



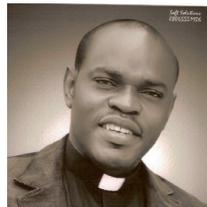
TOWARDS AN IGBO-AFRICAN CHRISTOLOGY

The faith that Christianity cherishes and bears witness to must have Christ as its foundation and goal. Without Christ as the central cornerstone and final aim, nothing in Christianity counts. Thus, Christology is, in the final analysis, the basic and central issue of Christian theology. This study is a contribution to the on-going discourse on Christology in African. It is of great importance to all peoples of Africa, as it touches on the way they experience Christ on a daily basis and provides a compelling explanation for the African as he can now see Christ within the categories that he or she can understand.

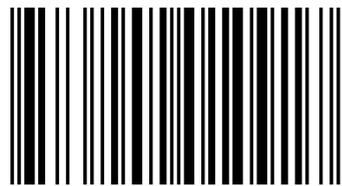
Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu

Towards an Igbo-African Christology

A Cultural Christological Construct in Post-Missionary Africa



Prof. Kanu, Ikechukwu Anthony, O.S.A., is a scholar in the areas of African Traditional Religion and Philosophy. He has served in various academic capacities, especially in Veritas University, Abuja; the Augustinian Institute, Makurdi; St. Augustine's Major Seminary, Jos. He currently teaches Philosophy and Religion in Tansian University, Nigeria.



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A CULTURAL CHRISTOLOGICAL CONSTRUCT IN
POST-MISSIONARY AFRICA**

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Dedication

Nnennia Chibuzor Achor

FOREWORD

Of the branches of African Christian Theology, it is no longer news to say that it is Christology, the study of Christ that has received the greatest attention. A testament to this fact could be seen in the array of its models that has so far been developed. Christ, as a matter of fact, has been presented, taking cognizance of yes the biblical and Christian traditions, but, especially, the African culture and contextual realities, individual cum communal experience, etc., as, among others, the Ancestor, Healer, King, Chief, Elder Brother, Liberator, Life-Giver. Likewise, many articles, books and dissertations have been written on the same African Christology.

But Christ is and remains, as it were, a mystery. And since none of the aforementioned models, essays and books could boast of having probed *in toto* "the width, the length, the height and the depth," (cf. Eph. 3:18) of this same mystery that He is and thus have succeeded in saying all there is to say on and about Him, there will always be need for more models and books that endeavour to shed light on Him.

It is, therefore, against this background that I bid welcome to the AfricanChristological arena, this piece, *Towards Igbo-African Christology*, by Rev. Fr Dr Anthony Ikechukwu Kanu, OSA. His – the fruit of his doctoral dissertation – is an exercise in inculturated Igbo-African Christology. It presents Christ in such a way that He could feel so much at home in the Igbo world and the citizens of this world

could see Him not as a stranger, but, indeed, as one of them, breathing their air and warming Himself at their socio-cultural fire-without any loss, however, made to His universal significance.

One of the beautiful things about this well-researched work is the recognition by the author that the enterprise of Christology, just like the business of theology in general, is never an I-alone-istic affair. Rather, it is one which the person concerned can only do better standing on the shoulders of those who, before him\her, had worked in the field of Christology while at the same time holding hands with contemporaries who are doing the same today. All these being done within and not without the Church, the Body of the same Christ, who is the subject of the study. Little wonder, then, an elaborate review was made by the author, before making his original input, of some well-known models of Igbo Christology like Healer, Chi, Ancestor, Victor, etc. He equally tried his hands at listing not only the sources of Igbo Christology which include, among others, the Scripture, Igbo Traditional Religion, Igbo myths, proverbs and parables, the historical experience of the Igbo people, but also went ahead to underscore the relational character of the same Igbo Christology.

While congratulating the author on this timely, serious and thought-provoking contribution to African Christological discourse, I wholeheartedly recommend it to theologians, pastors and, in fact, students and aficionados of African Christian

Theology. Indeed, much like St. Augustine (whose spiritual child the author is anyway: He is an Augustinian priest!) was told, in a childlike voice: *Tolle lege! Tolle lege!* "Take up and read, take up and read", to them all and, indeed, to all Christians, I say as well: Take this book and read and grow in your knowledge and experience of Christ, the Word, who became flesh and dwelt among us.

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January 22, 2016.*

INTRODUCTION

Waliggo (1996) avers that “the simple rules of communication require that the speaker adapts himself to the audience; and his message, in order to be understood by his audience, has to be clothed in the thought-patterns of the hearers” (p.14). From this perspective, it is obvious that inculturation as a principle has the power to drive Africa on the wheels of an intensively Christianized African Community that would witness transformation of the different levels of its life, laws, customs, moral values and its worldview in the light of the gospel message. Since evangelization in Africa in the third millennium is primarily the responsibility of Africans, it should focus on the evangelization and Christianization of African worldviews, cultures, symbols, institutions and values.

Shorter (1988), maintains that communication between human cultures can only take place effectively through dialogue and participation, through listening and through readiness to learn. Dialogue between Churches, religions and religious based countries leads to a better self identification and hope for convergence or growth towards a common horizon of truth. Kurgat (2009) avers that it is only through interdependence in corporation, and congruence that conversions can successfully take place. There is an emerging consensus that culture is a developing process in which there is and there must be a continuous dialogue between faith and culture. Practical inculturation is relevant to African nations that have been Christianized and to areas

where the Gospel has been proclaimed. As long as faith is present to a culture, inculturation dialogue must take place. This process of evangelization should engage culture until culture becomes gospel and the gospel culture. Culture and the gospel need each other if they gospel must be at home within particular cultures. And the two must work together for the two to be the church of Jesus Christ, who is for all mankind and, therefore, catholic; a sacrament of salvation for every people, therefore, concrete and particular.

A cursory glance at the developments in Africa, both past and recent, reveals that in the bustling continent, booming with Christianity, a teaming questions stares at Christianity on the face as a world religion. According to Schreiter (1991), much of the continent still staggers under the burden of neo-Colonialism and continued economic subordination to the powerful cultures of Europe, Asia and North America. The AIDS epidemic in central Africa threatens to decimate the human resources for growth and development in a way that the slave trade did in earlier centuries. This is amidst other diseases that lack of scientific and technological development and poverty have made Africans surrender to. The North Eastern segment of the continent still struggles with drought, recurrent famine and recovery from civil wars. Countries throughout the continent have to cope with national boundaries drawn by colonial powers that do not coincide with the natural social units of cultures. There has been over seventy political

coups and numerous civil wars in Africa since the independence movements of the 1960s, and many African countries are yet to recover from them. Many African countries are dying under the burden of foreign debt. In the midst of all these problems peculiar to Africa and Africans, how do we present Christ to the African? Where is Jesus Christ in the midst of all these? Christ is still a very distant figure for many Africans. Africans aspire for a Christ who will walk with a suffering people, sharing their pains and struggles. Africans are in need of a Christ that fits into the categories of their experiences; a Christ that is at home in and with the life, culture and philosophy of the African people.

It is from this perspective that Pobee (1992) observes that Christology in Africa, as is the case elsewhere, cannot exist without a social context. This is the point, according to Clarke (2011), where Christ and culture will sit at the centre stage of the historical evolution of the African people. This, once again highlights the creative tension between the particularity and universality of the church. Christ can only make meaning to the African when the African sees him from his own lens. And there is already a growing awareness of this need. Even though in 1967, Mbiti (cited in Clarke, 2011) had argued that the concept of African Christology does not exist. Seven years later, Fashole-Luke (cited in Clarke, 2011) observes that there are no signs that Christological ideas are wrestled with by African theologians, and thus called on theologians to make it a priority in their theological reflections. Ten years

later, after Mbiti's statement, Kofi (cited in Clarke, 2011), further observed that there is very little literature on Christology. These arguments and observations conjure the mortified spirits of theologians to tread on Christological grounds.

Clarke (2011), maintains that the impact of African theologians responding to the challenge of constructing an African contextual Christology has been impressive. And for the past thirty years African theologians have been working hard in this regard. Nathaniel (1994), further observes that the subject 'African Christology' is presently being taught either as a self-subsisting course or as a course under another in most ecclesiastical institutions. A number of theses have been written on it by both graduate and post-graduate students. A good number of journal articles and textbooks have been or are being published on it. Associations of theologians and exegetes are being set up in great numbers, and they are organizing symposiums and colloquiums. This, combined with the Christian sense of the African faithful has today given birth to a distinctive African theology which has emerged out of the identity of the African people and draws on African categories of thought and speaks to the historical situation of the African people; and by a deep reflection on the African way of seeing Christ, is enriching the universal church.

In the contention of Clarke (2011), Christology is coming of age in Africa, indicated in the fact that Christology is now itself being critiqued from within.

The critique levied against African Christology is first, from the fact that African theologians have failed to break away from Western missionary Christianity. There is an evident overdependence on the theological methods employed by Western missionaries in their analysis of Christ rather than on African theological traditions. And it has not been sufficiently related to Africans and African's missionary responsibility to Africa. And also, they have been reduced to academic discourses, with little or no dialogue between the African academic Christologies and the Christologies that are lived out in the everyday lives of Africans.

In spite of the evident success of missionary work in Africa seen in the teeming population of Africans who have embraced Christianity, there is an evident lack of depth in the faith and commitment of converts; there is also an increasing proliferation of Afro-Christian indigenous churches. This cannot be blamed on the lack of commitment of missionaries in Africa, for we saw them labour exceedingly. The cause, according to Metuh (1993), is due to the missionaries' intolerance of the tendency of the new African converts to introduce elements of the traditional religion into Christianity. There was a clash of worldviews and the failure of missionaries to come to terms with the traditional African cosmology.

Christ has not been brought to the African in such a way that he lies comfortably within the categories that the African would understand and appreciate. According to Clarke (2011), the approach to

theology taken by the Council of Nicea, 325 AD, which declared that Jesus was *homoousios* (one in being or one of substance) with the Father, and the statement of the Council of Chalcedon 451 AD, that the two natures of Christ: the human and divine are without division or separation, is not an African approach to theology. Christianity in Africa is not primarily an intellectual pursuit; it is a lived experience in which Christ is part and parcel of the people's day to day living. These Western Christological definitions leave a vacuum in the African's daily hunger and struggle to know and experience Jesus.

Clarke (2011) observes that the notion that all Christologies are cultural constructs is today commonly acknowledged, especially in missiological circles. A cursory glance at the historical development of Christology also reveals that Christians over the ages have tried to understand and express the meaning of Christ in terms that are meaningful to their cultures and worldviews. The New Testament is no exception. When Jesus presented himself to the Jews, Hahn (1969) avers that he revealed faces of himself that were at home with the Jewish worldview: Jesus presented himself as the Good Shepherd, the Gate to the Sheepfold, the Messiah, Son of David, Son of Man, etc. The purpose of this study is to answer the question asked by the emerging Igbo-African generation: who is Jesus Christ? By constructing an inculturated Igbo Christology in such a way that it satisfies the hunger of the Igbo African to know Jesus and simultaneously respecting the universal

significance of Jesus Christ. This work will only cover the development of inculturation in Africa and the emergence of Christology. But because of its vastness, it would be limited to the Igbo geographical area of Eastern Nigeria.

The faith that Christianity cherishes and bears witness to must have Christ as its foundation and goal. In the contention of Clarke (2011), without Christ as the central cornerstone and final aim, nothing in Christianity counts. Thus, Mugambi and Magesa (1989) opine that Christology is, in the final analysis, the basic and central issue of Christian theology. This study is a contribution to the ongoing discourse on Christology and African Christology in particular. It would be of great importance to all students of theology, especially for those who are interested in carrying out further research on inculturation and particularly in the area of Christology. It would also be of great help to all peoples of Africa, as it touches the way they experience Christ on a daily basis and provides a compelling explanation for the African's quest for salvation in Christ Jesus.

CHAPTER ONE

The Historical-Cultural Roots of the Igbo-African

A fundamental step in the study of an African perspective on Christology is the identification of the spatio-cultural horizon of the Igbo-African space. This would take two steps in the process of explanation: an understanding of what is regarded as African, then the Igbo cultural zone which lies within the African hemisphere to which this study is limited.

Africa provides the wider *locus* or *locale* for reflecting on what this research refers to as Igbo-African Christology; and it is in this regard that the analysis of the concept *Africa* is of great importance. Achen (1913) argues that the origin of the concept *Africa* depicts its geographical setting. *Africa* is of Phoenician origin and it was first used by the Romans to refer to the territory about the city of Carthage. However, Ki-zerbo (1981) states that *Africa* is used to denote the land of sunshine, of black race and mostly refers to the sub-Saharan regions of Negroes. Its etymology can be traced to the Latin adjective “*aprica*”, which means *sunny*. This notwithstanding, in this piece, the idea of Africa encompasses the territory about the city of Cartage and the sub-Saharan Africa.

Africa is the second largest of the Earth’s seven continents, covering 30,244,000 sq km (11,677,000 sq mi), including its adjacent islands with 54 countries. Robert (2003) observes that it encompasses 23 percent of the world’s total land

area. In 2000 some 13 percent of the world's population, an estimated 797 million people, lived in Africa, making it the world's second most populous continent, after Asia. Knappert and Pearson (1976), state that its peoples are divided into more than 1,000 ethnic groups, with different languages, social customs, religions and way of life. Onyeocha (1997), articulated the geo-numerical identity of Africa thus:

Africa is the world second largest continent. It covers an area of 11, 617, 000 square miles. It is three times the size of Europe (10, 400, 000 square kilometres and 4,000, 000 square miles) and contains about four hundred million inhabitants. Africa is divided into twenty five major ethnic groups speaking about seven hundred languages. It contains within it every known type of topography and climatic condition, except the Arctic cold. There are in the North the Sahara, and in the South the Kalahari Desert, with permanent snow in the Kilimanjaro. Also found in Africa are jungle areas beyond mere geographical location or designation. This is because, there are so many people in the African continent who are not Africans, as there are many people from Africa in Diaspora who do not accept that they are Africans. As such, a single characteristic such as colour, ancestry or geography does not settle the question of who or what is an African? Be that as it may, it does provide an insight into what or who an African is.

Below is a map depicting the geographical area referred to as Africa.

The Map of Africa



While Africa provides the wider *locus* for this reflection on Igbo-African Christology, the concept Igbo provides the particular cultural area or *locale* for the reflection on Christology. Who then are the Igbo of Africa? According to Onuh (1991), by way of definition, “Igbo” is both a language and the name of an ethnic group or tribe in Nigeria. There is, however, an etymological and lexical complexity surrounding the meaning of the term ‘Igbo’. In the contention of Ekwuru (2009), the difficulty of arriving at a precise etymological and semantic clarity of the word “Igbo” has its trace in the un-precise nature of the history of the Igbo people. For Afigbo (1975a), compared to

the state of research as regards origin in relation to other tribes in Nigeria, the Igbo history can without much exaggeration be described as *terra incognita*. However, Afigbo (1975b) further observes that the Igbo are not indifferent to this crisis of identity. Their experience of colonialism and even the Biafran War has sparked off in them the quest for a historical identity. It is such that Isichei (1976) avers that no historical question arouses more interest among the present day Igbo people than the enquiry "where did the Igbo come from?"

