

The Doctrine of Resurrection and the Challenge of Traditional Igbo (African) Eschatology

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Zusammenfassung

Die Motivation dieses Buch zu schreiben entspringt den pastoralen Reformen des II. Vatikanischen Konzils. Eine der Erwartungen dieses Konzils war das Aufscheinen eines "Zweiten Pfingstereignisses", um eine größere und bessere Kirche zu erreichen. Offenheit war eine der Früchte dieses Konzils; die Kirche wurde sensibel für die Werte anderer Religionen zum Vorteil der theologischen Entwicklung. Das bedeutet aber auch, dass jede gegenwärtige Theologie, die die pastoralen Reformen des Konzils für gewährleistet hält, es riskiert, der wahren Größe des Glaubens Schaden zuzufügen. In Erkenntnis der Werte, die in anderen Religionen zu finden sind, behandelt dieses Buch ein Thema im Besonderen, die Frage der Eschatologie. Der Autor versucht, einen christlichen Glaubenssatz - die Auferstehung - aus der traditionellen Igbo-Perspektive Ilo-uwa (Wiedergeburt?) zu definieren. Um eine klare Abgrenzung zwischen der asiatischen Vorstellung der Wiedergeburt und Ilo-uwa zu treffen, legt diese Darstellung große Aufmerksamkeit auf die innere und äußere Dynamik der Konzeptbedeutung Ilo-uwa. Ausschlaggebend hierfür sind vor allem zwei Gründe: Der eine ist die Vervollständigung. Nach Meinung des Autors dieses Buches gibt es bestimmte Werte in anderen Religionen, die die christlichen religiösen Werte entweder bereichern oder ergänzen können; zum Beispiel der Glaube an das Jenseits. Zweitens beschreibt dieses Buch eine angemessene Definition einiger traditioneller Igbo-Werte, die auch die Eschatologie umfasst. Das Überleben der Igbo-Kirche hängt von dem Verständnis einiger dieser Werte ab und der praktische Weg, dieses Überleben zu sichern, ist eine Evangelisation durch Inkulturation.

Abstract

The writing of this book is motivated by the pastoral reforms of the second Vatican Council. One of the expectations of the council was the 'descent' of the 'second Pentecost' for a bigger and better church. One of the fruits of the council was openness; the church became docile to the values found in other religions to the advantage of the development of theology. This means that any theology in the present that takes the pastoral reforms of the council for granted risks the danger of compromising the real growth of the faith. In recognition of the values found in other religions, this book treats one of the topics of religious concern, the issue of eschatology. The author tries to define resurrection which is a Christian article of faith from the Igbo traditional perspective of Ilo-uwa (reincarnation?). In trying to make the clear distinction between the Asian form of reincarnation from Ilo-uwa, this thesis paid greater attention to the internal and external dynamics of the meaning of the concept Ilo-uwa. There are two major reasons for addressing this topic. The very first reason is complementarity. It is the opinion of the author of this book that there are certain values in African religions that could either enrich or compliment the Christian religious values, for instance, the belief in the living-dead. Secondly, this book suggests for the appropriate definition of some Igbo traditional values including eschatology. The survival of the Igbo Church depends on the understanding of some of these values and the practical way to do this is through evangelization via inculturation.

Contents

1	General Introduction	15
1.1	Statement of the Problem	19
1.2	The Argument of this Work.....	20
1.3	The Purpose of the Research	21
1.4	The Methodology Used	22
2	Definitions of some Fundamental Concepts	25
2.1	Introduction.....	25
2.2	Revelation	26
2.3	Life after death - the two common Terms	28
2.4	Resurrection in World Religions and Philosophy.....	29
2.5	Religion, God and Humanity in Relationship	29
2.6	The Being and Essence of God	31
2.6.1	Definition of God from Philosophical Perspective	32
2.6.2	OT and the Definition of God	38
2.6.3	The Name of God as Power	40
2.6.4	The God who creates	43
2.7	The Human Nature	46
2.7.1	The Image and Likeness of God	49
2.7.2	Biblical Anthropology	53
2.7.3	The Relationship Between Basar, Nephesh and Ruach in Hebrew Anthropology	53
2.7.4	Pauline New Testament Anthropology	59
2.7.5	The Sóma	60
2.7.6	Immortality of the Soul	63
2.7.7	Immortality and the Resurrection in Christianity	65
2.8	The Origin of Death	77
2.8.1	What is Death	80
2.8.2	The Dynamism of Death	80
2.8.3	Anxiety and the Fear of Death	82

2.8.4 Existentialism and the Question of Death	83
2.8.5 Martin Heidegger	84
2.8.6 Martin Heidegger and the Problem of Death	85
2.9 Conclusion.....	88
3 Death as the Way to Eschaton.....	93
3.1 Introduction.....	93
3.2 The Problem of Originality of the Doctrine to Israel	94
3.3 Egypt	97
3.3.1 Zoroastrian Impulse	101
3.3.2 Persian/Iranian Influence on Judaism	102
3.3.3 The late establishment of the resurrection concept in the OT	110
3.4 Foundation of Resurrection Expectation	112
3.4.1 The Rise of the Hope of Resurrection in OT	118
3.4.2 Resurrection of the Just - Isaiah 26:7-19	123
3.4.3 General Resurrection	133
3.5 Resurrection in the NT.....	140
3.5.1 What did the NT really think about the Resurrection of the Dead?.....	141
3.5.2 The Empty Tomb.....	143
3.5.3 The Post-Mortem Appearances	152
3.6 Resurrection Appearances and Faith Transformation.....	157
3.7 Conclusion.....	163
4 The Resurrection in History and Theology.....	167
4.1 Introduction.....	167
4.2 Gnosticism: Origin and the Problems of Definition.....	168
4.2.1 Resurrection and the Gnostic Code.....	173
4.2.2 What is a Creed.....	175
4.2.3 The Apostolic Creed.....	176
4.3 The Doctrine of Resurrection and the Creed.....	179
4.3.1 Sources of Knowledge of the Resurrection.....	183

4.3.2 The Patristic Period, ca.100-451.....	186
4.3.3 Two Stages of the Patristic Era before the Division.....	188
4.3.4 The Apostolic Fathers.....	189
4.3.5 The Apologists	192
4.3.6 Christian Teachers.....	198
4.4 Summary to Early Christian Teachers.....	213
4.5 Augustine (354-430) and Western Latin Thought.....	215
4.5.1 Aquinas and Medieval Theology before the Reformation ..	220
4.5.2 Martin Luther (1483-1546) and the Reformation.....	228
4.5.3 John Calvin (1509-64)	235
4.6 Resurrection in Contemporary Theology.....	238
4.7 Conclusion.....	245
5 African/Igbo world-view in General.....	247
5.1 Introduction.....	247
5.2 The Question of Homogeneity.....	247
5.2.1 The Land and People of Africa.....	248
5.2.2 The Igbo Ethnic Group.....	254
5.2.3 Preliminary Remarks on Weltanschauung.....	255
5.2.4 The Igbo World-View.....	257
5.2.5 The Ala Deity.....	261
5.3 The Idea of the Soul in Igbo Traditional Thought.....	267
5.3.1 The Image of the Soul.....	268
5.3.2 The Soul as a Transcendental-Self (Chi).....	272
5.3.3 The Person as a Being-With.....	276
5.4 Death.....	283
5.4.1 The Causes of Death.....	283
5.4.2 The Rites of Purification and Final Commendation.....	285
5.4.3 Funeral Rites and Second Burial.....	287
5.4.4 Places of Burial.....	290
5.4.5 The Grave.....	293
5.4.6 The Hereafter.....	294

5.4.7 This-Worldliness and Other-Worldliness.....	296
5.5 Resurrection and the African Perspective of Time.....	298
5.5.1 The African Time as Non-Time.....	300
5.5.2 African Time as Eschatological Time.....	303
5.5.3 Cyclic Time as Structural Expression.....	305
5.5.4 Igbo Christianity and Resurrection.....	309
5.6 Conclusion.....	311
6 Reincarnation and Ilo-uwa in General.....	315
6.1 Introduction.....	315
6.2 What is Reincarnation.....	315
6.2.1 The Origin of the Doctrine of Reincarnation.....	316
6.2.2 Reincarnation in Some World Religion.....	318
6.2.3 Reincarnation and the Asian Religions.....	318
6.2.4 Hinduism.....	320
6.2.5 Buddhism.....	321
6.2.6 The Tenets of Eastern Religions about the Material Universe	324
6.3 The Bible and the Doctrine of Reincarnation.....	325
6.3.1 The World as Evil.....	329
6.3.2 The Identification of Reincarnation in Religions.....	333
6.3.3 Partial Reincarnation in African Religions.....	334
6.4 The Meaning of Ilo-uwa.....	337
6.4.1 The Philosophy of Omenala.....	338
6.4.2 The Reason for the Survival of the ‘Reincarnation in Ilo-uwa	341
6.4.3 Reincarnation and Ilo-uwa Compared.....	342
6.4.4 The Paradox of Reincarnation Belief.....	345
6.5 The Ogbanje Phenomenon and its Relationship with the Doctrine of Reincarnation.....	347
6.5.1 Conclusion.....	351
7 Colonialism, Culture Contact and its Implications on Igbo Belief.....	357

7.1 Introduction.....	357
7.2 Colonialism and Nigeria Evolutionary History.....	357
7.3 The Definition of Evil.....	359
7.3.1 Kinds of Evil.....	361
7.3.2 What is suffering.....	362
7.3.3 Fear and Human Suffering.....	363
7.4 Ilo-uwa as Retribution.....	364
7.4.1 The Igbo and the Sense of Justice.....	366
7.4.2 Why the Igbo became Christians.....	369
7.5 The Missionary Enterprise in Igbo Land.....	375
7.6 Mission and the Influence of Colonialism in Igbo Land.....	378
7.6.1 Independent Churches.....	382
7.6.2 The Ethiopian/African Church.....	384
7.6.3 The Foundation of African Independent Churches.....	387
7.6.4 African Independent Churches and Syncretism.....	389
7.7 A Church on Transition.....	393
7.7.1 Ecclesia in Africa and the New Evangelization.....	395
7.7.2 Evangelization via Inculturation.....	398
7.7.3 The Meaning of the Term Inculturation.....	400
7.7.4 Theological foundation of Inculturation.....	402
7.7.5 The Purpose of Inculturation.....	404
7.7.6 African Theology Advancing African Christianity.....	406
7.8 Evaluation.....	408
7.9 General Conclusion.....	410
Abbreviations	417
Encyclical-Letters/Addresses/and Exhortations.....	417
Internet and other Subsidiary Sources	448

1 General Introduction

Resurrection is a doctrine of life after death. Judaism, Christianity and Islam are the three major religions that hold this opinion. Resurrection is not about an ordinary return to earthly life but it depicts the entry into a full realization of life. Other religions have different concepts of life after death. The relations of these other beliefs (reincarnation) with the concept of the resurrection remain ambiguous. St. Paul dedicated chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians to the treatment of resurrection. The Corinthian community is an aggregation of different opinions. Some within the community opined to resurrection whilst there are still some parts that rejected it (1 Cor 15:12b).¹ Paul did not deem it fit to allow the negative arguments to strive within the community since the doctrine itself is the heartbeat and the central point of Christianity. For him the survival of Christianity depends on the proclamation of the Easter event because “if it is true that Christ was not raised from death, then we have nothing to preach and you have nothing to believe” (V.14). That means resurrection is the cardinal belief and live wire of Christian existence and the foundation of its faith. The authenticity of this belief is also that of Christianity. Granted that this belief is the foundation of the Church’s faith, to teach it Paul was very careful. According to Karl Barth, in the early days of his catechetical instruction in the Corinthian Church (1 Corinthians), Paul did not explicitly mention this vital teaching of the Christian faith until the fifteenth chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians. In this chapter, Paul gave it a comprehensive treatment. Like already implied, there could have been obvious reasons why he did not explicitly treat this topic before this chapter. However, it is important to know that Paul knew the spiritual

¹ The following authors have extensively retreated resurrection. Gerhard Sellin, *Der Streit um die Auferstehung der Toten, Eine religionsgeschichtliche und exegetische Untersuchung von 1 Korinther 15*, FRLANT 138, Göttingen, (1986); G. Barth, *Zur Frage nach der in 1 Korinther 15 bekämpften Auferstehungsleugnung*, in: ZNW 83 (1992), 187-201; D. Zeller, *Die Rede von Tod und Auferstehung Jesu im hellenistischen Kontext*, in: BiKi 52, (1997), 19-24; idem, *Die angebliche enthusiastische oder spiritualistische Front in 1 Kor 15*, in: *The Studia Philonica Annual* 13, (2001), 176-189.

strength of his Corinthian community. In his catechesis, especially at the beginning St. Paul was always using the metaphor of milk and solid food to teach his assembly. He compared the early Corinthian church with children who need milk more than solid food. Actually, he could not talk to them like people who have the spirit. He talked to them as children in the Christian faith. As children feeding on milk, they were not yet ripe for serious theological talk (1 Cor 3:1-2). Nevertheless, we will not forget the vibrant and warm spirit with which the Corinthian community accepted the Gospel. This warm spirit is what St. Paul also acknowledged in the early chapters of the epistle. This prosperity of spirit notwithstanding, Paul was quick to notice the intellectual skepticism of some of the proletariats of the Corinthian community (1 Cor 1:18-25). The complex composition of the Corinthian church did not stop philosophical and theological dialogue² nor did it prevent a didactic approach to the understanding of the mystery of which they were coheirs. After a series of epistemological engagement and when Paul was sure the community had benefited both from his teachings and had been enriched by God's grace (1 Cor 1:5), Paul then introduced the resurrection chapter in 1 Cor 15. The NT used two prominent Greek words to describe resurrection, *Anistamai* (Mtt 26:62; Lk 11:7f) and *Egeiromai* (Mtt 8:26; 9:19; Mk 1:31; Acts 3:7). The former depicts an act of standing up after having lain down to sleep the latter suggests the rising up again after death. There are arguments that this principal metaphor that describes what happens after death was foreign to the psych of the OT and that is why it took so long to develop. The other stream of argument upholds that the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Persian religions did not influence the independence of OT theology on the doctrine of the resurrection. However, the final establishment of the doctrine took place in the second century B.C. at the time of the Maccabean martyrdom.

² Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, H. J. Stenning (trans.), Oregon, (2003), 13.

In keeping with Jewish anthropology, the NT and the Fathers of the Church usage of the resurrection terminology expresses that God has restored the crucified Jesus to life. Since the body is a means by which one could be identified, the traditions claim that Jesus rose bodily though not a return to physical earthly life. This claim has its own generational problems. The arguments have continued on both sides of pro and contra. This thesis tries to make clear the distinction inherent in the positions taken by various authors on the metaphors used in describing human final destiny. The metaphors are mainly about resurrection, reincarnation, immortality of the soul, transmigration of soul, resuscitation etc. The resurrection terminology does not amount to reincarnation, or the immortality of the soul. It is quite different from resuscitation of the corpse as in the case of the Lazarus. Unfortunately, the English language has no clear-cut distinction between resurrection and resuscitation. The two concepts are very much related. To draw a clear difference from these concepts two German concepts were used. German theology distinguishes the terminologies of resurrection from restoration or resuscitation with the phrases of ‘*Auferstehung*’ for the resurrection of Jesus and ‘*Auferweckung*’ for the re-awaking of Lazarus.

The resurrection of Jesus is not a mere lease from the tomb³ otherwise the Easter event will be simply a natural phenomenon. The discovery of the

³ For detail insight on the resurrection of Jesus and that of the dead see, Berger, K., *Die Auferstehung des Propheten und die Erhöhung des Menschensohnes* (StUNT 13), Göttingen, (1976); Becker, J., *Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi nach dem Neuen Testament*, Tübingen, (2007); idem, *Auferstehung der Toten im Urchristentum* (SBS 82), Stuttgart, (1976); Paul Hoffmann, *Die Toten in Christus* (NTA NF 2), Münster 3(1978); idem, *Art. Auferstehung. 1/3 Auferstehung der Toten im NT*, TRE 4 (1979), 450-467; idem, *Art. Auferstehung. II/1. Auferstehung Jesu Christi im NT*, TRE 4 (1979), 478-513; Crag, W. L., *The History of the Empty Tomb of Jesus*: NTS 31, (1985), 39-67; Berg, W., *Jenseitsvorstellungen im Alten Testament mit Hinweisen auf das frühe Judentum*, in: *Die größere Hoffnung der Christen*, (hg.), A. Gerhards (QD 127), Freiburg, (1990), 28-58; Biddle, M., *Das Grab Christi. Neutestamentliche Quellen – historische und archaologische Forschungen – überraschende Erkenntnisse*, Basel, (1998); Filoramo, G., *Art. Escatologie 1*, RGG⁴ 2 (1999), 1542-1546; Write N.T., *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, London, (2003); Alkier, S., *Die Realität der Auferweckung in, nach und mit den Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, Tübingen, (2009).

empty tomb by Mary Magdalene (Jn 20:1ff) and subsequent appearance stories specified that the personal being of Jesus had been transformed in its totality to a full and definitive existence. Resurrection for the NT consists of the transformed or glorified body “spiritual bodies” this is in contrast to the other terminologies already mentioned and other possible concepts that describe life after death. Unlike these other phenomena, the resurrected body has the ability to be with others in a way that is not limited by ordinary earthly conditions.⁴ This thesis steps to wrestle with the puzzle of the belief of the Igbo in relationship with human destination after death and the direction the pendulum of belief tilts: towards resurrection or reincarnation.

Traditional religion was Nigeria major religion before its Islamization in the 13th century and Christianization in the 15th century.⁵ Today 45% of Nigerians are adherents of Islam, 49% are Christians and 6% remain followers of traditional religion.⁶ On the part of the Igbo people, more than half of its population has gone over to Christianity abandoning their traditional religion and allowing many of their former traditional places of religious gathering and shrines to crumble. Their sacred groves with their totemic animals have been destroyed. As much as this statement is verifiable, it is also true that the Igbo have somehow kept their traditional faith authenticated in the philosophy ‘let the Eagle and Kite peach’ (“Egbe bere Ugo bere”). Such a philosophy does not see any contradiction between attending Christian service and worshipping at the remaining shrines of the traditional deities.⁷ In Igbo land today, there are unidentifiable numbers of Christians who carry holy water with the same zeal as they carry talisman, Juju and fetish images. Many of them attend Masses, Eucharistic adorations and other spiritual ex-

⁴ Xavier Léon-Dufour, Resurrection, in: Dictionary of the New Testament, San Francisco, (1983).

⁵ Various parts of Africa as well as the Nigeria nation did experience evangelization at different times. Some had early experience while many others only experienced missionary Christianity in much later years.

⁶ Kenneth Enang, Nigeria, in: Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon, vol. 3, (1992), 759-763, 760-1.

⁷ Luke N. Mbefo, Christian Theology and African Heritage, Onitsha, (1996), 114.

ercises during the day only to consult with the medium at the shrines under the cover of darkness. Where there are no shrines, some of the Independent Churches are providing alternatives.

At present, it is very difficult to decipher their authentic belief. Given this scenario, the arising anxiety is whether Christianity was sufficiently planted in the Igbo (African) soil. In the alternative, whether Christianity in Igbo land is merely on a transitory stage or on a brief stopover between animism and secularism.⁸ To address this imbroglio is to define what the Igbo believe in; their authentic belief will help to define the future of Christianity in Igbo land. What is the totality of religious belief if not the eschatology, the last events pertaining to the end of human history in which resurrection is a theme.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

It seems right enough that if the basic concepts that describe life after death in other religions are not mentioned right away, if they are instead stressed only in its Igbo context, then the character of the concept in Igbo religion becomes so elusive. It definitely becomes nonsensical to go forward with the problem this thesis wishes to address. This work focuses on the belief in life after death and human final destiny. The question of human final destiny remains a serious concern. The human mind has tried to address this. To do this it has developed different theories and different kinds of answers have equally evolved. These answers have come from philosophical and theological backgrounds, from atheistic and theistic standpoints.

In the case of the Igbo religion, the concept of the 'resurrection' has not developed in its religious cult. However, this does not mean there are no elements of the doctrine within its religious tradition. In fact, a particular concept within the Igbo traditional religion has helped my interpretation of the presence of eschatological belief within Igbo religion. This concept is called

⁸ Ogbu Kalu, *The History of Christianity in West Africa*, Hong Kong, (1980), 345.

ilo-uwa (rebirth?). Does this term (*ilo-uwa*) effectively compares with the idea of Christian resurrection? As it is, paying attention to the internal and external dynamics of the term is very important. The thesis distinguishes between *ilo-uwa* (rebirth, reincarnation?) from the Asian form of reincarnation. Granted the Igbo concept explains the closeness between the visible and invisible world, the interest of this thesis is on the eschatological belief of the Igbo. Do they believe in reincarnation or resurrection? Secondly, why are there tensions between Igbo culture/religion and Christianity?

1.2 The Argument of this Work

From the perspective of anthropology, the human being knows that it would die. The inescapability of death challenges the value to human life. That death challenges life, this does not mean it reduces it. To think of life is to think of death and vice versa. To think death is to think of the resurrection, it is to think of life. Death has no different meaning from life and from the resurrection. The role death plays in human existence brings the issue of eschatology in focus. Every culture or tradition has its own different ways of assessing the world. Their *Weltanschauung* gives them foundation to believe what they hold. The Jewish world-view and experience influenced them in believing what they hold about eschatology. Jewish eschatology has helped in modifying the eschatological thought seen in both Christianity and Islam. The two religions have their roots in Judaism. Unlike Christianity and Islam, the Igbo religion is not directly rooted in the Jewish religion but like in these religions eschatology stands at the heart of Igbo traditional religious tenets.

Religions that teach eschatology believe that it is the culmination of salvation. For the Igbo salvation is an inter-connectivity of existence, it implies fullness of life (*uju ndu*), wholeness, wellness, blessed life (*uju ngozi*), harmonious relationship with fellow human beings, the spirit world, and the whole cosmos. This dissertation argues that the close “connection between the biblical/Oriental idea of salvation and the African idea of salvation, sug-

gests that those ideas are tightly connected with a complete pattern of thinking.”⁹ While it took the Jewish several centuries to develop its doctrine of the last things, the development of the doctrine in Igbo religion is still undergoing interpretation especially in the phenomenon of *ilo-uwa*.

1.3 The Purpose of the Research

This research intends to demonstrate the reconcilability of the eschatological hope of the Igbo with those of the Christian Bible. The missionaries actually did not in the real sense of the word introduced the idea of religion, nor the concept of God neither would it be credited to them that they introduced the concept of eschatology within the Igbo religion. Before the advent of the white Christian missionaries in the later part of the 19th century (1885), the Igbo already shared in the religious sentiment for a concern of life after death, a universal phenomenon in the psyche of most world religions. Like Christianity and Islam, the Igbo traditional religion may well be an ‘Abrahamic’ religion, despite the fact that it is not scriptural but sculptural. This is because, like these other religions, the Igbo Ancestral Religion upholds the ultimate hope in the resurrection of the flesh.¹⁰

The Igbo traditional religion “resembles on points the religions of those peoples of the ancient Near East. It also bears semblances of the Hebrew religion as revealed to them by Yahweh.”¹¹ The purpose is to say that the Igbo religion like Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and many other religions is a world religion¹² with a developed doctrine of life after death. The belief in life after death within Igbo tradition speaks out eloquently in Igbo religious practices, rites and rituals of birth and burial. The sacrifices of the Igbo people and their burial rituals celebrations are not symbolic but

⁹ George M. Okorie, *The Integral Salvation of the Human Person in Ecclesia in Africa*, Frankfurt am Main, (2008), 26.

¹⁰ Cajetan Ajoku Duruji, *Ofo na Ogu in Igbo Traditional Religion*, in: *Religion in a World of Change, African Ancestral Religion, Islam and Christianity*, Theophilus Okere, (ed.), Owerri, (2003), 87.

¹¹ Anthony Ilonu, *God and Evangelization, A Lenten Pastoral*, Okigwe, (1991), no. 34.

are real. In this sense, a belief in real ‘resurrection’ in the hereafter is believed to have taken place after celebrating appropriate rites of passage.

The crux of the matter, that is, the intention of this thesis is to find a soft landing ground for dialogue between the two religions of different cultures. Of course, “the Gospel is not opposed to any culture.”¹³ When it engages any culture, it does not do so in order to strip that culture of its richness. It does not force any culture to adopt forms that are alien to it in order to bring the culture to a genuine liberation.¹⁴ Finding common ground for possible reconciliation remains the primary goal of this work.

1.4 The Methodology Used

Given the inherent problem of establishing the doctrine of the resurrection in our culture of study, various methodologies were used, mainly interpretative. Hermeneutics here is to help us interpret some phenomenology in Igbo religion that could possibly be interpreted in the sense of the Christian resurrection. Of course, resurrection terminology in our present world has many interpretations. Schools of thought understand it differently. Different traditions and cultures approach it differently. The resurrection is a past event for some, for others it is a future event while another interpretation holds it as a continuous event. In relations to the resurrection of Christ, “the

¹² Adiele E. Afigbo, *Ancestral Igbo Religion and Cosmos and the Idea of World Religion*, in: *Religion in a World of Change*, 168-180. In this article, Afigbo refutes the definition of world religions proposed by a number of scholars including Pal Twitchwell, *The Spiritual Notebook*, Minneapolis, ²(1990); Florence Tanner, *The Mystery Teachings in World Religions*, Illinois, (1992), 11; See, Charles Joseph Adams, *The Study and Classification of Religions*, in: *Encyclopedia Britannica* vol. 26. ¹⁵(2005), 509-29. These writings classified certain religions as world religions. Afigbo maintains that the convention of World religion as used in these books and authors is vague and imprecise. The notion of world religion according to him means different things for different people. As a result, “one man’s World Religion could be subsumed in another man’s World Religion or could be still another’s tribal, local or national religion.” *Ibid.* 168.

