

# GOD AS THE GIVER OF LIFE IN IGBO-AFRICAN ONTOLOGY

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## **Abstract**

This work is an attempt to understand God in Igbo-African category. As a thesis, it has gone beyond proving that the African can know or conceive God, and moved from the wider parameters of theology to the particular aperture of Christological investigation. It investigates the possibility of an understanding of the Christ-God within an African category. The idea employed here is that of an Igbo-African. This concept is very significant because the Igbo race shares in the African worldview, and the interactive nature of the African worldview, makes this consideration more relevant. This Christological perspectives constructed from the Igbo worldview creates a socio-political context, as theology is meant for a community and not to remain the property of a theologian class. It responds to the question: “how will Christ and his message be presented to the Igbo person, in such a way that he or she would understand and appreciate Jesus within categories that he or she is at home with?”

**Keywords:** *Chi, Ndu, Igbo, African, Category, Christology, God, Chukwu, Chineke.*

## **Introduction**

At the time when ideological race struggle was at its peak, Gobineau (1915) developed a biased anthropology, which placed human beings on a hierarchy with Africa at the bottom. He argued that Europe had attained civilization while others are yet to. Following the same line of thought, Hume (cited by Chukwudi 1998) wrote, “I am apt to suspect that the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion or even an individual eminent in action or speculation” (p. 214). Hegel (1956), following the same derogatory path wrote further about the Negro:

In Negro life the characteristic point is the fact that consciousness had not yet attained to the realization of any

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substantial existence.... Thus distinction between himself as  
an individual and the universality of his essential being, the  
African in the uniform, undeveloped oneness of his  
existence has not yet attained. (p. 93).

He thus posits that the Negro is yet to go beyond his instinctual  
behaviour to identify a being outside of himself. Following the same  
line of thought, Levy-Bruhl (cited by Njoku 1993), questioned the  
veracity of an untutored African knowing about God. Corroborating  
with Levy-Bruhl, Baker (cited in Richard 1964) wrote:

The Negro is still at the rude dawn of faith-fetishism and has  
barely advanced in idolatry.... he has never grasped the idea  
of a personal deity, a duty in life, a moral code, or a shame  
of lying. He rarely believes in a future state of reward and  
punishment, which whether true or not are infallible indices  
of human progress (p. 199).

*Chi n'eye ndu* as an understanding of God in Igbo-African category,  
is a thesis that has far gone beyond proving that the African can  
know or conceive God. It has moved from the wider parameters of  
theology to the particular aperture of Christological investigation. It  
investigates the possibility of an understanding of the Christ-God  
within an African category. The idea employed here is that of an  
Igbo-African. This concept is very significant because the Igbo race  
shares in the African worldview, and the interactive nature of the  
African worldview, makes this consideration more relevant. This  
Christological perspectives constructed from the Igbo worldview  
creates a socio-political context, which agrees with the perspective  
of Schreier (1985), who maintains that theology is meant for a  
community and not to remain the property of a theologian class. It is  
not an elitist enterprise. It begins from below, from the underside of  
history, its main interlocutors, the poor and the culturally  
marginalized. It responds to the question: "how will Christ and his  
message be presented to the Igbo person, in such a way that he or  
she would understand and appreciate Jesus within categories that he  
or she is at home with?" This piece adds to the ongoing  
developments in Christology during the past thirty three years as

evident in the works of Nyamity (1984), Sanon (1991), Kabasele (1991), Kolie (1991), Magessa (1991), Walligo (1991), Waruta (1991), Bujo (1992), Ukachukwu (1992) among other scholars who have searched for an authentic African response to the Christ event.

### **From Biblical and Patristic Christology to an Igbo Christology**

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. The Aramaic Hebrew speaking Christians, closest to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, 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 presented Jesus as healer and exorcist. 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 presented a Jesus who is a prophet and 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, the Christology of the Fathers was profoundly biblical. For them, Christ is 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. 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. Thus 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 Jesus has two natures, without confusion and change, without division and separation (Kanu 2012).

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 Christologizing 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 western Christology could be considered as high, the African approach to Christology is quite different. It begins from below and ascends above (Kanu, 2012).

### **An understanding of Nd'igbo of Nigeria**

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 unprecise 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 Igbos are not indifferent to this crisis of identity. Their experience of colonialism, and even the Biafran Civil 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 Igbos, Uzozie (1991) 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. 4). 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, Hatch (1967) describes the Igbo people as a single people 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 "where did the Igbo come from?"