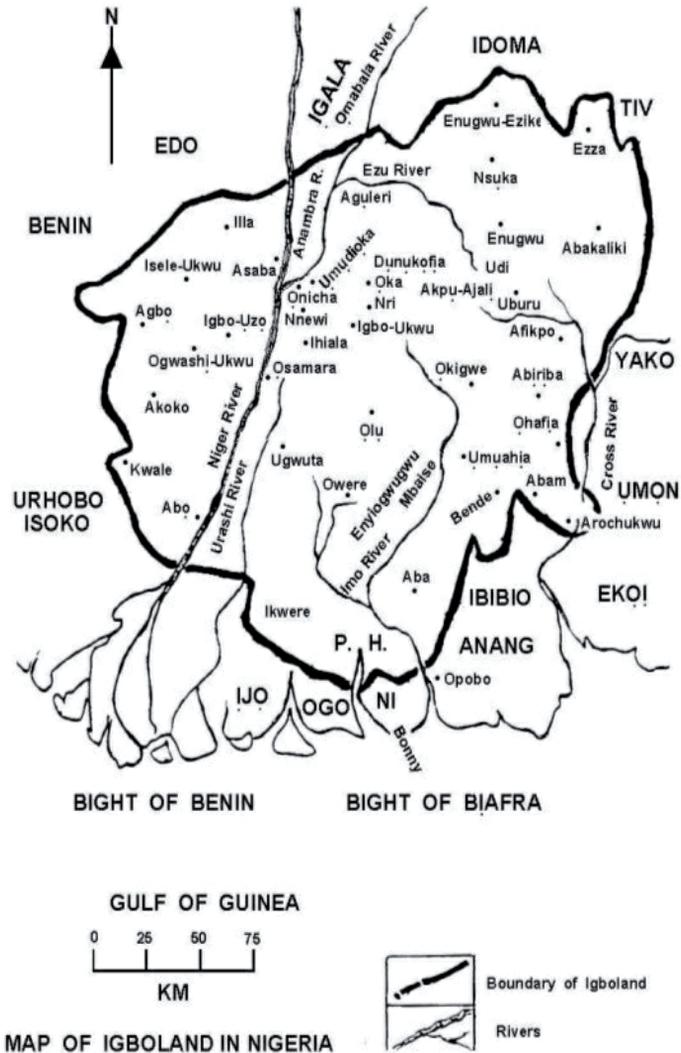
As regards the territorial identity of the Igbo, Uzozie (1991:4) observes that "To date, there is no agreement among ethnographers, missionaries, anthropologists, historians, geographers and politicians on the definition and geographical limits of territory" (p. 14). Ekwuru (2009) states that any attempt to introduce who the Igbo is poses a lot of problems in all aspects of its academic conceptualizations. This notwithstanding, the Igbo people as a single race even though fragmented and scattered, inhabiting a geographical area stretching from Benin to Igala and Cross River to Niger Delta. They speak the same language which gradually developed various dialects but understood among all the groups. Their cultural patterns are closely related, based on similar cults and social institutions; they believe in a common Supreme Being known as Chukwu or Chineke. Two theories have emerged in response to the question of the origin of the Igbo. There is, the 'Northern Centre Theory' which, according to Onwuejeogwu (1987) posits that the Igbos migrated from five northern

centre areas, namely: the Semetic Centre of the Near and Far East, the Hermatic Centre around Egypt and Northern Africa, the Western Sahara, the Chadian Centre and the Nok Centre. The second historical hypothesis is the 'Centre Theory of Igbo Heartland'. According to Jones (cited by Isichei 1976), the early migrations of the proto-Igbo originated from the areas termed as the Igbo heartland, such as: Owerri, Okigwe, Orlu and Awka divisions.

Geographically speaking, Njoku (1990) posits that Igbo land is located in the South Eastern region of what is known as Nigeria. The Southern part of Nigeria exhibits a wide variety of topographical features. It is situated within the parallels of 6 and 8 east longitudes and 5 and 7 north latitudes. As a culture area, it is made up of Enugu, Anambra, Imo, Abia and parts of the Delta, Cross River, Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria. According to Uchendu (1965), in its status as an ethnic group, the Igbo share common boundaries with other ethnic groups: eastward, the Yakos and Ibibios; westwards, with the Binis and the Isokos, Warri; northward, with the Igalas, Idomas, and the Tivs, and southward, the Ijaws and Ogonis.

Socio-politically, unlike the other tribes in Nigeria, who evolved a molithic centralized system of government, the Igbo distinguish themselves with a complicated socio-political structure which has been qualified as *republican*. The Igbo ethnic group is divided into clans, each clan is made up of towns; and each town is comprised of villages. The village

is the primary social unit constituted of families or kindred. The family is the nucleus of society. Politically, the lineage system is the matrix of the social unit or organization and provides grounds for political and religious structures. The traditional concepts of political power and authority is structured and determined by their concept of *umunna* and the membership of the association based on elaborate title system. Economically, Aligwekwe (1991), avers that the traditional Igbo people were sedentary agriculturists. This delimitation of Igbo land as a cultural area, helps to identify the cultural horizon for the study of Igbo-African Christology.



The idea of Igbo employed in this research on Igbo-African Christology is to indicate that, although the

research is based fundamentally on the Igbo worldview, the African worldview is a shared worldview as there are many similarities and points of convergence. Ogugua (2003) would prefer to use concepts such as *Igbo-African*. He writes that:

'Igbo-African' therefore represents the generalizations from the Igbo race, which is one of the races making up the African race. A good number of scholars who have carried out research in Africa, refer to it in this ethnic sense. Again one can make a limited generalization about Africa from what we get from Igbo world because of felt similarities which exist among races in Africa. (p. 15).

The perspective of Ogugua was furthered by Nwoga (cited by Ogugua 2006) when he writes:

It is possible, however, to consider Africa in terms of a centre and periphery theory in which certain phenomena, certain aspects of firmer and deeper and more expansive hold in particular parts of Africa and to be of less effect in surrounding areas. (p.1).

Moreover, the fact that the researcher is from an Igbo speaking area and knows this named area and its existential principles and practices more than any other part of Africa counts in his favour. When Ogugua (2006) was carrying out a research in Igbo-African Medicine, he writes:

I may not have the time to carry out an extensive research involving other African peoples and nations. But I have a very safe and secured ground

thinking of Igbo-African because the law of statistical regularity and inertia of large numbers are in my favour. (p. 43).

It is the same confidence that informs the present research and researcher in the area of an Igbo-based African Christology. It is Igbo with reference to the culture area of this research; however, it is also African since the African world is defined by interactiveness and complementarity. What can be said of one part of African can similarly be said of another part of Africa, meaning that there is a huge similarity in perspectives.

CHAPTER TWO

Inculturation and the Reciprocity of Culture and the Gospel

A definition of inculturation can be considered from a variety of angles. However, from whatever angle you choose to approach it, the theological content remains the same. According to Walligo (1986):

Inculturation means the honest and serious attempt to make Christ and his Gospel of salvation ever more understood by peoples of every culture, locality and time. It is the reformulation of Christian life and doctrine into the very thought patterns of each people.... It is the continuous endeavour to make Christianity 'truly feel at home' in the cultures of each people. (p. 11).

Sharing in the perspective of Walligo, Arrupe (1990) contends that:

Inculturation is the incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question, but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the cultures, transforming it and remaking it so as to bring about a new creation. (p. 6).

From this perspective, inculturation becomes a process that plies the pattern of the 'Word made-flesh'. It involves the gospel taking life and flesh in the beliefs of people who welcome Christ and the

values of the gospel. Just as Christ became man so as to win salvation for all, the gospel must become 'culture' so as to win the heart of 'local people'. John Paul II (cited by Udoide, 1996) shares the same sentiments with Arrupe when he defines inculturation as "the incarnation of the gospel in autochthonous cultures, at the same time, the introduction of these cultures into the life of the church" (p. 2). He further stresses the need for reciprocity in the relationship between the gospel and cultures.

Crollius (1986) adds a new dimension to our concept of inculturation when he defined it as:

The integration of the Christian experience of a local church into the culture of its people in such a way that the experience not only express itself in elements of this culture, but becomes a force that animates, orients and innovates this culture so as to create a new unity and communion not only within the culture in question, but also as an enrichment of the church universal. (p. 43).

This notwithstanding, when all is said about inculturation, it must not be forgotten that it is a conscious and conscientious effort to help particular people be converted down to the very roots of their culture. As its prospect, it strives at establishing a fundamental relationship between the conversion of mind and the conversion of the way of life, so that African Christians would be able to live their faith in all its depth and be able to give it expression in their own way.

The Colonial and Missionary Enterprises and Africa's Faith Pathology

The encounter between European and African cultures is better described as a forced acculturation. A word that describes a situation in which a highly developed society imposes certain elements of its culture on the other, thereby forcing it to derail from its unique tract of cultural civilization; the observed result is an initial form of resistance and conflict that often leads to a situation of cultural disorder. It is in this regard that Ekwuru (1999) believes that the first strategy employed by the colonial masters was that of disassemblage, concealed in the exploitative colonial ideology of benevolent paternalism. Kwame (1981) avers that it was first an ideology of condemnation, which identified everything "good to be white" and everything "bad to be black". The basic purpose of condemnation was to create a moral ground for the destruction of the traditional society in its various forms and modes. This according to Ekwuru (1999) was followed concurrently by a process of reassemblage, and this involved the reconstruction of the African cultural world in accordance with colonial vision and design.

Achebe (1958), in his celebrated classic and epoch-making piece, *Things Fall Apart*, brought out the consequences of the encounter between the European and African worlds. He particularly looks at the Igbo society at the period when the white man broke into it as a missionary, trader and administrator. Obierika accuses the white man thus:

Does the white man understand our custom about land? asked Okonkwo, How can he when he does not even speak our tongue? responded Obierika, and then he continued, But he says our customs are bad; and our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs are bad. How do you think we can fight when our brothers have turned against us? The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers and our clan can no longer act as one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart. (pp. 124-125).

European missionaries in particular admitted little if any value in African culture. Many of them denied that Africa had any religion other than fearful superstitions. The Christian church regarded African culture as primitive, savage, pagan, barbaric, etc. They closed their eyes to the fact that man is a cultural being, a *homo culturalis*, and according to Mondin (1999), from the moment of birth enjoys the capacity to form himself so as to realize his being through culture. For Rodney (1972), culture is the sum total of a people's way of life, which embraces their mode of dressing, talking, the food they eat, and the way they conceive death and welcome life. By destroying African cultural values, the Europeans dealt a *coup de grace* to the African personality, to his *is-ness*. Mageza (1976) maintains that they made no appraisal of our peculiarities, our languages enriched with traditions of centuries, our parables, many of them the quintessence of family

and national histories. This was done against the background that the negro in all his susceptibilities is an inferior race and that it is needful to give him a foreign model beacon to emulate and follow. Hastings (1976) describes Africa as a continent of song, dance and musical instruments. It is a continent of language and languages. And here lies the heart of its artistic communal inheritance and nothing was sadder than the missionary failure to open a door whereby at least some of the wealth might pass across into the worship of the young churches. The drum was not heard in most churches, only the harmonious accompanying carefully translated European hymns sung to the tune of the west. The result was frequently deplorable; African languages cannot be bent to European hymn tunes:

Metuh (1993), argues that the falling apart of African traditional social structures on which African Traditional Religion was based forced Africans to take refuge in the Christian churches. The Christian missionaries allowed the African refugees a brief period within its ranks as "refugees" during which they were hastily instructed (as catechumens), before admission into full citizenship into the kingdom of heaven (through baptism). In spite of the evident missionary successes in Africa, he further observes that there is still a huge conflict between the Christian and African world-views. The conflict between the African worldview and that of Christianity was primarily due to the missionary's intolerance of the tendencies of the new African

converts to introduce new elements of the traditional religion into Christianity. The successes in terms of evangelization he categorized as extensive, which primarily involves recruiting individuals and communities to embrace Christianity. It does not focus on the depth of the Christianization and the Christian commitment of the individual or community. Church membership in this case is mere adhesion. He presents this in juxtaposition to the need for an intensive evangelization which is characterized by, not just the Christianization of people and communities but the transformation of different levels of its life, its laws, customs, moral values and worldviews in the light of the gospel. The conflict between African and Christian worldviews has led to a retinue of consequences: it is the cause of the lack of depth in the faith and commitment of converts from African Traditional Religion to Christianity. It is also the cause of the proliferation of African Independent Churches. He, thus, argues that if the gospel message must influence the lives and destiny of the African people, it must be incarnated in African worldviews. For the African worldview is like a compass with which Christianity would find its way into the vast, strange and often threatening universe of African culture.

In his analysis of inculturation and the future of evangelisation in Africa, Umorem (1992), employs the historical method to drive his message home. He believes that a look at the past of the church in Africa contains important lessons for the future. He observes that the church came to Africa twice and

twice it withered away: first during the apostolic age, from Egypt the church spread to Mauritania in the North West, and in the fourth century found centres in Alexandria ruled by Athanasius and Carthage ruled by Cyprian. Great names like Athanasius, Augustine and Cyprian are strong testimonies of both the intellectual and Episcopal vitality of that early church in Africa. However, weighed down by disputes, the church limped along entering Ethiopia in the 4th century and Nubia in the 6th century. The church had no roots and with the emergence of Islam in the 7th C which identified with African culture, she was lost. The church got a second chance at the end of the middle ages as a result of the Portuguese exploration. During this period it spread to Congo and Angola; but the church did not come to stay. Gradually it was withering away while Islam was waxing strong. Looking back to this, Hasting (1969) laments, "The African Church had its memories, its canonized saints but where were its living members?" (p. 53). The consequence of all these, he argues, is lack of incarnating the gospel message into the African culture, which results either in the loss of Christianity or the hatching out of half Christians and half "pagans". He thus calls for a move from enculturation to inculturation to remedy the situation; and proposes that language and culture are two areas that require attention, that is, if Christ and his message is to take root in Africa.

The Christological Question

With the development of inculturation, the need for the development of African Christology also began

to emerge. Africans started asking the question: 'What is the image, status and role of Christ in Africa?' When Jesus spoke of himself in Palestine as the Vine, the Good Shepherd, the Sower, etc, he was speaking within categories that were relevant to Palestine. If he had made his appearance in Africa, "who will he tell us that he is?" Africans have the mandate to name Christ: "Who do you say that I am?" (Mark 8:29) Given the richness of the mystery of Christ as well as the richness of African cultures and experiences, it is normal that Christ be given a name that is African. This was also the case of the apologetics of the first Christian communities. Right from the 80's, theologians began Christological explorations illustrating a creative outburst that spanned geographical and confessional lines.

In response to the question, "Who is Jesus to the African?" Nyamiti (1984), proposed Jesus as an ancestor. While paying little attention to the crisis that has given birth to faith pathology in Africa, he argues that the African religious heritage is a fertile ground for Christological construction. He explicated the entire Christian message using the African category of ancestor. Within his overall scheme, the concept of Christ as ancestor is pivotal. He juxtaposes Jesus and the African brother-ancestor figure and then compares this ancestral paradigm with both traditional and contemporary Christologies. The advantage of Nyamiti's ancestral Christology is that it allows the African the opportunity to believe in Jesus without losing his natural ancestral values. However, this approach has the tendency to minimize the complexity of the

ancestral model. In transposing the ancestral figure to Christ for the benefit of Christian apologetics obliges the theologian to degrade African ancestors to the benefit of Christ. They end up giving the impression that African ancestors do not have consistence without Christ. Another problem of this apologetics is that the comparism between African ancestors and Jesus leads to a Christology from below which overloads the humanity of Jesus to the detriment of his divinity.

Takatso (1986), made a Christological analysis which sprang from conditions he experienced in his first parish ministry in South Africa. His central Christological question was: "How can faith in Jesus Christ empower black people who are involved in the struggle for liberation?" At the background of his Christological approach was the socio-political and economic factors in South Africa at the time. In opposition to the oppressiveness of the situation, he developed a black Christology, based on the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus, for as the Lord of history, Jesus continues to live in community and in solidarity with them, suffering in every way with them but also inspiring the victory of the resurrection as oppressed people are empowered to become agents of their own history.