¹³ Pope John Paul II, (Encyclical Letter), *Fides et Ratio*, 14 September (1998), no.71.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

past event is treated as a foretaste, or first fruits, of the future.”¹⁵ The power to interpreting eschatology grants us the room to do so with the Igbo religion.

The next methodology used in this research is analytic method. Though orally transmitted, the riches of Igbo tradition, culture and religion like other African religions unfortunately, lack documentation.¹⁶ The Igbo religion is not a religion of the book; it has no written or documented articles of faith. Our task here is to synthesize the thoughts of the Igbo by piercing their psychology via language analysis, traditional examination and the scrutiny of cultural practices. This work has followed primary and secondary library sources. The work has analyzed these sources to make its point clearer. Finally, the historical methodology adopted has helped this work to connect Igbo (African) history, belief and practice with the history of the OT and NT as well as showing their differences in relation to the Asian religions belief in life after death.

¹⁵ Henry J. Cadbury, *Intimations of Immortality in the thought of Jesus*, in: *Immortality and Resurrection*, Krister Stendahl (ed.), New York, (1965), 119.

¹⁶ John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*. no.72.

2 Definitions of some Fundamental Concepts

2.1 Introduction

One fundamental question of life is the mystery of human existence, life and death. Unfortunately, neither science nor philosophy has been able to provide satisfactory answers to these great questions of ‘who we are, who we were and where we go from here.’ These basic questions confront the meaning of ‘the inner personality.’ To provide solutions to these questions of human reality, humanity confronts science, technology and philosophy. When these disciplines fail to answer the questions to the riddle of life, humanity turns to different religions for answers. In their own capacities world religions attempt various ways to calm the human heart about the meaning of life especially what happens at death.¹⁷ They do this by formulating doctrines and moral precepts fortified with sacred rites.¹⁸

These attempts notwithstanding religions not even Christianity as well as science and philosophies have been unable to contribute the details that define these basic questions. The Magisterium clearly confirms this when it says. “Neither Scripture nor theology provides sufficient light for a proper picture of life after death.”¹⁹ Having said this, we understand the belief in the events of after death as an article of faith or creed.²⁰ The importance of this article of faith is that it reveals God’s plans. Has God any plans for creation? Is there any particular way to know this plan? To answer these questions we are focusing on the definition of some basic concepts. We are beginning with the definition of revelation and God.

¹⁷ *Nostra Aetate*, 1.

¹⁸ *Nostra Aetate*, 2.

¹⁹ *The Reality of Life after Death: Recentesiores Episcoporum Synodi*, 11 May 1979, in: *Vatican Council II Post Conciliar Documents*, Austin Flannery (ed.), New York, (1982), 502-3.

²⁰ *The Reality of Life after Death: Recentesiores Episcoporum Synodi*, 500.

2.2 Revelation

The coming of Jesus in human form was for one major reason. He came to give back life to the human being (Jn 10:10). Jesus used various analogies to describe himself in connections with the Father and the purpose of salvation. He used the imagery of the tree and the branches to show himself as the source of life. He says, "I am the real vine, and my Father is the gardener, He breaks off every branch in me that does not bear fruit.... Those who remain in me, and I in them, will bear much fruit..." (Jn 15:1-6). In the Gospel of John 10:7-10 Jesus presents himself in a positive way as the gate and life and contrasts the negative image of death and the thief. Jesus in these passages identified himself as the means of salvation (v.9). The promise of entering through the gate to find salvation alludes to Ps 118:19-20 thus, this passage identified Jesus as the only access to the Father.²¹ In the 10b verse of this Gospel, Jesus says he has come to bring life and to bring it in full. This statement has an eschatological significance. It draws our attention first to revelation. Jesus is the revelation of the Father. We know the Father through Jesus and we know the plan of God through his revelation in Jesus.

Revelation is a communication of some truth of God through means, which are beyond ordinary course of nature. Revelation from the Latin *revelare* usually refers to an unveiling of truths which ordinary reason alone cannot reach. In religious matters, revelation discloses the fact of God who communicates himself to creatures and allows creatures a participation in a knowledge that cannot be reached by reason alone. The human being participates in God's knowledge.²² There are two kinds of revelation, supernatural and natural. Supernatural revelation transcends all that a creature could dis-

²¹ Gail R. O'Day, *The Gospel of John*, in: *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 9, Nashville, (1995), 491-865, 669.

²² Gernot Wießner, *Offenbarung I, Religionsphänomenologie*, in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, bd. 25, Berlin, (1995), 109-117, 117; Horst Dietrich Preuß, *Offenbarung II, Altes Testament*, in: *TRE*, Bd, 25, 117-128, 119.

cover by the power of its own ability. It is a communication of God himself to humans either by word or by signs. Scripture is an act of supernatural revelation. On the other hand, natural revelation is God unveiling himself in human conscience or in nature.²³ The entire dogmatic constitution, *Dei Verbum* of the Vatican II council concentrates on the subject of revelation. In the Gospel of John we read, God created the world and conserves it with the powers of his Word (Jn 1:3). Nature is not God, created things equally are not God but God constantly reveals himself through them (Rom 1:19-20). Through them God provides and reveals to humanity his constant plan for the world. God has no other plans except plans for life. The creed described the plans of God for the world. God who created the world planned to save it. The plan to save the world and humanity started from the moment human first parents sinned. Sin brings condemnation and damnation. Adam's sin brought him shame and pains to humanity. But after the fall, God signed Adam and Eve up with the hope of salvation. He did this by promising redemption (Gn 3:15). God made good his promise. In Jesus, the salvation promised humanity was fulfilled. This is an act of faith revelation. The final article of the baptismal creed describes the human final destiny in the faith of the resurrection. Saint Paul states how much the resurrection of the dead is the heartbeat of Christian belief (1 Cor 15).²⁴ The remarkable statement with which Tertullian (ca. 160 – ca. 225) began his *De resurrectione carnis* (On the Resurrection of the Flesh) characterizes the relationship of the resurrection with revelation. Following Saint Paul, Tertullian agrees that 'the resurrection of the dead is the Christian's trust. It is Christian men and women's confidence. By it, we are believers. By it, we are what we claim to be. To the belief of this (article of the faith) truth compels us, that truth which God reveals.'²⁵ As part of revelation, the human mind wants really to

²³ Cf. Avery Dulles, *Theology of Revelation*, in: *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 12, Washington, D.C., (2003), 193-198, 193.

²⁴ *The Reality of Life after Death*, *Recentiores Episcoporum Synodi*, 500.

²⁵ *De Resurrectione* 1. (De res. Quotations from Tertullian's and other works of the Fathers are taken from 'New Advent CD-ROM, Kevin Knight, (editor), or www.newadvent.org).

appropriate the meaning of the resurrection. In some cases, it seems incomprehensible. ‘Gnostics’ suppose that nothing will survive after death at least, not the body.

2.3 Life after death - the two common Terms

When discussing life beyond this physical existence there are two constant terms. The concepts are resurrection and immortality. Both terms co-relate with life after death that is, the rising of the dead or flesh/body at death. The resurrection of the dead or of the flesh, in some cases is linked up with the question of the immortality of the soul.²⁶ Though the terms are related, they have their inner differences. They could be misconstrued. The two concepts describe life after death. In its strictest definition, life-after-death is a conscious existence after resurrection. For the Christian it is the fullness of life in God. Christians (catholic) believe life in God begins here in the present physical world especially through the sacraments. It begins with the sacrament of baptism. By baptism, the Christian is buried with Christ and share his death. Thus, Paul writes; “by our baptism, then, we were buried with him and shared his death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from death by the glorious power of the Father, so also we might live a new life. For since we have become one with him in dying as he did, in the same way we shall be one with him by being raised to life as he was” (Rom 6:4-5). It is the objective of Christian baptism and initiation, to transform the Christian from mortality to immortality. By initiating him in the death of Christ to gain the immortal life of he who has conquered death. The death of Christ is only salvific, it does not destroy or obliterate our own individual physical death. However, through the help of God who resurrected Jesus, death becomes a means of life for many through baptism. Death of course does not destroy life in the baptized of Christ. The death of a Christian therefore becomes only but a reiteration of a systematic change; from one stage to an-

²⁶ Willem Cornelis van Unnik, *The Newly Discovered Gnostic ‘Epistle to Reginos on the Resurrection,’* in: *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 15, (1964), 141-153, 153.

other, one life to the next, in this way life does not end. It does not enter into oblivion neither is it a cessation of existence. Thus, the terms resurrection and immortality brought to light by the Gospel²⁷ means that man rediscovers in God his whole history. In this mode, resurrection is not a question of empty faith or a simple belief on a survival theory. It is not just a mere doctrine of hope, which we must believe in order to escape the worries of the present situation. It is not a theory we must believe just because we wish to survive and experience a better life beyond the grave. It is an inevitable moment in human existence when death seen as an enemy will turn to be a great crusader of life. It is a moment when death will be a gateway to the immortal life of the transformed.

2.4 Resurrection in World Religions and Philosophy

History of religions reveals that death is a concern of almost every religion. Even though Hinduism and Buddhism claim to have some kind of reservation in life after death, they emphasize reincarnation rather than resurrection. Resurrection of the body or flesh is a strong doctrine found in Judaism religion besides we know of some world religions that teach resurrection of the body. We find this doctrine in Zoroastrianism (Persian religion), in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The doctrine is also contained partly in the old Egyptian religion. There is implicit presence of the doctrine in many other traditional religions. While all of the above religions have showed that there is life after death, Christianity has explicitly taught the resurrection of the body in the sense of a miracle of transformation.

2.5 Religion, God and Humanity in Relationship

Understanding human essence either in religion or in culture does not happen in isolation. The talk of the human being equally does not exclude the idea of God. Religion synthesizes the notion of God and humanity. The extent this notion has gone is realized in the fact that religion in our present

²⁷ De res 1.

time is receiving different interpretations. People are giving it their personal definitions to the exclusion of the traditional meaning and from others. A Christian may believe Christianity (Catholicism or Protestantism) is the definition of religion the way a Muslim (Shiite or Sunni) may think Islam is the definition of religion. Even the definition of religion from its Latin etymology (religare - to tie fast) is equally fraught with difficulty. People who are tied fast and have good faith in what they believe at times expressed such belief as their religion. Some who are deeply tied to love, sport or even adventure seem at times to believe these as their religion. They identify their passion as been controlled by a supernatural force, which they think is the god or goddess of their religion.

On the other hand, some people see religion from the ‘anthropological’²⁸ point of view. This perspective is gradually eroding the traditionalists’ concepts that religion deals with abstract interpretation from God perspective. The understanding of religion in ‘anthropological’ perspective explains the human as the one seeking to understand the divine. Religion as ‘anthropology’ is concerned on how religion works in the lives of the human.²⁹ Helping the human to live and appreciate others as the image of God.

It all means that there is no way the human being and what concerns it would be effectively discussed without reference to God. In other words, “we cannot get pictures of human beings and pictures of God separately. Talk of God says as much about human commitment as about the commitment of God.”³⁰ The inseparability of the discussion about God from humanity is the crux of the whole “Theology of the New Testament” by Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976). For him, all talk about God is also talk about humanity and all talk about humanity invariably is a talk about God.³¹ The

²⁸ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Church the Human Story of God*, New York, (1990), 63.

²⁹ Neil Gillman, *The Death of Death: Resurrection and Immortality in Jewish Thought*, Woodstock, (2006), 19.

³⁰ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Church the Human Story*, 63.

³¹ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testament*, Tübingen, ⁹(1984), 192.

question of the relationship between God and humanity is rooted in the old question of creation and the destiny of humanity. The points made so far have brought to consciousness the fact that the revelation of God in Jesus is in fulfillment of the promise of salvation after the pains brought about by the fall. Almost all world religions reckon with the belief in life after death. These religions could not have come to this conclusion except through the tools of revelation knowing that the doctrine of after life is not empirically demonstrable. While some religions have defined eschatology many have no specific definition of how one enters eternity. In Christianity, one enters life after death via the resurrection. Both in Christianity and in other religions were the doctrine of life after death is defined God remains the matrix of the belief in life after death. Therefore, to have a better idea of the resurrection, it is important to understand the nature of God. This approach will aid our understanding the doctrine of resurrection of the dead from the Christian perspective as well as from the traditional Igbo belief in life-after-death. We are beginning with the being of God. The consideration of the nature of God is necessary, as expectations concerning some form of human survival after death, cannot be isolated from the totality of the understanding of the nature of the divine.³² It is necessary to consider God here since his nature and image in itself is redemption.³³

2.6 The Being and Essence of God

The being of God denotes in a simple language the attributes of God or his qualities. These qualities describe God's nature of internal existence and external being compared with others. Historic Bible-based ascribes five different modes of existence to God. He exists in the following ways. 1. He exists as a self-existent in sufficiency and sustenance 2. God is simple, perfect and immutable 3. He is infinite, bodiless, omnipotent, omnipresent and eternal

³² Jane I. Smith, *Afterlife: An overview*, in: *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol.1, ²(2005), 128-135.

³³ Charles Partee, *Calvin and Classical Philosophy*, Netherlands, (1977), 53.

4. He is both transcendent and immanent in the universe 5. God is impassible.³⁴ These qualities commonly summarize the existence of God, as a necessity attributable to his nature. God did not exist in time and cannot stop to exist. His existence is a quality of having life. Different thoughts have tried to construct the meaning of God by trying a definition.

2.6.1 Definition of God from Philosophical Perspective

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1956) captivates our attention here, especially in his central role in analytic philosophy that very much influenced the thought of 20th century philosophy. This influence has continued to shape philosophical thoughts in areas of ethics and religion, aesthetics and culture, logic and language. According to Wittgenstein, definition of terms in the usage of language is very necessary.³⁵ Also of absolute importance is specification in words application and the use of names. For Wittgenstein, naming is like attaching a label to a thing and unless we name things, we cannot talk about them. We cannot refer to them in discussion. Names at times do explain the meaning of things and point to their bearer.³⁶ In the same vein, it is important we properly identify God and properly place him within the perspective of our study.

The prevailing logic of Wittgenstein notwithstanding, we shall not prioritize the definition of God for proper identification. Secondly, it is obvious that certain concepts have defiled definition perhaps from their nature or due to circumstance. Given the nature of philosophy, it will be difficult trying to have a systematic constructed definition of God. Even if we try to do this by way of etymological derivation from Greek, Latin or English, we will still encounter the same difficulty. This is because God has different meanings for different people. Autonomous philosophy understands God in perspective. In his natural 'theology' and science, Aristotle references the word

³⁴ Cf. J.I. Packer, *New Dictionary of Theology*, Sinclair B. Ferguson, et al (eds.), (1996), 276.

³⁵ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigation*, Basil Blackwell, (1989), 13e § 21e.

³⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigation*, 13e § 21e.

‘God’ as the cause of all things. He is the First principle called the ‘Unmoved Mover.’³⁷ Thus, God becomes a person that moves others and causes effects. However, God is not simply the Prime Mover or First Cause; he is the cause of the very existence of the world and its continuance in being.³⁸ To acquire the knowledge of God is to go from the effect to the cause. Evidently, we have knowledge of original cause only when we recognize the existence of the principle first cause. The notion of the word ‘God’ as a person deserving unconditional obedience begins to wane in the last few decades, especially at the wake of the industrial revolution. It began with the negative and radical theology that culminated in the death of God movement.³⁹ The death of God movement sometimes technically referred as “theothanatology” or radical theology brought the whole change in the modern conception of God. The word has its derivation from two Greek words, Theos meaning God and Thanatos meaning death. This shift in understanding was actually initiated by the related events of the World War II and the experience of the concentration camps in Europe. The ‘God is dead’ movement or the negative or radical theological movement introduced a new kind of understanding in the definition of ‘God.’ This new way became quite different from the traditional concept of explaining God.

Richard Rubenstein, one of the prominent proponents of this radical theology of the 1960 interpreted God as a ‘Holy Nothingness.’ Before this usage and interpretation, Hegel (1770-1831) had already said of God as an ‘Absolute Spirit.’⁴⁰ Paul Tillich (1886-1965) cautions the understanding of God outside the interpretation of ‘Being-itself or Ground of Being.’⁴¹ For him,

³⁷ Richard Mckeon (ed.), *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, New York, (2001), Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 983a, 5.

³⁸ Peter E. Hodgson, *The Christian Origin of Science*, in: *Religion in a World of Change*, 32.

³⁹ Richard L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, London, ²(1992).

⁴⁰ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, J.B. Baillie (trans.), London, (1931), 493, 86. See also, Edward Schillebeeckx, *Church the Human Story of God*, John Bowden (trans.), New York, (1990), 64.

⁴¹ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1. Chicago, (1951), 235-6.

outside this interpretation will be setting confusion and weakness in the doctrine of God. Rubenstein explains his interpretation of ‘omnipotent Nothingness’ as meaning that God is the Lord of all creation. For him God as Holy Nothingness offers a concise way of synthesizing mystical, dialectical, psychoanalytic, and archaic insights concerning God as the ground, content, and final destiny of all things.⁴² This concept captures the thought of Paul of Tarsus’ recapitulation theology of the final consummation of redemptive history when Christ, the Messiah, destroys ‘every rule and every kingdom, power and authority including the ‘last enemy’ death. He will then submit himself to the one who made the universe subject to him, so that God may be all in all (1 Cor 15:20-28).⁴³ The consummation of things at the end of time and the recapitulation Paul introduced in Christian spirituality has a different implication from the adoption John Hick has made of Dharma in Buddhism. “[...] Though whereas there is only one Second Person of the Trinity there are innumerable Buddhas – although, again ultimately all the Buddhas are one. And in catholic or Mahayana Buddhism the Buddha came to draw men into his Dharma Body as, in Mahayana or catholic Christianity, the Christ came to draw men into his Mystical Body.”⁴⁴ Contrary to the comparison of Hick, both concepts have structural parallel. The Christian Church as the body of Christ to be drawn back to Christ by recapitulation differs from the complete absorption in the flesh of Buddha at the end of time. All things are drawn unto Christ that he may reign supreme over all. In Christ, all things will maintain their identities. However, in Buddha, all things are drawn in his Body, Dharma or flesh unto which they lose their identity.

It is right here to point that the death of God movement was influenced by the 1882 publication of Friedrich Nietzsche’s “Die fröhliche Wissenschaft” or the “Gay Science.” The word ‘God is dead’ appeared for the second time

⁴² Richard Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 305.

⁴³ Richard Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 304.

⁴⁴ John Hick, *Death and Eternal life*, Kentucky, (1994), 440-1.

in section no.125 of the “The Madman.” In section no.343 of “The Meaning of Our Cheerfulness,” the statement appeared again for the third time. However, the word ‘God is dead’ was made famous by Nietzsche’s classical work “Thus spoke Zarathustra.” Before the publication of Nietzsche’s works, Hegel had already nursed the thought of the death of God. At the end of his treatise Faith and Knowledge (1802), Hegel names the “feeling on which rests the religion of the modern period, the feeling God himself is dead...”⁴⁵ However, “Hegel’s pronouncement carries a thought different from that contained in the word of Nietzsche. Still, there exists between the two an essential connection that conceals itself in the essence of all metaphysics.”⁴⁶ The pronouncement of Nietzsche also carries a different thought from what is contained in the words of 1960 death of God movement theologians. However, the thought of Nietzsche and the radical movement theologians are technically connected. In Nietzsche the word, ‘God is dead’ is used to “designate the suprasensory world in general. God is the name for the realm of Ideas and ideals.”⁴⁷ In the case of the radical theology, the term was used in cautious reprimand of the rapid individualistic Western society.

Like in Nietzsche, it must be said that the usage of the word in the era of our concern was metaphorical. It must be stressed “that the death of God is not something that has happened to God. It is a cultural event experienced by men and women, many of whom remain faithful members of their religious communities. No longer able to believe in a transcendent God who is sovereign over human history and who rewards and punishes men and women according to their deeds, they nevertheless render homage to that God in the rituals and liturgy of the community of their inheritance.”⁴⁸ This statement makes two basic cases for the emergence of radical theology. Negative theology in this statement tends first to criticize society’s lip service to God

⁴⁵ See, Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, William Lovitt (trans.), San Francisco, (1977), 58-9.

⁴⁶ Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 59.

⁴⁷ Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 61.

⁴⁸ Richard Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 294.

and religions, which it understands as only serving a purpose. The society in this sense view religions in the forms of “fences that hold young saplings erect. Without the fence, the sapling could fall over. When it takes firm root and becomes a tree, the fence is no longer needed.”⁴⁹ Understanding of lip service in Rubenstein is what Nietzsche explains as the society moving towards nihilism that is, towards devaluing the highest values (Will to Power, Aph.2) which include God and all that supports human life.⁵⁰

The next purpose negative theology intends to serve is to criticize the injustices perpetrated by humanity against fellow humans. It warns against the irreligiosity of the society that no longer believes in the existence of a transcendent God. It also confronts the negative undertone implication of the opinion that the society determines the existence of God in the form Hegel says of it. “Ohne Welt ist Gott nicht Gott (without the world God is not God).”⁵¹ On the other hand, radical theology means to demonstrate the uniqueness of creation that is connected to the creator. It argues: “If God were not, I should not be, and if I were not, He too would not be.”⁵² Metaphorically, the extermination at Auschwitz and the Holocaust was a constructed effort to cause the death of ‘God’ by destruction of his image, the human person. The unwillingness on the part of God to save humanity from the wickedness of the Auschwitz massacre is evident of the readiness to die with humanity. Thus, Rubenstein cautioned against the orthodox/traditional theistic God of the Abrahamic covenant, rather, God for him is a historical process.⁵³ He is not interpreted by one single act in history. From this movement onward the expression “God” for some becomes only applicable in reference to concepts. He became a supreme Idea, which coordinates and synthesizes every other idea.

⁴⁹ Richard Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 293.

⁵⁰ Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 66.

⁵¹ Friedrich Hegel, *Begriff der Religion*, Hamburg, (1928), 148.

⁵² Richard Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 302.

⁵³ Richard Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, 293-306.

This notion of a supreme Idea is already contained in the metaphysics of Plato where the idea of God is concerned with realm. The metaphysical or ideal world is the real world. The realm of forms is the true world while the physical or sensory world is unreal. There is still other interpretation of this “word” God. We meet it in the light of Spinoza’s ‘Deus Natura’ and Kant’s ‘condition of possibility’ for human ethical action. The sensory world in this sense is only but a vale of tears in contrast to the mountain of bliss of the suprasensory world. The suprasensory world is the metaphysical realm while the physical is the sensory world. Still for many others, “God” remains meaningless except as part of grammatical expression for example; good heaven, in god’s name, damn heaven, and god bless. There are some doubts whether the logic of interpretation, the endorsement by scientific theology or the denial or affirmation by rationalistic philosophy determines God or his being. Martin Luther (1483-1546),⁵⁴ confronts philosophical theology or what could be called natural theology of the scholastics that try to define God. He referred to them as blind and ignorant scientists. He explains that we cannot know God by definition or by human intellectual gymnastic. For Luther God could be known only through faith. By this opinion, he seriously criticized both the Aristotelian and Thomistic excessive confidence in reason.⁵⁵ The proofs of the existence of God in the above authors are found in their natural and revealed theology and most importantly in their mechanistic proofs. For Luther the fact that Aquinas assumed philosophy as handmaid of theology is notwithstanding. It still remains within the realm of rational enterprise and will offer little to theology unless it involves faith.⁵⁶ In addition, unless this happens its discourse from the Unmoved Mover, from contingent being to the Necessary Being, from Esse to Existence irrespective of its conclusion philosophy will continue to leave the human mind bizarre.

⁵⁴ Wolfgang Klausnitzer, *Gott und Wirklichkeit*, Regensburg, (2000), 133.

⁵⁵ Thomas F. George, *Theology and Philosophy: A Mediating View in Christianity and Reason*, Meyers Edward (ed.), New York, (1951), 45-53.

⁵⁶ Wolfgang Klausnitzer, *Gott und Wirklichkeit*, 133.

The fact is, “there can never be a true divergence between theology and philosophy, faith and reason, since the same God who reveals the mysteries and bestows the gift of faith has also placed in the human spirit the light of reason. This God could not deny himself, nor could the truth ever contradict the truth.”⁵⁷ In the light of this, we have to say for philosophical talk of God to be anything; it has to be understood within the background of traditional religious faith. However, what is the faith in which philosophy must recline. John Wright sees it (faith) as not just, “a religious activity, but a universal human activity by which we reach certitude even when the evidence is not rationally compelling.”⁵⁸ Thus, the purpose of rational philosophical analysis is uncovering the cognitive intentionality of a particular traditional faith and belief in God.⁵⁹ In our situation, the particular religious faith is that of the Hebrews and their fundamental document, the OT.

2.6.2 OT and the Definition of God

Theoretical atheism, that is, the actual denial of God’s existence is unknown to the tradition of the OT. The Bible however acknowledges that there are those who do not believe in God. These do not believe not because they are atheists in the manner of Hegel, Nietzsche or after atheistic mode of Jean-Paul Sartre. Biblical ‘atheists’ did not seek argument to substantiate their unbelief. They deny the existence of God simply because of their geocentrism and selfishness. To such people the Bible calls fool (Ps 14:1). In biblical estimation, selfish people are practical atheists. The fact is OT tradition has no knowledge of theoretical atheism. Its spirituality does not project people who believe the only way to access knowledge is only through empiricism or by way of scientific demonstrations. Given this background, the

⁵⁷ See, The first Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith *Dei Filius*, IV; DH 3017, (Italics mine); Paul Tillich, *Hauptwerke/Main Works*, vol.5. *Writings on Religion/Religiöse Schriften*, Robert P. Scharlemann, (ed.), Berlin, (1988), 265.

⁵⁸ John H. Wright, God, in: *The New Dictionary of Theology*, Joseph A. Komonchak et al (eds.), (1996), 423-436, 425.

⁵⁹ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Church the Human Story of God*, 64.