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 Hermetic 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 Igboland is located in the Southeastern region of what is known as Nigeria. The Southern part of Nigeria exhibits a wide variety of topographical features. The average temperature is about 85, with annual rainfall of 70 inches. 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 State 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 on the 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 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 units or organization and provides grounds for political and religious structures (Kanu, 2012). The traditional concepts of political power and authority is structured and determined by their concepts 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 Igboland as a culture area, helps to identify the cultural horizon for the study on the Igbo-African concept of life.

### **Life in Igbo-African Ontology**

The concept of life has been analyzed by scholars of various academic disciplines and at different periods. However, the researcher is primarily concerned with the concept of life *ndu* in Igbo anthropology. Igbo traditional thought, like those of other African groups, has perhaps been rightly dubbed heavily anthropocentric and their concept of life and person derives from this perspective (Nwala, 1998). The concept of life in Igbo anthropology can be seen from various perspectives; however,

generally, it is a road-map that reveals the Igbo conceptual and historical construct of life possibilities and human potentialities, with built-in goals and values for communal and individual self-determination. For a better appreciation of the Igbo concept of life, there is need to explore the historical-cultural roots of the Igbo.

### **Life as the Highest Good**

The desire for life *ndu* and its preservation in Igbo ontology is the *summum bonum* (the supreme good), and every other thing is expected to serve its realization (Nwala, 1998). 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 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.

*Ndubizu*: 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, 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 (Obi, 2009).

### **Life as Active and Dynamic**

Life for the Igbo is not just to exist and be counted as existing at census. It is an active and dynamic existence in which other things follow. Life is the principle of activity, growth and fulfilment. As such, the more elevated the life, the more effective and efficient will the functions of acting, growth, reproduction. This implies that the value of life is linked with the quality of life. The higher the quality the better the performance; it is a vital force that keeps a person not only in motion, but also in constructive actions that help a person and others live on and better (Obi, 2009). From the above perspective, to say to a man who lives *iwuola* (you are dead), means that the person in question has become inactive or incapacitated in respect to certain functions expected of him as a human being (Nwala, 1998). For instance, the inability of a man to climb a palm tree or to make his wife pregnant, these may earn a man the expression *iwuola* or *odi ndu onye wuru awu ka mma* (a living that is worse than the dead). If one however is able to execute any of the above roles, it earns him or her the expression *idi ndu*.

### **Life as Given and Sustained by God**

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, 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) (Obi, 2009). Even though life is in the hand of God, it is still for the Igbo 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 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" (Onunwa, 1990, p.81).

Although death is conceived as a transition to the world of the ancestors, it still does not change the fact that it 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.

### **Life as Belongingness**

The Igbo world into which a child is born crying *abatata 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 (Pantaleon, 1995). This communal dimension of the African life is expressed in the Igbo proverb, *Ngwere ghara ukwu osisi, aka akpara ya* (If a lizard stays off from the foot of a tree, it would be caught by man). It 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, he becomes aware of his dependence on his kin group and community (Kanu, 2012). He also realizes the necessity of making his own contribution to the group (Uchendu, 1965). According to Mulago (1989),

The community is the necessary and sufficient condition for the life of the individual person. The individual person is immersed into the natural world and nevertheless emerges from it as an individual and a person within his conscience and freedom given him by the mediation of the community in which he senses a certain presence of the divine. (p. 115).

During one of the feasts organized by Okonkwo in the work *The Things Fall Apart*, his uncle Uchendu expressed the Igbo philosophy of belongingness:

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 (Achebe, 2008, p. 132).

After the feast, when one of the eldest men of the *umunna* rose to thank Okonkwo, the reason for the Igbo philosophy of belongingness is revealed with a different shade of insight,

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 (Achebe, 1998, p. 133).

Mbiti has classically proverbialized the community determining role of the individual life, “I am because we are and since we are, therefore I am” (Mbiti, 1970, p. 108). The community, according to Pantaleon, gives the individual his existence. That existence is not only meaningful, but also possible only in a community (Kanu, 2012). To be is to belong and to belong is to be (Anah, 2005). To be alive is to belong. 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 Igbo 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. Thus existence for the Igbo is an act of belonging.

### **Life as a Circle**

Life is cyclical for the African. The cyclical nature of life affects the African’s concept of time, and also gives a philosophical basis for beliefs such as in reincarnation. The history of the African people, as in that of the Greeks is not a lineal movement. Everything repeats itself. Thus one moves from day to night, which gives birth to another day, and since man is part of the laws of this world, he moves from life to death and to another life again. This explains why when an African loses time, he does not see it as a loss because he knows another will come.