Udoh (1988), developed a Christology drawn from his experience as a refugee in the Biafran War. His experience was triggered by the question about the image, status and role of Christ in Africa. Crisis was, thus, central in his Christological interrogations.

Like most African scholars, he argues that there is schizophrenia among Africans. They are torn in between two worlds: their traditional beliefs and the Christian religion. This he blames on the way Christ was first presented to the African. The African "faith pathology" as he describes it, is because, "Christ entered the African scene as a forceful, impatient and unfriendly tyrant. He was presented as invalidating the history and institutions of a people in order to impose his rule upon them" (pp.10-11). The consequence is that many Africans see Christ as a stranger, an illegal alien, a refugee, a dissident, the most visible and publicized symbol for foreign domination, or worse still, a fugitive who in desperation came to Africa for sanctuary. To remedy the situation, he explored the proposal of Christ as doctor, liberator and victor, as promising genuine theological alternatives to western Christologies. From this platform, he proposes his guest Christology. In order to overcome the African's sense of Jesus as a stranger, he proposes that Jesus be welcomed first as a guest. After he resides intimately among them on this basis will the faith pathology be resolved, for Jesus would not just be recognised as a guest but as our kin.

McCarthy (1988), approaches Christology from a feminist perspective. She observes that from the soteriological emphasis of African Christology that the figure of Christ as liberator underlies many of the images that arise from the African concept of saviour and also has liberative consequences for women. To the African, Jesus is the liberator from all that keeps him or her in bondage, in fear, in

domination, in exploitation, oppression, and in religious distortion be it economic, political, psychological or social terms. He is the liberator from all that robs them of their dignity as full human beings and hampers the full realization of their potentials. He has come to proclaim the good news to the poor, to proclaim release to prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the broken victims go free and to proclaim that the Lord's year of favour has come (Lk 4:18ff). This image of Christ has great relevance in the discussion of the theology of the liberation of women in Africa.

Bediako (1990), while recognizing the same Christological problem, with Udoh, he traces it to the quality of contact between the Christian proclamation and traditional religious life. The western missionaries, in their bid to push forward the universality of the gospel of Christ, reduced the African's reception and articulation of the Christian message to models from Christian traditions of Europe. The consequence he argues is that, Christ could not inhabit the spiritual universe of the African consciousness, except in essence, as a stranger. Fundamental to his Christology is the question: must we become other than African in order to be truly Christian? In a style that expresses confidence in African Christology, using the scripture as a basis, he argues that Jesus is not a stranger to Africans. The universality of Jesus, does not negate, but rather denotes that Christ is the saviour of the African world. Although he was incarnate in a Jewish setting. Through faith, African believers now share in the promises made to the people of Israel,

and thus the good news becomes our story. And thus we need to make Jesus at home in our spiritual universe by approaching him in terms of our religious needs and longings. For this reason, he interprets the gospel in the light of the Akan Traditional Religion. Since ancestors are central to Akan heritage, he proposes the image of Jesus as ancestor: "Jesus Christ is the only real and true Ancestor and source of life for all mankind, fulfilling and transcending the benefits believed to be bestowed by lineage ancestors" (pp. 41-42).

Ukachukwu (1993), devoted his elaborate research to *Christ the African King*. After his comparism between the kingship of Christ in the New Testament, as Messiah, the anointed king and the understanding of kingship in some major African traditions, like the Yoruba and the Zulus, he concluded that there is a complementarity between the kingship of Jesus and kingship in African religious traditions. He noted however, that the kingship of Christ transcends in African traditions especially on the ground that Jesus is the servant king who gives his life for his people, hence Jesus is a model for African kings. The idea of Christ as king, like other faces of Jesus connects with African symbol and aspiration. He is a king because he is all-powerful, generous, wise and assures the protection of his people. Above all, he reconciles his people.

Healey and Sybertz (1996), contributed to the ongoing African journey of inculturation and contextualization by bringing out the faces of Jesus

as Healer and Victor over death. As a narrative theology, they employed hugely African oral literature and the wide range of narrative and oral forms: proverbs, sayings, riddles, stories, myths, plays and songs, explained in their historical and cultural contexts. They argue that many of the titles given to Jesus in the gospels refer to him as great and powerful and a divine healer. He is not just a healer like other African healers who conjure magical powers to heal. Jesus is the Doctor of Doctors and the Healer of Healers. It is from him that every healer gets his or her power. Also in the light of many African fears and superstitions connected with death, Christ's victory over death and his resurrection to new life are even greater. He has overcome the evil powers of witches and witchcraft. He has the medicine of life and not death. In fact, they refer to Christ as the Medicine of Life and the Medicine of Immortality. By his death, he has conquered our death and by his rising from the dead, he has given us new life.

Following Nyamiti, Chidili (1997), argues that the African ancestor symbol is the key to a genuine understanding of Christ. He however made it clear that the reference to Jesus as ancestor is not because he originated historically from Africa, but because Christ came to be the sum total of what God wants human beings to be. He is thus considered an ancestor in an analogous sense. He first explores the New Testament images of Jesus which presents him as the perfect human being. Coming back to our African beliefs about ancestors, they are also referred to by Africans as perfect

human beings. It is this thought of 'perfect-human-being-ness' that compels African Christians to regard Jesus and the ancestors as heroes, people to be emulated. Jesus like the ancestors teaches us how to live our life, how to suffer its indignities, and to die surrendered to the Father. The death of Jesus reveals his unreserved love for others, and impels believers to follow his selfless love.

Bujo (1999), also taking from Nyamiti, employs the style of classical analogy to transfer the title of ancestor to Christ. For him, Jesus is the proto-ancestor, which means 'ancestor per-excellence'. In this regard he writes that:

This signifies that Jesus did not only realise the authentic ideal of God-fearing African ancestors, but also infinitely transcended that ideal and brought it to new completion. No ancestor can be thought of who was capable of such a complete and effective realization of the ideal. (p. 74).

This makes the ancestry of Jesus Christ the measure of all other conception of ancestor. He further envisages the heuristic effect of this Christology. If Jesus Christ is the proto-ancestor, the whole of African life as aspiration to ancestorship becomes the celebration of the *memoria passionis, mortis et resurrectionis* of Jesus of Nazareth. This memory stands a great chance of liberating the possibilities of the African. It will also serve as a critique of all forms of violence that hinder the humanization of the African.

Ezeogu (2010) develops a Christology that tries to

prove that Jesus is of African origin. His research is an exercise in afro-centric exegesis in which one uses the standard tools of biblical exegesis to highlight aspects of the text that are of special interest to people of African descent. He argues that the tradition available to Matthew was that in which Mary and Jesus were known to be Africans of Egyptian origin resident in Galilee. But that Matthew's enterprise was an apologetics aimed at presenting the gospel in such a way that it would be acceptable to the Jews, and so Jesus was given a Davidic ancestry. His reasons for taking this position is as follows:

1. The fact that Matthew needed to prove the Davidic ancestry of Jesus shows that this fact was not evident for his contemporaries.
2. Matthew gives us Jesus' lineage from Joseph when Joseph is not his real father.
3. Matthew included women in a genealogy that traces lineage through fathers.
4. The name Mary is not Jewish. It may have been derived from the Egyptian *Mery* which means cherished, beloved.
5. The Magi might have come from Egypt, since they are from the east.
6. Finally, the escape of the Holy Family to Egypt points to the Egyptian origin of Mary and Jesus. For in the cultural ethos of the biblical times and still in traditional African societies, if a person is

threatened in his father's land, the safest place to run to is the mother's maiden home.

Why Ezeogu took the pains to show that Jesus is an African is to negate the popular opinion that Africans have not made any contribution to the history of civilization and salvation, and to prove that Christianity, in its origin, is an African religion. He had also hoped that his new findings would minimise racial tensions. The highpoint of Ezeogu's discovery is that from now forward, Christianity will no longer be termed foreign religion but rather, the coming of Christianity to Africa will now be seen as a return of Christ to his home land through the Western world.

Clarke (2011) analyses Christology from the Akan perspective. His primary concern was the African Independent Churches among the Akan people, how they, out of the richness of their symbols, their cultural expressions, their experiences, their hopes, their fears and their daily life in community articulate faith in Jesus Christ. He believes that all Christologies are cultural constructs; and that the credit of the development of African Christology goes hugely to African Independent Churches. In the 1920s they mounted a new form of resistance to the Western cultural hegemony. It originated in grassroots movement throughout the continent, contrary to academic discourses on Christology which often starts and ends up in the classroom. He listed the Akan African Independent Churches Christology as: Saviour, Messiah, Lord, Healer, God, Conqueror, Chief, Brother and Ancestor. He argues

that African Christology is present and developing, but perhaps African theologians and western scholars have been looking for it in the wrong places.

The literatures reviewed so far have tried to study African Christology from various perspectives. It first began with the examination of history, going back to the encounter between the European and the African cultures, and observing how the African culture was condemned, creating a moral ground for the destruction of our values. The result is that we have half Christians and half 'pagans'- a situation described as schizophrenic. To create a situation that provides the platform for the African to understand Christ, as relevant to his situation and within categories that he would appreciate, the development of an African Christology is inevitable. Jesus is thus presented with different faces: as the welcomed guest; as the only real and true Ancestor and source of life for all mankind, fulfilling and transcending the benefits believed to be bestowed by lineage ancestors; he is presented as a king, deriving from the African traditional concept of king. Christ is not just presented as a king or guest or ancestor, he is presented as an African. But in all these analysis there is hardly any attempt to study the idea of who Jesus is to the African Igbo person. If Jesus had made his appearance in Igboland, "who will he tell the Igbos that he is?" Put another way, should he appear in Igboland, having experienced him, "who will the Igbo person say that He is?" The Igbos have the mandate to name Christ: "Who do you say that I am?" (Mark 8:29) Given the richness

of the mystery of Christ as well as the richness of Igbo culture and experiences (like in the case of the Biafran War), it is normal that Christ be given a name that is Igbo in nature and origin. This is actually the gap created in this literature which will be filled up in the course of this research.

CHAPTER THREE

Inculturation: Provenance, Related Concepts and Agents

A cursory glance at the historical evolution of Christianity reveals that the issue of the relations of Christianity with other religions has been a vexed issue. Although during the second and third centuries, Christian thinkers like Justin Martyr in 160 AD and Clement of Alexandria in 210 AD expressed great esteem for non-Christian religions. For them, these religions functioned as *preparatio evangelica* (preparation for the gospel) and based on their *Logos spermatikos* (seeds of the word) theology which conceived Christ as present in all human cultures, they taught that these religions belonged to the human economy. By the mid third century, exclusive theological current began to emerge.

Cyprian in 250 AD gave a dogmatic slant to the dictum *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside the church there is no salvation). By the 19th century, the Second Vatican Council modified the thought of Cyprian and said that without the church there was no salvation. Paul (1984) argues that this exclusive-inclusive Ecclesio-centricism attitude towards other religions has been that of confrontation and condemnation. As such, the encounter between Christianity and precisely African traditional religion led to the undermining of the worldview of the African people. For a healthy encounter between culture and the gospel, and the insertion of this

gospel into the cultures of the African people, a new mode of interaction between culture and the gospel is indispensable. It is from this background that the idea of inculturation emerged as a new and preferable mode of interaction between the Christian faith primarily and the culture of the African people.

The Origin of the Concept 'Inculturation'

A historical analysis of the evolution of the Church reveals that the idea of inculturation is a new one, but again it is as old as the Church. It is, thus, not surprising that Onwubiko (1997) avers that inculturation is a new vision of an old problem or a new approach to a solution of an old problem. The concept appeared in missiological discussions not so long ago. Metuh (1996), states that the concept was probably first used in a theological sense by Joseph Masson, a professor of the Gregorian University Rome, in his book, *L'Eglise ouverte sur le monde*, published in 1962 shortly before the opening of the Second Vatican Council. Mason (cited in Metuh, 1996) writes that there is a more urgent need for a Catholicism that is inculturated in a variety of forms.

Schineller (1990), however, avows that the exact origin of the word as it functions in the theological community is unclear, but he points to its use by Cardinal Sin of Manila at the Synod on Catechesis held in Rome in 1977 and its first insertion into Papal Documents by John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation on Catechesis on October 1979. Since

then, the concept has become a common place and was frequently used by the John Paul II during his visits to Africa.

Metuh (1996), views the primary origin of the concept 'inculturation' from a secular perspective. He states that the term was borrowed from cultural anthropology where it denotes the process by which a person is inserted into his culture. This, however, has been given a slight change in its missiological use as a process by which the church becomes inserted into a particular culture. It is in this regard that Schineller (1990) says that "at its best, the term combines the theological significance of incarnation with the anthropological concepts of enculturation and acculturation to create something new" (p. 21).

Inculturation and other Related Concepts

According to Metuh (1996), there are concepts that may suggest the same meaning at the pragmatic level with inculturation, but are neither fully synonymous in conceptual content, nor compatible in their theological or ideological implications. These concepts would need to be identified and clarified before further discourse on 'inculturation'.

a. Culture

The word culture is so rich and all encompassing that both sociologists and anthropologists have defined it in multifarious ways. Tylor (1891) defined culture as "The complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, moral law, custom and any other compatibilities caused by man as a member

of society" (p. 1). He admits that there are special elements identifiable with culture. Adamson (1972) defines cultures as "the integral system of learned behaviour patterns which are the characteristic of the members of a society and which are not the result of biological inheritance" (p. 6). In other words, culture does not come from human genes, but rather it is learnt and taught. This aligns with the etymology of the word culture as *colere*, which means "to cultivate" or "to practice". The human person is, therefore, the author and architect of culture.

b. Interculturation

Blomjous (2000) used the concept "intercultururation" in terms of the mutual influence between Christianity and the culture into which it is introduced. In this process, culture is transformed by the Christian message. There is a greater emphasis on the transformation of culture by Christianity. Mutuality in the interaction of culture and Christianity is not safeguarded.

c. Enculturation

Shorter (1988), said that the spelling of the word "enculturation" is purposely designated for sociological usage while "inculturation" is theological. However, enculturation is the process whereby individuals are conditioned by, adjusted to and integrated with the cultural norms prevalent in the society of which they are members.

d. Acculturation

Richard (1994) understands acculturation as the process wherein two cultures come into contact and the necessary changes and transformation that ensue. Chidili (1997) describes the situation of acculturation in relation to the effort of missionaries to adapt the Christian message. They used elements from the local culture in order to communicate meaning to their hearers. In this process, they modified the culture of their hearers, which consequently brought about a new culture.

e. Indigenization

According to Schineller (1990), indigenization means that:

The local community, with its own indigenous leadership, has the primary responsibility and task of developing the teaching, liturgy, and practice of that local Church. Outside help may be needed at the beginning and at key stages, but the major work is done by the local Church as it develops its own identity based on its own cultural heritage and situation. (p. 18).