OT did not find it necessary to have a definition of God.⁶⁰ However, Israel's nearest attempt to fathom the personality of God is by analogy.⁶¹ They defined his essence by analyzing the weakness of human constitution and frailness. Thus, Israel acknowledged that the Egyptians are men, and not God, and their horses are flesh, and not spirit (Is 31:3). Israel makes a distinction between God and man (Nu 23:19). He is a living God who does not lie.⁶²

This goes to say that the OT was never interested in the definition of God. It did not deem the proof of God's existence necessary. The details of this thought is expressed when the psalmist points at creation as proclaiming the existence of God (Ps 19:14). Israel's fundamental religious view of God is based on their life experience. Their belief in monotheism continues to evoke sentiments in their history and that of humanity. These sentiments have guided human events and have continued unabated to influence tradition and cultures of the modern society and its *Weltanschauung* (world view). The Bible is the fundamental document of the Hebrews, it has influenced peoples and religions, including the Igbo people of West Africa sub-Sahara. In this document, we notice as recorded the events and the encounter between God and Israel. "Recorded" include the match of salvation. God marches with Israel, endured the rough and hard paths of a journey. These are the starting points of God's expression of himself. This fellowship had no meaning until God began raising prophets who gave this encounter interpretations. Of course, it is a relationship with universal transmittable characteristics. How did the people understand this meeting with God, what idea had they of God?

⁶⁰ William Dryness, *Themes in Old Testament Theology*, London, (1977), 18.

⁶¹ This work uses the terms Israel, Jews, Hebrews in a homogeneous context of sacral confederation of twelve tribes and partner of Yahweh's covenant. While it acknowledges the extensive changes that took place in the inner co-ordination in terms of what one may call core Israel as the early normadics, the Jews in terms of Israel in diaspora and the Hebrews as products of inter-cultural marriages and relationship.

⁶² See Jos 3:10, 1Sm 17:26; 36, 2Kg 19:4; 16, Job 27:2, Nu 16:22, Dt 4:33 etc.

The Anglo-American philosopher and process theologian Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947)⁶³ cautions about quantifying or defining divine beings. For him definition or categorization of God limits his existence and potentials. In fact, the moment God is defined, he is specified and limited and such a God is no longer attractive.⁶⁴ God for the ancient Israel was always attractive, always there. The many encounters with him reveal his presence so that no definition of him was necessary. To prevent putting God in perspective the Hebrew mind avoided a theoretical definition of God. From this it is concluded that in Israel and indeed in the OT, there was less interest in the etymological significance of the divine existence than in the concrete which his existence conveyed⁶⁵ namely, the acts and wonders he worked among the people and in history.

God was able to work wonders in history because he is omnipotent. The concept power distinguishes the “living God” from other individual gods of the nations. The divine name “Yahweh” revealed to Moses (Ex 3:14-15) portrays God’s nearness and concern for his people (Dt 3:24). In our context, “I am who I am” means subsistence Existence, Existence par excellence, un-participated and uncreated. Yahweh here means unlimited reality.⁶⁶ These various ways of personifying God as power are the best ways to describe the biblical Jewish idea of God.

2.6.3 The Name of God as Power

The Hebrew Bible has four distinct older words for God. These names include ‘El, Elohim, Eloah and El Shaddai.’ These words are related to one another. They are rooted in El, the power of God (Gn 17:1, 2). The words

⁶³ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, David R. Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (eds.), New York, (1978).

⁶⁴ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 342.

⁶⁵ Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, Vol.1. London, ⁵(1978), 187.

⁶⁶ Nwachukwuike S.S. Iwe, *Christianity, Culture and Colonialism in Africa, Calabar*, ²(2002), 5.

refer to the “power” or “strength” of God.⁶⁷ The implication of this is, Yahweh is not just one individual, he is El (elohim and eloah) the Godhead. “The divine name El olam is attested only ... in connection with the cult-site of Beersheba. Most probably, to be regarded as the name of the local deity worshipped there and adopted by the Israelites, it may be taken to mean ‘God of Ancient Days’ or ‘God of Eternity.’ In either case it signifies the permanence of the deity exalted over the changes and chances of time.”⁶⁸ In any case, El in its various forms either elohim and eloah are words that represent God as one who has power over other gods, nature⁶⁹ and death. Therefore, Yahweh is understood by the Hebrews in two larger contexts as the living God and God of the living (Ex 3:6; Jer10:10). By way of extension, the name ‘Yahweh’ (God) becomes in the African theological context the “God of the living-dead.” This title is one of the ways the African can appreciate the power of God to resurrect the dead. Of course, “there is no reason why such titles need be the exclusive prerogative of one particular culture.”⁷⁰ Jesus referred to patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob though dead as living (Mt 22:29-32), the dead live because Yahweh who protects them is a living power and a living God (Wis 3:1-3).

Like many other Jewish religious doctrines, it took the Jews time to believe in what God can do and in his power. Thus, “During and after the Exile, therefore, there are frequent references to the eternal God, whom the stars obey, and before whom this fleeting world cannot but tremble (Is 40: 28; Ps. 90:2; 92:2; 145:13 ...). To the everlasting King, who puts the false gods to shame (Jr 10:10) to the eternal Governor, exalted over the world and time (Is 26:4; Dn 4:31; 6:27; 7:14; 12:7 ...). With this intense emphasis on the transcendence of God eternity was also naturally included among his at-

⁶⁷ J.I. Packer, God, in: *The New Dictionary of Theology*, Sinclair B. Ferguson, et al (ed.), (1996), 274-277, 274.

⁶⁸ Walter Eichrodt, *Theology*, vol. 1, 182.

⁶⁹ William Dryness, *Themes in Old Testament Theology*, 19.

⁷⁰ Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, John Drury (trans.), Maryknoll, New York, (1978), 379.

tributes.”⁷¹ The implication of this statement is the development of the doctrine of resurrection among the Jews. Israel belongs to the living God, the source of all life (Ps 36:9). Interestingly, this strong emotion reminds them of their privileged inheritance in God who is also their father (Hos 1:10). He is a God who journeyed with them. In life of course this art for the Jews shows God a ‘humanist’ and an empathetic redeemer. The biblical Jews look at God as a sovereign Lord and a possessor of absolute power. His immeasurable power includes giving life to dry bones (Ez 37:5). This power is never arbitrary. It is positive and persistent. It intends towards achieving the divine purpose of creation and redemption. Here we notice “this persistence of the divine purpose constitutes the real unity of the Old Testament”⁷² summarized by Deutero-Isaiah addressing Yahweh as redeemer or savior God. Consequently, Yahweh the living God is man’s creator and savior (Is 40:28; 41:4; 43:1ff). Invariably, it is theologically right to say the creator of the universe is its savior. With his power, Yahweh has dominion over life and death, this power to create is the same that heals man’s illness, cures wounds, and delivers from evil and enemies.⁷³ These human unfortunate circumstances are positively assimilated in the OT tradition. They are understood as vicarious and as media of opening the way to eternity, which is a motion. Eternity simply means a movement into timelessness, into unforeseeable whereby time and everything loses itself in the infinite. In eternity, time loses itself to the knowledge of God and to the definition of God.

Given this foundation, the Jews began to express their confidence in this God who possesses absolute power. They began to make connection between creation and salvation invariably with history. The entire history of the world for them begins to receive meaning that is more enlightened. Human salvation was now seen as beginning with creation.

⁷¹ Walter Eichrodt, *Theology*, vol.1, 183.

⁷² Robinson H. Wheeler, *Record and Revelation*, Oxford, (1938), 328.

⁷³ Stanley B. Marrow, *Resurrection*, in: *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 12, (2003), 165-172.

2.6.4 The God who creates

The one individual can actually account for the creation of the world and it is not possible to demonstrate empirically the fact of its origin. Given this reason, creation stories occasionally are categorized as myths. Talking about creation as myths, the Enuma Elish Babylonian story of creation comes to mind. The story is a Babylonian epic of creation myth recounting the struggle between cosmic order and chaos. The Akkadian myth narrates how Marduk conquered Tiamat the water goddess and using her broken body, he created the world hence bringing order to chaotic world. It narrates a tale of creation, the battles between the gods, creation of man and the ordering of the universe. The primary purpose of the poem is to enthrone the supremacy of the god hero Marduk the patron and deity of Babylon.⁷⁴ On the other hand, the argument that Israel's creation story is dependent on the translation of myths especially the Enuma Elish is highly probable.

It is not a thing of surprise to discover some parallelism between the Genesis story and the Enuma Elish epic. Because of these parallels, some scholars conclude that the Genesis account of creation was simply a rewriting or copied account of the Babylonian story of creation.⁷⁵ However, some other scholars have different opinions. Such people maintain that while Enuma Elish epic story is a myth of the cycle of seasons the uniqueness of the Bible argues for itself. For them either there were no real parallel between the Babylonian creation myths with the Bible or that the Genesis narratives were written first and the Babylonian epic borrowed from the biblical account.⁷⁶

Scholars who emphasize the uniqueness of the Bible argue that the Genesis story contradicts the confused creation myths of Babylon and the surrounding nations. For them, though expressed in poetic form, the Genesis story has a clear logical structure. It systematically expresses a belief in the abso-

⁷⁴ Michael P. Streck, *Enuma elisch*, in: *LthK* 3, ³(2006), 697.

⁷⁵ Robinson H. Wheeler, *Record and Revelation*, 329.

⁷⁶ Dennis Bratcher, in: <http://www.crivoice.org/enumaelish.html> (accessed 15.09.10).

lute sovereignty, rationality, and benevolence of a God who brings everything into being by his command and communicates his own goodness to them.⁷⁷ Though Israel knew the mythological creation stories of other surrounding neighbors, it however, it did not copy it whole and entire since its own story followed a certain unique pattern peculiar to it alone. It did not reject the myths of the heathen speculations concerning the mystery of life and death in its entirety rather it interpreted them according to its faith in JHWH. It re-interpreted the myths like the coming back to life of Osiris as practiced and contained in the Osiris and Adonis cults and myths. But it refused to accept the resurrection myth of Bel-Marduk.⁷⁸ Creation story in polytheistic Near East Religions was not only Deus Otiosus centered, a form of construction on the God who creates and abandons. It was also pantheistic; God brought order in nature invariably organizing its chaotic self. The created universe in Jewish sense is quite different from God though there are testimonies of relationships. There is a relationship between the material world with the transcendent creator. Creation account tells us that God created everything subsequently and not simultaneously. He created everything according to plan and order (Gn 1:1-30). After creating God saw that everything he created was good to behold (Gn 1:31). If God hated anything he could not have formed it in the first place (Wis 11: 24). God loves his creation. The rate at which he keeps order and stability of the natural phenomena induced both the canticles of Daniel and that in the book of the Revelation, (Dn 3, Rev 19:5). These verses make demands on creation to praise God who created heaven and earth out of nothing (Gn 1:1-4). The Bible refutes the existence of creation from a material existence and because the biblical description of creation is ex-nihilo, it rejects the notion of dualism. It refutes the idea of putting order into existence peculiar with the Akkadian Enuma Elish myth. The Genesis account is of a different genre. It demonstrates that God is the origin of all things. He created through the

⁷⁷ Peter E. Hodgson, *The Christian Origin of Science*, in: *Religion in a World of Change*, 30.

⁷⁸ Walter Eichrodt, *Theology*, vol. 231.

power of his speech by calling order into existence. (“God said ‘Let there be ... and it was’”). God involves himself in the organization of the world and in all the movement of the universe. The Bible believes that the universe is very much dependent on God and very much distinct from him at any instant, however, the universe is “sustained in being by God, and without this sustaining power it would immediately lapse into nothingness.”⁷⁹ Creation is by the absolute will of God. It could be argued that God’s mighty work of redemption in the form of the liberation from Egypt began the realization of the creation story. The Jews arrived at the knowledge that Yahweh is the maker of heaven and earth only after the preceding miracles of the exodus event.⁸⁰ “People finally began to listen and turn to God only when the prophets and patriarchs, empowered by the gift of God’s spirit, were there to ‘interpret’ that march and those events.”⁸¹ The Genesis (1:1-31; 2:7) accounts narrate with sobriety the coming to be of things, their purpose, including the creation of man. This account tells us how God molded man from nothing and empowered him with his spirit. The breath of God becomes the power of life in human being, the person near to God. The spirit was the cause of the change; matter becomes so to speak no more mere matter but soul resulting to the human person as a whole. The breath technically called the soul becomes both visible and invisible.⁸²

Supporting the Genesis account, Irenaeus (ca. 135-202) clearly affirms creation as having no material cause. Creation dependent on already existing matter makes nonsense of the divine fullness (Pleroma). Since the contrast is the case, integral redemption consequently becomes the right of created nature. In Irenaeus, creation and redemption are connected. He expresses this thought this way, “To attribute the substance of created things to the power and will of him who is God of all, is worthy both of credit and acceptance. It is also agreeable (to reason) ..., that the things which are impossi-

⁷⁹ Peter Hodgson, *The Christian Origin of Science*, in: *Religion in a World of Change*, 34.

⁸⁰ Cf. William Dryness, *Themes in Old Testament Theology*, 37.

⁸¹ Helmut Thielicke, *Tod und Leben*, Tübingen, (1946), 201.

⁸² Horacio Lona, *Kleine Hinführung zu Paulus*, Freiburg, (2006), 85.

ble with men are possible with God (Lk 18:27).”⁸³ He is able to call back into being the substances of fallen creation. This type of thinking in Irenaeus emphasizes nothing but “that all levels of created existence, material and spiritual alike, are subjects of divine redemption,”⁸⁴ and subject of resurrection. Tertullian (ca. 160-ca. 220 A.D) himself makes a convictional assertion to Deutero-Isaiah that humanity can have full confidence in God’s power to redeem precisely because God has demonstrated his power in creating ex-nihilo. Which means only the Creator can be an effective Redeemer in the personhood of the creator. Here we find the Creator God is also the Redeemer God.⁸⁵ Thus, humanity becomes a subject of redemption, and this makes a case for the resurrection.

2.7 The Human Nature

The debate on the fundamental composition of the human nature resurfaces constantly. It has continued in our present time from Platonic sophisticated intellectual soul to Darwinian complicated materialistic evolutionary theory of natural selection. Before Charles Darwin (1809-1882), the French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) envisages the human nature from Heraclitus’ (ca.535-ca.475 BC) point of view of change. The human nature is a changing and constantly developing nature. Rousseau seems to mean that unlike other creatures, human beings because of their rationality, selfishness and the instinct for self-preservation develop and change faster than other species.⁸⁶ This development and change has continued until the present stage and may not have reached the possible final stage. Rousseau argues that the development of man is a process in progress determined by society’s social status quo.⁸⁷ This assumption favorably compares

⁸³ Adv. Haer., 2. 10.4

⁸⁴ Norris Richard, *God and World in Early Christian Theology*, London, ²(1965), 73.

⁸⁵ Ayers R. H *Language, Logic, and Reason in the Church Fathers*, New York, (1979), 35.

⁸⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Lester G. Crocker (ed.), Washington D.C., (1967).

⁸⁷ Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, bk II, 36-54.

the human nature with natural realities, with motion and change. Movement and change are characteristics of “bodies.” It matters less whether they be natural bodies, animal or human bodies. It all means that humans are more or less purely natural phenomena. Now instead of dealing with the phenomenology of the body, we will rather be asking the questions, what makes a human being. Why is its nature a subject of redemption or resurrection? Before discussing the relationship the human being has with the resurrection, it is important to stress one remark. In addition to understanding the human being within the anthropological genus of *Homo sapiens*, the human being is a theological phenomenon. The scripture understands the human being as a creation of God and bears his image.⁸⁸

The human nature according to scholastic teaching is a single indivisible entity. As far as Thomas Aquinas theological anthropology is concerned, human beings are composed of soul and body. Though Thomas became interested in the body due to its relationship with the soul yet it is his conviction that no one part may be isolated from the other.⁸⁹ The human being is a totality and a radical unity.⁹⁰ Which means, there is always and all the time a mysterious interaction taking place between the spiritual and corporal aspects of the human personality.⁹¹ Aristotle actually initiated this assertion. His psychology has become part of the classical Western tradition, a tradition that Aquinas developed in his *De Anima*, on the Soul, which is an interpretation of Aristotle’s own work on the soul.⁹² Aristotle’s *De Anima* appears to depart from the thought of his master, Plato. While Platonic notion of the soul points upward and connected with the notion of spiritualized idea, Aristotle’s concept of the soul points downwards stressing the point of fact about the natural universe. While Plato spiritualizes the human being by

⁸⁸ Georg Langemeyer, *Mensch*, in: *Lexikon der Katholischen Dogmatik*, Wolfgang Beinert, (ed.), Freiburg, (1997), 366-8, 366-7.

⁸⁹ *STh* 1a.75-76.

⁹⁰ *GS* 14.

⁹¹ David Brown, *Continental Philosophy and Modern Theology*, New York, (1987), 75.

⁹² *De Anima* 1.

a radical assumption of dualism, a separate existence of matter and spirit, Aristotle refutes Plato's argument that the human is the soul and that the soul is a spatial magnitude that is distinguished from the body.⁹³ He rather presents the human person as a complex integration of spirit and matter in a harmonic unity.⁹⁴ Thus, he describes the question of the divisibility of soul and body as meaningless and unnecessary.

Therefore, in the question about anthropology Aristotle uses a metaphoric expression of the wax and its produced image to depict the commingling of spirit and matter, body and soul as the essential definition of the human being. We also discover this kind of expression in the Bible. The narrator of the creation story tells us that, "the Lord God took some soil from the ground and formed a man out of it; he breathed life-giving breath into his nostrils and the man began to live" (Gn 2:7). Here the Bible uses a symbolic language to depict the human person as corporal and spiritual. The body is animated by the spiritual entity called soul. As the spiritual aspect of human personality, the "spirit or soul" is the fullness of human personality as well as the form of the body. It shares in both the dignity and likeness of God's image.⁹⁵ 'Likeness and image' are the two characteristic terminologies of divine image in human beings found in (Gn 1:26-27). This expression became a major term in the theology of Irenaeus. The mind in the thinking of Cicero is believed by wisest men and women to have an element of the divine.⁹⁶ "For this reason man may not despise his bodily life. Rather he is obliged to regard his body as good and to hold it in honour since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day."⁹⁷ Thus, in his body humanity shares in the nature and likeness of God. The human nature is God's form made visible.

⁹³ De Anima 1. 407a.

⁹⁴ De Anima 2. 412b.

⁹⁵ Cf. Katechismus der Katholischen Kirche (KKK), München, (1997), no. 364.

⁹⁶ De Finibus II. 34.114.

⁹⁷ GS 14.

2.7.1 The Image and Likeness of God

In his, “*Adversus Haereses*” Irenaeus suggests that human ‘likeness’ of God was lost at the fall⁹⁸ or at least effaced however, the ‘image’ of God according to Irenaeus was not obliterated with the primordial mistake. Luther and some other reformers like John Calvin have a contrary opinion. In order to situate the relevance of grace and the coming of Christ these reformers suggest the loss of the image at the Fall. Of course, the Genesis narrative shared no such opinion.⁹⁹ Charles Partee in ‘Calvin and classical philosophy’ writes that in considering anthropology Calvin treats and teaches that human creation and all other lower animals including beast of burdens are products of a common material.¹⁰⁰ Indeed in terms of biological composition, there is no comprehensive difference between the human body and the bodies of other animals. God could have taken the material composition of these beings from a common source. However, there is a substantial difference between the human being and the animal nature. This significant difference Calvin sees as the image of God in the human being. Thus in his sermon on Job he writes, “Was not the elephant created with us? Is there any quality in us that we should be excellent? No, there is nothing that makes a difference between us but God.”¹⁰¹ David Hume on his own part did consider no significant difference between the animal nature and the human being. He rather reduced the human being to the level of lower animals¹⁰² that lack soul or rationality. Early Greek philosophers, the scholastics and Irenaeus agreed on the uniqueness of the soul. The soul is the immortal image of God in the human being.¹⁰³ Thus the Book of Genesis reiterates the creative power of

⁹⁸ *Adv. Haer.*, 5, 6, 2, 3, 18, 1. The corpus of these passages support Irenaeus’s argument that humanity lost its “likeness” of God after the Fall.

⁹⁹ David Brown, *Continental Philosophy*, 76.

¹⁰⁰ Charles Partee, *Calvin and Classical Philosophy*, 52.

¹⁰¹ See, Sermon on Job 40:20 (CO 33,466); Charles Partee, *Calvin and Classical philosophy*, 52.

¹⁰² Hume David, *Essays, Moral, Political and Literary*, Eugene F. Miller (ed.), Indianapolis, (1987), 80-1.

¹⁰³ David Brown, *Continental Philosophy*, 77.

‘ruach’ or breath as the image of God in human beings. This thought resonating in the fact that creation was made for immortality was established in the mind of the author of the Wisdom literature when he writes “but God created man imperishable, and made him in the image of his own eternal self.”¹⁰⁴ This thought Irenaeus insist does not lack merit since the image of God in the human opportunizes him or her rationality and the ability to make choices. This *imago Dei* consisting of reason which humanity possesses is what helps them to distinguish between good and evil.¹⁰⁵ It helps them to reach the gratuitous Grace of God (*a bonum adventitium*).

David Brown rejected the propositions of the image of God as we find it in traditional philosophy. He rather adopted the philosophical ideas of the Jewish phenomenologist Emmanuel Levinas (1906-95). The latter maintains respect for the mystery of the other as the constituent of the *imago Dei*. And this mystery is the strength discovered in the weakness of the other which is not in power or in violence. The Other Person (*Autrui*) is the other human being and the Face of the other is the Face of God since there is no difference between the Father and the Word; it is in the form of speech, in the form of an ethical order, an order to love, that the descent of God takes place. Humans and the universe were created through the power of the Word. It is this Word, the Face of the other which interrupts the progress of the world.¹⁰⁶ In this expression Levinas’ image of the face finds its most obvious *raison d’être* that we most clearly encounter ‘the ethical resistance’ of the other when the face of ‘the stranger, widow and orphan,’ the face of the despised and deprived, look at us accusingly, demanding by their expressions that we take account of them in their weakness.¹⁰⁷ That means the temptation of total negation of the other, the weak of the society is the inab-

¹⁰⁴ Wis 2:23.

¹⁰⁵ Charles Partee, *Calvin and Classical Philosophy*, 52.

¹⁰⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous*, Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav, (trans.), New York, (2006), 94.

¹⁰⁷ David Brown, *Continental Philosophy*, 84.

ility to recognize the image of God in them. There is the temptation to exterminate them if they have not been looked straight at the face.¹⁰⁸

Human atrocities and injustice committed against the other puts the question of theodicy and the divine image in humans in context. “Did not Nietzsche’s saying about the death of God take on, in the extermination camps, the meaning of a quasi-empirical fact?”¹⁰⁹ The events of the Holocaust under the reign of Hitler make a paradigm of the question of the image of God as the face of the other. The pogrom makes it difficult to reconcile between the image of God in human and the wickedness still found in humans. If Brown has followed Levinas to insist that “what identifies us with God is the radical freedom he has given us to say ‘No’ to him or anyone else, even when we are totally powerless”¹¹⁰ then both have reintroduced once again the old philosophical explanation hence theologizing freedom of choice and independent rationality as the image of God in man. If this is the case, it may be difficult to account for the image of God in the handicapped, those morally and physically displaced. They are those who may not be able to make effective choices or resist injustice. Thus the image of God is not only localized in human rationality, it is the spirit of God and the form of the body, the soul. It makes much sense to understand that the body is the human being itself and the human being is a true soul, a composition that is the image of God.¹¹¹

In his May 28, 2006 visit and address at the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration death camp in Oswiecim, Poland, Pope Benedict XVI analyzed this new explanation of the image of God as a mystery of identification submerged in weakness. The Pope metaphorically identified the mystery of human nature as the mystery of God, the weakness of man as equally the

¹⁰⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 9.

¹⁰⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 84.

¹¹⁰ David Brown, *Continental Philosophy*, 85.

¹¹¹ Florence Obiageri Anugom, *Ahu Mmadu: Nsopuru kwesiri ya, Nkuzi Odenigbo, Owerri*, (2010), 15.

‘weakness of God.’ This is the way he puts it, “those vicious criminals, by wiping out this people, wanted to kill the God who called Abraham, who spoke on Sinai and laid down principles to serve as a guide for mankind, principles that are eternally valid. If this people (the Jews), by its very existence, was a witness to the God who spoke to humanity and took us to himself (shared human nature), then that God finally had to die and power had to belong to man alone – to those men, who thought that by force they had made themselves masters of the world.”¹¹² The *imago dei* is more as philosophical assumption and speculations in terms of particular human faculties in Irenaeus or the misery of the helpless discussed by Levinas. Suppose the image of God is identifiable only with the wretched of the earth and the pains of the weeping child. Suppose the child abates crying, does it decline the realization of God in the human being? The image of God is the mystery of God’s identification with entire human personality and history. His breath of love which humans share that qualifies man to participate in eternity. The identification of God otherwise, the breath of love is defined in a way of illustration in the experience of the desert journey. Taking the experience of the Israelites as an example, God defined himself by walking with the Israelites for 400 years in the desert. God reveals his entire self at the course of the exodus event.¹¹³ In Jesus, he revealed the nature he shared with humanity. He assumed himself all the qualities of a servant having been born like men. He passed through all the tribulations of humanity. Thus this image of God in humankind enables him to see himself and God in the other, in the weak as well as in the strong. The whole drama when played out shows God’s special interest not only in the power exercised by the powerful but equally his interest in displayed weakness. This choice to

¹¹² John L. Allen, Jr., “Pope at Auschwitz praised, faulted,” in: *National Catholic Reporter*, (CNS), June 16, 2006; Hans Küng, *Credo*, München, ⁴(1993), 121, (*Italics mine*).

¹¹³ See, Gerhard von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, Bd. 1, *Die Theologie der geschichtlichen Überlieferung Israels*, München, (1966), 189.

identify is justice imbedded; it is the starting point of the belief in the doctrine of resurrection in the Jewish Scripture.