### **Life as a Stage**

In African ontology, life could be referred to as a play. In a play, according to Jacob (2010), how and when an actor enters the stage is not his own making but depends on his assigned roles in the play. In

life too, where and when a person is born or dies which makes for human superficial differences of race, colour, status etc, is not his own design. Destiny plays a very significant role in the determination of our life. The interference of destiny raises questions as regards freedom and determinism. More so, just as an actor may return one or more times to the play stage after once taking an exit in order to complete his assigned roles, a dead person may also return through reincarnation to the world stage.

### **Life as Everlastingness**

Pantaleon (1995) had argued in his study of the analytic connotations of being as belongingness that to be is to 'be-long', which means, 'to live long'. This is based on the idea that life extends into eternity. Life goes beyond the present dimension of the *Uwa* (World) to the *Uwa* of the ancestors (the world of the ancestors), such that to be and not to be-long is not to be at all. While *on-going* belongingness may be open-ended, *being-long* belongingness stretches into everlastingness. As such, in Pantaleon, one becomes through being-on so as to be-going, in other to be-long, that is to participate in the everlastingness of being.

### **The Provenance of Human Life in African Ontology**

In African ontology, 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, the hands of the gods are recognized in the socio-religious community and implored to further effect their authenticity and relevance (Madu, 2011). 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. Thus, 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* (Metuh, 1991).

Very significant is the fact that rites of passage are done for the various stages in the development of the human life and in the life of the traditional people. And every stage is connected to the other and is as significant as the other, for without the early stage, there wouldn't be a later stage. In the contention of Metuh (1991), "Pregnancy (for the African), is a transitional period between conception and childbirth. And so the ceremonies of pregnancy and childbirth together, generally constitute one whole" (p. 124). According to Parrinder (1976), "Like some of the seven sacraments, these mark the turning points in life; birth, puberty, marriage and death. They are accompanied with various religious and magical acts" (p. 90).

Pregnancy in African life, is not just about the woman and her choices, it is a community affair. The community bears both the gains and the loses. The *dramatis personae* include: the wife, the husband, neighbours, spirit forces and the unborn baby. The whole pregnancy rite is fashioned to facilitate the birth of the child and to protect the mother and child from evil forces (Madu, 2011). Among the Igbos of the North Central area of eastern Nigeria, their pregnancy ritual is called *Ima Ogodo*. It involves a series of rites. As soon as conception takes place, there is consultation with the divine about the best way to preserve the pregnancy. The materials used in the rite are symbolic: a dog for sacrifice, a white chalk, ogirishi tree and gravels. When the dog is sacrificed, it is usually a dynamic ceremony for the child, praying that he may be dynamic, visionary, smart and loyal as the dog. The white chalk signifies purity. It is also a symbol of consecration. The ogirishi tree survives under hard conditions, and have very long life span. It symbolizes longevity and health. The prayer of the community that brings the origishi tree is that their child may flourish like it. The gravels symbolize

permanence, signifying that the child has come to stay. This is the prayer that the priest says during the sacrifice:

We have planted the ogorishi tree in order that the child born to this woman may flourish like the ogorishi tree. We have set gravels from the riverbed besides the tree in order that as gravels remain when the river dries up, so may this woman's child remain alive after the waters of childbirth have broken (Metuh, 1995, p. 125).

In all these, efforts are directed towards protecting the child and securing his future if he is eventually born (Madu, 2011). The various preparations made even before the child is born is based on the African philosophy that life begins even before conception.

### **Chi in Igbo Ontology**

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 inlaw 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 jioke:* 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

***Chi n'eye ndu: God in Igbo Category***

A very significant concept of life among the Igbos is the idea that life is from God. This makes the human person a theomorphic being. Thus the Igbo would 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,

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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 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 Ebinoluwa, 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 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 African but rather makes more sense to him and agrees with what he already believes about God.

### **Conclusion**

This research has investigated the possibility of an understanding of the Christ-God within an African category. The idea employed here is that of an Igbo-African. From the Christological perspective, it responds to the question: "how will Christ and his message be presented to the Igbo person, in such a way that he or she would understand and appreciate Jesus within categories that he or she is at home with?" It is born out of the understanding that 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. It asserts that God is not a being only expressed in western categories, but can also be received and appreciated within African categories, as in *Chi n'eye ndu*: God who gives life.

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Nnadiabube Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 2 (2) 2018  
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