Schineller (1990) points out that indigenization has the danger of seeing culture as a static process which could deny it of changes and growth that ensue from the proceeds of modernization, technology and education.

f. Africanization

Mwasaru (1978) asserts that Africanization is not all about replacing personnel, as in having

indigenous bishops, priests and sisters, it is not all about putting Africans in the positions formerly held by the whites, it is a process that would involve living and expressing the Christian message in accordance with African traditional cultures. He agrees with Mihayo (1970) who sees Africanization in terms of Africans establishing their own forms of ministry best suited to their own way of life.

g. Contextualization

Contextualization speaks more about contexts and situations; it is about weaving the gospel message with every particular situation, which is aimed at making the gospel message relevant to particular contexts. This reminds us that each situation calls for a particular theological reflection. According to Schneller (1990), the concept achieved prominence in 1975 when the Rockefeller Foundation gave three million dollars for the establishment of theological education fund for the training of leaders in the Third World who would contextualize the gospel message. In 1972 and 1974, the World Council of Churches made use of the concept in their conferences in Geneva and Lausanne respectively. Since then, many scholars have engaged the concept in their writings. This notwithstanding, Schneller (1990) points out the danger of contextualization as overemphasizing the present context to the detriment of continuity with the past.

h. Adaptation

To adapt means to “make fit”. It implies a selection of certain rites and customs, purifying them and

inserting them as rituals in Christianity where they have apparent similarities. In recent times, its attraction has declined as it only expresses a superficial phenomenon. Paul VI (1969) emphatically urged for a more radical adaptation when he said, "Adaptation of the Christian life in the fields of pastoral, ritual, didactic and spiritual activities, is not only possible, it is even favoured by the Church. It is in this sense, you may, and you must, have an African Christianity" (pp. 797-798). This notwithstanding, adaptation has in recent times been criticized as a pseudo-imposition and of not taking the local culture seriously. Shorter (1988) criticized adaptation as conveying "an activity that is peripheral, non-essential, and even superficial. It was realized that the concept of "adaptation" contained within itself the seeds of peripheral Western superiority and domination" (p. 150).

i. Reformulation

Reformulation was stressed by the Second Vatican Council. It emphasizes the reformulation of Christian doctrine in the thought and language that is understood by contemporary Christians. This, however, does not stress the culture of a particular people but that of the time.

Amidst all these concepts, inculturation is preferable as a veritable instrument for post-missionary evangelization in Africa because it transcends the limitations of these other concepts, and has a completeness and wholeness that would enhance an intensive evangelization in Africa.

The Provenance of African Inculturation Theology

African inculturation theology arose against the background of attempts made during the missionary period to sow the seed of the gospel in Africa. Long before the advent of missionaries, some negative notions dominated Europe's concept of Africa. For instance, Homer (cited in Njoku 2002) said that Africa is a remote place at the extreme of the universe where people worshipped and sacrificed to the gods. Hobbes (cited in Njoku 2002) said that Africa is a timeless place in which there are no art, letters or social organization, but instead only fear and violent death. According to Hegel (cited in Njoku 2002), Africa is an ahistoric continent even though it has a geographic location. The people live in a condition of mindlessness barbering without laws and morality. Rousseau (cited in Njoku 2002), said that the black people are unable to think in any reflective manner. Their engagement in arts is, therefore, a thoughtless activity which is the antithesis of the intellect. Comte (cited in Njoku 2002) said that "Africans are people who lack the sophisticated linguistic skills, the scientific and political faculties of the European and are best suited to dancing, dressing up and singing" (p. 10). These ideas, in one way or the other conditioned the relationship between European missionaries and Africans.

Metuh (1996) argues that African inculturation theology, grew out of the different movements which questioned the assumptions of the early missionary missiology. From this, a new vision of

African missiology emerged, and emphasized that any theological application to Africa, must take account of the Africans to whom the faith is addressed, their culture, religion and civilization. It also recognized that Africans have come of age, and can no longer be treated as footnotes in missiological activities in their home land. They have the right to reflect on Christianity in their own terms, and express their faith in a theology and religious life relevant to their cultural situation. The pursuit is for a theology that would value the cultural and religious experiences of the African people.

The main movements that influenced the birth of an African Inculturation Theology include, the African Culture Society (SAC), which was a francophone Catholic strand; there was also the Anglo-phone All African Council of Churches (AACC), through which Protestants made significant contributions to the development of African theology; the liberation oriented and ecumenical strand led by the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), they made contribution to the development of theology through their work titled *African Theology En Route*, which is made up of selections from papers presented at the Pan-African Conference of Third World Theologians, held in Accra, Ghana, in 1977. Black Theology, which developed in South Africa, in reaction to racial discrimination; while this could have contributed to the development of inculturation, it was more of a political theology. Contributions were also made by AMECEA (Association of Member Episcopal

Conferences in East Africa) through sponsorship of conferences, workshops, colloquia and the publication in the *Journal African Ecclesiastical Review* (AFER). The Catholic Institutes of East and West Africa and the Association of Episcopal Conferences of English-Speaking West Africa (AECEWA) have also stirred up similar interests in theological research in the East and West African Regions. These communities, movements and Institutions provided a fertile ground for the sowing and nurturing of the seed of Inculturation Theology and have continued till date to influence its development.

The Agents of Inculturation

In many African Christian communities, inculturation has been entirely left to the members of the clergy as its agents. The clergy is seen as the all in all and the owner of the church. In some areas, the lay faithful look at inculturation as either fetish or syncretistic or the evolution of a new kind of Christianity, and so they hardly participate. There are also circumstances where the lay faithful are interested and members of the clergy are not.

This notwithstanding, in Africa, inculturation is linked with evangelization, because it is inculturation that makes evangelization begin at the very depths of the hearts and customs of people, and more importantly, gives flesh to evangelical values in the language, symbols, history, politics and the people's way of developing. And so to talk about

the agents of evangelization in Africa is to talk about the agents of inculturation. And if the work of evangelization involves the entire church, then the entire church community is the agent of inculturation. Therefore, inculturation is not only the responsibility of foreign missionaries, or native clergy or a handful of experts. It is the responsibility of the entire believing community. The lay faithful who constitute a greater percentage in the church even have a greater responsibility in this regard.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Foundations and Imperatives for Inculturation

Inculturation has a couple of theological foundations. These foundations would be discussed as sub-themes.

a. The Mystery of the Trinity

The idea of the Trinitarian perichoresis and circumincession is a solid theological foundation for inculturation. This process describes the penetration and indwelling of the three divine persons reciprocally in one another; it does not throw away the distinctiveness of persons in the Trinity; but stresses that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct persons but consubstantial; the beauty of this interpenetration and mysteriousness lies in the fact of their distinctiveness is beautifully weaved into a unity. In

accordance with Trinitarian appropriation, the Father has distinct qualities, as the Son and the Holy Spirit do. Their missions in the economy of salvation are also distinct, but still, it is the same one God who acts. Cultural diversity can itself be a source of unity in the Church if it is respected. Plurality in the one Church of Christ can also be a source of beauty to the Church. Cultural pluralism does not pose a threat to the Church's unity, it rather adds to its beauty.

b. The Mystery of the Incarnation

According to Krieg (1995), the incarnation refers to the "abiding reality of the hypostatic union of the divine nature and the human nature in Jesus Christ" (p. 659). For so many theologians, the idea of the incarnation expresses the whole process of inculturation. It is within the parameters of this understanding that *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) maintains that genuine inculturation should be based upon the mystery of the incarnation, seen not only as a mystery and as an event in the person of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, but as a process to be carried on in history till the end of time.

c. The Mystery of Creation

Scripture scholars generally agree that the book of Genesis was written during the exile to counter the Babylonian myths of the origin of man. It is in this regard that Gallagher (1997) observes that the narrative of Genesis was an early example of dialogue between faith and culture, "as against the Babylonian stories of wars and chaos, Genesis

shows God freely and serenely creating as a gift to humanity, and indeed portraying God as an artist rejoicing in the sheer goodness of the finished work” (p. 105). He further maintains that these texts are much more than the stories of origin. They are rooted in God’s continuing relationship with us in our responsibility for each other and human history. When God tells us to multiply and rule the earth, he gives us the mandate of continuing his work of creation; and this provides a biblical basis for us to see culture as a human response to God’s continuing creative gift, since culture is a product of human ingenuity and creativity. And if all that God has made is good, human culture is also good. This does not rule out the proclivity of culture to become sour and lose its beauty, in that case, culture would need redemption. For John Paul II (1995), this is where Christianity has the capacity to transform human cultures, where necessary, so that they follow the logic proper to the mystery of redemption. This is achieved through the process of inculturation, which brings the divine in contact with the human.

d. The Paschal Mystery

The Paschal Mystery refers to the unified total event of Christ’s Passion, death, Resurrection and Ascension, in so far as it reveals and accomplishes God’s previously hidden plan of salvation. John Paul II (1995) contents that every culture needs to be transformed by the Gospel values in the light of the Paschal Mystery:

Given the close and organic relationship that exists between Jesus Christ and the Word that the Church proclaims, the inculturation of the revealed message cannot but follow the 'logic' proper to the *Mystery of Redemption*'. Indeed, the incarnation of the Word is not an isolated moment but tends towards Jesus' 'Hour' and the Paschal Mystery: 'Unless a grain of wheat falls on the ground and dies, it bears much fruit' (John 12:24). Jesus says: 'And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself' (John 12:32). This emptying of self, this *kenosis* necessary for exaltation, which is the way of Christ and of each of his disciples (Philippians 2:6-9), sheds light on the encounters of cultures with Christ and his Gospel. (p. 85).

e. The Mystery of Pentecost

On the day of Pentecost, religious people gathered in Jerusalem from all over the world. When the apostles spoke, they were all excited because they heard them speak in their own different languages (2:5-7). People culturally diversified but united as a Church and hearing the Gospel in their own various languages, this was the beauty of this Church and the cause of excitement for new believers. It is in this regard that John Paul II (1995) writes:

Thanks to the outpouring and action of the Spirit, who draws gifts and talents into unity, all the peoples of the earth when they enter the Church live a new Pentecost, profess in their own tongue the one faith in Jesus, and proclaim the marvel that the Lord has done for them. (p. 85).

f. Revelation and Grace

Schineller (1990) holds that revelation and grace could be considered as theological foundations for inculturation. With regard to revelation, he agrees with Vatican II that the seed of the word of God is present in every culture. And so the agent of inculturation does not step into godless contexts as some missionaries had earlier conceived, but rather into a holy ground, where God is already in contact with a given context, even though in imperfect and hidden ways. This expands the traditional belief that revelation is only found in scriptures with their highpoint in Christ to the understanding of revelation as a dynamic and ongoing process. In this case, cultures, both traditional and modern, remain the *locus* for God's past, present and future revelation.

Related to the theology of revelation is that of grace. Schineller (1990) avows that grace:

Like revelation is offered to all men and women, and any exclusivist understanding of grace would deny the understanding of inculturation as a two-way street, a listening as well as sharing or teaching. The exclusivist understanding of grace accounted for the lack of respect for local cultures and traditional religion, and for the colonialist attitude of much traditional missionary endeavour. If, on the other hand, grace is offered to and in some ways present in cultures and contexts beyond the explicit Christian pale, then the agent of inculturation must attend to and search for the presence, learn from it

and build on it rather than reject or ignore it. (p. 47).

Imperatives for Inculturation

There are a couple of imperatives for inculturation. These imperatives are derived from the Scripture, history of the Church and the values in African Traditional Religion with Christian analogies.

a. Imperatives from Scripture

Jesus, the apostles and the Church Fathers in sowing the seed of the Gospel had respect for other peoples' cultures. Jesus and his apostles came from the Jewish background whose religiosity, prayers and practices of worship were well defined. However, Jesus' attitude towards the Jewish cult according to Uchu (2007) were represented in two categories: Fidelity and autonomy. In fidelity, Jesus had respect for the traditions of his time. He came not to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfil them (Matthew 5:17). He was faithful in observing the offering of sacrifices in the temple (Matthew 21:12), the service of words in the synagogue (Matthew 6:6), observing the day of the Sabbath, the feasts of Passover, Tabernacle, and Dedication (Matthew 26:17-19). However, his fidelity did not lie in passivity, but represented that of a "critical yes", a reforming fidelity that placed a demand of purification to the worship of it's time. His autonomy found expression in his challenge to fellow Jews to spiritualize and interiorize the Jewish religion and in this process he was giving birth to the era of Christian worship.

When Jesus preached the Gospel, he used categories familiar to his audience. We hear of absentee Lords and Tenant revolts (Matthew 21:31-45); Small family-run farms (Matthew 21:28-30); debts and debtors (Matthew 18:25-35); extortion and corruption (Luke 16:1-9); uncaring rich (Luke 12:18); day labourers paid merely subsistent wages (Matthew 20:1-6); these graphically reflect the detail of the picture of Palestinian countryside during his time. St Paul wrote, "To the Jews I became a Jew, in order to win Jews... I have become all things to all men that I might by all means save some" (Philippians 9:20 & 22); in the opinion of Metuh (1996), St Paul was talking about missiology, and at the same time using the language of contextual theology in which lies the theology of inculturation: bringing the Christian experience into the culture of the people, a process that makes alive the dynamic and eternal motion of the incarnation. Freyne (1980) observes how St Paul criss-crossed the Mediterranean world on sea and land with the Good News of Christ vying for the souls of the masses with religious leaders and philosophers. Any contemporary missionary will testify to the value of Paul's acquaintance with the language of the people and his ability to share many of their assumptions with them.

After Jesus, Dulles (1983) argues that his apostles continued to employ the same model in their attempt to bring the Good News to the peoples of their time. With the conversion and subsequent mission of St Paul to the Gentiles, so many were converted to Christianity and there now arose the

question as to whether to allow the Gentiles to become Christians without imposing on them the law of circumcision held in high esteem by the Jews. This called for the Council of Jerusalem between 49 - 50AD. The Judaizers held that circumcision, as contained in the Old Testament was necessary for salvation, while St Paul and his followers maintained that all that was needed for salvation was faith in Jesus and baptism in his name (Acts 15). According to Schineller (1991):

Peter's position which agreed with Paul's, prevailed, and it was decided not to lay extra burdens on the Gentile converts. Because of this liberating decision, the mission of Paul continued with great success, and the Church expanded far beyond the borders of Palestine. One did not first have to become Jewish before becoming a Christian. (p. 30).

b. Imperatives from Church History

Justin the Martyr (cited in Shorter, 1988), holds that different cultures were inspired by God and should be appropriated for his service. He saw these cultures as prefigurations of Christ "a *Logos spermatikos*" (seed bearing word). He taught that the *Spermatic Logos* has been implanted in the heart of every human culture since all things were created through Christ, with him and for him:

We are taught that Christ is the first born of God, and we have explained above that he is the word (reason) of whom all mankind have a share and those who live according to reason are Christians, even though they were classed as atheists... Thus,

whatever has been spoken aright by any man belongs to the Christians, for we worship and love, next to God, which is from the unbegotten and ineffable God. (p. 76).

Clement of Alexander (cited in Shorter, 1988) established a fundamental theory- a harmony of faith and Greek culture, which places Greek philosophy at the service of faith. For him the ideas of Greek Philosophy a gift to mankind and finds its unity in Christianity.

Philosophy was necessary to the Greeks for righteousness until the coming of the Lord, and even now it is useful for the development of true religion, as a kind of preparatory discipline for those who arrive at faith by way of demonstration. For, "your way will not stumble" the Scripture says, if you attribute to Providence all good things, whether belonging to the Greeks or to us. For God is the source of all good either directly or indirectly as in the case of philosophy. But it may even be that philosophy was given to the Greeks directly; for it was a "schoolmaster", to bring Hellenism to Christ, as the law was for the Jew". (p. 136).

Following the expansion of the Church from Palestine to Rome, it became clear that it was going into a new culture and would have to have new ways of expressing herself. In 312 Constantine gave freedom of worship to Christians, which paved a way for the initiation of large numbers of people to Christianity and the shaping of their belief systems on the Greek and Roman philosophical thought,

principles and methods. At this time, the Greek language dominated, after which Latin overpowered it in the West while Greek remained in the East. With the dominance of Greek language it influenced the culture of the Church at the time, especially Greek Art. The court which Constantine relinquished to the Church for a place of worship influenced Church structures, event to this day. The Roman juridical system was a basis for the Church's hierarchical structure. The celebration of Christmas replaced the Roman pagan feast of the sun.