2.7.2 Biblical Anthropology

Just as human culture and traditional rites are multifarious, what happens to the human person after death has received multifarious interpretations. For tradition and cultures that believe in survival after death, the survival of the human being within these traditions is normally conceived in the way the individual is composed. Within the culture of the origin of the Bible (the Hebrew culture), the general makeup of a human being is in the collective sense of *nephesh*. As principles of subsistence, this concept is responsible and it accounts for the end and the survival of the human being. The Bible derives its conception of human composition from two primary sources, from Hebrew (OT) and Pauline (NT) conceptions of anthropology.

2.7.3 The Relationship Between *Basar*, *Nephesh* and *Ruach* in Hebrew Anthropology

None of the religious traditions of Ancient Near East and not even the Greek cosmology was able to influence the early biblical Hebrew on its conception of human constitution. While the psychology of the other Eastern neighbours support dualism of the person, the Jews and biblical tradition conceive the human being as a totality understood more in the implied terms of a unity.¹¹⁴ Despite the bias of dualism and in some extreme cases trichotomy within the Eastern religions, the Jewish psychology remains monistic and quite distinct. This lies within the concept of *nephesh*. The ‘soul’ is the English translated equivalent of the Hebrew word *nephesh*. In the Hebrew Bible, the word stands for the form of the body. However, there are few places where the word denotes material elements but these places are few in the OT. Paul made so much use of the word and this is mainly in connection to resurrection or salvation. He never spoke of the redemption of the spirit without the body. He emphasized the salvation of the entire creation (Rom 8:21-23).

¹¹⁴ Horacio E. Lona, *Kleine Hinführung zu Paulus*, 85.

The word *nephesh* or soul primarily speaks or means the person¹¹⁵ in some senses and places it speaks of *nephesh* in terms of God's creation. Invariably all creation is *nephesh*. Among these other nuances the concept which remains characteristics to our theme is the application of *nephesh* (soul) as meaning, "life" (Pr 8:35; Ps. 30:3), a "person" (Pr 3:22; Lv 14:28) or a "number of persons" (2 Mac 12:26). In some other instances it could stand for a "corpse" (Nu 6:6; Lev 21:11; Tob 1:18; Jdt 13:9; Eccles 23: 16; 41:11; 44:14; 48:13; Bel 32; 1 Mac 11:4; 1 Mac 9:29; 12:39).¹¹⁶ So the soul is not an indivisible spiritual element as to concreteness and physicality. In this way, the dialogical concept of man as emerged in the term *nephesh* or soul does not only refer to the immaterial aspect of man but also to the material part. Granted that Thomas Aquinas has divided the soul into faculties, he located the intellect and will into the soul. The vegetative and sensitive faculties are located in the composite nature of the soul and body.¹¹⁷ The fact of the concept is, whenever the word soul is used, the reference is to the whole person. The soul is something visible with invisible faculties. The spirit and heart are good examples. These faculties are interchangeably frequently used implying the soul and at times in place of the soul. Johannes Pedersen has shown various instances in the OT where the spirit has been interchangeably used for the person or the soul. For instance, the spirit of Caleb was understood as meaning his soul as different from the rest (Nu 14:24). The heart of Samson on the other hand designates his entire person. The story of the betrayal of Samson, we read that he told Delilah his Philistine mistress, (who betrayed him into the hands of the Philistines) the secret of his whole heart. That is, Samson opened his whole person and told the secret of his whole heart to Delilah (Jdg 16:17-18).¹¹⁸ Aristotle in his theory of *Esse* and *Existence*, act and potency argues that the soul does not possess

¹¹⁵ William Dryness, *Themes in Old Testament*, 58.

¹¹⁶ William Dryness, *Themes in Old Testament*, 59.

¹¹⁷ STh 1a. 77-83.

¹¹⁸ Johannes Pedersen, *Israel its Life and Culture I-II*, Copenhagen, ²(1946), 102.

an independent existence outside the body.¹¹⁹ “Following Justin, Athenagoras rejects with Middle Platonism, this Aristotelian belief¹²⁰ that the soul was an attribute of the body and could not exist without it.”¹²¹ Referencing physicality, the OT always calls a person a soul.¹²² Abram took his wife Sarah, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people (soul) they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan (Gn 12:5; 14:21; Ex 1:5). In the above passages and others, people indeed could have been substitute for souls. However, we will be missing the point of the argument were we to transpose our modern understanding or common usage of these constituents human faculties into early Hebrew perspective. Despite Hellenistic encounter, Paul’s understanding of the human person was influenced by Jewish belief. His understanding of anthropology was fundamentally Jewish and biblical. This does not mean that the Greek and Hellenistic worldview and category from which background Paul thinks and writes had no implication on his theology. Paul was not entirely striped off these Hellenistic influences respective of Jewish appreciation of anthropology. He uses so many terminologies to explain the human project. He divided the person under various auspices, spirit, soul, body, heart, mind, breath. Paul understands the relationship between these perspectives of the person in a form of a unity.¹²³ Thus in Paul the whole person is described as *nephesh*, soul. It is the ‘I’ of the person, “they have cheered my spirit up just as they have cheered you up” (1 Cor 16:18; 1 Cor 5:3-5; Phil 4:23). In 1 Cor 7:34 *nephesh*, the soul is understood in relation to the body, in 1 Thess 5:23 it is related to the Spirit and to the body.¹²⁴ For Pedersen “*Nephesh* is the soul in the sum of its totality, such as it appears, the heart is

¹¹⁹ De Anima, 412a, 412b, 417a.

¹²⁰ De Anima, 412b.

¹²¹ Bernard Leslie, *Athenagoras: A study in second century Christian Apologetic*, (Theologie Historique 18, Beauchesne), Paris, (1972), 122.

¹²² *Katechismus der Katholischen Kirche*, no.363.

¹²³ For detailed explanation of Pauline various parts of the human see, Horacio Lona, *Kleine Hinführung zu Paulus*, 82-85.

¹²⁴ Horacio Lona, *Kleine Hinführung*, 85.

the soul in its inner value. One may just as well say ‘that which is in your soul’ as ‘that which is in your heart.’ But whereas it can be said that Jacob came to Egypt with seventy souls, it cannot be said that he came there with seventy hearts.”¹²⁵ Thus, Pedersen argues against the modern application of the heart as seat of understanding and knowledge that Dryness reclines. Dryness upholds a sort of quasi-modern ideology of a distinctive function of the heart. “The highest gift that can be given a person is a heart (usually translated mind) to understand.”¹²⁶ This makes the heart a later or foreign faculty of the person instead of sharing in the inner life of the person. It becomes something that could be acquired later in life instead of something synonymous with the soul and the spirit. Moses complained of lack of understanding among the people. That is, he complained against the lack of sound minds among the people (Dt 29:4). On his own side, King Solomon’s prayer was for a sound mind or heart (1 Kg 3:9, 12).

A study of the psychological terminology used in the OT show quite clearly that human personality is a unity of entity (nephesh, soul, ruach, spirit and basar, body). Heart and the spirit are cohesively in an indistinguishable union¹²⁷ they are the soul in operation. We are making no distinction by saying of the heart as the strength, centre of the soul and the spirit as faculty of power and energy to the soul.¹²⁸ The Hebrew pictorially depicts the unity and functioning of these elements in the soul. For that reason, everyone who was willing and whose heart moved him came and brought an offering to the Lord for the work on the Tent of Meeting, for all its service, and for the sacred garments (Ex 35:21). The first striking point to notice with the primitive community is the non-categorical classification that is popular with our scientific age. That does not deprive the early Hebrews of the sense of one and many, a part from a whole. In this community in their form of thinking,

¹²⁵ Cf. Johannes Pedersen, *Israel its Life*, I-II, 104.

¹²⁶ Dryness William, *Themes in Old Testament*, 64.

¹²⁷ Horacio Lona, *Kleine Hinführung*, 85.

¹²⁸ Johannes Pedersen, *Israel its Life and Culture*, I-II, 104.

the soul is not recognized as an isolated part of man rather the totality of the man.

The three terms soul, spirit and heart should not be taken to represent three separate ‘parts’ of a human being, rather they indicate three ‘aspects’ of his personality and signify three different lines of approach to an understanding of human consciousness.¹²⁹ The same logic of comprehension holds also with the body, basar. Granted the Hebrew language has no precise word for the body basar has been translated as the nearest in meaning as an expression of physical existence. It is difficult to make definitions one for flesh and another for the body. The two have been used interchangeably. In his writing on the Resurrection, Justin Martyr typically uses these terms interchangeably. According to him, it is quite true, they say that the flesh is a sinner, so much as it forces the soul to sin along with it... but how could this be possible, in what instance can the flesh possibly sin by itself, if it has not the soul going before it and inciting it? In fact, Justin makes analogy of the close connection of the yoke with the oxen¹³⁰ and concludes that, God has even called the flesh to the resurrection, “where God promises to save man, there he gives the promise to the flesh. For what is man but the reasonable animal composed of body and soul.”¹³¹ As an expression of physical existence, flesh often represents the entire human body.¹³² It stands for the whole personality. Thus, the Hebrew psychology understands man as a unity of soul, body and spirit. This resulting idea of “personality” should be considered from the vantage point that it is different from Orphic and Pythagorean dualism. Hebrew personality is not divided into parts of three, body, soul and spirit. It is not also divided into parts of two, body and soul it is rather essential composed unity.¹³³ The unity of body (heart), soul, is coordinated by the spirit. The spirit is the spirit of God and the power of life

¹²⁹ David S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, London, ²(1971), 154.

¹³⁰ *De resurrectione*, 8.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² William Dryness, *Themes in Old Testament*, 61.

¹³³ David S. Russel, *The Method and Message*, 154.

which is purely immaterial. There are no distinctions in kind among these elements but there could be in strength; the soul is the stronger manifestation of the person, the flesh the weaker. But there is no distinction between them as two fundamental forms of existence.¹³⁴ The soul is the bearer of man's history, with a horizontal cosmic relationship. Karl Rahner vividly made this assertion tagging the soul as Pancosmic. The spirit has a vertical relationship with the pure Spirit, God. Rahner "On the Theology of Death" vividly made a developmental assertion of the continuous relationship of the dead with their history by way of pancosmic affiliation. At death, the soul continues a relationship with the material universe because of the logic of interconnectivity. Thus, "since the soul is united to the body, it clearly must also have some relationship to that whole of which the body is a part, that is, to the totality which constitutes the unity of the material universe."¹³⁵ By this substantial cohesion and unity of matter and form we find it absolutely difficult to explain the loss of relationship after death or a total decay of the soul in death or a total separation of the material world of which the soul is a part so that in Rahner's terminology the soul becomes a-cosmic, that is out of relationship with the world. Instead of a-cosmic relationship, the soul assumes pancosmic interconnectivity: that is, a horizontal connection with the material world and in vertical connection by the way of form relationship with God in death. We can subtly add that man is a corporal spirit. In this sense, *ruach* means "life." In the understanding of a Hebrew, *ruach* is not as a baseless colourless concept it is rather a concrete and physical existence.

Back to Aristotelian theory of Esse and Existence, the spirit obviously cannot exist outside a living human body. It must manifest itself in a soul (*nephesh*). Given therefore the interrelatedness and cooperation of these parts to one another the spirit functions as the coordinating energy and

¹³⁴ Robert H. Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology*, Melborne, (1976), 120.

¹³⁵ Karl Rahner, *On the Theology of Death*, Herder, (1961)1972, 18; Bernard P. Prusak Bernard, *Bodily Resurrection in Catholic Perspectives*, in: *Theological Studies*, vol.61, (2000), 64-105, 68.

power to live. Thus from the perspective of the OT existence is corporal with spiritual dimension functioning together. As long as the spiritual element coheres with the material aspect so long is the soul “a living soul” when this cohesion is destroyed when the spirit is withdrawn the soul or *nephesh* becomes a soul of a dead man¹³⁶ a weak, powerless and moribund person. This idea of the unity of personality in which body, soul and spirit represent three ways of looking at human personality, not three parts or sections within it. The unity of the entities is essentially a precondition for the radical hope of surviving in the OT tradition. The understanding of the person in form of a unity remains the fundamental matrix for OT doctrine in the immortality of the person. The thought of a survival after death will later developed into the belief in eschatology and resurrection. So the thought of the resurrection in the OT started with the idea of death, after which the person (soul, body, spirit) in a state of great weakness goes down to Sheol.

2.7.4 Pauline New Testament Anthropology

We have earlier referred to the conclusion that resurrection is the heartbeat of Christian belief and by so saying two problems are envisaged. What is the nature of resurrection? Secondly, which form of body shall be the carrier of man’s resurrection? We will be more interested in the second question, the form of the resurrected body. This doctrine is the basis of later Jewish and early apostolic teaching. Pauline theological writings and letters especially first Corinthians in the opinion of Karl Barth are confirmatory of this generational teaching. This is deeply rooted in the understanding of *sarx* and *sóma* (often translated as body, physical body).

The body in Pauline theology is that which accounts for the resurrection since Paul accepts the unity of the soul and body. “Acceptance of the unity of the human being may be well and good but who, on the basis of the current tenets of the natural sciences, could imagine a resurrection of the body?”¹³⁷ Phillipe Menoud envisaged difficulty of a response. He insists on

¹³⁶ Robert H. Charles, *Eschatology, the doctrine of a future life*, New York, (1963), 42.

¹³⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology, Death and Eternal Life*, Washington D.C, (1988), 106.

faithfulness to the preference the Jewish theology and the NT give to the resurrection of the body and the person than to the thought on immortality of the soul. Thus he writes, “in the present time, because of the ambiguity involved more especially so that we can remain faithful to the teaching of the New Testament, it is better to speak of the resurrection of the body or of the person (translation mine).”¹³⁸ The person here is not the psychological personality as the totality of the human being which is the NT Pauline anthropological concept of the carrier of human resurrection.

Pauline “body” is a complex concept which may not be reduced simply to our everyday language or understanding.¹³⁹ For instance, there exists in his thought according to Bultmann different kinds and variety of bodies. Most often, the body in Pauline NT anthropology appeared to be differently used especially when it pertains to physicality.¹⁴⁰ In some passages of the NT Paul uses the body in terms of physicality in a less important way. But in a number of passages where the term is of theological significance Paul uses *sóma* in the sense of the human person as a whole.¹⁴¹

2.7.5 The *Sóma*

The Pauline concept of *sóma* has acquired complex and difficult definitions. Sometimes it is defined by Metonymy and Synecdoche at some other times.

¹³⁸ “De nos jours, afin d’éviter toute équivoque et de rester néanmoins fidèle à l’enseignement du Nouveau Testament, il faudrait parler de résurrection de la personne” (In his comment on footnote no 3 of the same page Menoud writes ‘the term, spiritual body’ can be poorly understood and this is because of the Hellenistic (Greek) distinction between matter and form (spirit). But we must reserve the expression (spiritual body), so that the contrast between Pauline ‘fleshy body’ and ‘spiritual body,’ ‘earthly body,’ and ‘heavenly body’ could be understood. “L’expression de ‘corps spirituel’ court le risqué d’être comprise abusivement selon la distinction hellénique de la matière et de l’esprit. Si on la conserve, il faut toujours sous-entendre l’opposition paulinienne entre ‘corps charnel’ et corps spirituel,’ ‘cors terrestre’ et ‘corps céleste.’ Cf. Phillippe H. Menoud, *Le sort des trépassés*, Neuchâtel, (1945), 36.

¹³⁹ Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Resurrection of Jesus and Roman Catholic Fundamental Theology*, Oxford, (1997), 237.

¹⁴⁰ Rom 1:24; 12:4f; 1 Cor 5:3; 7:34; 12:12-26; 2Cor 4:10; Gal 6:17; 1Thess 5:22-23.

¹⁴¹ Gundry H. Robert, *Soma in Biblical Theology*, 4.

Metonymy is a representation of a part or a thing with a related but distinct part. ‘Synecdoche’ is a representation of the whole by a part. It might more properly designate a usage of the whole by a part, the *sóma* for the entire person. Some scholars fault Paul’s usage of the word *sóma* in the sense of the entirety of the person. Kendrick Grobel insists that Paul does not materialistically equate man with his physical body but uses *sóma* by metonymy for the whole self.¹⁴²

However, one hears from time to time the phraseology, ‘the person is his/her *sóma*.’ The person is a form of itself. The language of the form, or *sóma* expresses the meaning of two sides of the same coin. In his “Theology of the New Testament” Rudolf Bultmann explains the meaning of *sóma* in Pauline conception. For him, ‘*sóma*’ in Pauline theology refers to the entire person. It refers neither specifically to physicality nor particularly to the spirituality of the human nature.¹⁴³ The word summarizes Paul’s theology on the unity of the human being. Many scholars agree with Bultmann that *sóma* is a Pauline summary of the NT description of the person. For Robinson, “one could say without exaggeration that the concept of the body forms the keystone of Paul’s theology.”¹⁴⁴ On the other hand, many of these authors have also disagreed with Bultmann’s understanding of *sóma*. In a monograph (*The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology*) published shortly after Bultmann’s “Theology of the New Testament” (1948), Robinson disagrees with Bultmann for understanding Pauline theology as anthropology, particularly the saying that God-talk is possible only through man-talk. This is a way of implying that the history of God is the same with that of man and vice versa. Because of this way of understanding the *sóma*, “theologians often charge Rudolf Bultmann with reducing theology to anthropology,”¹⁴⁵ since it seems for him that there no distinction between human

¹⁴² Cf. Kendrick Grobel, *Soma as “Self, Person,”* in: the LXX, *Neutestamentliche Studien für Rudolf Bultmann*, BZNW 21, (1954), 52-9; Robert Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology*, 5-6;

¹⁴³ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, Tübingen, ⁹(1984), 193-4

¹⁴⁴ John Robinson, *The Body*, 9.

¹⁴⁵ Robert H. Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology*, London, (1976), 3.

nature and the nature of God, which is expressed in the way the human, relates. Robinson argues that Bultmann misrepresented Paul's understanding of *sóma*. Instead of the *sóma* being a 'self' in the sense of an "I" that is self-consciousness; the first personal pronoun in Bultmann rather was misapplied for the "Me." Robinson concludes that this pattern of thinking is un-Hebraic and post-Cartesian.¹⁴⁶ Granted that majority of biblical experts including Robinson associate Paul's anthropology with the concept of *sóma* many of them like W. Morgan think this phraseology is neither classical Jewish nor biblically OT. One would suspect the confusion is arising due to the complex nature of the term. The difficulty in understanding the application of the term has driven W. Morgan and some others to label Paul a dichotomist. For them Paul borrowed Hellenistic philosophy and brought division in the unity of man.¹⁴⁷ Robinson however thinks in a different direction. He opines that 'in the Septuagint the Greek word *sóma* translates no less than eleven Hebrew words. Despite these different translations, *sóma* has no true equivalent in the OT. However, "the most important term that it represents and the only one of theological significance is the word basar. It is here if anywhere that one must look for the Old Testament determination of the Pauline use of *sóma*. Yet basar is essentially not 'body' but 'flesh,' and is in fact in the great majority of instances translated in the Septuagint by sarx. This means that both the most decisive words in Pauline anthropology, 'flesh' and 'body,' represent a common Hebrew original."¹⁴⁸ It all means that, from its background Greek think fundamentally dualistic, making it possible for the usage of two words (sarx and *sóma*) in the description of man. The dynamic Jewish way of thinking enabled the understanding of man as a unity hence making do with one word (basar). Robinson is of the

¹⁴⁶ John Robinson, *The Body*, 12-13 footnotes 1; Rudolf Bultmann, *Theologie des Neue Testament*, 193.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. W. Morgan, *The Religion and Theology of Paul*, Edinburgh, (1917) 1950, 16.

¹⁴⁸ John Robinson, *The Body*, 11-2.

opinion that Paul should be understood in the light of this assumption and not that he is a dichotomist or a Platonic.

What then is the meaning of *sóma* in Paul? Let us keep in mind that Paul was an orthodox Jew, conversant with the Hellenistic environment thought pattern. He writes basic traditional Hebrew thought with Hellenistic influence. Simply put, “however much Paul may have drawn on Hellenistic sources for other parts of his doctrine, he is at any rate in his anthropology fundamentally what he describes himself, a Hebrew of the Hebrews.¹⁴⁹ Paul’s discussions on *sóma* in the strict sense of it are eschatological and not metaphysical. The body referring to the total personality has inner and outer aspects. These various aspects, the larger and the smaller, visible and invisible parts are coordinated not only by the head but by all. They are a unity (Col 2:19). It all implies that if one aspect is corrupt the entire body is condemned but one part will resurrect like the other.

Paul’s theology of the *sóma* teaches that humanity is not going to resurrect as parts but as a whole. God’s relationship or human participation in the image and likeness of God is only possible through *sóma*. This will in turn reach eschatology when God will show mercy to the sinful nature by ending it in a new covenant of grace. If it is agreed that Paul’s discussion about the *sóma* is strictly pointed towards eschatology then it all means the resurrection according to Pauline thought is the restoration of the personality, the *sóma*. The conclusion may pose a problem about identification. What will be the symbol of identification, that the resurrected “I” is “Me.”

2.7.6 Immortality of the Soul

The human being is aware that life is transitory. Definitely human daily experiences tell the individuals that one shall not live in *secula seculorum* (forever). Despite this, the human still embraces the idea of survival after death. Philosophers like Feuerbach, Nietzsche, and Martin Heidegger have all accused the human being of playing down this awareness. The human

¹⁴⁹ John Robinson, *The Body*, 11.

being according to their thought has denied death only to accept immortality. For philosophy, immortal life has its prime root in individual feeling. This thinking is supported by the various ways people behave. People express their denial of death in so many ways. They do this by maintaining a culture of survival. This includes the notion of physical survival in offspring. They make this expression by ritual and ceremonial sacrifices. This is mostly when individuals and groups honour their dead in acts of ritual ceremonies and sacrifices. John Mbiti has identified this practice within the African as well as in the European cultures.¹⁵⁰ There is also this notion of group consciousness and the theory of social survival. This notion holds that the survival of the society is the survival of the individual.

The inner organic feelings for immortality have been expressed in some other ways. Ernest Becker calls this other way a 'hero-system.' People earn a feeling of denying death by "carving out a place in nature, by building an edifice that reflects human value: a temple, a cathedral, a totem pole, a skyscraper, a family that spans three generations. The hope and belief is that the things that man creates in society are of lasting worth and meaning, that they outlive or outshine death and decay."¹⁵¹ All the above remarks give credence to the desire to survive death. They are the different ways of expressing immortality. Nevertheless, the difference of the substantiality of these attitudes rest mainly with the individual and perhaps with institutions which promote such ideological type or system of immortality.

Apart from the common ways of expressing the desire to survive death, some religions specifically argue for resurrection (Christianity and Islam) while other argue for the immortality of the soul. In all these, the common teaching is that death is not the "end of life." Immortality of the soul is strictly connected to form personal survival. It is all about outliving the

¹⁵⁰ John Mbiti S., *Im Kreis der Lebend-Toten Religiöse Ideen im österlichen Zentralafrika, Geister* 376, in: *Mircea Eliade, Geschichte der religiösen Ideen*, bd 3/2, Freiburg, (1991), 245-264, 252.

¹⁵¹ Ernest Becker, *Die Überwindung der Todesfurcht*, Olten, ²(1976), 25.

physical temporality. From the ancient times, there was the general faith in a survival of a spiritual substance after the decay of the material body. The Greeks mainly express this thought. Plato (427-347 B.C) loudly propagated the attitude of the survival of the form in the *Phaedo*. Part two of this book summarises the conception of the immortality of the soul. In the discussion between Socrates and his friends, Cebes made a short statement about the state of the dead. In response to the comment, Socrates argued that death is the opposite of life and vice versa. For Socrates, the soul can die neither in this life nor in life after death. The soul departs the body in this life to exist elsewhere perhaps in Hades from which it is born again.¹⁵²

Greek-platonic thinking holds that the soul is spiritual while the body is material. The body according to this understanding is the prisoner of the spiritual soul. The time of death is a moment of great release for the spiritual soul. Once the soul is released, it continues its existence. The soul is in a steady process of regeneration, in a continuous rebirth after death. Greek Platonic thought on immortality however, is a direct opposite of Jewish biblical conception of the resurrection.

2.7.7 Immortality and the Resurrection in Christianity

The preceding paragraphs related immortality with the notion of survival of the soul with its background origin in Greek cosmology. In view of this notion one may ask whether it would be possible to identify a biblical concept of immortality. Does immortality belong to Christian belief? For Peter Müller,¹⁵³ apart from the experience of Christ, the resurrection is an event that has never happened in human history. The resurrection is not about immortality of the soul and should not be interchanged with it. The Resurrection rather means a coming back to life though not to this earthly life, it does not imply a going out of existence. It is a miracle of transformation and a fresh start the type Paul means when he writes “listen to this secret truth, we shall not all die, but when the last trumpet sounds, we shall all be

¹⁵² See, Eric Segal (trans.), *The Dialogues of Plato*, New York, (2006), 89.

¹⁵³ Peter Müller, *Der Soma-Begriff bei Paulus*, Stuttgart, (1988).

changed in an instant, as quickly as the blinking of an eye. For when the trumpet sounds, the dead will be raised, never to die again, and we shall all be changed.”¹⁵⁴ Resurrection in this context implies to both the flesh and the body. The two words are interchangeable presupposing that the decomposed body/flesh will revive to newness of life again.

The concepts of immortality and resurrection have been differently used in Greek-Platonic philosophy as much as in Hebrew-Christian spirituality. The two concepts point to the belief in life after death. Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-72) contrasts these notions as utopic craving to live forever. The desire is a common instinct shared by animals and humans. In his book “Das Wesen des Christentums (1841),” Feuerbach writes. In all things, “the human being, at least in a state of ordinary well-being, has the wish not to die. This wish is originally identical with the instinct of self-preservation. Whatever lives seeks to maintain itself to continue alive, and consequently not to die.”¹⁵⁵ While our two cultures (religion and philosophy) admit the eternity of the human being, even in cases where the emphasis is only on the survival of the vital principle, the mind or the soul, as it is the situation with the Greek philosophy Feuerbach maintains that it is only a vague way by which the ancients expressed themselves.¹⁵⁶ The ancients express themselves in abstruse sense of spiritual immortality but the resurrection of the flesh/body is the really new thing Christ and Christianity has given to the world.¹⁵⁷ Contrary to the proposition of second century thinkers which Feuerbach has come to join in the 19th century, Christianity according to Justine Martyr did not proclaim only salvation of the soul. If it did, it then means that Christianity is not saying any new thing except what we have already heard from Greek philosophers.¹⁵⁸ By insisting that Christianity is

¹⁵⁴ 1 Cor 15:52-3; Peter Müller, *Der Soma-Begriff*, 64.

¹⁵⁵ Ludwig Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums*, Stuttgart, (1841) 1849, 216.

¹⁵⁶ Ludwig Feuerbach, *Das Wesen*, 216.

¹⁵⁷ Willem Cornelis van Unnik, *The Newly Discovered Gnostic epistle*, 155.

¹⁵⁸ See, Justine, *De Resurrectione*, x.

following the old part of nature, Feuerbach joined the 19th century materialists empowered by the industrial revolution of the time to advance a materialistic philosophy that rejects the existence of a human spiritual element.

Feuerbach did not only reject the survival of death by way of immortality of the soul, he equally rejected the notion of the resurrection. Thus, he believes that proofs of immortality are insufficient even 'revelation' or the so-called unassisted reason is not capable of apprehending it still less of proving it.¹⁵⁹ He accused Christianity of interpreting what the ancients understood figuratively into dogmatic faith when he writes. "The Christians on the contrary, in the undoubting certainty that their personal, self-flattering wishes will be fulfilled, that is, in the certainty of the divine nature of their emotions, the truth and unassailability of their subjective feelings, converted that which to the ancients was a theoretic problem into an immediate fact, – converted a theoretic, and in itself open question, into a matter of conscience, the denial of which was equivalent to the high treason of atheism. He who denies the resurrection denies the resurrection of Christ, but he who denies the resurrection of Christ denies Christ himself, and he who denies Christ denies God. Thus did "spiritual" Christianity unspiritualise what was spiritual! To the Christians the immortality of the reason, of the soul, was far too abstract and negative; they had at heart only a personal immortality, such as would gratify their feelings, and the guarantee of this lies in a bodily resurrection alone. The resurrection of the body is the highest triumph of Christianity over the sublime but certainly abstract spirituality and objectivity of the ancients. For this reason, the idea of the resurrection could never be assimilated by the pagan mind."¹⁶⁰ Feuerbach personally objected Greek immortality in its notion of a spiritual principle of the soul but he admired it in its capacity as reason. He blamed Christianity for incarnating and giving eternal dimension to what normally was a theoretical knowledge.

¹⁵⁹ Ludwig Feuerbach, *Das Wesen*, 217.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

However, because of his materialistic philosophy Feuerbach had some sympathy for the doctrine of the resurrection than the immortality. Especially since the doctrine of the resurrection for him teaches ‘some kind of quasi’ restoration of material parts. The point is that the resurrected human parts will eventually communicate, drink and eat.¹⁶¹ Due to his connection to phenomenalism and materialism Feuerbach, chide Christianity for abandoning what Paul made in the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians the bedrock of Christianity (resurrection of dead) for a profound interest in ancient philosophy and their teaching of immortality,¹⁶² that is, instead of making strong appeals to the Christ who resurrected and ate fish with his disciples. The early church fathers according to Feuerbach took side and made case for the immortality of the soul. The question is whether Christianity actually emphasizes immortality over resurrection.

Oscar Cullmann (1902-95) strongly rejected the assumption that primitive Christianity abandoned resurrection for immortality of the soul. In his Ingersoll Lecture of 15th September 1955, Cullman argued that the present thinking and the emphasis on immortality rather than resurrection is but a new trend. Early Christianity, he argued witnessed to the resurrection and not to immortality thus, he radically criticized what he calls the present change on emphasis as misleading. This is the way he says it “if we were to ask an ordinary Christian today (whether well-read Protestant or Catholic, or not) what he conceives to be the New Testament teaching concerning the fate of man after death, with few exceptions we should get the answer: ‘the immortality of the soul.’ Yet this widely accepted idea is one of the greatest misunderstandings of Christianity.”¹⁶³ Though early Christian community knew about the implication of immortality in its Christian relationship to

¹⁶¹ Ludwig Feuerbach, *Die Unsterblichkeitsfrage vom Standpunkt der Anthropologie*, in: *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 8, Eberhard Bethge (hg), Gütersloh, (1972), 10:231.

¹⁶² Ludwig Feuerbach, *Die Unsterblichkeitsfrage*, *ibid.*, 20:214; Werner Jaeger, *The Greek Ideas of Immortality*, in: *Immortality and resurrection*, Krister Stendahl (ed.), New York, (1965), 97-114.

salvation Cullmann however, argued that immortality in Platonic sense was not original to the bible. Thus he believes that the concept as it is known at the present time has been hijacked by the influence of Greek-Platonic understanding. Hence, “it was from Greek thought that the ideas of the soul and immortality had particularly been inherited”¹⁶⁴ so that whenever, immortality is mentioned, the Platonic implication comes to mind.

The question is whether Plato was the progenitor of the concept of immortality. History has it that Plato did not single handedly create the idea rather the thought was native to the Greek culture of which Plato was an integral part. “The first time that we are told expressly that a man will become ‘immortal’ is therefore quite logically in martial poetry. This is in one of the few elegies preserved of the Spartan Tyrtæus (seventh century), who promises this as their future lot to the valiant warriors who have died for their country.”¹⁶⁵ Before meeting this pattern of thought within the specific group of the Spartan Tyrtæus, the idea was already existing in general Greek thoughts. This means it “had a previous development of its own, which, so far as we can trace it, takes us back to the sixth century B.C. In this period of social revolution and intellectual upheaval there is more than one group that seems to have contributed to the new conception of man’s internal life and nature. The Orphic religion, the Pythagorean ideal of an ascetic life, and the religion of the so-called mysteries....They all think of man as being much close to the divine than was commonly assumed, even as being himself of divine origin.”¹⁶⁶ These cults and religions thought of man as an immortal soul.

The Greek culture, tradition and system of learning have enormous influence on the thinking pattern of ancient societies, without excluding early

¹⁶³ Oscar Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead, the witness of the New Testament*, in: *Immortality and Resurrection*, Stendahl Krister (ed.), 9-53, 9.

¹⁶⁴ Barr James, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality*, London, (1992), 99; Krister Stendahl, *Meanings: The Bible as Document and as Guide*. Philadelphia, (1984), 197.

¹⁶⁵ Werner Jaeger, *The Greek ideas of immortality*, 100-1.

¹⁶⁶ Werner Jaeger, *The Greek Ideas of Immortality*, 101.

Christian communities. The father of Christian theology, Origen, “was a Platonic philosopher at the school of Alexandria. He built into Christian doctrine the whole cosmic drama of the soul, which he took from Plato, and although later Christian Fathers decided that he took over too much...”¹⁶⁷ Through the contact with Greek-Platonic system the language of immortality became known within early Christianity. Influenced by Platonic tradition via Origen, Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 335-ca. 395 AD) asserts that there is immortality of the soul and immortality as it refers to the resurrection of the body. He argued, “The environment of the atoms being one and the same on every side of the earth, I deem it right neither to contradict nor yet to favor those who raise the objection that we must regard either this or the lower region as assigned to the soul released. As long as this objection does not shake our central doctrine of the existence of those souls after the life in the flesh. There need be no controversy about the whereabouts to our mind, holding as we do that place is a property of body only, and that soul, being immaterial, is by no necessity of its nature detained in any place.”¹⁶⁸ It may not be out of place to make a short digression on the three Gregories who played important roles in the Church history of Asia Minor. These Fathers were influenced directly as well as indirectly by Platonic philosophy.

First above the three previously mentioned Gregories, is Gregory Thaumaturgus (ca.213-ca. 270/275). The Gregory means worker of wonders. He was born of pagan parents at Neo-Caesarea in Pontus. While in Palestine on studies, he came under the influence of Origen. He was converted to Christianity after his education in Palestine. In 240, he was elected the bishop of his hometown. His Platonic teaching however, influenced Basil (330-379) the brother of Gregory of Nyssa. His grandmother, Macrina, brought him up at Amnesi near Neo-Caesarea. Through his grandmother, Basil became acquainted with the ideas of Gregory of Thaumaturgus and his strong attachment to Origenism. In fact it was through Macrina and her knowledge of

¹⁶⁷ Werner Jaeger, *The Greek Ideas of Immortality*, 112.

¹⁶⁸ See, Gregory Nyssa, *De anima et resurrectione*

Gregory Thaumaturgus that the teachings of Origen were able to reach Basil and his friends especially Gregory of Nazianzus (ca. 325- ca. 389). Both friends (Basil and Gregory Nazianzus) were together at the University of Athens. After Basil became bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia in 370, he encouraged his friend, Gregory Nazianzus to accept the See of Sasima.

As already mentioned, Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 335- ca. 395) was a younger brother of Basil. Gregory Nyssa later became the bishop of Nyssa, he was the one who wrote the life of Gregory Thaumaturgus through the stories he heard from his grandmother, Macrina. The life and thought pattern of Gregory of Thaumaturgus strongly influenced not only the writings of Gregory of Nyssa but also that of Basil, and Gregory of Nazianzus. Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa are collectively referred to as the Cappadocian Fathers.¹⁶⁹ The content of this statement shows that the Fathers and the early Christian communities knew the Greek-Platonic ideas of immortality but the extent it was used within Christian theology remain a question of opinion.

The phenomenal reaction of Justin Martyr (ca. 100 - ca. 165) has contributed a great deal in understanding the implication of ancient Christianity claim to immortality. For him, immortality remains a part of ancient Christian heritage. Christianity grew out of Judaism and Moses one of the adherents of Judaism existed before the prominent adaptation of the concept of immortality by Plato and other Greek thinkers. This is the way Justin puts it. "Moses.... is more ancient than all the Greek authors. And whatever philosophers and poets said about the immortality of the soul, or punishments after death, or contemplation of things heavenly, or doctrines of the like kind, they have received such suggestions from the prophets as have enabled them to understand and interpret these things."¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Lowther Clarke, *St. Gregory of Nyssa: The life of St. Macrina*, Society for promoting Christian knowledge, London, (1916), 5-7.

¹⁷⁰ 1 Apology, 44.

Philo of Alexander (ca. 20 BC – ca. 50 AD) probably first used the ‘Loan theory.’ Philo of Alexander was a Hellenized Jew and an embodiment of trans-cultural knowledge. That says much on his knowledge and learning. As a Jew, he was conversant with his ancestral Jewish culture. As a scholar, he was proficient in Hellenistic tradition. The ‘Loan theory,’ is occasionally attributed as traditionally Jewish and Philo grew up to adopt this knowledge of the theory. As already mentioned, the theory emphasizes the precedence of Jewish tradition and culture to Greek culture and Hellenistic learning. The theory crowns Moses as the seat and summit of Jewish philosophy. Philo adopted this ideology. He thought that Moses was the teacher of Pythagoras. Philo defines Moses as the teacher of all other Greek philosophers, lawmakers, and poets including Hesiod, Heraclitus, Lycurgus, and so many others. For Philo Greek philosophy was a natural development of the revelatory teachings of Moses.¹⁷¹

Justin Martyr later adopted this theory. As we have seen in the above quotation, Justin used this theory to show how dependent the Greek theology and philosophy were on the Hebrew culture and Scripture. Justin seems to be saying that what the Fathers thought was the essence of Plato’s philosophy of the soul. The essence of the soul for the Fathers as it was also for Plato was a significant expression. It showed their basic belief in the immaterialism and spiritualism of the soul. The Fathers rejected the immortality in its connection to reincarnation and soul migration but upheld it as biblical concept in its relation with Paul’s notion of the resurrection and with Hebrew-Christian belief in existence of the immaterial world and immaterial beings like the angels.¹⁷²

In the above sense, Joseph Ratzinger insists on the usage of the word soul and immortality as being both biblical as well as belonging to early Chris-

¹⁷¹ De Opifio Mundi, 8; See also <http://www.iep.utm.edu/philo/> (accessed 10.10.10).

¹⁷² Werner Jaeger, *The Greek ideas of immortality*, 112.

tian tradition and application.¹⁷³ He accused some protestant theologians especially Carl Stange (1870-1959), Adolf Schlatter (1852-1938), and sometimes Paul Althaus (1888-1966) of making the concept of immortality vulnerable. For him, “Appealing to the Bible and to Luther, these men rejected as Platonic dualism the notion of a separation of body and soul in death as the doctrine of the immortality of the soul presupposes.”¹⁷⁴ Ratzinger rather maintained that immortality and dualism are not original to Plato in the first place. Whenever and wherever immortality of the soul is found in Plato it was according to Ratzinger for a political analysis. Because in “Plato, the doctrine of immortality belongs to a religious context that is at the same in the perspective of his political thought, his principal concern.”¹⁷⁵ The interrelation of body and soul is an inherited principle adopted by Plato for the interest of political service. Thus, Ratzinger maintained that Plato did not develop the doctrine of soul immortality “his successors rather found themselves wandering in the philosophical landscape pitted with problems.”¹⁷⁶ For Ratzinger, if Moses, the prophets and the Torah who were before Plato had no doctrine of immortality in terms of dualism, and if Jewish theology that influenced Platonic philosophy had no knowledge of immortality in its dualistic mentality, then Plato could not as well have held immortality in its negative dualistic form. Hence, he argues against a possible influence.

Before Plato’s philosophy, Greek mythology probably influenced by Zoroastrianism was already familiar with immortality, the mortality of some gods. In the bid to find relevance and foundation for themselves the disciples of Plato attributed and obscurely believed Zoroaster was a precursor of Plato, or Plato a reincarnation of Zoroaster.¹⁷⁷ Some Greek poems bear testimonies to the immortality of the gods. The Theogony remains a good exam-

¹⁷³ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 104-132.

¹⁷⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 104-5

¹⁷⁵ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 143.

¹⁷⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 143-4.

¹⁷⁷ Emile Benveniste, *The Persian Religion*, *Librarie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, Paris*, (1929), 21.

ple. The reputable Greek poet Hesiod (ca. 740 - ca. 670 BC) perhaps wrote the poem in the eight century. In the *Theogony*, Zeus made some goddesses immortal (including Ariadne the wife of Dionysus).¹⁷⁸ Herodotus (ca.484 – ca.425 BC) asserts that the doctrine of immortality was not original to the Greeks but it could have been influenced upon Pythagoras by Egyptian theology.¹⁷⁹ Therefore, “Plato left no ‘Hellenic schematization’ just lying at the wayside for any interested passer-by to pick up.”¹⁸⁰ He (Plato) introduced the idea of immortality of the soul as an exotic religious doctrine.¹⁸¹ The whole sequence of this argument relates that immortality of the soul was not part of the everyday beliefs of the ancient Greeks or in Plato.¹⁸² Secondly, “Plato learned the substance of his wisdom from the prophets. But the prophets announced Christ as the substance of their message.”¹⁸³ It is in this connection that Paul systematically and theologically connected Christ to the lineage of the prophets of old. Hence, he means to say that the coming of Christ and the Gospel brought life and immortality (2Tim 2:10). Christ cannot be separated from his resurrection, which also is to be viewed as the Parousia.¹⁸⁴ Immortality is the participation in the glory of incarnation and in the cross, “if we have died with him, we shall also live with him, if we continue to endure we shall also rule with him” (2Tim 2:11-12). We have now arrived at the crucial point of the meaning of Christian immortality understood as satisfying the curiosity of the empty tomb. It reveals what great plans God has for humanity. The great secret is that Christ is in us, which

¹⁷⁸ Hesiod, *The Theogony*, Martin West (ed.), Clarendon Press, (1966), 949. The above passage of the poem is highly technical and difficult to digest. Nevertheless, in his commentary 941-950, Martin West specifically cleared the doubt one may entertain relating immortality with the content of this passage.

¹⁷⁹ See, Simon Tugwell, *Human Immortality and the redemption of death*, London, (1989), 14; Henry Barclay Swete, *The Life of the World to come*, (1919), 4.

¹⁸⁰ Ratzinger Joseph, *Eschatology*, 143-4.

¹⁸¹ Meno, 81a.

¹⁸² Simon Tugwell, *Human Immortality*, 15.

¹⁸³ Richard Norris, *God and World*, 41.

¹⁸⁴ Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, xvi.

means that we will share in the glory of God (Col 1:27). In this context, immortality is no more seen in the concept of Greek philosophy. It is now the doctrine of living hope. It is no more a mere doctrine of the survival of the soul after death. It now includes the resurrection of the body.¹⁸⁵ The immortality of man therefore implies the immortality of the soul¹⁸⁶ understood in the sense of the indivisibility of matter and form. The discovery of this new indivisibility of man shows that the biblical message promises immortality to the whole man and not to a separated soul.¹⁸⁷ So that “immortality is no longer a belief but a sure hope which embraces the whole man, which promises to preserve body, soul, and spirit in the completeness to the day of Christ.”¹⁸⁸ Appropriately contextualized, biblical immortality like the resurrection anchors on the hope of eternal life engraved in salvation history (Heilsgeschichte). Therefore, biblical immortality is strictly incompatible with Greek model that is connected and related to the dualism of the person. If we return to the point with Feuerbach and his interpretation, we notice that he completely misinterpreted biblical and Pauline doctrine of the Christian resurrection. In the first place, resurrected body in Pauline is pure ‘spiritual not material’ in the sense Feuerbach understood it and spiritual bodies have no material qualities. Secondly, by understanding resurrection in the sense of material regeneration Feuerbach contradicts Jesus’ teaching that “at the resurrection men and women do not marry, no, they are like the angels in heaven (Mt 22:30).” Thirdly, the Fathers of the church who for him abandoned resurrection for immortality knew that the Hebrew Bible does not know of immortality in Greek sense. To show their consciousness, the Fathers abandoned the Greek, Orphic and Pythagorean transmigration of the soul for immortality of soul, since they found it reconcilable with Paul’s no-

¹⁸⁵ Henry Swete, *The life of the world to Come*, 13-4

¹⁸⁶ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, ³(1958), 194-5.

¹⁸⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, *Einführung in das Christentum*, München, (1968), 289-299.

¹⁸⁸ Henry Swete, *The life of the world to Come*, 16.

tion of the resurrection and with Jewish-Christian angelology that is, the existence of a world of immaterial beings.¹⁸⁹

Krister Stendahl argues against the opinion that immortality of the soul is fundamentally biblical. For him "... the whole world that comes to us through the Bible, OT and NT, is not interested in the immortality of the soul. And if you think it is, it is because you have read this into the material."¹⁹⁰ It has been identified that "in the Jewish tradition, the being of the human person which survives death, and thus, in the Christian perspective, the bearer of existence with Christ, is most frequently called the soul or spirit... the Church's own form of the doctrine of immortality was developed in a consistent manner from the resources of the biblical heritage, and is indispensable on grounds of both tradition and philosophy."¹⁹¹ Another argument being proposed here suggests that Christian resurrection presupposes immortality since the existence of the person does not stop at any stage to begin again. Dying is passing over to immortality and to eternity. The later word closely expresses the first that refers to a quality of life that has no end.

Johannine theology indicates that the immortality is a gratuitous gift granted to every Christian, which starts both here in the present life and proceeds to the world to come 'I am telling you the truth: those who hear my words and believe in him who sent me have eternal life. They will not be judged, but have already passed from death to life' (Jn 5:24). The Gospel is one very important thing that brought life and immortality to light,¹⁹² but it is not the Gospel alone; the entire biblical tradition is founded on the truth that the human being is immortal. This assertion simply tells us that it makes sense

¹⁸⁹ Werner Jaeger, *The Greek Ideas of Immortality*, 112.

¹⁹⁰ Krister Stendahl, *Meanings*, 196.

¹⁹¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 147.

¹⁹² David Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary*, Eugene F. Miller (ed.), Indianapolis, (1987), 591.

within the NT to talk of immortality as accomplished by the Christ event who by his resurrection humiliated the last enemy – death.

2.8 The Origin of Death

The human being is conscious of the inevitability of death. But why must the human die? To answer this question, different religions have given different reasons for the emergence of death in our cosmos. The Indian mythology connects the account of the entering of death into the world with the birth of the first humans, Yama and Yami. Both primordial twins were born immortal. As time goes on Yama became tired of living as an immortal being. In quest for a different kind of life, he travelled southward to learn the eternal secret. Here he discovered the realm of death and died hence he became the first human to die. Yami followed him but was not in a hurry to learn the eternal secret. She rather urges him to commit incest with her and learn with her what it was to be fruitful and multiply ‘since they owe it to life to procreate.’¹⁹³ Yama in Asian mythology is usually the personification of death. As the god of death, he reigns within the realm of death as king.¹⁹⁴ The Igbo folklore has a verity of myths that explain how death entered the world. The myth leaves us with the impression that at the beginning the human being was meant to live forever. To make sure this happen, Chukwu (God) gave early humans one or more options of immortality, resurrection and the ability to become young again after a very old age. But these three options were carelessly lost and death came into the world.

According to one of the myths, when death first entered the world, men sent a messenger to Chukwu, asking him whether the dead could not be restored to life and sent back to their old homes. For the fact that the dog had ‘antelope legs’ and was friendly to humans it was chosen as the right messenger

¹⁹³ Hans-Peter Hasenfratz, *Der indische Weg, Die Spiritualität eines Kontinents entdecken*, Freiburg, i.Br. (1994), 57.

¹⁹⁴ Hans-Peter Hasenfratz, *Tod, Jenseits, Auferstehung in der Welt Religion*, in: *Auferstehung der Toten*, Hans Kessler (hg.), Darmstadt, (2004), 13-33, 13.

to Chukwu. The dog, however, did not go straight to Chukwu. The toad had overheard the message and wished to punish humanity for reasons best known to him. He tricked the dog to delay by showing him the deposit of human excreta, which the dog went to eat. As the dog dallied on the way, the toad overtook him and reached Chukwu first. He told Chukwu that he had been sent by men to say that after death they had no desire at all to return to the world. Chukwu declared that he would respect their wishes, and when the dog arrived later with the true message, Chukwu refused to alter his decision. Thus, although a human being may be born again, he cannot return with the same body and the same personality.¹⁹⁵ There are other versions of this particular myth and various other similar myths of the origin of death within traditional thought.¹⁹⁶ We now know that death did not just happen; there are fundamental reasons why it came to stay. In Christian religion, the doctrine of sin in coalescent with the Adam's story emerged as the cause of death in the universe (Gn 3; 6:5-6). For the Genesis creation story, the human being was created immortal the entering of death was a consequence of disobedience. Many religions as already seen share the idea that the entering of death in the human world was as a result of sin and disobedience. The Christian tradition, Augustine has an elaborate explanation for this.¹⁹⁷ His idea nevertheless was influenced by the Pauline theology of the origin of sin and death. St. Paul took with him from Judaism to Christianity that Adam's sins have affected his descendants as well as himself by generating an evil imagination within them (2 Esdras 3:21-22; 7). Through the sin of Adam, death came into human spectrum and this completely spread to the rest of the human race (Rom 5:12; 1 Cor 15:21-22). The "Augustinian picture is so familiar that it is commonly thought of as the Christian view of man and his sinful plight. Nevertheless, it is only a Christian view."¹⁹⁸ Con-

¹⁹⁵ Ulli Beier (ed.), *The Origin of Life and Death: African Creation Myths*, Ibadan, (1986), 56.

¹⁹⁶ John Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, Ibadan, (1986), 110; Hans-Peter Hasenfratz, *Tod, Jenseits, Auferstehung in der Welt Religion*, 13.

¹⁹⁷ Augustine, *On the Grace of Christ, and on Original Sinn*, bk.II, ch. 2.

¹⁹⁸ John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, London, (1977), 201-2.

trary to the Augustine Christian perspective, the emergence of death in Igbo traditional setting was due to mistake. The mistake is not sin on the part of man but on the part of the animal as a revolt against God's will. The toad was the harbinger of the evil message. No matter how it goes, death entering the world was not just accidental. It entered due to a premeditated action of someone or something. This premeditation for the Igbo spoiled the original hope of 'paradise' meant for humanity. Since this promise was broken, death has remained.

2.8.1 What is Death

The phenomenon of death has been so much taken by its frequent occurrence that its definition at times seems like over laboring the obvious. Instead of asking the question, what is death? It is preferable to enquire about the meaning of human death. How do we know a human has died? Death is the cessation of life; the ceasing to exist. It is technically defined by physicians as the irreversibility and cessation of organ functioning, the absence of respiration, pulsation, peripheral impulse and heartbeat, cessation of blood circulation and a bluish color that results consequent to lack of oxygen and blood circulation,¹⁹⁹ lack of eye reflex etc. These are all biological definitions of death. To fathom the real meaning of death, it is important to stride across the borders of biology and connect death with the definition of life, which is active participation in the ongoing processes of our environment.²⁰⁰ It is expressed in various ways including internal and external participation. The adoption of internal expression of participation involves understanding human being as a combination of a physical matter and a spiritual form. The external participation involves existence in physical environment. With these phenomena of internal and external character, the human being participates in life. Death and dying in this way would be a decline in the participation of the unity and the extinction from existence. It is not concerned now with the cessation of a process but the irreversible loss of the personhood. Does this mean that the human being can lose its personhood to death? Can the human being go out of existence? Let us see the suggestions of some philosophies.

2.8.2 The Dynamism of Death

The most often asked question of a modern person is the right of self-expression and the limitation to this right. How much rights individuals have

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Johannes Hoff/Jürgen, Kritik der „Hirntod“ – Konzeption. Plädoyer für ein menschenwürdiges Todeskriterium, Organverpflanzung und Hirntodkriterium, in, der Schmitt, Reinbek, (1994), 153-254, 234.