St Augustine learnt much from Greek Philosophy, especially from Plotinus which he used greatly in his writings. It is his opinion that as faith runs on earth and takes its citizens from all nations and languages; and faith is not to be pre-occupied with customs, laws and institutions, neither is it to reject or destroy any of these, but rather it should observe and conserve them so that they do not constitute an obstacle to the religion that teaches the true worship of God.

c. Imperatives from Values in ATR with Christian Analogies

Good data never goes out of style; neither do they lose their freshness or excitement. In African traditional cultures, there are strong ethical religious values that are still vibrant that to speak of them as straw-men theories would be inconsistent with contemporary religious teachings that still hold strongly to us, as in Christianity. African traditional religion and Christianity are pregnant with rich

ethical and social values that can be studied alongside each other. Little wonder Raz (2004) states that “values are universal” (p. 3), by pursuing these values, we are sharing the same goal and we are all united in the same pursuit.

1. In the Religious Sphere

In Africa, there is widespread belief in a Supreme Being, unique and transcendent. Africans have a sense of the sacred and a sense of mystery; there is high reverence for sacred places, persons and objects; sacred times are celebrated. It is difficult to separate the life of the African from his personal inclination to the divine. It is in this regard that he does everything with the consciousness of God. Mbiti (1969) puts this succinctly:

Wherever the African is, there is his religion. He carries it to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting new crop, he takes it with him to a beer parlour or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated, he takes religion with him to the examination room at school or in the university; if he is a politician, he takes it to the house of parliament. (p. 2)

For Njoku (2004), this dimension of the African life is such that:

The African man had many taboos to observe, and many daily rituals to perform, either to appease the community or the divinities. If he was not an indirect or unconscious slave of the dominant conscious, he held perpetual allegiance to one divinity or another.

If he was 'free' with men, he was not free with nature or his environment. Suppose community and environment allow him to live his life with fewer burdens, he would still have to pay the debts owed by his past ancestors. (p. 157).

It is true that the traditional religious practices of the African are anthropocentric in the sense that all their religious practices invariably point to one objective, namely, human life and its preservation. According to Maquet (1972), prayers and sacrifices offered to the gods and the ancestors all have one end in view, namely, the welfare of man. There is harmonious interplay between the Decalogue and the African moral code. In view of the first Decalogue which makes us duty bound to God, African ethics similarly has an unreserved respect for the divine. His everyday life is pervaded by the thoughts of the sacred. The accordance of respect to our parents is the content of the fourth Decalogue; the African culture goes many miles beyond the requirement. Stealing and perjury are frowned at in relation to the sixth, seventh and eighth commandments of the Christian scripture respectively. These are strongly imbedded in the values already upheld by the African.

2. In the Religio-Social Sphere

The African sense of '*Hospitality*' is one of the values that are still quite alive. Hospitality is a duty and is the most common value in African Traditional Religion. Between kith and kin and people of the same clan, there is a very strong sense of sharing,

solidarity and belonging. Efforts are made to secure and promote justice and peace within the community. The nuclear family and the extended family have been the pivots of the African social system. Respect for authority, sanctioned by the ancestors, is strong and represents the common will. The poor and the sick are taken care of; widows and orphans are looked after.

Africans are generally known to be hospitable and accommodating. Ireogbu (1994) describes the African spirit of hospitality thus:

No special rendezvous is required to join in a meal in another family one has just visited during a meal. On arrival, once there is food, the visitor is invited to eat. He or she is treated kindly, just as one would like to be treated when visiting another home. Sharing with a needy neighbour who comes for assistance is a value that is highly cherished in African culture. (p. 88).

The Christian scripture advises that "Let your foot be seldom in your neighbour's house lest he become weary and hate you" (Proverbs 25:17). This passage of scripture encourages hospitality.

Another virtue highly honoured by Africans after life is 'Purity'. It encapsulates most importantly, chastity and marital fidelity. Thus, adultery, flirting or premarital sexual unions were serious crimes against the family and community at large. And if a man has a sexual intercourse with a woman who he is not married to, the rites of purification would have

to be performed. In the Christian scripture there are many calls to embrace purity of life: "You shall be holy, for I the Lord I am Holy, and have separated you from the people that you should mine" (Leviticus 20:26), "You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14).

Still on the religio-social sphere, Ojade (1990) pointed out that as regards 'Gratitude', Africans are charming. Many African proverbs abound in reference to gratitude, to which every member of the society is called to imbibe. "When you are unwell, you promise a cow, but when you recover a chicken would do". "Friendship with a ferry man right from the dry season means that when the rain comes, you would be the first to cross". The gratitude emphasized by the African culture is also parallel to the Christian scripture's insistence on gratitude: "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord" (Psalm 136: 2), "Give thanks unto the Lord for he is good" (Psalm 107:2).

3. In the Religio-Cultural Sphere

In the sphere of the religio-cultural, Addo (2011) states that man is located within his environment as the centre of reality and making him feel at home in it is of utmost importance. Tradition is handed down through stories, poems, hymns, proverbs, riddles and art. The whole community is involved in the training of the young, and education itself has a necessary community and social aspect. The moral education of youth is taken seriously. Everyone older than the other is respected by the younger in

Africa. Formal education, a result of colonialism, radicalized the traditional values of the African and introduced some completely new ones. It is in this regard that Mazrui (1980) says that the colonial impact, transformed the natural basis of stratification in Africa. Instead of status based on, say, age, there emerged status based on literacy. Instead of classes emerging from the question, "Who owns what?" class formation now responds to the question, "Who knows what?"

Elders are seen as both spiritual and moral guides who are endowed with wisdom; that is why it is said that "what an elder sees when he is seated, a child cannot see even when he is standing". This respect is not only restricted to the elders within one's area but to all elders, wherever and whenever they are met. It is in this regard that Nwako (2009) states that moral values are common to all Africans and that respect is given to elders irrespective of social status or position.

The African teaching on respect for elders also has parallels in Christianity: "My son, hear the instruction of your father, and forsake not the law of your mother" (Proverbs 1:8). "Honour your father and your mother that your days may be long upon the land which your Lord your God gives you" (Exodus 2:12).

Africans conceive 'humility' as a wise policy which must be patronized at all times. It is therefore not surprising that many African proverbs and stories insist on humility. Proverbs such as "Bending down

to a dwarf does not stop you from rising from your full height afterwards”; this proverb teaches that humility does not take away anything from anyone. “It is the water that doesn’t fill the pot that makes the most noise”, this proverb teaches that those who brag around are those who are empty or have nothing to offer. “The bird that imagines itself on the same level with the turkey would soon find itself on the grill”, this proverb teaches humility is a path to learning. The same insistence on humility is also found in the Bible which teaches that: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). “Whoever shall exalt himself shall be abashed, and he that humbles himself shall be exalted” (Matthew 23:12).

4. In the Religio-Moral Sphere

Morality is another area where there is considerable parallel between Christianity and African culture. This is probably due to the fact that morality flows naturally from religious creed and that man, in both the African and the Christian cultures, has a hereafter whose condition is determined by the quality of one's present life. Amucheazi (1980) avers that to gain that hereafter as a place of comfort one must behave in ways consonant with the demands of the divinities and ancestors.

Africans believe that life comes from God, and as such has a transcendental dimension. The sacredness attached to life due to designation of God as its source is evident in the names Igbo

people give to their children: *Chiwendu* (God is the owner of life), *Chikerendu* (God made life), and as such in Igbo traditional society *Igbu Ochu* (murder) was the greatest abomination. To kill merited either capital punishment or total banishment from the community.

To touch a person's life, starkly put, to shed blood, especially innocent blood is the greatest evil on earth, against the earth and against humanity. According to Ireogbu (1994), it is *Nso Ala* (taboo) that has the mightiest sanction in the world.

Life is therefore considered sacred and held in high esteem. Right from the womb, life is protected and the greatest joy of a family is the birth of a child. This is why Africans do all that is in their power to save life, and whatever harms life is their greatest enemy. Issues like abortion and Euthanasia are foreign to African vocabulary. In the Christian Decalogue there is also the instruction: "Thou shall not kill" (Exo 20:13).

CHAPTER FIVE

The Criteria and Current Results of Inculturation

The fears that the idea of inculturation instils, led Carrier (1989) to distinguish four criteria that should underlie the process of inculturation. They include: the distinction between the gospel and culture, preservation of the Church's unity, unity and pluralism and discernment and investigation.

a. The Distinction between the Gospel Message and Culture

In every process of inculturation, it is very significant to distinguish between the Gospel message and any culture; not only because their distinctiveness is important, but also because it is only by knowing their distinctiveness that their integration in the process of inculturation would be appreciated. The message of the Gospel which has got to do with the incarnation transcends and surpasses all cultures and cannot be identified with any particular culture. The incarnation and crucifixion of God are divine facts that transcend every civilization and culture. Any attempt to reduce the Gospel to any particular culture would, in the contention of Carrier (1989) mean its dissolution. This finds resonance in the view of John XXIII (1959) who said that the Church does not identify with any one culture, not even with Western culture, to which it is linked by its history.

However, while we assert the distinction between the Gospel message and culture, it should not be thought that there is no point of confluence

between the two. Carrier (1989) asserts that:

If that were the case, the Gospel message could not possibly inspire cultures and transform them from within, as it has done for two thousand years. Christ himself lived in a particular culture, and throughout its history the Church has become incarnate in specific socio-cultural milieus. (p. 96).

The building of the kingdom of God cannot but help make use of cultural elements and human cultures. Although they are independent of cultures, the gospel message and evangelization are not necessarily incompatible with them; rather they are capable of impregnating all cultures without becoming enslaved to any.

b. Preservation of the Church's Identity

The Church has come a long way, it has passed through centuries accompanied, moulded and enriched by the thought and practices of pastors, teachers, believers, thinkers, saints, councils, great theologians and the Fathers of the Church. The practices and thoughts that evolve from these encounters have become part of the Church's heritage and life, which defines her identity. The preservation of this identity of the Church is what every agent of inculturation must remember and safeguard. In the contention of Carrier (1989), this is not to say that the Church did not express itself in particular languages and cultural forms; while this is accepted, it does not rule out the reality of the perduring value and basic meaning of dogmatic formulations and ways of conceptualizing the faith,

of basic sacramental and liturgical structures. One of the primary laws of inculturation is to announce Christ to all cultures so that the Church may grow in them in accordance with its proper nature and its own perduring identity.

The fundamental identity of the Church refers both to its *unity* and *catholicity*. The Church is to be regarded not as a uniform, but as an organism with different parts, however working towards the unity of the entire body, which alone guarantees the survival of the whole. It is in this regard that *Lumen Gentium* (1964) calls for the protection of the variety in the Church, and at the same time ensuring that the unity of the Church is preserved. From this perspective, every individual Church must harmonize its own experience with the experience of the universal Church, that is, if its experience must be the experience of the Church. This principle appreciates and safeguards individual Church cultures, and emphasizes that they find their fulfilment when they blend with the culture of the universal Church.

c. Unity and Pluralism

This is related to the criterion for the preservation of the Church's unity. It however, further emphasizes that safeguarding the identity of Christianity does not constitute a threat to healthy pluralism. This notwithstanding, the tension between unity and

pluralism must be balanced if inculturation is to be truly inculturation. The beauty of pluralism is better appreciated when it becomes an articulation of the unity of the Church. In this case, the Church accepts and appreciates pluralism when it is guided by a careful discernment and fidelity. It is in this regard that Paul VI (1975) says that there must be fidelity to “the essential, identical... heritage, the selfsame doctrine of Christ that is professed by the authentic, authoritative tradition of the one true Church” (p.1).

This criterion requires that the agent of inculturation engages in a deeper investigation of the cultural traditions of different populations, and of their underlying philosophical notions, in order to pinpoint those elements that are not in contradiction with the Christian religion or that can contribute to the enrichment of theological reflection. Since the Church is a communion of particular Churches, true pluralism should be one that would bring about communion in the Church.

d. Discernment and Investigation

The fourth criterion holds that for a mutual and fruitful encounter between faith and living cultures there is need for a profound theological and anthropological investigation of the cultures in question. This for Carrier (1989) includes practical judgment and methodological reflection. This is to ensure that cultures are rooted in Christ and the teachings of the apostles and universal tradition, which are given to the Church as an inheritance, before they are integrated into Church’s life,

discipline and liturgy.

This process of discernment and investigation would require that the agent of inculturation has a good knowledge of the culture in question. This process, therefore, while accepting the richness of cultures, also accepts the limitations that are part of every assemblage of people. This affirms that inculturation is a process that must be guided by the processes of receptivity and discernment, that is, if its objective is to be realized.

Current Results on the Practice of Inculturation

The benefit of hindsight reveals that the church in Africa has gone far as regards the practice of inculturation. The subject African Inculturation Theology is presently been taught either as a self-subsisting course or as a course under another in most ecclesiastical institutions. A number of theses have been written on it by both graduate and post-graduate students. A good number of journal articles and textbooks have been or are being published on it. Associations of theologians and exegetes are being set up in great numbers, and they are organizing symposiums and colloquiums. These research work, combined with the Christian sense of the African faithful has today given birth to a distinctive African theology which has emerged out of the identity of the African people and draws on African categories of thought and speaks to the historical situation of the African people, and by a deep reflection on the African way of seeing God, human beings and life, is enriching the universal

church. As regards the Mass in the Catholic Church, in Ethiopia, there is already an Ethiopian rite in existence. In Zaire, there is also a Zairean rite which speaks to the people's religious categories. However, in places like Nigeria, the proposed Nigerian rite is still at the level of proposal and not practice.

Among the African Independent Churches much has been realised: African names are used by believers, African local musical instruments are highly prized. Categories peculiar to the African worldview like healing are incorporated to feed the hunger of the African soul. As such, the spiritual leader is not just a teacher but a healer. So far in Africa, the great majority of attempts at inculturation have been carried out in the area of liturgy, and this has moved rapidly from simple adaptations to creative efforts. There is now a wide usage of vernacular among African Christian worshipping communities. African art is now widely used in the liturgy and in decorating places of worship. Traditional forms such as drum strokes, hand claps, dancing and body language are now largely used in liturgy to express certain elements of the Christian faith.

Nathaniel (1994) observes that in spite of the full mandate given to Catholic bishops and priests to practice inculturation, it is sad that in this all-important task of making Christianity more meaningful to Africans, not enough has been achieved. However, many of the suggestions suggested by many Nigerian theology lecturers and students in their dissertations rot away in the

libraries or college archives. Nothing of their proposals has been tried out in practice. There are still many African theologians who don't see the need for inculturation, they still prefer to walk, talk and live in the white man's culture, which they perceive as more superior to theirs. In most seminaries in Nigeria, where inculturation is practiced, it is more of a caricature of what inculturation should be. It is usually a mass celebrated once in a while, some times when there are visitors from the West. In preparation, students go to the store to dust up what is considered their culture for display, as long as the celebration lasts or the white visitors are still in sight. Once they are gone, inculturation goes with them. This makes inculturation less of a way of life, and more of a show in memory of antiquity.