²⁰⁰ Hans Schwarz, Eschatology, Michigan, (2000), 250.

over their lives or how much human history would be lost to death. If one has no right to his/her own life, does he/she have the right to its disposal? Present human situation and modern understanding of anthropology are influencing the answers to these questions. The modern man is more sceptical than ever about "eschatology." This is so because the modern man is a technically minded empiricist under the affection of dualistic ontology, a dichotomy of body and soul. And with this kind of philosophical reasoning the modern man thinks that death is the end of everything²⁰¹ since it is a cessation of active biological participation.

When we talk of dualistic ontology, we mean the pattern of thinking that impresses modern man to understand things in material categories. Dualistic ontology impresses the modern mind with the understanding of temporary existence of the material person or 'body' and eternal existence of the 'soul' the spiritual archetype. In this form of thinking, the question becomes whether not only the individual will exist as a pure form but also the problem becomes that of unity of nature.²⁰² The mind of the modern age is tormented with the question; would the "form" be the "me" after death? The ontological seriousness of this question makes death appear as a radical end to all.²⁰³ This thought impedes the contention that the human exists after death. Philosophy also challenges religious belief in eternity. It alienates resurrection, thereby giving the logic that humanity will be totally lost into history. However, if it is true that the right to life which humanity possess belongs to a sovereign, then the right to live after death is equally transmit-

²⁰¹ Piet Schoonenberg, I Believe in Eternal Life, in: Concilium, Vol. 41, the problem of eschatology, Edward Schillebeeckx (ed.), New York, (1969), 96-112, 101.

²⁰² Karl Rahner, Zur Theologie des Todes, Herder, (1958), 37. „... es handelt sich, um das nochmals ausdrücklich zu betonen, bei dieser Analyse des Todesphänomens nicht um die Frage, ob der Mensch nach dem Tod „weiterexistiert“ oder nicht. Daß er weiter existiert, kann hier von vornherein als ausgemacht vorausgesetzt werden. Sondern es handelt sich darum, wie dieses im Tode weiterexistierende Wesen bleibe, insofern dieses Wie am Phänomen des Todes selbst abgelesen werden soll. Und da bleibt jene unzurückführbare dialektische Einheit, die wir die „Verhülltheit“ des Todes nennen wollen.“

²⁰³ Piet Schoonenberg, I believe in eternal life, 101-2.

ted by the sovereign. This means, death could be a probable means of losing or gaining human history and identity. The question remains how well is death accepted as a means of entering into resurrection and salvation.

2.8.3 Anxiety and the Fear of Death

Is fear really a psychological phenomenon? This question has a yes and no answer. Some people who will respond in affirmation think that fear is an inherent quality of creation. Fear in this sense is comparable with love. One may say that love for life is the reason for the fear of death. The love for life results to fear and self-defence, which is an instinctive art inherent in every creation. Some others think that fear is evolutionary (Darwinism). It is only sociological. Whether we call it self-consciousness or symbolic identity, Homo sapiens alone among the animals know that he/she is going to die. For the fact that the rational being knows about death it lives in the awareness of that final horizon.²⁰⁴

Whether fear is psychological, sociological or evolutionary, the fact remains that the human being is afraid of something. It is afraid of death and the uncertainty of the possibility of a future and better existence. These two factors draw the margin between humanity and lower animals. Human reflective nature imprints on him/her and calls to mind that not all is well; there is yet something to settle. The irrational nature of brutes spare them from worries and anxiety, they are saved from real fear of the unknown, they “don’t know that death is happeningthey live and they disappear with the same thoughtlessness,”²⁰⁵ because they simply are and quietly pass on and life goes on.

Human inner fear often complicates by the thought of death. The causes of some times emit anxiety and silence among humans. Theorists that have attempted producing answers to quell this anxiousness have ended up present-

²⁰⁴ John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life*, Kentucky, (1976), 97.

²⁰⁵ Ernest Becker, *Die Überwindung der Todesfurcht*, Olten, (1973) 1976, 54.

ing what Feuerbach thinks is logic in self-defence.²⁰⁶ This self-defence leads to the doctrine of survival and an inner desire for a life after death. Some theorists have radically surrendered to human incapacity in the face of death. They criticised the belief in after life and the doctrine of resurrection. Both situations still bring to the fore and demonstrate human inner fear and anxiety. Fear has been a central theme in the thought of the leading continental existentialists particularly in Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). For him the primary cause of fear and anxiety is inauthentic existence. Inauthentic existence is when Dasein (Being) surreptitiously refuses accepting death as characteristics of existence. When it (Being) refuse to acknowledge that to exist leads essentially towards death. Thus, this covetousness to life according to Heidegger is the cause of anxiety²⁰⁷ and fear.

2.8.4 Existentialism and the Question of Death

The function of theology has always been to continue to relate where philosophy stops, in other words faith continues wherever reason ends. Historical researches, which have ever remained with us, have ever been done through and with reason but these researches have never explicitly excluded theology. The conflict between philosophy and theology is never really a conflict between reason and faith but a conflict between sciences an “unfortunate mistiming or comparing not equal to equal: when religious sanction was given to scientific insights of an earlier time, it often clashed with newer insights in the sciences.”²⁰⁸ If one assumes for instance that philosophy has never provided theology strong reasons to believe, one notices immediately that whenever philosophy presumes to have taken over from religion (theology) the inherent subjects of religion take central stage. It should be noted that the problem of evil, justice, peace and suffering has remained real test for philosophy; death and resurrection have equally become its main problems. Contemporary thinkers especially phenomenologists and

²⁰⁶ Ludwig Feuerbach, *Das Wesen*, 217.

²⁰⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, John Macquarrie et al (trans.), Oxford, (1992), 265.

²⁰⁸ Krister Stendahl, *Meaning*, 194.

existentialists did not back out at this generational problem. Their contributions to the treatment of our theme injected upon the platform of theology, a call for historicity of all events, subjecting faith, religion and revelation to a historical proof or data basing. This opinion is found in the Atheism of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), the positivism of August Comte (1798-1857) and in the existentialist thought of Martin Heidegger. The above philosophers have helped in reshaping philosophical thinking. Nevertheless, this work will only consider the contributions of Heidegger.

2.8.5 Martin Heidegger

The German existentialist philosopher Martin Heidegger flourished during the 20th century intellectual revolution classically known as the reshaping of philosophical mind. Like Friedrich Nietzsche and August Comte, Heidegger was interested in the role science of philosophy and religion play in defining human destiny. As an existentialist, Heidegger busied himself with two questions. The first was whether death is the end of man. The second point of interest was whether the human is an immortal being. The first question is an offshoot of the second. In order to find solution to these questions Heidegger rejected the ontic inquiry about man since for him the ontical inquiry renders the whole question of being and its meaning useless. The word “ontic,” is from Greek on, ont- meaning, “Being.” Here it means being in its basic simple form of existence. It relates the reality of being as opposed to phenomenal existence.

Heidegger preferred the ontological inquiry about the nature of man and his existence. An ontological existence is a phenomenological existence of Dasein in the world. The words ‘ontic and Ontological’ are all Heidegger’s jargons expressing the relationship between beings. In his Being and Time, Heidegger makes a movement away from using the concept of ontic to the ontological. The two concepts are not a jump from particular to universal. Ontic designates relations among entities, features, or characteristics that differentiate one sort of existence from the other. “Ontological designates

the philosophical analysis of the nature of being.”²⁰⁹ It is always the Beingness which is a particular existence exercise. It is always the particular thing. The being of a table is always this ‘table.’ Ontological existence satisfies created things as beings-towards, they are beings towards nothing but death.

2.8.6 Martin Heidegger and the Problem of Death

Death for Heidegger has no meaning except for beings whose existence is characterised by temporality. Human beings are the only beings that exist. Trees, horses, angels and God simply “are” as such they are not bothered by the threat of death. Because they do not really exist, they do not reflect. The knowledge of death is conceptual and reflective a trait that these other beings do not possess. If they do contemplate and do reflect, they would know that death would eventually happen to them.²¹⁰ Heidegger conceives life as being-in the world; it is a being there and a being-towards death. Death for him is synonymous with existence and with man, Dasein (Being-there). That is being-there in an inescapable relationship with the world, nature and other created things. Being-there categorises and defines the existential character that distinguishes man radically from everything non-human thus, man is in the world with other beings but mode of existence differs; while other things are man exist.²¹¹ Karl Rahner systematically puts another way. For him, while plants, animals and other things change, it is only the human being in the real sense of the word that experiences death.²¹² Another characteristic of being-there in the world is temporality, which is also a feature of death, and the cause of anxiety found in Dasein. Death stares man everyday in the face, Dasein is a dying being.

²⁰⁹ Paul Tillich, *Hauptwerke/Main Works*, vol. 5, *Writings on Religion/Religiöse Schriften*, Robert P. Scharlemann, (ed.), Berlin, (1988), 160.

²¹⁰ See, Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death*, London, (1973), 27.

²¹¹ Martin Heidegger, *The way into the Ground of Metaphysics in Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, New York, (1956), 215.

²¹² Karl Rahner, *Tod*, 3, in: *Sacramentum Mundi*, bd.4. Freiburg, (1969), 920-928, 921-2.

The anxiety or rather fear discovered in Dasein is the consequence of inauthentic existence. The throwing of Dasein into the world sets him on a process essentially temporal, finite and incomplete. This incompleteness must naturally seek wholeness. It is natural and normal to think Dasein will gain this wholeness by everydayness (day-to-day existence), that is living minute by minute until maturity. Heidegger has a different view. He thinks that, “Dasein’s inherent moves, is not towards completeness, but towards death.” The everydayness existence is only part of being in the world but at death, man ceases to be there in the world. Heidegger insisted that this fact must be accepted if not, man lives in-authentically and hides from self and from the truth. As long as Dasein exist in the world, it must accept the fact that there is something to settle and this is outstanding. This inevitability is the ‘END,’ William Shakespeare has it that it will come when it must. “This end, which belongs to the potentiality-for-Being - that is to say, to existence – limits and determines in every case whatever totality is possible for Dasein”²¹³ yet it will be foolhardy not to accept this fact. Death according to Heidegger is a necessity of human mortality; existence without eschatological expectation is for him a mark of unique personality and an authentic living. “If we fully confront, accept and affirm our own mortality we thereby conquer it, so that it can no longer lead us into inauthentic existence”²¹⁴ and a possible pretence of a future life to come.

In Heidegger, at death man simply passes on. Not into openness as Karl Rahner proposes²¹⁵ or to an unrestricted relationship to the cosmos, no, death renders Dasein ‘a pancosmic’ and moves man to nothingness. Rahner introduces the word Pancosmic to demonstrate the reality of the resurrection in relation to the human being. Death is an event that happens completely to the person. The human however is a unity of person and nature. That means,

²¹³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 277.

²¹⁴ Hick John, *Death and Eternal Life*, 100.

²¹⁵ Karl Rahner, *Tod*, in: *Sacramentum Mundi*, 920-7; See, Gerald O’Collins, *Jesus Risen*, Darton, ²(1988), 79.

at death man does not enter into annihilation but into inescapable pancosmic relationship with itself and with nature. Death opens to the individual an unrestricted relationship with the cosmos. A relationship made possible due to the openness of the soul to the material world. The soul is not a close monad, or a shot window, it communicates rather with the material world.²¹⁶ On the other hand, Heidegger emphasizes that as an entity, Dasein never reached its ‘wholeness’ at death. Nevertheless, if it gains such ‘wholeness,’ this gain becomes the total loss of Being-in-the-world. In such a case, it will never again be experienced as an entity.²¹⁷ Heideggerian phenomenology offers no opportunity to the full meaning of death or its understanding, it has no solution for the issue of life after death neither of resurrection.²¹⁸ Heidegger expresses his doubt of life after death and in resurrection when he writes “the ‘ending’ which we have in view when we speak of death does not signify Dasein’s Being-at-an-end (Zu-Ende-sein), but a Being-towards-the-end (Sein zum Ende) of this entity. Death is a way to be in the physical world which Dasein takes over as soon as it comes to life, and then he is immediately ready and old enough to die.²¹⁹ ‘Zu-Ende-sein’ is an expression to be distinguished from ‘Sein-zum-Ende.’ In our context, ‘Sein-zum-Ende’ summarizes that ‘Nothingness’ which Dasein enters into at death.’ Sein-zum-Ende is the last stage of Dasein which allows no further development or living. There seem to be a clear evidence of Heidegger’s dispute with Orthodox religions, the tradition of the OT, Christian religion even the Islamic religion and other contemporary religions that share similar belief on the fate of the dead. Finally, the possibility of Heidegger disputing the human universal salvation through death and resurrection is clear. He writes, “‘No one can take the Other’s dying away from him’ Of course someone can ‘go to his death for another’ but that always means to sacrifice oneself for the

²¹⁶ Karl Rahner, *Tod*, in: *Sacramentum Mundi*, 922 here in 923.

²¹⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 280.

²¹⁸ Gerald O’Collins, *Jesus Risen*, 79.

²¹⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 289.

other in some definite affair”²²⁰ since such dying in actual fact does not matter much and has no after life implication, it could be a good act to die for a noble cause or for someone. But such arts have no after life reward. Heidegger describes existence as strictly phenomenological and within our present world. Therefore, eschatology if this idea existed in Heidegger is a realization of human authentic existence and this is only possible in the present life. Heidegger’s thought had influence on what I may call phenomenological or secular theology of the 20th century that pressured theologians like Rudolf Bultmann and his theology of demythologization. Other theologians whose thought could have influenced their position include Marxsen Willi, John Crossan and many others insisting on historicity as measuring yardstick to demonstrate the events of the death and resurrection.

2.9 Conclusion

In Heidegger, the essence of existence is to die. At death, the whole circle of human existence is completed. Unfortunately, in Heidegger death does not depict coming to fulfilment. The interpretation of death as a welcome phenomenon by Socrates in the sense of a great liberation does not seem so to Heidegger. Death is not even too much rather it is too little so that, “Dasein comes to its ripeness only with death. For the most part, Dasein ends in unfulfilment, or else by having disintegrated and been used up.”²²¹ For Heidegger, the human loses its essence and existence at death. The human at death enters into nothingness and disintegrates into oblivion. However, we may not say that entering oblivion or such other terms is the same as going down into Sheol as in earlier Hebrew spirituality. This means that Heidegger’s idea of disintegration into oblivion does not automatically make him a believer in life after death.

²²⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 284.

²²¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 276.

Heidegger is not concerned with human experience after death. This is vividly described when he writes: "If 'death' is defined as the 'end' of Dasein – that is to say, of Being-in-the-World- this does not imply any ontical decision whether 'after death' still another Being is possible, either higher or lower, or whether Dasein 'lives on' or even 'outlasts – Ableben' itself and is 'immortal.' Nor is anything decided ontically about the 'other-worldly' and its possibility, any more than about the 'this-Worldly;' it is not as if norms and rules for comporting oneself towards death were to be proposed for 'edification.' But our analysis of death remains purely 'this-Worldly' in so far as it interprets that phenomenon merely in the way in which it enters into any particular Dasein as a possibility of its Being. Only when death is conceived in its full ontological essence can we have any methodological assurance in even asking what may be after death; only then can we do so with meaning and justification. Whether such a question is a possible theoretical question at all will not be decided...., this-worldly ontological Interpretation of death takes precedence over any ontical other-worldly speculation."²²² Since death according to Heidegger is the end of Dasein, and the natural end of every biological life, one dies like the other. The end of man has no different meaning from the end of other existence and vegetation. This is a way of saying that death in Heidegger deprives human life every meaning, meaning for living and meaning for hoping in life after death. Does death really deny human life of possibilities of meanings?

Now, the manner in which Heidegger handled the issue concerning the end of humanity-injected agreement and disagreement within existentialists circle especially between Heideggerian school of thought and Jean-Paul Sartre circle of thinkers. In the area of agreement, Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), sees reasons with Heidegger and coincides that human fear is depicted in concealed 'inauthenticity', which is the inability to accept the reality of death. Unlike Heidegger (death should be aspired in the sense of authentic living since it is the only possibility to self-fulfilment), Sartre objects and

²²² Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 292.

insists on the contrary. “Death deprives life of the only kind of meaning that it might conceivably have had.”²²³ Therefore, instead of meaning, death makes life meaningless.

It is perhaps worth pointing out that, in connection with Heidegger and in total contrast to him, Sartre argues that “death is never that which gives life its meanings; it is, on the contrary, that which in principle removes all meaning from life. If we must die, then our life has no meaning because its problems receive no solution and because the very meaning of the problems remains undetermined.”²²⁴ For Sartre, to be dead, “is to be a prey for the living”²²⁵ this is a way of reconciling the thought of Heidegger about the dead entering oblivion. That is, once dead, the dead have no other existence except in the consciousness of the living. It is the living in this case that give the dead their meaning and not death because dying is dying to nothingness. This stratum of immortality in the perpetuation through offspring in Heidegger’s conception is not the matrix of Christian spirituality of the resurrection.

In making connection between philosophy and theology, we are discovering the scepticism with which philosophy has treated the end of the person. Nietzsche had referred the belief in the life after death as Christianity ‘other-worldly nonsense’ this is the implication of his nihilism (Will to Power, Aph. 2). Nietzsche understands nihilism “as an ongoing historical event. He interprets that event as the devaluing of the highest values up to now. God, the suprasensory world as the world that truly is and determines all, ideals and Ideas, the purposes and grounds that determines and support everything that is and human life in particular, all this is here represented as meaning the highest values.... And yet the highest values are already devaluing themselves through the emerging of the insight that the ideal world is not

²²³ See, John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life*, 101.

²²⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, New York, (1956), 539-40.

²²⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 543.

and is never to be realized within the real world. The obligatory character of the highest values begins to totter.”²²⁶ If philosophy sees death as evil and a deprivation then, the endorsement of the term power to the essence of God is filled with lots of problems. From subsequent discussions, it has been established that creation is not regarded as a dynamic interplay of opposite forces with God bringing chaos to order. Creation rather is attributed ex nihilo exercise of God. If eventually human beings and creation are conquered by death, there might be possible objections to the position to the belief in creation ex nihilo. What sense does it make to say that God is the saviour of creation if he is unable to save it from the salvage of death? These are all scaring fundamental issues. This chapter makes the conclusion that human life is a horizontal and vertical participation. Horizontal participation in the unity of the self as matter and form integrated in the ongoing processes of the cosmos. This suggests that human life is not simply a biological life it is also spiritual. Vertical participation is sharing in the eternal life of Christ. Humanity shares in this life by sharing in the resurrection of Christ and this is made possible through baptism. The theology of the Bible that has shown us the means to the eternal life cannot provide contrary suggestions to this participation except through the paschal mystery, by death and dying. This is another way of saying that our history is incomplete without the story of death. Having said this, philosophy especially Heideggerian thought discovers itself parallel to theology. Heidegger has a negative attitude about death. However, the concept of death in Christianity is a positive idea even though it remains the enemy of God. In death and through death the human person comes to maturity and to the promise. This is the understanding of St. Augustine when he writes; death seen positively from Christian perspective is “no longer a disability, but a service. It is no longer entailed upon unbelief, but is embraced by faith. Thus death becomes the instrument of life.”²²⁷ As a

²²⁶ Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 66.

²²⁷ St. Augustine, *The City of God*, 13. 4; Montgomery Hitchcock, *Early Church Classics*, St. Augustine’s treatise on the city of God, Society for promoting Christian knowledge, ³(1915), 85.

process, death is not restricted to the point of cessation of life. It is a necessary companion of life and its actual presupposition. It is an instrument of life. It rebuilds bonds and friendships. If it is agreed that death is a process that clears the ways and spaces leading to the unforeseen forms of future life,²²⁸ it may be necessary to ask the question: Where do the dead go?

²²⁸ Edouard Boné, "Das Aussterben biologischer Gruppen: Tatsachen und Hypothesen, "in *Tod – Preis des Lebens?* Norbert A. Luyten, (ed.), Freiburg, (1980), 100.

3 Death as the Way to Eschaton

3.1 Introduction

Most authors treat the topic of eschatology towards the end chapters of their books. The reasons for this may have to do with the nature of the topic itself. Eschatology from the Greek *eschatos* 'last' is a part of theology concerned with the last four events: death, judgment, heaven and hell. Eschatology is summarized in the concept of resurrection conversely, it is a Christian dogmatic Tract within this so-called doctrine of the last things (*De Novissimus*). The Latin word 'novum' normally portrays the sense of innovation, something new. However, instead of suggesting 'first or something new,' the superlative, which is *novissimus*, means the latest. It suggests the sense of the last thing and *novissima* meaning the last things.²²⁹ The Greek word *eschaton* first appeared at the end of Abraham Calovius (1612-86) 12 volumes dogmatic work in 1677 under the title 'Eschatolia Sacra,' whereby he dealt with death, resurrection, the last judgment, and the consummation. He read back the word (*eschaton*) into its Latin equivalent of *novissimus*, denoting last in time.

In the 19th century the term was popularized as part of Christian theological terminology by the father of modern protestant theology, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834). Since the exegetical studies of both Johannes Weiß (1863-1914) and Hugo Greßmann (1877-1927), the term has been translated into more than one meaning.²³⁰ The contributions of the above theologians have made it possible for it to stand in the later years outside traditional meaning to include the idea of heaven, immortality of the soul, the perfecting of the Church, the imminent end of the world (Apocalypticism), universal reconciliation (Apocatastasis) etc. The 20th century witnessed the emer-

²²⁹ <http://www.traditioninaction.org/religious/c003rp.htm> (browsed 06.06.2011).

²³⁰ Klaus Bieberstein, *Der Lange Weg zur Auferstehung der Toten. Eine Skizze zur Entstehung der Eschatologie im Alten Testament*, in: *Auferstehung hat einen Namen. FS Hermann-Josef Venetz, Sabine Bieberstein und Daniel Kosch*, (hg.), Luzern, (1998), 3-16, 3.

gence of other implications of the term. Modern studies speak of eschatologizing all sciences. This thought has given shade to the emergence of anthropological and philosophical eschatology expressed in J.P. Satre's "anxiety and meaninglessness," the borderline situation (K. Jaspers),²³¹ being unto death (M. Heidegger), and the principle of hope (E. Bloch).²³² The general sense in which eschatology is used in these sciences are still to provide specifications concerning the end-time at which it was believed creation and humanity would come up for final judgment. In expressing some principles of hope the Bible like most human cultures incorporate a belief in eschatology where resurrection is the ultimate. Consequently, one question arises. How did the idea of the resurrection develop in the OT?

3.2 The Problem of Originality of the Doctrine to Israel

There are three arguments explaining the doctrine of the resurrection in earlier Judaism. The earliest argument insists that physical resurrection of the dead never existed in the OT. The introduction of the doctrine in the OT was rather because of external influences, chiefly from the Persian religion²³³ and probably by the Egyptians in whose land the Israelites were enslaved for 400 years. In this connection, it is argued that the belief has no foundation in any part of the early OT.²³⁴ The appearance of the resurrection

²³¹ Karl Jasper, *Origin and Goal of History*, M. Bullock, (trans.), New Haven, (1953), 24.

²³² Erwin Fahlbusch, *Eschatology*, in: *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, vol. 2, (2001), 121-2.

²³³ Harris Birkeland, *The Belief in the Resurrection of the Dead in the Old Testament*, 61.

²³⁴ See, Horst Dietrich Preuß (hg.), *Eschatologie im Alten Testament*, WdF 480, Darmstadt, (1978), Heinz-Josef Fabry (hg.), *Bausteine Biblischer Theologie. Festgabe für G. Johannes Botterweck zum 60. Geburtstag*, BBB 50, Köln/Bonn, (1977), 351-357; Jutta Hausmann, Hans-Jürgen Zobel et al, *Alttestamentlicher Glaube und Biblische Theologie. Festschrift für Horst Dietrich Preuß*. Stuttgart, (1992), 321-330, in: Klaus Bieberstein, *Der Lange Weg zur Auferstehung*, 4. Studies on this topic include, R. Smend, *Eschatologie II: Altes Testament*, in: *TRE 10*, 256-64; J. Barr, *The Garden of Eden*, London, (1992); A. E. Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell: Death and Retribution in the Ancient and Early Christian Worlds*, London, (1993); H. W. Wolff, *Endzeitvorstellungen und Orientierungskrise in der alttestamentlichen Prophetie*, in: *Festschrift für H. J. Kraus*, Neukirchen, (1983), 75-86.

ideology and doctrine in some passages of the OT like Isaiah 26 and Daniel 12 are thought to be a later development. Israel's sojourn in Egypt did influence its culture on the primacy of morality. It did not provide them with objective lessons about the evils of social oppression alone, but it also taught them the reality of retribution base relating to God's justice. His redemption of Israel from Egypt's servitude provides an equally explicit grounding for the legislative belief in the doctrine of life after death.²³⁵ Also of importance is the inter-cultural relationship with these neighbours especially in the area of inter-cultural marriage. They were familiar also with the Persian religion at least from the time of their exile in Babylon and the Canaanites whose land again Israel inhabited as promised. In fact, through its Diaspora, Israel was caught in the many currents that disturbed the ancient world. By these alone, "their piety and their doctrines alike were profoundly modified and in some respects manifestly enriched. In particular, belief in the resurrection was one of the acquisitions of Jewish syncretism."²³⁶

A second opinion suggests that resurrection expression in the OT only serves as metaphor of expression with no eschatological implications as contained in later intertestamental Judaism. The sense of this proposal is that the earliest OT prophet's usage of the resurrection terminology was figurative. The Prophets described Israel's exile as death and the promise to return to Palestine from the exile as resurrection. As a metaphor of language, resurrection is used in terms of revival, restoration or reconstruction of the Jewish nation hence, the terminology in the earliest OT theology lacks a clear defined eschatological dimension.

A third suggestion maintains that the idea that the resurrection was fundamental to Israel's religious piety. Hans Küng (b.1928) opines that resurrection is an old Israelite doctrine of afterlife that has only passed through evolution. Israel in earlier Judaism connected resurrection with the life of

²³⁵ Neil Gillman, *The Death of Death: Resurrection and Immortality in Jewish Thought*, Woodstock, ²(2006), 264.