CHAPTER SIX

The Challenges and Future of Inculturation in Africa

A community of factors have clung to the wheels of inculturation, either reducing the speed of its implementation or stopping its movement completely. According to Nathaniel (1994), unless these obstacles are removed Africa is likely to disappoint not only her sons and daughters, but also the entire universal church for her inability to take the initiative and make good of Africa's finest hour. These factors that have constituted obstacles to the development of inculturation include:

a. The Problem of Language

Language identifies a people more than other traits, including customs, traditions, dressing, attitudes and other behavioural patterns. It is therefore a very significant instrument of inculturation. Nathaniel (1994) observes that language plays the most leading role in the entire effort to bring Christianity much more closer to Africans; it makes the Christian message clearer and more meaningful. The Germans, the French, Italians and English people celebrate their liturgy, including paraliturgical activities in their various languages. Their ministers preach in their languages. When the liturgy is celebrated in Latin or other languages, it is usually for a special purpose. Here in Africa and Nigeria in particular, although much has been achieved, there are still many ministers who cannot preach or administer the sacraments in their local languages.

They might be very good in Latin, Italian, French, Spanish etc., when it comes to their local languages, they find it difficult to communicate. They seem not to have taken note that the language of the people is a key factor in evangelization.

b. The Problem of Scepticism

Numerous African Independent Churches have obviously taken the initiative of adapting the Christian religion to the mentality and lifestyle of the African people. These adaptations are found in the area of liturgy: sacred music, dancing, drumming and the use of African art and local materials at worship. They have adapted the devotional prayers and hymns to suit the African mode of worship and needs. However, Nathaniel (1994) observes that many Bishops, priests and even the lay people of the mainline churches are too cautious in giving any impression that they are imitating the African Independent Churches. For many who belong to this group, they see it as downgrading for their members to copy the mode of worship found in these spiritual churches. Many of those who belong to the mainline churches see the leaders of these spiritual churches as false prophets. It should however be noted that the mainline churches cannot be said to be imitating the African Independent Churches since both Denominations are drawing from the same pool, namely African culture. If this African culture is not evil, immoral or superstitious, and can help give more meaning to Christian beliefs, why should these not be incorporated. This explains why members of the mainline churches desert their churches for

these spiritual churches where their spiritual aspirations find more fulfilment.

c. Fear of Syncretism

Tippet (cited Yamamori, 1975) defines syncretism as the union of two opposite forces, beliefs, systems or tenets so that the united form is a new thing. This agrees with the understanding of Schreier (1994), who defines syncretism as the “mixing of elements of two religious systems to the point where at least one, if not both, of the systems loses basic structure and identity”. Pinto (1985) has a dismal concept of syncretism. In his opinion, it is the “fusion of incompatible elements” or the “mingling of authentic notions and realities of the revealed faith with realities of other spiritual worlds”.

Syncretism occurs when basic elements of the gospel are replaced by religious elements from the host culture. It often results from a tendency or attempt to undermine the uniqueness of the gospel as found in the Scriptures or the incarnate Son of God. Many clergy men and women and the laity fear that what we call inculturation may turn out to be another form of what fetish priests, witch doctors and fortune tellers do in African traditional religion. For Nathaniel (1994), even here a lot of work need to be done, namely to purify what appears to be “superstitious” and “syncretistic” and adapt them to the gospel message of liberation.

d. Distrust for Things African

The distrust for things that are African is another

serious obstacle to the progress of inculturation. Many Africans are afraid and ashamed of being Africans. With the slave trade and later colonialism, the whites gave blacks the impression that they were a superior race. In French colonies, through the principle of 'assimilation', they tried to stop the indigenous languages of colonies, which they considered inferior to the French Language. In British colonies, English was taught at schools. Many Africans have grown with the impression that their language is inferior. Many Africans, see their traditional poetry, including freelancing with songs, dancing, and theatrical renditions as pagan. When we lose our culture, we lose our identity, we suffer self-alienation because we become less African, and unfortunately never European. To achieve our goal in inculturation, Nathaniel (1994) argues that we must liberate ourselves from this negative self-image syndrome.

Inculturation and the Future of Evangelization in Africa

For many in Africa, inculturation is limited to the activities in the Church premises, especially in the area of translation and liturgy. However, inculturation must not be limited to any particular field or aspect of evangelization because it is a movement towards full evangelization and full self realization. John Paul II (1995) avows that it is a process that must underpin the entirety of the evangelization process, ranging from the church's structure, liturgy, translation and interpretation of scriptures, pastoral method to theological research;

it must touch on the personal, cultural, economic and political levels so that Africans can live a holy life. It is a process that must affect even our way of thinking, so that whether in the church or at home or in our working places the process continues to evolve into something integral and dynamic. This therefore calls for the need for research in the field of African cultures in all their complexities.

In the area of scriptures, the African church should be able to make it accessible to the people of God by translating it into the languages they understand. This has been greatly achieved in Africa, as most cultures now have the sacred scriptures translated into their local languages. However, there remains more to be done, as there are still some tribes that are yet to receive the Word of God in their local languages.

The pastoral method is another field for the experimentation of inculturation. Many Christian communities in Africa need to be organized along the lines of the idea of the church as a family of God. This provides an ecclesiastical structure that is African, and which allows the people of God the opportunity of seeing themselves as a communion of parts which must stand together. This also affects the way they share responsibilities, such that it is not entirely left to the clergy or the lay faithful. In the area of catechesis, there is the need to take African symbols and cultural values into account. The translations of the catechism into African languages were done from the Catechism of the Council of Trent with little or no adaptations and

with foreign languages. Its methodology of questions and answers is not African. Learning through stories and proverbs is more common to the African Background.

Inculturation should also be practiced in such a way that it relates the Gospel of liberation to the experience of the Nigerian woman. Inculturation does two things: it roots the gospel in a culture and inserts that culture into Christianity. To root Christianity in a culture prompts two events: the first is the transformation of the African culture that oppresses women; secondly, it involves positively developing the culture of the Nigerian people so that they enhance positive potentials towards the development of the woman. Inserting the Gospel of liberation into the experience of women means allowing the gospel to be read and understood in the context of the experience of women, their joys and pains, their hopes, disappointment, their achievements and failures. In this process Christ is again brought into the experience so that they hear him say to them again "Talitha Qumi", which means "Daughter arise", thereby liberating her from the dehumanizing conditions that punctuate her daily life. This is where Christology comes in; trying to help the African understand Christ within the categories that he does understand. This would be the preoccupation of the next chapter as it principally relates to the Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria

CHAPTER SEVEN

Towards an Igbo-African Christology

Christology as a concept comes from two Greek words: *Christos* (Christ) and *logos* (study or word). When the two Greek words are brought together, we would have “the study of Christ”. As an aspect of theology it discusses any evaluation of Jesus in respect to who he was and the role he played in the divine plan. It encompasses an analysis of the Christ-event (life, death and resurrection of Jesus) and the universal significance of that event for the understanding of life itself. For the purpose of this study, the researcher would be more concerned with Igbo Christology, which speaks of how the Igbo people see and understand Jesus.

Towards a Christology from Below

The followers of Jesus acknowledged him as the Messiah (*Christos*, the anointed one), the expected anointed King of David’s royal line; whether in the combination of Jesus Christ or Christ, it quickly became equivalent to a personal name. At his emergence, the Aramaic Hebrew speaking Christians, closest to his life, death and resurrection, understood him as “the Son of Man”, “the Messiah”, “Son of David” and “Son of God”. The Jewish Greek converts to Christianity translated Christ as *Christos*,

and they understood him as the centre of the cosmos or universe. For the Hellenistic Gentile Christians, Christ is the Eternal Divine *Logos* and the Wisdom of God.

According to Kankai (2008), the different authors of the gospels presented Christologies that responded to particular situations and cultures. Mark the evangelist gave a picture of Jesus as Healer and Exorcist. Already, in the first chapter, he narrates that Jesus cast out demons and healed the mother-in-law of Simon. As a consequence, people were immediately drawn to him with confidence because of his power to heal. In addition to highlighting Jesus as healer and exorcist, Jesus is designated as a faithful and suffering servant of God. In Matthew's gospel, he is the Son of David, King of Nations, the New Moses and the Lawgiver. The Evangelist Luke presents Jesus as prophet, advocate of the poor and a person of prayer. In John's gospel, he is the Pre-existent Word, Eternal Wisdom, Revelation of God's Glory and the One Who Is.

During the Patristic period, Kankai (2008) further observes that the Christology of the Fathers was profoundly Biblical. They presented Christ as the ultimate meaning of all Scripture. They believed that every text of the Bible reflects and expresses a moment or aspect of one plan of salvation or the other, in which the Old Testament prepares and anticipates Christ in the New Testament. During this period, heresies about the nature of Christ also

emerged. Docetism proposed that Jesus was not truly human but merely apparent to be man. For the Gnostics, Christ is the spiritual being fully aware of his divine identity, and whose mission is to reveal to his followers the secret of their divine identity. Adoptionism teaches that Jesus was a man whom God adopted to be his son.

The Arians taught that the *logos* and Jesus were not two beings but one, since the *Logos* has indeed become flesh. They argued that the *logos* is not God since he cannot be God and man at the same time. Unlike the Arians, the Appollinarians denied the existence of a rational human soul in Christ, because they believed that the *logos* uniting with Jesus takes the place of a rational soul. During the Council of Ephesus, the Fathers declared that the same Jesus Christ is perfect God and perfect man, composed of a rational soul and body, consubstantial to the Father as to his divinity and consubstantial to us as to his humanity. Thus Christ has two natures, divine and human. The Council of Chalcedon further emphasized that these two natures, were without confusion and change, without division and separation.

From the above observations, it is obvious that these Christologies emphasize the divinity of Jesus. This is referred to as a high or descending Christology or Christology from above. It emphasizes the exalted and high quality of Jesus. This method of Christology goes back to the gospel of St John, which in fact has a high Christology. Low

Christology, different from high Christology concentrates on the man Jesus, his humanity. This Christology has opened interesting possibilities, producing a whole new set of categories such as Jesus as the man for others, the revolutionary, the way, the representative and the harlequin. While the Western Christology could be considered as high, the African approach to Christology is quite different. It begins from below and ascends above.

In the contention of Clarke (2011), this uniqueness of African Christology mirrors that Christianity in Africa is not primarily an intellectual affair but a lived experience in which Christ is part of the lived experience of the African people. It is a theology from below meaning that African thinkers are not as focused on the ontology of Christ and the relationship of his deity and his humanity as Western theologians have been. Its overall approach is more holistic and integrative in explaining how the person and work of Christ apply to the whole of African life. African Christology is concerned with connecting Christ to Africa's pre-Christian past, and to portray Christ in terms of Power. There is an emphasis on the power and victory of Christ.

Although Mbiti (1967) had remarked that an African concept of Christology does not exist, and Fashole-Luke (1978) observed that there were no signs that Christological ideas were being wrestled with by African theologians, with the development of liberation theology and inculturation in the past thirty years, Nyamity (1984), Sanon (1991), Kabasele

(1991), Kolie (1991), Magessa (1991), Walligo (1991), Waruta (1991), Bujo (1992), Ukachukwu (1992) among other scholars have searched for an authentic African response to the Christ event. The impact of African theologians on the construction of African Christology has been impressive. It is such that Nyamiti (1991) states that Christology is the most developed subject matter in African theology today.

The real breakthrough, according to Bosch (1973) came with the advent of Third World Theologies in their various forms. And the Christological perspectives of these theology were constructed from a plethora of socio-political contexts. The essential contextual approach to Third World Christologies distinguishes African Christology from Western Christology, which was basically an elitist enterprise, with philosophy as its main source and the interlocutors, the educated non-believer. African Christology begins from below, from the underside of history, its main source apart from Scripture and Tradition, the social sciences and its main interlocutors, the poor and the culturally marginalized.

Schreier (1985) maintains that theology is meant for a community and not to remain the property of a theologian class. The contemporary signs of the times is the *locus theologicus* in Igbo Christology. The history of Jesus continues in the history of the Igbo people as a living and functional Christology. In fact, in the face of hardship, fear of death, the

effects of the Nigerian Civil War etc., Jesus challenges the Igbo ethnic group with the question, "Who do you say that I am?" In responding to this question, Schillebeeckx (1980), would argue that the Igbo people would be writing their Fourth Gospel, as their story is the story of Jesus, alive and active in history.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Sources of Igbo Christology

The sources of Igbo Christology are the given of this enterprise. They shape the structure of the Igbo concept of Jesus. According to McIntyre (1966), they affect the systematization, organisation, analysis and interpretation of a discipline. In the contention of Clarke (2011), since Christian faith hinges upon faith in Jesus Christ, the resources that we draw upon to construct our Christology are of crucial importance.

a. The Scripture

The Scripture is one of the most obvious sources of Igbo Christology, particularly the New Testament, and when the Old Testament is employed, it is used only in terms of typology. The church understands the two Testaments as having the same authority. During the classical formative periods of Christology, as it is evident in the Christologies of the Fathers, Scripture constituted the primary source of Christology. According to Stinton (2004), it is the final authority on religious matters. It is the final court of appeal and constitutes the common to all controversies in Igbo Christology. It is literally and authoritatively definitive of all that is affirmed within Christology. The Scripture thus stands out as the principal source of Christology for the Igbo people.

Sermons on passages of Scripture also contribute to the development of Igbo Christology. More

effective in this regard are dialogical sermons, which allow for a high degree of interaction between the preached word and the congregation. Clarke (2011) states that it is through this dialogue between the preached word of God and the response of the congregation that the written word becomes the living word.

b. Igbo Traditional Religion

Igbo Traditional Religion, after the scripture, is a fundamental source of Igbo Christology. Having moved from Traditional Religion to Christianity, the Igbo African is not completely detached from his religious values; he still respects his culture and tradition. He comes into Christianity with his former religious worldview and attitude, and interprets reality from this perspective; his ideas of sacrifice, pouring libation, visiting priests and diviners for divination are still in his psych as fundamental elements of religious practice. With these in his worldview stock, he builds a Christology that is African.

Further components of Igbo religion include her concept of supernatural beings: God, the spirits, and the ancestors. *Ndigbo* believe that there is only one Supreme Being, who is variously known in different parts of Igboland as *Chukwu*, *Chineke*, *Ezechitoke*, *Osebuluwa* or *Obasi di n'elu*. Each name privileges certain attributes. He created the world and sustains it from above, and one of his praise names is 'the one who is known but never fully known'. Igbo parents honor Chukwu by naming their children in

praise of his power: *Chuk-wudi* (God lives), *Chukwu nyelu* (God gave), *Chuk-wuneke* (God creates), *Chukwuma* (God knows), *Chukwuka* (God is greater), *Ifeanyichukwu* (nothing impossible with God), *Chukwuemeka* (God has been very kind), *Kenechukwu* (thank God), *Ngozichukwu* (blessing of God), *Chukwumailo* (God knows my enemies), and *Chukwujioke* (God is the sharer).

c. Igbo Myths, Proverbs and Parables

As Justin the Martyr (cited in Shorter, 1988) has indicated, that the seed of the gospel is in the heart of every culture, the image of Jesus was already present in Africa even before the advent of missionaries. It is in this regard that Hearly and Sybertz (1996) opine that Jesus had sown the seed of his word in the African culture long ago. This is evident in many Igbo myths, proverbs and parables. They are good sources of an authentic and inculturated African Christology. These myths, like the Nri myth, hover around the creation of the world, especially human beings, animals and the universe; the separation of God and human beings and the origin of death.

In African traditional society, a proverb on God is a serious talk. It embodies profound reflection, such that when unravelled in theological terms would file into volumes of books. Below is a list of African proverbs on God from the Igbo cultural background, which expresses the Igbo native wisdom and philosophy of God.

- i. One's creator is also one's God.

- ii. The same God created the rich man and the poor man.
- iii. God drives away flies for a tailless cow.
- iv. God has both the knife and the yam; only to those whom he gives may eat.
- v. God always gives each person a hook to plug things with.
- vi. May God who gave the coconut its milk give us life and where withal to sustain life.
- vii. Whatever God gives you receive it with an open hand.
- viii. Whoever wants to do an evil against another person does not remember God.
- ix. There is no short-cut to God.
- x. If God removes his hand, the world will end.
- xi. When man is thinking, God is also thinking.
- xii. If God is not in the plot, death cannot kill a man.
- xiii. God knows whom he will give but he whom he will give to does not know.

These proverbs give us a great deal of information about how the Igbo conceive God. If the missionary understands these proverbs, they could be employed for Christological purposes. This becomes significant when one considers that the things said of God in the Igbo proverb are no different from what the Christian believes.

d. The Historical Experience of the Igbo People

The historical experience of the Igbo people is one of the basic sources of Christology; it provides materials for Christology, and further shapes its construction. This is very significant, as Igbo Christology is a lived Christology. It is one in which

Christ is fully part of the everyday life of the Igbo people. Most of the names that Igbos give to Jesus are born out of what he has done for them or what they look forward to seeing him do for them. For instance, when a child is born into an Igbo family, the Igbo man would call Jesus, *Oji obara akpunwa or Uzu nakpu nwa*, when the Igbo is healed, he refers to Jesus as *Aka nagwo oria*; having passed through a horrible situation and survived it, he would refer to Jesus as *Echete obi esie ike*, after experiencing safe journey, he calls him *odum nije or oduputamu okperazu*, having survived injustice, he calls him *aka na gbaji aka, agbkwuru obi esie ike, agu bata ofia mgbada awaru osu or onoru ihe noru eyi*. The Igbo Christology is therefore an experience based Christology. When God fulfils his word to the Igbo person, he calls him *okwuo'me*. These names given to Jesus are either monumental, to remember what he has done or in anticipation of what he is yet to do.

The Relational Character of Igbo Christology

The word 'Relational' is an adjective, and it implies having a relationship or being related. Within the context of Igbo Christology, it is used to emphasize that Igbo Christology has got to do with relationships; and through this relational character of Igbo Christology, Christ is presented to the Igbo in such a way that is foundational and central to the African world-view and way of life.

This relational character of Igbo Christology, is based on the Igbo ontology of belongingness. Pantaleon (1995) believes that the Igbo world into which a child is born crying *abatala m ya* (I have come into it) is made up of seven characteristics: common origin, common world-view, common language, shared culture, shared race, colour and habits, common historical experience and a common destiny. Even as the baby sleeps in its cradle, it already has its being, performance and *akaraka* (destiny) partly enshrined and construed in the Igbo world. The communal individuality of the Igbo world is expressed in proverbs such as, *Ngwere ghara ukwu osisi, aka akpara ya* (If a lizard stays off from the foot of a tree, it would be caught by man). This expresses the indisputable and inevitable presence of, not just the family, but the community to which the individual belongs. The Igbo's believe that when a man descends from heaven, he descends into a community. The community rejoices and welcomes his arrival, finds out whose reincarnation he is, gives the person a name and interprets that arrival within the circumstance of the birth. As the child grows, Uchendu (1965) observes that he becomes aware of his dependence on his kin group and community. He also realizes the necessity of making his own contribution to the group.

During one of the feasts organized by Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, his uncle Uchendu revealed the essence of the Igbo philosophy of belongingness. Achebe (2008) writes:

We do not ask for wealth because he that has health and children will also have wealth. We do not pray to have more money but to have more kinsmen. We are better than animals because we have kinsmen. An animal rubs its itching flank against a tree, a man asks his kinsman to scratch him. (p. 132).

After the feast, when one of the eldest men of the *umunna* rose to thank Okonkwo, the dynamics of the Igbo philosophy of belongingness is further expatiated. Achebe further writes:

A man who calls his kinsmen to a feast does not do so to save them from starving. They all have food in their own homes. When we gather together in the moonlit village ground it is not because of the moon. Everyman can see it in his own compound. We come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so. (p. 132).

Mbiti (1970) has classically proverbialized the community determining role of the individual when he wrote, "I am because we are and since we are, therefore I am" (p. 108). The community, according to Pantaleon (1995), therefore gives the individual his existence and education. That existence is not only meaningful, but also possible only in a community.

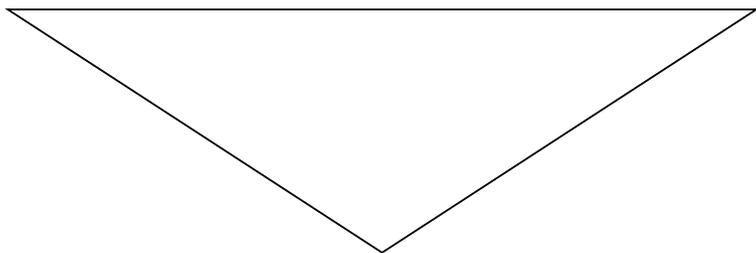
Belongingness is a special noun from the verb 'to belong'. It means to be part of, or to be a member of a group. For Instance, I belong to Arondizuogu community, this gives me rights and privileges that others who do not belong to this community do not

have. There is also a possessive nuance of the verb 'to belong'. I can say that the soap belongs to me. In the first nuance, to belong creates a situation of participation and in the second, it creates a situation of possession. According to Anah (2005), there is an ontological nuance of belongingness, which specifies that a thing is because it belongs. To be is to belong and to belong is to be.

The Igbo principle of *Egbe bere Ugo bere* (let the kite perch, let the eagle perch) re-enacts the contents and significance of belongingness as the essence and hermeneutic core of reality. Pantaleon (1995) believes that what a being is, is its activity of perching (belonging). To perch is to be. To be is to perch. To be is to belong and to belong is to be.

To-perch

To belong



To be

Figure 2: A Diagram showing the dynamics of belongingness. The relational character of the Igbo world view accounts for the relational character of Igbo Christology.

CHAPTER NINE

The Dimensions of Igbo Christology

Since Christian missionaries had baptised individuals in Africa and had failed to baptize the African culture, this study represents one of the ongoing effort to complement the conversion of Africa in to the depths. This research has explored the possibility of developing an Igbo Christology, since Christ's incarnation is not only to be conceived as the in-breaking of the divine *Logos* in human history but also as the advent of the mystery of possibilities of his humanization in a variety of cultures. This piece asserts that for a qualitative insertion of Christianity into the Igbo culture, the area of Christology needs to be explored. The Igbo people should be able to understand Christ in such a way that it fits into their category and in such a way that it answers the questions raised by their historical experiences. It has further shown that Christology is not just an account of Jesus' life in terms of a biography; it is also a biography, the story of other people's life. This explains why the story of Jesus has been expressed by various people, in various portraits, in such a way that the story of people, like the Igbo's become the story of Jesus. With this, Christ and culture will sit at the centre stage of the historical evolution of the Igbo people.

Over the years, African theologians have tried to

develop models of African Christology, using particular cultures and historical experiences as springboards; drawing from the Igbo worldview the researcher posits a couple of Christological models, which include Christ as Leader, King, Ancestor, Victor, Life Giver, Intercessor and *Chi*. This is expressed in the diagram below.

Figure 3: Models of Igbo Christology

a. Christ as Healer

From the Western understanding of the cosmos, things can happen by chance. But for the African, the world is an ordered universe in which all events

are caused and potentially explicable. Egbeke (2001) posits that the Igbo does not just speak of mechanical, chemical and psychological interactions like his Western counterparts; he also speaks of a metaphysical kind of causality, which binds the creator and the spiritual world to the creature. Through this interaction, a force could weaken or re-enforce another force. Each force has an activating principle or vital force which allows it to function in a specific manner.

Egbeke (2001), further observes that even when the Igbo speak of *odachi*, or *Ife mbered* (an accident or the unexpected event), he does not speak in terms of chance, but in terms of an event whose cause is not yet known. This explains why for most Africans, when one is bitten by a snake, it is not just understood as the product of chance, it is interpreted as sorcery or witchcraft. When one sneezes, it is believed that someone is somewhere gossiping about him or her. Because of the need to trace the causes of these events and conditions, counteract them and appease or punish those behind them, the African employs the help of healers. They principally concern themselves with sickness, disease and misfortune. They symbolize the hope of society: hopes of good health, security and prosperity. The satisfactory answer that people need at a time when the question of the cause is sought is that 'someone' caused it.

Mbiti (1969), observes that these medicine men and women are the greatest gift to African societies and the most useful source of help. It is therefore not

surprising that every village in traditional Africa has a medicine personnel within reach. They are accessible to everyone at almost every time and come into the picture of the people's life as individuals and as a community. The central and significant place that the medicine man plays in Igbo traditional life accounts for one of the foundations for constructing a Christology of Jesus as Healer.

In the Markan Jesus, one is quickly struck as the evangelist presents Jesus as a healer. From the first chapter, Jesus casts out demons and heals the mother-in-law of Peter of her fever, he cleansed lepers and worked so many other miracles so that people brought him all who were sick and possessed with demons (Mark 1:32). Jesus was so engaging and promising in his ministry that the Scripture notes that the whole city was gathered around the door (Mark 1:33). Even when Jesus sought time for solitude and prayer, his disciples ran to him saying that everyone was searching for him (Mark 1:37). A further succession of stories, in rapid sequence, intensifies the image of Jesus as healer. The second chapter begins with Jesus healing the paralysed man and forgiving his sins (Mark 2:1-11). Next, Jesus is presented as curing a man with a withered hand (Mark 3:1-5). Finally, the evangelist brings out the magnetic power of Jesus: "They came to him in great number from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and the region around Tyre and Sidon. He told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, so that they would not crush him" (Mark 3:8).

The Markan Jesus emerges quickly with mounting energy as a powerful Healer. Anyone who reads the gospel cannot but be marvelled at this power; anyone afflicted in any way cannot but be drawn to seek his healing power, his readiness and ability to cure every infirmity. It is precisely this Jesus that Mark intends to assure the believer that he is present with us forever, and in every culture.

Jesus as Healer for the Igbo restores life where it has been diminished, and repairs life where it has been broken. Jesus as Healer is supreme over every life-diminishing force. As Healer he recreates our wholeness in all its aspects: body, soul and mind. He does not just cure diseases, he cures financial problems, job issues, marriage problems, demonic attacks etc, he is an All Round Healer. As an All Round Healer, Jesus addresses the problem of healing as it appeals to the African Igbo person, to whom healing is wholistic.

b. Jesus as King

When it comes to discussions pertaining to kingship in Igbo traditional societies, Chigachi (2009) avers that there are two schools of thought. The first could be categorized as those who subscribe to the philosophy inherent in *Oha Na Eze* (The People and the King). This school makes it abundantly clear that at some point in Igbo history the Igbo people were ruled by kings. Words like *Eze* (King), *Lolo* (queen), *Oparaeze* (first son of the king, prince), *Adaeze* (first daughter of the king, princess), *Obieze* (palace), *Okwaeze* (throne) and *Okpueze* (crown),

constitute a unique royal register so complete and indigenous that to neglect or deny them would be a calculated travesty. Besides, Igbo orality notes Eze Nri as the founding king of the Nri Kingdom that thrived from 900 A.D. to 1911.

There is an antithesis to this debate: those who subscribe to the philosophy inherent in the idea that *Igbo Enweghi Eze* meaning (The Igbo have no king.) This school argues that there was never a time in Igbo history when they were ruled by one-man king. In places like Aro and Nri ruled by Ezes, these kings were more priestly than kingly as the title, "Eze," within the contexts of Igbo language and culture connotes two things: "Chief Priest" and "King". In pre-colonial Igbo, "Eze" is used in the political sense to refer to *Chukwu* (God), the only King of *Nd'Igbo* (Igbo people). Religiously, however, it applies to the chief-priest of any particular deity. For example, the chief-priest of Amadioha is called *Ezeamadioha*. This notwithstanding, the idea of king in Igbo life and philosophy is not just a human being, but has something of God in him. He is not just a political leader but also a spiritual leader. He is called *okara nmadu okara nmuo* (half human and half divine).

Christ in the Christian teaching, through the incarnation was united with flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Although he is a person (*prosopon*), he has two natures (*physis*): human and divine. He is complete in his nature as God and complete in our nature as human being. He is perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, composed of a rational soul

and body. Thus, he is one in being with the Father, as to his divinity and one in being with us, as to his humanity. In him, there is the existence of two natural volitions or wills and two natural actions, without division, without separation and without confusion. His human will does not refuse or oppose but rather submits to his divine and almighty will. Just as his flesh is said to be and is the flesh of God the Word, so also his natural will is said to be and is the will of God the Word.

Through the incarnation, lowliness was taken away by majesty, weakness by strength and mortality by eternity. In order to pay for our fallen state, the inviolable nature was united to another subject to suffering, so that as was fitting to heal our wounds, one and the same mediator between God and the human race, could die in one nature. Even though the dual nature of God as human and divine, and his birth in human history is alien to the Igbo, the dual nature of a king as *okara nmadu okara nmuo* is not alien to the Igbo race. The idea of Jesus as King is easily accepted and appreciated by the Igbo person, not only because it directly fits into the Igbo people's category, but more so, the dual nature of the King and Christ, helps to convey the idea of the mediatorship of Jesus. He is not just God become man, he is the one to redeem mankind. In the same way, the King who is half human and half divine also stands between the people and God during moments of sacrifice; through his divine aspect, he communicates with the Immortal in a way that attracts his blessings, and as human, he communes

well with the human community where he is adored as King.

c. Christ as Ancestor

Ancestors occupy a very significant place in Igbo life and religion. Uchendu (1965) avers that ancestors are the invisible segment of the Igbo lineage. They are honoured and not worshipped. The honour given to them is anchored on the principle of reciprocity and philosophy of reincarnation: having been honoured, they are expected to reincarnate and do for the living members what they did for them. Nyamiti (1984) distinguishes two elements that characterise the African concept of ancestorship: *natural relationship*, which usually exists between the ancestor and his relatives, either as parent or brother. It can also be founded on common membership of a clan, tribe, religious sect or society. It can therefore either be consanguinous or non-consanguinous. There is also the *sacred or supernatural* status of an ancestor, which is the consequence of his death. Following the African traditional moral standard, a good life is very significant here, since the ancestor is like a standard for the living.

In relating the idea of ancestorship to Jesus, it would be used only within the context of the kind of ancestorship that exists between the dead member of a family and his brothers and sisters in a nuclear family. This is employed because it bears the closest analogy to Christ's Brother Ancestorship. In

Igbo traditional societies, the ancestorship of the dead is built on consanguineous ties with the living relatives. It is also based on the supernatural status which the ancestors acquired through death by being closer to God. Christ is related to us as brother ancestor through his being part of the lineage of Adam. More so, through the incarnation, he made us adopted children of God, so that we now share the same supernatural Father with him, who is God. The first person of the Trinity is the common and immediate Father of Christ and his earthly members. He died and has risen from the dead, and as a God that is both human and divine, his nature has brought his human and divine family together to become one big family. Thus the entire family is called the church. The heavenly church is referred to as the Church Triumphant, the church going through purification is called the Suffering Church and the church on earth is called the Church Militant. However, together they constitute one extended family: the Church.

The ancestor, as already indicated acquires some spiritual power, which Nyamiti (1984) calls super human power, as a result of their death, and because of their closeness to divinity, they mediate between the divine and human. Christ's ancestorship is rooted both in his divinity and humanity. The case is not different from Jesus, by his dying and rising from the dead, all authority in heaven and on earth have been given to him and at the mention of his name every knee in heaven and on earth bows, for he has been exalted above all powers, kingdoms, principalities and powers.