²³⁶ Robert Martin Achard, *From Death to Life*. John Penny Smith (trans.), London, (1960), 187.

the shades in the underworld (Sheol). This connection blew into a full doctrine of resurrection in later Judaism²³⁷ as a faith belief. Defenders of this opinion insist that the "...belief in a resurrection was an inner-Jewish development,"²³⁸ strictly foundational to the Oral Torah and dominant in Judaism.²³⁹ This estimation directly suggests that the doctrine excludes external influence in its strictest form.²⁴⁰ Because of the complex situation of religious belief and practices, it is easy to be skeptical and very hard to be certain of these positions. On balance, there is more to be said in support of the stands, but at the very least, it becomes clear how tedious it can be to arrive at an acceptable conclusion. Against this, Klaus Bieberstein argues that: "Die Erwartung der Auferstehung der Toten ist Ziel und Gipfel eines historisch gewachsenen Aussagensystems, das innerhalb der alttestamentlichen Literatur in einem über sechs Jahrhunderte nachvollziehbaren theologischen Reflexionsprozess entstanden und mit dieser Option als Schlussstein erst in den jüngsten Schriften der hebräischen Bibel zu einem vorläufigen Abschluss gekommen ist. Ob diese Erwartung zu teilen sei oder ob sie den Bogen des Aussagbaren nicht überspanne, war noch im Judentum zur Zeit Jesu umstritten, und darin nähert sich unsere, nur noch in ihren historischen Wurzeln christlich geprägte Gesellschaft der Situation jener Zeit wieder

²³⁷ Hans Küng, *Credo*. München, ²(2006), 145; Franz Zeilinger, *Der biblische Auferstehungs-glaube, Religionsgeschichtliche Entstehung, heilsgeschichtliche Entfaltung*, Stuttgart, (2008), 38.

²³⁸ Edwin Yamauchi, *Life, Death, and the Afterlife in the Ancient Near East*, in: *Life in the Face of Death, the Resurrection Message of the New Testament*, Richard N. Longenecker (ed.), Michigan, (1998), 49; Andrew Chester, *Resurrection and Transformation*, in: *Auferstehung/Resurrection*, (WUNT 135), Friedrich Avemarie et al (eds.), Tübingen, (1999), 47-77, 77; Günter Stemberger, Art., *Auferstehung I/2*, in: *TRE 4*, 443-450, 444.

²³⁹ Günter Stemberger, *Auferstehung Art., I/2*, in: *TRE 4*, 444, idem, *Zur Auferstehungslehre in der rabbinischen Literatur*, *Kairos 15* (1973), 238-266; M. Dahood, *Psalm, III, AncB 17A*, Garden City, (1970), XLV; Jacob Neusner, *Judaism when Christianity began*, London, (2002), 168; Klaas Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East*, *Neukirchen-Vluyn*, (1986), 4; G. F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, II*. Cambridge, (1927), 277-395.

²⁴⁰ Günter Stemberger, Art., *Auferstehung I/2*, in: *TRE 4*, *Ibid.*

an.²⁴¹ Even with the acknowledgment of the complexity of the argument of precedence, a variety of opinions accepts that the OT texts are a matrix of the concepts of resurrection belief. Though this belief could have existed in partial forms in earlier OT texts, it later developed in full scale in the later Jewish literatures.²⁴² At this point it is necessary to briefly examine the presence of this doctrine in some ancient religions within the Near East.

3.3 Egypt

Writing about death and life after death in the Ancient Near East regions, Aimo Nikonainen²⁴³ said that one would not effectively do a study of the resurrection excluding the Egyptian religion and its belief in life after death.²⁴⁴ Of course, the Egyptian culture was the cradle of civilization and remains one of the oldest religions within the Ancient Near East zones to concern itself with the question of life after death. As Aimo suggested, it is important to begin the studies of resurrection in OT Judaism firstly by considering the religion of the Egyptians. This is done for two reasons. First, Israel in its early history had contact with the Egyptians. They dwelled in Egypt for centuries. As a result, there could have been possible influence, even though the extent and direction of this influence remains disputable. The influence of the Egyptian religion is better considered in perspective without over exaggeration. It is known that the ancient Egyptian theology of eschatology in many respects shares a common similarity with that of Greek-platonic philosophy in contrast to Judaism. The resurrection belief in ancient Egypt was based on certain factors, namely, the belief in a Supreme Being referred

²⁴¹ Klaus Bieberstein, *Der Lange Weg zur Auferstehung der Toten*. 3; Lester L. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, vol. 2. New York, (2008), 258.

²⁴² Klaus Bieberstein, *Jenseits der Todesschwelle: Die Entstehung der Auferweckungshoffnungen in der alttestamentlich-frühjüdischen Literatur*, in: *Tod und Jenseits im alten Israel und in seiner Umwelt*, Angelika Berlejung und Bernd Janowski (hg.), *Forschungen zum Alten Testament* 64, Tübingen, (2009), 423-444, 444.

²⁴³ Aimo T. Nikolainen, *Der Auferstehungsglauben in der Bibel und ihrer Umwelt*, vol.1. Helsinki, (1944).

²⁴⁴ Aimo T. Nikolainen, *Der Auferstehungsglauben*, vol. 1., 1.

to as the Almighty God. Secondly, the belief in after-life is specifically expressed via the two extraordinary rich sources, the ‘Pyramid Texts’ and the ‘Egyptian Book of the Dead.’ These texts describe four different stages of the development of the Egyptian belief in after-life and eventually the resurrection. The first stage counts from the mid-fifth millennium onward when the deceased were buried in respect to social and religious status. Tombs of this era were decorated with household wares. These wares should help the dead to start life in their new state of existence. Sometimes the dead do also demand for these wares, or may even take them by themselves. The second stage started from the Pre-dynastic period. In this age, the tombs were discovered to be in forms of buildings when the tomb was considered as a home for the dead. This period progressed to the third dynastic era when drawn images started appearing on the walls of the tombs. From the late fifth dynasty, the text began discussing, depicting and describing life after-death in a clear mode.²⁴⁵ Evidence of this era is the reverence with which ancient Egyptians offered gifts in vases to their dead ones.

The presence of grave gifts makes this belief in life after death clearer. At early Egyptian burial sites and in the tombs, one discovers ‘costly’ vessels. The presence of these vessels at the gravesides, points to the thought of life after death in the minds and beliefs of the people who made these sacrifices. Through the sacrifices of these grave gifts, they believed that their friends and relatives would rise to live again in some place, the whereabouts they probably had very vague ideas, perhaps in a life presumably different from the present.²⁴⁶ This tradition lends credence to their belief that their dead friends would probably be revived either in the old body or in a new body.²⁴⁷ It is not clear by the argument of Wallis whether the revivification of the dead should be understood in the same sense that St. Paul writes

²⁴⁵ Charles Venn Pilcher, *The Hereafter in Jewish and Christian Thought*, Edinburg, (1940), 111; Donald Redford B., (ed.), *The Ancient Gods Speak*, London, (2002), 1-9.

²⁴⁶ Ernest Wallis Budge A., *Egyptian Ideas of the Afterlife*, New York, (1995), 160.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

about the glorified body of those who die in Christ. Nevertheless, to live again must be to exist in some kind of ethereal body in a ka form “defined as an abstract individuality or personality”²⁴⁸ which comes to existence with the birth of the person.

This personality rather called spiritual form is distinguishingly contrasted from the platonic idea of soul or the archetype. Here, the soul or form though it enjoys independency maintains contact and communicates with the body.²⁴⁹ It can move freely from place to place on earth. It even possesses the capability to enter heaven and converse with the gods.²⁵⁰ The ka, ba, and akh, often translated as “soul,”²⁵¹ are principles of existence in the sense that they animate the body and constitute its means of continuous existence and survival. Whether the individual survival is unitary or divisible remains problematic because, “after death, this situation was reversed: the body was an immobile mummy, but the ‘souls’ could leave it on occasion and wander around.”²⁵²

The Egyptian belief in the hereafter is also illustrated by the celestial theory of the hereafter and the Osiris theology of the dead. Charles Pilcher is convinced that the early Egyptians largely drew their views of the future from the phenomena of the daily journey of the sun and other heavenly bodies. The sun rising in the east and setting in the west remains a convincing phenomenon drawing the Egyptians to relate such ever appearance and disappearance of the sun with the realm of the dead and the dead passing into heaven as stars.²⁵³ This theory does not make the resurrection definite but it rather points to the fact that the Egyptians posit different levels of life after death. It is difficult to say how the celestial theory has come to support the

²⁴⁸ Ernest Wallis, B.A., *Egyptian Ideas*, 163.

²⁴⁹ Robert H. Charles, *Eschatology: The Doctrine of a Future Life in Israel, Judaism, and Christianity*, A critical History, New York, (1963), 142.

²⁵⁰ Robert H. Charles, *Eschatology*, 164.

²⁵¹ Donald Redford B., *The Ancient God’s Speak*, 1.

²⁵² Donald Redford B., *The Ancient God’s Speak*, 2.

²⁵³ Charles Venn Pilcher Charles, *The Hereafter*, 112.

resurrection. The Osiris theology of resurrection has been referred to as the theology of the Egyptian doctrine of resurrection.

This doctrine really begins with the concept of the dying and rising gods which Osiris the chief Lord of the Egyptians, the Nile god and a spirit of vegetable life as he is called is a typical instance. Writing about the resurrection Pilcher's statement is quite clear; the Egyptians share the destiny of Osiris who was resurrected after he was murdered by Set his brother. Thus as a burial ritual it is common to hear: "Even as Osiris lives, he also will live, even as Osiris is not destroyed, he also will not be destroyed."²⁵⁴ The origin of the idea of the resurrection in this case is a participation in the life of the dying and rising sun god, Osiris. The theology of Osiris has some claims to the doctrine of the resurrection in the religion of Egypt. However, Pilcher did not go further to clarify how Osiris cult made serious contributions to the resurrection doctrine since from the ritual of prayer it seems that the individual or the king in question was not dead. As such instead of a hope of resurrection, the ritual prayer was an anticipation for the resuscitation from death. From these considerations, one wonders how "prayers for resuscitation' or the 'resurrection' of dying and ever rising gods influenced the later OT testimony of the resurrection as an eschatological event. The expression of belief of life after death in the old Egyptian religion is not disputable even when the description of the doctrine of the resurrection is objectionable. Nevertheless, there are elements or conceptions describing life after death in Egyptian religion that inevitability supports the resurrection claim. Christianity and Pauline theology include transformation as an inevitable aspect of the resurrection. Here, change involves incorruptibility. It is either in the sense that the present body will rise again after death or that a new ethereal body (1Cor 15) will be granted. In this way then that the resurrection terminology in the Osirian theology, which involves the changing of the present body, is not entirely misleading.²⁵⁵ Then, this type of cosmic re-

²⁵⁴ Charles Venn Pilcher Charles, *The Hereafter*, 114.

²⁵⁵ John Gwyn Griffiths, *The Origins of Osiris*, Berlin, (1966), 42.

surrection (the idea of dying and rising gods) has quite a different dimension to the OT development of the resurrection of the body involving the human person. However, is resurrection terminology original to the OT scriptures?

3.3.1 Zoroastrian Impulse

The resurrection doctrine as already said, is a profound concept that defies any one simple interpretation. Zoroastrianism or the Persian religion of Iran may seem of little importance. Attention will be paid to this religion for two reasons. Firstly, Iran is included among the linguistic homogenous communities that migrated from India to settle in Mesopotamia. Secondly, the religion of Zoroastrianism developed around sixth century B.C and it developed from Iran that it developed. The religion in various ways influenced the politics and philosophy of Central Asian countries and it eventually turned out to be their main religion.

The ideas and beliefs of Zoroastrianism are attributed to a devotional poet, priest and prophet called Zarathustra (or Zoroaster in its Greek translation). Zoroaster existed around 6th century before Christ.²⁵⁶ The nomenclature, Iranian or Persian religion sometimes refers to Zoroastrianism. Parsism remains its other name. The religion has the Avesta as its sacred book. Besides the Avesta there are early Iranian scriptures that comprises, of Yashts, hymns of praise for ancient divinities and the Videvdat. The Gathas are sacred songs and poems composed by Zoroaster. The religion expanded mainly during the tenth century AD. It is believed that this extension and expansion was made possible because of the privilege opportunities the religion enjoyed from rulers, kingmakers and various dynasties of the time. During those centuries, Zoroastrianism influenced Hellenistic philosophy. It equally influenced Judaism, Christianity and Islamic traditions. This influence was because of the cultural and religious contacts between these communities.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁶ Manfred Hutter, Parsismus, in: LThK 7, ³(2006), 1394-5.

²⁵⁷ Jamesheed K. Choksy, Zoroastrianism, in: Encyclopedia of Religion vol. 14, (2005), 9988-1008, especially here 9988.

The basic question is now; to what extent and area did Zoroastrianism influence Judaism and its belief in resurrection.

3.3.2 Persian/Iranian Influence on Judaism

Hans Schwarz²⁵⁸ writes that the “Apocalyptic thinking did not suddenly emerge in post-exilic Judaism through the events of the Babylonian exile when Israel was exposed to the influence of the Iranian religion (Parsism) and the Babylonian religions.”²⁵⁹ To think otherwise may amount to some distraction and syncretism. In the same pattern of thought, Robert Martin-Achard cites the opinion of some scholars who think that Judaism contemporary to the commencement of the Christian era was a “syncretistic religion.” To sustain his argument, Achard has shown that this is also the opinion of other theologians. Thus, he cites H. Gunkel’s analysis of A. Causse.²⁶⁰ But for Edwin Yamauchi Zoroastrianism did greatly influence Judaism. It influenced Judaism’s development of the final judgment, resurrection, a fiery trial, heaven and hell. In fact, Jewish apocalyptic belief has got a marked Zoroastrian impression.²⁶¹ He even cited Bernhard Lang, who says that Ezekiel 37 expresses a belief in the resurrection. For him, “...the concept of bodily resurrection was borrowed from the ancient Iranians. It first appears in the teachings of the Iranian prophet Zoroaster.”²⁶² Syncretism found in historic Judaism has been credited to the contact with Zoroastrianism.

It is not gain saying that early Judaism engaged in some practices forbidden by monotheism. It involved itself in such practices like the worship of fertil-

²⁵⁸ Hans Schwarz, *Eschatology*, Michigan, (2000).

²⁵⁹ Hans Schwarz, *Eschatology*, 55.

²⁶⁰ Robert Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life*, London, (1960), 187; A. Causse, in: *Les disperse’s d’ Israël*, Paris, (1929), 130ff.

²⁶¹ Edwin Yamauchi, *Life, Death, and the Afterlife in the Ancient Near East*, in: *Life in the Face of Death*. Richard N. Longenecker (ed.), Michigan, (1998), 47.

²⁶² See, Bernhard Lang, *Afterlife: Ancient Israel’s Changing Vision of the World Beyond*, in: *Biblical Review* 4, (1988), 19, as cited by Edwin Yamauchi, *Life in the Face of Death*, 47.

ity gods (Dn 11:37). Ancient Israel worshipped other foreign gods like Baal, Ashmodeus, Ashtorathes the Moabites god, and the Philistines gods (Jg 10:6; 11:30-40). Attention were paid to these gods more than to Yahweh. However, it is illogical to think that Jewish syncretism was influenced by one culture alone. Jewish syncretistic practices were made possible due to two prominent factors. The first was their migration into Palestine. The second was the conquest by the Babylonian Empire and later Persian rule. In 586 B.C., the Jews suffered the destruction of their capital Jerusalem and the Temple. Their government was overthrown and the majority of them particularly their skilled workers and political elites were carried into exile in Babylon.²⁶³ The Jews lived in Babylon for about “three generations.” About 539 B.C. their captors, the Babylonians, lost a war with the Iranians under Emperor Cyrus (c.585-c.529 B.C.) of Persia.²⁶⁴ Cyrus reversed the autocratic policies of the Babylonian rule. He allowed Israel to return to Judea. In 538 B.C., the Jews returned home to rebuild the temple, which had been demolished by the Babylonians. Among the many reasons for his kind gestures on the Hebrews, the Hebrew Bible bears eloquent testimonies of two versions of an edict by Cyrus in which the victor owes his victories to the Hebrew god. “YHVH God of Heaven” who “command me to build him a temple in Jerusalem” (Ezr 1:1-3, 6:3-5).²⁶⁵ The Judeans living in exile in Babylon saw Cyrus as their liberator. He liberated them from the tyrannical rule of the Babylonians and allowed them to go back and rebuild the temple of Jerusalem. Unfortunately, the Jerusalem Temple was not rebuilt until 450 B.C. through the intercession of Ezra and the province governor who represented the king in Jerusalem.

Cyrus’ shrewd calculation and military success helped him to establish the largest empire in world history. His conquest brought most nationalities and religions of the Ancient Near East and Asia Minor under his rulership. One

²⁶³ Babylon is around present day Baghdad in Iraq.

²⁶⁴ Jacob Neusner, *Judaism when Christianity Began*, London, (2002), 57-8.

²⁶⁵ Edward L. Greenstein, *Cyrus II*, in: *Encyclopedia of Religion* vol. 3, (2005), 2118-2119, 2119.

wonders whether the Jews, their religion, and piety were not affected by the pluralistic current of the time. It seems that Jacob Neusner denies the implication of this pluralistic experience. He stresses that the Jewish religion has never been identical with any other religion, even if they have co-habited and exchanged similar details. For him, under other circumstances, worldviews may be responsible for shaping people's religions and belief and this could have been possible with the Persian religion. In Jewish religion, it is the other way round. Jewish religion specifically formed their world-view and framed their realities, and not the world of politics, or culture. Society did not form their religion.²⁶⁶ It seems that Neusner is disregarding the purported influence of the Persian religion or the religions of the surrounding Near East neighbours as having a direct effect on Judaism. It looks as if he is suggesting a contrary explanation to the origin of life after death, the resurrection and other doctrines found within Judaism. For him in composing their history the generation that returned to the Land of Israel did this without outside influence. Thus, "...the generation of return to the Land of Israel, then drew together whatever stories, laws, prophecies, and other writings that they had inherited out of their past in the land of Israel and produced the Pentateuch, the Five Books of Moses."²⁶⁷ Even though Judaism came into contact with Persian politics, culture and religion; even though it worshipped their gods, it seems it did not identify them as Yahweh. It did not reduce Yahweh to fertility gods of the host nation and did not understand resurrection in the way Ancient near East religions did as the dying and rising of fertility gods. Though Neusner believes Judaism was never influenced by Persian politics, culture or religion, he did not specifically mention whether the Babylonian experience that began in 586 and ended in 450 in any way influenced the Five Books of Moses promulgated by Ezra during the restoration of the Temple and its Land.

²⁶⁶ Jacob Neusner, *Judaism when Christianity Began*, 59.

²⁶⁷ Jacob Neusner, *Judaism, when Christianity Began*, 58.

While Neusner agrees at the uniqueness of Judaism, especially the one that encountered the current of civilization and movement of the first century B.C. Wilhelm Bousset (1865-1920) one of the prominent figures in the Religionsgeschichtliche Schule (Historical School of Religion)²⁶⁸ argues that the Jewish religion was swept and influenced by the currents of the time. One such area of fundamental influence is human destiny after death, the question of resurrection. For him the conquest of the Persian Empire and the whole of Asia Minor by the Macedonian, Alexander the Great (356-323) brought about the change that the then ancient world experienced. After the conquest of the Persian Empire, Alexander the Great introduced a Hellenistic culture in which all vassal states participated.²⁶⁹ The reign of Alexander according to Bousset attempted the first universal globalization. He wanted to make the whole world a global village by introducing a homogeneous intellectual, political, cultural and religious system. To achieve his goals, hindrances that prevented free movements and free trade such as restrictions around internal and national borders were all removed.²⁷⁰ He did this in order to create a system of one people and one nation. Granted Bousset did accept the fact that there were traits of the resurrection belief in early Judaism but he refused to admit, that later Judaism before Christianity was not syncretistic and later Judaism according to him was influenced in every ramification.

²⁶⁸ Other members of the school include scholars such as, Richard August Reitzenstein (1861-1931), Albert Eichhorn (1856-1926) and Hermann Gunkel (1862-1932).

²⁶⁹ See, Frank W. Walbank, Alexander the Great, in, *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* vol.13, ¹⁵(2005), 224-8.

²⁷⁰ Wilhelm Bousset put it this way “der Zeit, in welcher das Judentum aufwuchs, mit. Die Zeit Alexanders des Grossen und der Diadochen ist eine Zeit der allgemeinen Verschmelzung. Die Grenzen der Völker verschwinden, die Nationen beginnen eine gemeinsame Sprache zu reden, äusserlich betrachtet und auch geistig. Dieselben Ideen und Gedanken durchfluten die Völker, die Religionen fliessen ineinander. Sollte allein das Judentum nicht an dieser Bewegung partizipiert?” Cf. Wilhelm Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter*, Berlin, ²(1906), 542.

The fact of elements of the resurrection doctrine in early Judaism notwithstanding, Bousset insisted that this fundamental belief did not blow into a full-scale doctrine until it was influenced by the (Persian) Babylonian religion.²⁷¹ This argument suggests that in its dualism, the transcendental belief in future hope, the conception of the world and end of the age as contained in Jewish apocalyptic are of Iranian rather than Jewish origin. Consequently, Jewish belief in the resurrection at least in the general resurrection of the dead and the Last judgment was the effect of the openness to the Iranian apocalyptic influence.²⁷² Bousset argues that later Jewish and early Christianity teachings were profoundly influenced by neighbouring cultures and belief systems. He is not alone in this frame of thinking. Harris Birke-land has also followed this line of thought.²⁷³

Like every other culture, Birkeland believes Israel's history and culture shared in this dynamism which is characteristic of living cultures. Every living culture allows some kind of contact that may imply giving-up or borrowing from higher cultures. The history of living cultures shows how they have been enriched through innumerable borrowing and openness towards especially to older and higher cultures. As a living culture, the history of Israel is no different. The migration into Palestine, the contact with its superior religious and cultural practices was the beginning of change and adoption. While admitting the fact of culture contact between Israel and her neighbours, Birkeland makes two points about the doctrine of the resurrection in Israel. Firstly, there was a fundamental matrix for the doctrine of the resurrection within Judaism at least of the individual resurrection. Secondly, he believes that the decisive impulse for a general doctrine of the resurrection; the real formation came from the influence of the Persian religion or Iran. This is the way he puts it, "Neither Ez 37 nor Hos 6:2 testify to a belief

²⁷¹ Wilhelm Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums*, 550.

²⁷² Wilhelm Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums*, 582-3

²⁷³ Harris Birkeland, *The Belief in the Resurrection of the Dead in the Old Testament*, in: *Studia Theologica III, Fasc. I-II*, Oslo, (1969), 60-78.

in a general resurrection, only the idea and the possibility of such a belief. The decisive impulse to the real forming of that belief itself came from the Iranian religion. In this religion, the belief in question existed a long time before we meet it in the OT. How long, is impossible to say. We find it in the Gathas, so it must be very old.”²⁷⁴

Birkeland’s argument implies that Israel did not only learn of the belief in life after death but also the doctrine of the resurrection, which had existed in Iranian religion for a long time. The Iranian doctrine of the resurrection according to Birkeland has an eschatological future as its dimension. ‘Audacity’ is one word Birkeland has used to emphasize the enhancement of this influence. I may also apply another phrase here ‘openness.’ For our scholar, the audacious nature of both religions made the assimilation and integration between the two possible. In the area of culture contact, ‘primitive’ cultures have always caved in to much higher cultures. In the case of the two cultures, the Jews and Iran, Judaism shares the characteristics of the Bedouin, that is, desert dwelling nomadic tribe religion. The Iranian religion of Zoroastrianism on the other hand has the advantage of prestige not only because it belongs to a domineering culture but also because it belongs to a great Empire.²⁷⁵ In addition, the vulnerability of Judaism to outside influences and its adaptability to the culture of Zoroastrianism.

Hans Schwarz has criticized the opinion that Israel was externally influenced on general eschatology. For him if the Iranian religion has imparted on Judaism, it was on the level of ‘dualism.’ It is “remarkable that once the Jews had made contact with the Iranians, they took over the typical Zoroastrian doctrine of an individual afterlife in which rewards are to be enjoyed and punishments endured.”²⁷⁶ Other contenders who have rejected the Iranian proposition have done so based on the nature of the Iranian scriptures. In the first instance, the heterogeneous nature of the Avesta scriptures

²⁷⁴ Harris Birkeland, *The Belief in the Resurrection*, 74.

²⁷⁵ Harris Birkeland, *The Belief in the Resurrection*, 78.

²⁷⁶ Hans Schwarz, *Eschatology*, 60.

appears to lack chronology. “One major problem is that the details about Persian eschatology are drawn almost entirely from the Bundahishn, which is a ninth-century AD Pahlavi writing. We are, in fact, lacking any religious texts from the crucial Parthian era (250 BC to 225 AD).”²⁷⁷ The heterogeneous nature of this scripture shows the independence of Jewish doctrine of our study. The Iranian texts, which have been assumed to belong entirely to antiquity, have been discovered to be made up of many parts different from one another. While some of these texts are rooted in antiquity, it has however been discovered that many of them are contemporary to later Judaism and early Christianity.²⁷⁸ The fact that some parts of the Persian scripture are contemporary to Judaism on the doctrine of eschatology taken the details of such extraordinary texts for granted may allow vague conclusion.²⁷⁹

From the study of the earliest documents of Zoroastrian and Iranian religion, it seems there is no defined belief in the resurrection. In the later part of the Avesta, there was the mention of resurrection and ascension into paradise. The passage reads, “when the dead rise, the living incorruptible one will come and life will be transfigure” (Yashts 19:11).²⁸⁰ Even at this point, it is about the preservation of the body, which is not a presupposition for life beyond death.²⁸¹ This means that, there are fundamental differences in how the Jews and the Persians understand resurrection. “The Jewish dead, who are buried, rise from the dust of the earth, whereas the Persian dead, who are exposed, must be recreated from the elements... In Zoroastrianism the resurrection is linked with the fiery Ordeal and the Renewal, whereas in Judaism resurrection hope means life beyond the grave with Yahweh.”²⁸² However, as long as discrepancy in textual content and preced-

²⁷⁷ Edwin Yamauchi, *Life, Death, and the Afterlife*, 47-8.