In Igbo traditional life, the ancestors are for the living models and standard of behaviour, as well as sources of tribal tradition and stability. In a similar way, Christ as a brother-ancestor is a model of conduct. Christians look up to him as a model of behaviour. In every step, the Christian looks towards Jesus for the right step. As he lived, the Christian is also expected to live his or her life. Just as the relationship between an ancestor and those in the world is furnished with prayer and sacrifices, the relationship between Christ and Christians is also maintained through prayer and sacrifices.

The emphasis here on Jesus as Brother Ancestor, which brings out the similarities between Jesus and the Igbo concept of ancestor, also coexists side by side with profound differences. Nyamiti (1984) points out a couple of these differences. First is that the African concept of ancestorship is founded on consanguinity, in Jesus it is a different thing altogether; his brotherhood transcends family ties, or clanic and tribal limitations. As regards the categorization of Christ as a model, drawing from the Igbo concept of ancestor, the analogy leaves some vacuum. Christ is a God-man, and is necessarily infinitely more perfect as a model of conduct than the Igbo ancestor. More so, brotherhood in Christ is something that one freely accepts, but in that of Igbo traditional thought, the person involved receives it without wilful choice, nor can he decrease or increase the degree of brotherhood in him. Not minding these differences, there is enough similarities to show that the two kinds of relationships have fundamentally the same

structure. The divergence, does not kill the analogy, it rather affirms that Christ's brotherhood is the divine exemplar of its Igbo counterpart.

d. **Christ as Victor**

The idea of Jesus as Victor in Igbo ontology springs from the Igbo concept of life and death. The concept of life has been analysed by scholars of various academic disciplines and at different periods. Nwala (1998) avers that Igbo traditional thought, like those of other African groups, has perhaps been rightly dubbed heavily anthropocentric and their concept of life derives from this perspective. The desire for *ndu* and its preservation in Igbo ontology is the *summum bonum* (the supreme good), and every other thing is expected to serve its realization. The prominent appearance of *ndu* in Igbo proverbs, parables and personal names projects the height of the value the Igbo race places on life. For instance, the Igbo would say,

Ndubisi: life is the first. From this perspective, life for the Igbo, is the prime necessity. Life should be pursued before and above every other thing or value.

Ndukaku: life is greater than wealth. This is a little bit related to the first. If life is greater than wealth, then, wealth must not be pursuit at the expense of life.

Ndubuizu. life is ethos of consensus. That people are able to come together and discuss and even agree on something is because they have life.

Ndulue: If life stretches out. The plans about the future in the present can only be actualized if life extends into the future.

Ndukwe: If life agrees. This is related to the preceding. The actualization of future plans depends on if life agrees that we be in that future.

Nduka: Life is greater.

Nduamaka: Life is good.

Because of the prime place that life occupies in Igbo philosophy, Obioma (2009), argues that everything that the Igbo does is geared towards the preservation of life. Eating, drinking, sacrifices, rituals and rites, kinship, taboos and other moral provisions, worship and even the existence of sacred specialists is for the preservation of life. Nothing is done without a bearing to life.

Life for the Igbo is also a paradox: meaning that it is unpredictable. It is often interrupted by death. One wonders indefinitely at such enigma, inconsistency, mystery and puzzles of premature death, the absurdity and ambiguity of life and death. It is in this regard that Onunwa (1990) echoes that, "Among the unfriendly agents that threaten life here on earth (for the Igbo) is illness. The other enemy which the Igbo hates is death" (p. 81). Death for the Igbo is an enigma. It is thus not surprising that the Igbo would name their child: *onwu di njo* (death is bad). *Onwubuche* (death is my worry). *Onwubiko* (death I implore you). *Onwu kam ike* (death is more powerful than I am). *Onwuasoanya* (death is no respecter of

persons). *Onwuamaeze* (death does not recognize a king or a great man). In spite of the human person's wisdom and technological know-how, death still defies prediction. The Igbo person thus lives in fear of death.

The message of Christianity as regards Jesus' victory over death makes sense to and offers hope to the Igbo. Christianity teaches that with the fall of Adam and Eve came all the evils that make the life of the human person a burden here on earth: sickness or ailments, mental and physical pains, vices, hatred, jealousy, anger, lust, deception, egoism, pride, prejudice and above all death (Genesis 3:1ff). Since the period of the failure of Adam and Eve, the devil held the power of death, enslaving humanity and putting us into the fear of death, for death was seen as a loss. However, for those who believe in Christ Jesus, He has forever changed the way death is looked at. The Scripture says, "And because all those children share one same nature of flesh and blood, Jesus likewise had to share this nature. This is why his death destroyed the one holding the power of death, that is the devil" (Hebrews 2:14-15).

Jesus has gained victory over death. His mission was to free humanity from the fear and power of death. It is therefore not surprising that after his death on the cross, as the earth quaked and the rocks split He walked through the tombs of Jerusalem and opened them, raising to life several holy men and women who had died. They came out of their tombs after the resurrection, and entered

the Holy City, appearing to many people (Matthew 27:51-54). In Jesus Christ, death, which has been an enemy of humanity, has been turned into a friend; death, which has been a terrifying journey has been baptized into the anticipation of a welcome reunion. And so believers can now face death without fear, with the Psalmist they can say, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4). For we are certain that "Goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life, and that we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Psalm 23:6). Death is now called a shadow. And we know that a shadow of something cannot hurt. The shadow of a lion cannot kill; the shadow of a scorpion cannot sting. The shadow of an axe cannot injure. Jesus Christ has conquered death and so death no longer has power over us. Although it is present, it is only a shadow. Death is now referred to as 'the valley of the shadow'.

How could have Jesus accomplished this wonderful work of salvation on behalf of humanity? To realize this, He became one of us, so that by His death, He would destroy the fear of death and conquer the devil. Satan's weapon of fear was taken away from him when Jesus died and rose again. His death and rising to new life is a reminder to each of us that death need not terrify. As scripture teaches, by virtue of our baptism, we have died with Jesus by being plunged into His death, and by this baptism into His death we have been buried with Him. And

as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we will also share in His resurrection (Romance 6:3-5). Then our mortal and perishable bodies would have put on imperishable life and immortality. St Paul writes, "Death has been swallowed up by victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55)

Jesus has conquered the most fearsome enemy of the Igbo: death. He has triumphed where others failed and conquered where others have been forced to confess defeat. The resurrection of Jesus is the cornerstone of the Christian belief and a hope of victory for the Igbo race. And even though the Igbo still fear death, the more they come to know about Jesus and his victory over death, the more the fear of death and its power over them fades away. Jesus promises the Igbo people in scripture, Do not be troubled; trust in God and trust in me. In my Father's house there are so many rooms. Otherwise I would not have told you that I would go and prepare a place for you. After I have gone and prepared a place for you, I shall come again and take you to me, so that where I am you also may be (John 14:1-3).

The dead in Christian belief are not forsaken; Scripture says, "The Lamb on the throne shall shepherd them. He will lead them to the springs of life giving water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 7:17). The idea of Jesus as Victor over death brings much consolation to the

Igbo Christian, who is under the constant fear of death.

e. Christ as the Giver of Life

A very significant concept of *ndu* among the Igbos is the idea that *ndu* is from God. This makes the human person a theomorphic being. This explains why the Igbos say, *ndu sin a chi* (life is from God). When a child is born it is taken to be a gift from God. The life of children is not attributed to mere biological fact of conception because every child has existed in an antecedent world of a divine master. It is thus not surprising that the Igbo would name their child,

Chi-nyere ndu: God gave life

Nke-chi-yere: the one God has given

Chi-n'eye ndu: God gives life

Chi-di-ogo: God is generous

Chi-nwe- ndu: God owns life

Chi-ekwe: God has agreed

Chi-ji-ndu: God owns life

However, according to Obioma (2009), God does not only give a child, he also guides and protects the child all through its existence; this is why the Igbo would say *ndu di n'aka chi* (life is in the hand of God).

For the Igbo, life begins from the conception of the child in the woman. And right from the time the child is conceived, respect is accorded to the child through the rites of passage. In these rites and rituals, Madu (2011) states that the hands of the gods are recognized in the socio-religious community and implored to further effect their authenticity and relevance. Thus, Metuh (1991) maintains that the rites of passage, as regards the conception of a child, are done to ensure a change of condition from the spiritual world to the physical world. It is celebrated as a new outburst of life following the intervention of the divine. At the point of conception, it is not just about human involvement, the divine is also involved. This is why, during the rites of pregnancy, the divine order is acknowledged and actualized. In fact, rites of passage are considered to be the re-enactment of the archetypal patterns set by the gods in *illo tempore*.

The concept of the human person in Yoruba ontology further reveals the place of the divine as the source of life. According to Oduwole (2010) Yoruba scholars agree that the human person is made up of three basic elements: *Ara* (body), *Emi* (breath) and *Ori* (soul). Idowu (1962) describes the body as the concrete, tangible thing of flesh and bones which can be known through the senses. As regards the *Emi*, he describes it as spirit, and this is invisible. It is that which gives life to the whole body and thus could be described through its causal functions: Its presence in the body of a person determines if the person still lives or is dead.

According to Ebunoluwa, the body is the creation of *Orisha nla* (Arch-divinity). He was assigned by *Olodumare* (the Supreme Being) to mould the body of human beings. It is only the Supreme Being that puts the spirit into the body so as to give it life. Yoruba reflections on the human person does not end with the body and spirit, there is a third element called the soul. The soul suggests that the human person already has an individuality in the spiritual world before birth. From this understanding, life does not begin with birth, it rather begins as soon as one acquires the soul which defies a person's individuality. The soul of the human person begins to live even before there is a body for its abode.

From the foregoing, it is general believe that life comes from God. Thus, the designation of Jesus as the giver of life is not alien to the Igbo but rather reaffirms his idea of God as the Giver of Life.

f. Christ as Intercessor

The Nri hegemony and its influence on Igbo history cannot be over emphasized. It is in this regard that Madubuko (1994) observes that the story of the Igbo people, no matter how briefly considered, would be incomplete if one omits the Eri-Nri contribution. Afigbo (1981) shows Eri clan as originating from the regions of Anambra River, at Aguleri; from there they fanned eastward and established various communities. According to Uzukwu (1988), Eri is the father of all Nri; and tradition says that he came from Chukwu. It is reported that the earth was not firm when he came

to the world. To solve the problem of flood, he employed blacksmiths from Awka to use their bellows to dry the flooded land. There was no food as well for the people. To provide food, he prayed to God and He demanded that he should sacrifice his first son and daughter to him. After the sacrifice and burial of his son and daughter, as though all were lost, yam and palm tree began to grow out of the place where he buried his first son while vegetables and cocoyam grew out of the place where he buried his daughter. If yam germinated from where Eri's first son was buried, it means that yam is the resurrected son of Eri, and since it was given to man to sustain life, it is regarded as life itself. This myth reveals so much about Igbo life and value system, which is equally relevant in our Christological considerations.

Madu (2004) observes a cosmological drama in the whole myth. It reveals the dynamics of the cosmic drama between god, man, land and crops. Eri, the civilization hero enjoys a special relationship with Chukwu, and through Eri's sacrifice, humanity now enjoy a special relationship with the land which offers food for his sustenance. The ritual act performed by Eri established a covenant between Eri, his descendants and Chukwu. From the sacrifice of Eri, we come to discover why yam is very prominent in Igbo sacrifice and life, a situation which warrants its annual elaborate festival throughout Igbo land. The growing of yam from the spot where Eri's first son was buried accounts for the respect given to *okpara* (first son) in Igbo life, he is in fact considered to be closer to the ancestors.

The place of Jesus as the first Son of his Father fits into the Nri myth. The father sent him to die on the cross and by the spilling of his blood to bring life and salvation to mankind. In a similar way, Eri's first son dies for the salvation of all mankind, precisely by the spilling of his blood. By the dying of Jesus on the cross, he brings life for all mankind, in a similar way, by the dying of Eri's son, life emerged for all mankind. Jesus dies and rises from the dead, in a similar way, Eri's son dies and rises in the form of yam to give life to mankind. As the blood of Eri's son continues to be the sign of the covenant between Eri and Chukwu, continually standing as an evidence for the divine to make provision for people, in the same way, the blood of Jesus pleads insistently for the salvation and redemption of mankind. If a Christology is developed from the context of this idea of Eri's sacrifice of his son, the Igbo person would better understand the place of Christ in his life and what he can accomplish for him.

g. Christ as *Chi*

According to Ezewugo (1987), the word *Chi* has three connotations in Igbo ontology: in its narrow and primary sense, it applies to the Supreme Being and carries here the force of a proper name. Secondly, it denotes any being, human or divine that is acting solely in the name and authority of the Supreme Being: *onye kwado ije chi ya akwadobe* (if a person gets ready to go on a journey, his *Chi* gets ready too); *chi ya edulugoya naba* (His *Chi* has taken him home with him). Human agents could also be called *Chi* if he or she has acted as an agent of

providence to a fellow human being, like saving the life of a person who wants to commit suicide: *chi nwayi bu diya* (a woman's *chi* is her husband); *ogo bu chi onye* (one's father in-law is one's *chi*). *Chi* also has an abstract and impersonal reference to providence. In this case, it refers to a divine decree or fate. The Igbos believe that before a child is born, his life course has been charted by his *Chi. onye ajo chi kpatalu nku ewa ta ya.*

Chi occupies a significant place in Igbo life and salvation history. It is therefore not surprising that many Igbo names have *Chi* attached to it. Like,

Chi azor. God saves

Chi jioké. God holds the share

Chi amaka. God is good

Chi wendu. God owns life

Oge chi. God's time

Chi nonye. God stays with me

Chi merem. God should do for me

Chi dera. God has written

Chi naza ekpere. God answers prayer

Chim dindu. My God is alive

Chi nedum. God leads me

Chi azokam. God saved me

Chi di bere: God is merciful

Amara chi: Grace of God

Nke chi yere: the one given by Chi

Gwa chi: Tell Chi

Kene chi: Greet God

Arinze chi: were it not for God

Golibelu chi: Rejoice unto God

For so many Igbo Christians, even though they have been converted, the idea of *Chi* is still very strong. Obinna (2010) observes that on many occasions, as in the case of immanent danger, instead of calling Christ, they exclaim *Chimoo!* (My *Chi!*) While they do this, they intend to call Christ and not the *Chi* as conceived in Igbo Traditional Religion. Thus in Igbo Christology, *Chi* and Christ constitute a continuum in the life of Igbo African Christians.

In Igbo traditional thought, *Chi* refers to the divine element or portion in humans and in other components of creation. Obinna (2010) refers to it as the personal presence of Chukwu and God in Igbo consciousness, even though the missionaries only used it within the context of Chukwu. It is in this regard that the Igbo would say *Chi bu Chukwu ma o bu Chineke nta no nime mmadu*. It is the supreme divine reality that creates, governs, guides and controls the universe: *Chi bu ozuru Igbo, ozuru uwa, Chi uwa nilie, Eke kere uwa, ama-ama-amachaghi amacha*. This becomes significant as

the world was created by the power of the Word of God which is Christ. He has been imbedded in all creation as its source of life and now fully revealed in Jesus Christ: *mmadu bu Chukwu*. Jesus the Son of God became the Son of Man in a divisive religious culture. The Gentiles were considered by the Jews as idolaterers and moral reprobates. But with the coming of Jesus, he dignified them by inviting them into a new human relationship which he had inaugurated; thus, empowering them to become the children of God. Among the Igbo's, there is also a divisive culture based on ancestral and idolatrous divide demarcating the Igbo people into the *Diala* caste, *Osu* caste and *Umeh* caste. Significantly, Jesus the God-man and the Man-God is redignifying the Igbo people with his divine presence. There is a continuous decline of *Diala*, *Osu* and *Umeh* identities, which are gradually being replaced by the Christ identity, animating, rectifying and unifying the Igbo race.

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