²⁷⁸ Robert Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life*, 189; See also Schwarz Hans, *Eschatology*, 57.

²⁷⁹ Emile Benveniste, *The Persian Religion*, Paris, (1929), 13.

²⁸⁰ Cf. H.S. Nyberb, *Die Religion des Alten Iran*, Leipzig, (1938), 310.

²⁸¹ Schwarz Hans, *Eschatology*, 58.

²⁸² Edwin Yamauchi, *Life, Death, and the Afterlife*, 48.

ence persists, the question of influence between the Iranian and Jewish faiths will ever remain ambivalent.

Again, there is incredible evidence showing parallel relationship between the Ancient Near Eastern religions especially Iranian with earlier Judaism.²⁸³ Despite the contact with Zoroastrianism, resurrection in Judaism is focused on revelation and its evolutionary origin is within the ambit of the Jewish religion and orthodoxy. From the foregoing, two conclusions could be arrived simultaneously. The first conclusion follows the suggestion of history. There is evidence that the resurrection is one central belief shared by Zoroastrianism and Judaism. It opines that the belief has a Jewish origin developed independently in Iran given the circumstances of the exile experience. The second conclusion gives vent to parallelism. Herbert S. Long asserted that the “Jewish concept is not borrowed from Persian religion, but is to be regarded as a parallel phenomenon.”²⁸⁴ In the case where the two suggested that solutions to the polemic have failed, the next probability is simply to accept, the fact not as a hypothesis, but the point that Judaism, with its unique understanding of God as all-powerful, imparted the idea of the resurrection to the Persian religion. As “... some of the Old Testament passages indicate, the Hebrews came over to believe that God was a God who would maintain fellowship with them beyond the grave, who would vanquish death, and who would raise the dead.”²⁸⁵ Given these facts, I think both religions somehow entered into a new totality. They were subjected to the same type of religious change. This may not have offered a different or new doctrinal change contrary to the classical belief of the Jews.

²⁸³ Wilhelm Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums*, 497-503; A. V. Jackson Williams, *Zoroastrian Studies: The Iranian Religion and Various Monographs*, AMS, (1965), 205; Hans Küng, *Credo*, 143; Lionel Swain, *The People of the Resurrection*, Delaware, (1986), 21; Hans Schwarz, *Eschatology*, 58-9.

²⁸⁴ Herbert Strainge Long, *Resurrection, Greco-Oriental*, in: *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 12, ²(2003), 145.

²⁸⁵ Edwin Yamauchi, *Life, Death, and the Afterlife*, 49.

Finally, if one decides to discard the above possible suggestions, the basic fact remains that the contact and fellowship with Iran only helped Judaism to formulate its faith in the living God, the winner of victory for believers by conquering the power of death.²⁸⁶ The growth of culture invariably of religion, the match of civilization is never always an external impulse different from sources outside the mother? environment itself (culture or religion). Civilization or religious culture do not always include a necessity of external adoption it could also mean internal progress and realization. One may not simply conclude that since the society is not static, its ingredients must always be influenced from without. This is to avoid a degeneration into a vicious circle of influences whereby eventually all would have been externally influenced without influencing.

3.3.3 The late establishment of the resurrection concept in the OT
 Different cultures have different conceptions of how life goes on after here. For some cultures, life goes on in the grave or in a special place or region. In this region, life would be similar or the same way as on earth, though not without certain differences. While every culture could be said to entertain the idea of a certain life after death, the belief in a resurrection of the human being after death is, on the contrary, not general. It means that life starts again after death through a special act or event. The nuance of life after death implies the notion of continuity.²⁸⁷ As already explained, opinions of the appropriation of this doctrine by Judaism vary. My primary concern here is to stress the reasons for the late establishment of this concept in Jewish literature in the second century B.C.

So when it comes to describing the delay of the definition of the resurrection in Judaism, certain reasons are responsible. One such reason is the claim that early Judaism exercised a spirituality of this worldliness. ‘For the

²⁸⁶ Robert Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life*, 194.

²⁸⁷ Harris Birkeland, *The Belief in the Resurrection of the Dead in the Old Testament*, 63.

OT person, present earthly life is actually the real life.²⁸⁸ Earthly living decorated with pleasure and the best that life affords is the only sensible and comprehensible life. Everything pivots around earthly existence. Goodness and hard work are to be rewarded here and not somewhere in the hereafter life (Eccl 9:7-10). The reasons for working hard for the Israelites are to enjoy life. What is gained by such quests is longevity in tight connection with good living (good health), acquisition of possession and wealth, good family life extending over many generations.²⁸⁹ The existence of their kids and kin, the prosperity of their household is the blessing of the JHWH. From the point of enjoyment of the pleasure of this present life, ancient Judaism indeed focused more on the opportunities physical life offered as to the promise of the future.

A similar point emerges from the nature of their religion. The nature of the Jewish religion contributed to the late development of the concept because the structure of Judaism opposes rude externalism. Biblical OT has no cult for the dead the type seen in Egypt or the dead cult of Apotheose famous among the Greeks. The only cult the OT supported is that of JHWH which does not bear or tolerate other cults beside it. The JHWH cult forbids consulting other cults especially that of the dead.²⁹⁰ The prophets and priests of the Hebrew scripture equally condemned practices of the veneration of material objects of these cults. They rejected necromancy, divination (Lv 19:26; 20:6; Dt 18:11; 1Sm 28; 2 Kg 23:24; Is 8:19), hilltop shrines under trees (Hos 4:13), temple prostitution (Hos 4:14), making of idols, golden calf/calves, and the multiplication of pillars (massebot) (Hos 3:4; 10:1). Because all these were to do with idols and the dead they were eventually were also rejected.²⁹¹ Because of the enmity of Hebrew texts towards foreign cults, the Bible became reticent about opening the door to them. The Bible's

²⁸⁸ Franz Zeilinger, *Der biblische Auferstehungsglaube*, 12; G. Fohrer, *Das Geschick des Menschen nach dem Tode im Alten Testament*, in: *Studien zu alttestamentlichen Texten und Themen*, (BZAW 155), Berlin, (1981), 188-202, 188.

²⁸⁹ Medard Kehl, *Eschatologie*, Würzburg, (1986), 124.

²⁹⁰ Franz Zeilinger, *Der biblische Auferstehungsglaube*, 14.

opinion of these cults is one of idolatry. It looks at Canaanite cults as veneration of spirits or ghost.²⁹² The impact of this negative opinion of foreign cult on the part of the OT inter alia, is a rejection of certain beliefs within these cults even if these fundamental are also tenets of Judaism. Of course, the consequence of this is the late development of the concept of resurrection since the notion was already contained in the religious canon of these other polytheistic religions. Without formulating it as a different point, the enmity towards foreign culture was another factor that hindered the earlier formulation of the doctrine of resurrection within Judaism. In effect, this was possible due to the susceptibility of the Hebrew tradition to imitation. The Bible normally turns the objects of veneration in other neighbouring countries into the material objects of God's creation. Thus, the heavens of Hebrew life are not gods, but the handiwork of God. The Israelite populace did at times venerate material objects that were opposed by prophets and priests.²⁹³ And the "prophets' vigilant fulminations against idolatry, the periodic purges of religious cult and practices, and the grim procession of national tragedies do not make such direct influence on the actual doctrine very likely."²⁹⁴ This consistent suspicion of foreign cults accounts for the Hebrew deliberate failure to spell out the doctrine of the resurrection in Judaism.

3.4 Foundation of Resurrection Expectation

The differences in opinion between JHWH and foreign cults notwithstanding, concrete historical occasions supporting the claims that the native Is-

²⁹¹ Claudia Setzer, *Resurrection of the Body in Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, Boston, (2004), 7.

²⁹² Alan Segal F., *Life after Death: The Social Sources*, in: *The Resurrection*, Stephen T. Davis et al (eds.), New York, (1997), 90-125, 92.

²⁹³ Alan F. Segal, *The social sources*, 91.

²⁹⁴ Stanley B. Marrow, *Resurrection of the Dead, in the Bible 1*, in: *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 12 (2003), 165-172, 167; Graham I. Davies, *Hosea, Old Testament Guides*, Sheffield, (1993), 41.

raelite soil provides a more fertile ground for the belief of resurrection within Judaism are lacking. The persistence of claims that the concept is indigenous to Israel could have arisen from later historical events or early speculation rooted in analyzing Jewish spirituality and psychology. Though some of the inferences have been criticized, the fact that ancient Israel did not renounce the worth and comfort of this life for the expectation of ‘eschatology’ or that the Bible was reticent to foreign influence sometimes is not as unique as the claims suggest. There are other reasons to think that the concept of ‘resurrection’ was a content of the Jewish scripture as much as it was a content of the canon of the Canaanite religions. These two viewpoints confluence in upholding that an element of belief may not all the time be influenced from without. In the case of the belief in resurrection one common argument claiming its foundation within the OT is the belief in the living God. However, there are doubts whether belief in JHWH who rescues from death as suggested by some psalms, have anything to do with belief in life after death or resurrection.²⁹⁵ Other scholars agree that most psalms that mention after life have the obvious meaning of the belief in immortality and resurrection.²⁹⁶ Amidst these polemics the ultimate question remains, what factor within Judaism pointed to the belief in the resurrection.

Some scholars suggest that in later Judaism, the focus on life situation, crisis, catastrophe and oppression during the Jewish pogrom contributed to the development of resurrection imagery. For Krister Stendahl “the original setting of the resurrection faith was in the martyrology of a people and in the grappling with the question of God’s chances to restore rightness and justice in an evil world.”²⁹⁷ The implied notion was a consequence of a historical phenomenon that has particular causes of a social nature.²⁹⁸ It was in

²⁹⁵ Franz Zeilinger, *Der biblische Auferstehungsglaube*, 29; C. Barth, *Die Errettung von Tode in den individuellen Klage und Dankliedern des Alten Testaments*, Zollikon, (1947), 166.

²⁹⁶ M. Dahood, *Psalm, III, AncB 17A*, Garden City, (1970), XLV.

²⁹⁷ Krister Stendahl, *Meanings: The Bible as Document and as Guide*, Philadelphia, (1984), 193. This statement is the opinion of many scholars. Nevertheless, it remains exaggerated.

²⁹⁸ Harris Birkeland, *The Belief in the Resurrection of the Dead in the Old Testament*, 63.

the context of protest against early death, unfulfilled life brought about by injustice.²⁹⁹ This perspective also shows that before the full development of this concept in the intertestamental period, early Judaism and the earlier books of the OT have no clear-cut definition of the doctrine of the resurrection. The intention of this position is to hold on to justice for the righteous that is, the Martyrology of a people led to the theological reflection of the idea.³⁰⁰ But martyrology alone was not the only necessary precondition that helped the formulation of the concept given the fact that the martyrology in question took place in the second century B.C. Apart from the growing sense of individuality, the belief in resurrection in Judaism is rooted in the power of JHWH³⁰¹ and the hope for a lasting communion with him,³⁰² and texts speaking of this communion include Psalm 16:10-11. Discussing the relationship with YHWH as a *conditio sine quo non* for the development of the belief in the resurrection R.H. Charles writes “...whilst Yahwism was destroying the false life in Sheol it was steadily developing in the individual the consciousness of a new life and a new worth through immediate communion with God. Now it is from the consciousness of a new life, and not from the moribund existence in Sheol, that the doctrine of a blessed future, whether of the soul only immediately after death, or of the soul and body through a resurrection at some later date was developed in Israel.”³⁰³ These statements interpret the historical persecution and the hope that God would not allow any injustice committed against the martyrs here on earth to go unrewarded. At the coming to this knowledge, “the faithful in Israel, little

²⁹⁹ Klaus Bieberstein, *Der Lange Weg zur Auferstehung der Toten*, 16.

³⁰⁰ Klaus Bieberstein, *Der Lange Weg zur Auferstehung der Toten*, 3-16.

³⁰¹ See, W.W. Baudissin, *Adonis und Esman: Eine Untersuchung zur Geschichte des Glaubens an Auferstehungsgötter und an Heilgötter*, Leipzig, (1911), 510.

³⁰² Klass Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife in Ancient Israel*, 72; Günther Stemberger, *Das Problem der Auferstehung im Alten Testament*, *Kairos* 14, (1972), 290; A.T. Nötscher, *Der Auferstehungsglauben in der Bibel und in ihrer Umwelt*, Helsinki, (1944), 113-147; Robert Marin-Achard, *From Life to Death*, 47-143, 163-175.

³⁰³ Robert H. Charles, *Eschatology*, 53.

by little, started (*italics mine*) opening the gates of the kingdom of the dead.”³⁰⁴

It is quite understandable that not all the Jews anticipated a resurrection and not all of them initially considered the underworld or abode of the dead as part of God’s creation.³⁰⁵ For them this realm was not important to JHWH. He has no connection with the abandoned dead of the underworld. This is true, in fact in the wider context in which most parts of the psalms and the wisdom writings mentioned little interest of JHWH on the moribund figures in Sheol. For instance, the passage of psalm 88:5 (Ps 6:6, 30, 10; 115:17) is concerned with the difficulty of one who feels forsaken by JHWH. In the psalm we read, “I am abandoned among the dead; I am like the slain lying in their graves, those you have forgotten.” The tone of the psalm shows the frustration of the shade in Sheol. This idea would not last. In another context it could be seen as portraying freedom from Sheol. In psalm 103:19 we read, ‘God is majestic, he seats on his throne in heaven from where he governs creation.’ The tone of this psalm revolves around JHWHs omnipotence reappraising his mercy. Does his majestic rule equally extend to the realm of the dead?³⁰⁶ Alexander Achilles Fischer responds in the negative. According to him, there are a number of biblical passages depicting early old Israelite ideas of no personal afterlife and no contact of Yahweh with the dead in the realm of the dead.³⁰⁷ In the priestly tradition (Gen. 1), Israel acknowledges God as the creator of heaven and earth. Creation belongs to God who takes care of it. God protects the inhabitants of the world. As

³⁰⁴ Nathan Söderblom, *La vie future d’après le mazdéisme*, p.342 in Robert Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life*, 183.

³⁰⁵ Alexander Achilles Fischer, *Tod und Jenseits im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament*, Vluyt, (2005), 145.

³⁰⁶ Cf. O. Kaiser and E. Lohse, *Tod und Leben*, Stuttgart, (1977), 49.

³⁰⁷ See Isaiah 38:18 „No one in the world of the dead can praise you; the dead cannot trust in your faithfulness. “ Similar passages reiterate the silence of Yahweh over the dead in Sheol. For instance, in psalm 88:6 we hear the cry of the abandoned soul when we read, “you have thrown me into the depths of the tomb into the darkest and deepest pit. Your anger lies heavy on me, and I am crushed beneath its waves.”

much as the creation story acknowledges the significance of God's might and power of creation, no single part of the story made allusion to God in connection with the creation of sheol neither does God have any relationship with the dead.³⁰⁸ In this way the psalms followed the Genesis creation account relating JHWH as a God who reigns over all peoples and creation (Ps 47:9) and whose throne is in heaven (Ps 103:19).

In an article on the contribution of the development of the doctrine of resurrection in Judaism, Günter Stemberger argues that the Jewish belief in the resurrection is weaved around the covenant relationship and faith in the living God who is Lord of life and death. For him belief in the idea of the resurrection in earlier Judaism was based on: „Gott als Herr über Leben und Tod wirkt über die Todesgrenzen hinweg; er ist treu zu seinem Bund, dessen wichtigste Auswirkung für das Volk das Leben in Gottes Land ist. Verliert jemand das Leben infolge seiner Treue zum Bund, darf er dieses Leben von seinem getreuen Bundesherrn zurückerwarten. Diese Gedanken sind für den jüdischen Auferstehungsglauben grundlegende Voraussetzung.“³⁰⁹ In the long history of the OT tradition JHWH was never in the real sense of the word identified with the God of the dead neither was he a dead God like Nergal, the god of the Mesopotamians, like Osiris the Egyptian god or the Ugarit Motu. JHWH rather is always recognized and worshipped as the “Living God” (Joshua 3:10; Hos 2:1- 2; 2 Kg 19:4; 16; see also Mk 12:27). He is also the “God of life” (Dt 5:26; 1 Sm 17:26; 36; Jer 10:10; 23:36)³¹⁰ whose power extends to the underworld. JHWH in the actual fact does not reign in the underworld. The interpretation of his ability to expand his influence in this realm is more of a metaphor of personification. JHWH is not

³⁰⁸ Alexander Achilles Fischer, *Tod und Jenseits*, 145; O. Kaiser and E. Lohse, *Tod und Leben*, 49.

³⁰⁹ Günter Stemberger, *Auferstehung I/2*, in: TRE 4, 444.

³¹⁰ Cf. S. Kreuzer, *Der lebendige Gott, Bedeutung, Herkunft und Entwicklung einer alttestamentlichen Gottesbezeichnung*, (BWANT 116), Stuttgart, (1983), 259-265; M. Leuenberger, „Deine Gnade ist besser als Leben“ (Ps 63:4). *Ausformungen der Grundkonstellation von Leben und Tod im alten Israel*, Bib 86, (2005), 343-368 especially 350.

the ruler of the kingdom of the dead as Mot reigns in Sheol and is one with it. Talking about Sheol, the implication of it and the relationship of the shades in it with JHWH Davies Graham writes: “The power [...] of Sheol [...] suggests a more than spatial meaning. But as often in poetic texts, it is difficult to be sure to what extent real mythological beliefs underlie what may be no more than vivid personification. In any case the implication of the texts is that it is Yahweh himself who summons the destructive powers to act according to his decision (just as in Hab 3:5, ‘plague’ and ‘pestilence’ form part of his entourage).”³¹¹ With the definition of the Kompetenzausweitung theory, that is, the ability of JHWH’s power to save the dead in the extended realm of Sheol³¹² the negative idea of Sheol as the land of the forgotten (Ps 88:13) receives a new understanding. The dead in Sheol became connected with God who has power over death. As such, death does not end the relationship with God.³¹³ In this mode, the underworld was no more seen as that land of ignorance and nonchalance where the dead have no knowledge of the events of earthly life simply because they are not concerned or affected them (Job 14:21). In the new theological exegesis, Sheol has become a symbolic expression of life coming out of death. This is because of the new understanding about the ever presence of the power and relationship with JHWH with the dead in Sheol. JHWH restores their vanished hope making it possible for them to take part in events under the sun. In fact “...JHWH und er allein im Rahmen der persönlichen Frömmigkeit [...] zuständig für den Verstorbenen und sein Wohlergehen im Jenseits.”³¹⁴ The conception that God cannot abandon his covenant people and that his

³¹¹ Graham Davies, Hosea (NCBC), Grand Rapids, (1992), 296.

³¹² See, Bernd Janowski, JHWH und die Toten. Zur Geschichte des Todes im Alten Israel, in: Tod und Jenseits im alten Israel und in seiner Umwelt, Angelika Berlejung und Bernd Janowski, (hg.), Tübingen, (2009), 446-477, 455. For detail treatment of this theory see, Gönke Eberhardt, JHWH und die Unterwelt. Spuren einer Kompetenzausweitung JHWHs im Alten Testament, (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2. Reihe, Bd.23), Bernd Janowski et al (hg.), Tübingen, 2007.

³¹³ Andrew Chester, Resurrection and Transformation, 77

³¹⁴ Bernd Janowski, JHWH und die Toten, 462-3.

indifference to those who are no more cannot be forever, because one day he will cease to suffer the existence of Sheol along with himself who will make all things new.³¹⁵ The “vision of the future in store for the dead little by little grows distinct, until at last, almost at the very moment of the coming of Him, who by His destiny was going to give them incomparable succor, it culminates in belief in the resurrection”³¹⁶ during the post exilic period.³¹⁷ In addition to the concept of Sheol, there are however, a number of other and older biblical texts (Amos 9:1-4; Ps 139:8-10; 1 Sam 2:6) and archaeological evidences making claims to early Jewish eschatological expectation.³¹⁸ Some of the texts will be considered subsequently.

3.4.1 The Rise of the Hope of Resurrection in OT

It could be said that the doctrine of resurrection received a dogmatic definition in the prophetic apocalyptic genera of the second century. Apocalypse has to do with a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is communicated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient. The transcendental being discloses a transcendental reality that is both temporal. This reality envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial,

³¹⁵ Robert Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life*, 50.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

³¹⁷ Klaus Bieberstein, *Jenseits der Todesschwelle. Die Entstehung der Auferstehungshoffnungen in der alttestamentlich-frühjüdischen Literature*, in: *Tod und Jenseits im alten Israel und in seiner Umwelt*, Angelika Berlejung und Bernd Janowski (hg.), Tübingen, (2009), 423-446, 423.

³¹⁸ See the 8th century B.C epitaphs. The first epitaph originated from Hirbet el-Kom, one of Judean mountainous towns that lay about 14 KM west of Hebron. Grave no.2 laying between the first and second cell has an astonishing inscription depicting total trust in Yahweh. The inscription reads, “Urijahu, der Reiche, hat es schreiben lassen. Gesegnet war Urijahu vor Jahwe. Und von seinen Feinden hat er ihn durch seine Aschera errettet.“ The second epitaph is quite recent, discovered in 1961. It was discovered during a road construction around the village town of Hirbet Bet-Layy, which lays 16 KM northwest of Hebron. The present epitaph originated around 7th century B.C. This epitaph reads “Yahweh ist der Gott der ganzen Erde; die Berge Judas gehören dem Gott Jerusalems.” Cf. Alexander Achilles Fischer, *Tod und Jenseits*, 147-8; J. Renz und W. Röllig, *Handbuch der Althebräischen Epigraphik*, Bd. 1, Darmstadt, (1995), 202-211.

hence involving another supernatural world. Most of the Jewish apocalypses are historically and also transcendently related. These apocalypses portray a journey of the otherworldliness and a review of history. As a result, they are called “historical” apocalypses, that is, apocalypses that have the scenario of the end of history.³¹⁹ In this section, we will only consider a few of the important texts dealing with the resurrection idea before the second century B.C. Some writings of the second century are connected with apocalypse others are not. The chronological sequence of the texts to be looked at may not take precedence here. Hos 6:1-3 is the most striking of these texts. The Book of Hosea, an eight-century prophet, contains one of the earliest witnesses that have assumed theological interpretation in support of the resurrection. Years before ‘the exile’ the prophet, about 750, B.C., called upon the northern kingdom for a religious repentance and a return to YHWH. “Come! Let us return to the Lord, for he has torn, that he may heal us, he has stricken, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us, on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him“(Hos 6:1-3). The precise sense of this passage is highly disputable. The passage has received varied interpretations perhaps given the circumstance under which the text was written which was during the Syro-Ephraimite war (733-732). The period saw Assyria taking the territories of both Judah and Israel completely. The prophet recalls the events of the war and its consequences as Israel reaping its reward of sin as he plausibly attributed the conquest to the abandonment of Yahweh (Hos 5:12).³²⁰ Who decides to humble the pride and arrogance of their hearts after the effrontery with which they practiced idolatry that led to insolence and depravity of their heart (Hos 5: 5).

³¹⁹ Cf. John J. Collins, *Daniel with an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature*, vol. XX, Michigan, (1984), 105.

³²⁰ Andrew Chester, *Resurrection and Transformation*, 57; Robert Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life*, 76-7; H. Schmidt, ‘Hosea 6:1-6, in: W.F. Albright, A. Alt et al., *Sellin-Festschrift. Beiträge zur Religionsgeschichte und Archäologie. Ernst Sellin zum 60. Geburtstag dargebracht*, U. Deichert, Leipzig, (1927), 111-126.

The point the prophet repeatedly reiterates is not in paying ransom to the king of Assyria.³²¹ The Israelites have to learn the root of their problems, it is spiritual and not political and the solution to their troubles should not be seen outside JHWH. In fact, it is in him that Ephraim must see the cause of its sickness, both Israel and Judah will never regain the courage to face their enemies unless they put their trust and confidence in JHWH rejecting sinful alliances and trust in idols (Hos 15:13-14). Even though JHWH is ready to abandon Ephraim, though he is ready to reject Israel yet one choice remains open to Israelite, one single possibility of salvation, that is, repentance and acknowledgment of offenses (Hos 5:15). By pointing to the Israelites the many reasons for their sufferings and rejection, the prophet sets before them a final choice whereby all may yet be saved and in some extreme cases where they may equally be lost.³²² Like in the book of Jonah 1:17 and the sickness of Hezekiah (2 Kg 20:5) the repentance of Israel and their turning to JHWH sets a new tone in their relationship making it possible for the promise of life and salvation. If Israel wishes to be saved, the prophet recommends a complete change and a return to JHWH.

The beginning of the sixth chapter introduces a new twist to the relationship with JHWH. After exhorting the people, they now know what God wants. He requires genuine repentance, penitence, devotion of heart and will rather accept these than external piety and sacrifice. Then the prophet introduces God as very sympathetic with the backsliding of Ephraim and Judah (Hos 6:4-11). In their excitement, Israel indeed expresses its hope in the certainty of its salvation. Referring to what he said in Hos 5:14 “I will tear and go away” the Israelites say “he has torn but he will heal us.” Their allies tore their lives and gave them no healing but while they acknowledged the justice of God in their punishment, they depend on his well-known mercy and

³²¹ In order to buy their lives and freedom, Menahem, king of Israel gave taxes of fifty shekel per head to Pul, the king of Assyria (2 Kg 15:16-20).

³²² Robert Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life*, 77.

compassion for restoration to life and well-being.³²³ The text introduces two terms, healing and resurrection. The introduction of these terms puts the text at the centre of different interpretations. While some think the language used is specifically that of bodily resurrection others argue that the language is that of a sufferer expecting help from a difficult situation. In which case, the text is interpreted as historical not implying bodily resurrection from the dead.³²⁴ But as a penitential psalm, Israel voiced out their sadness and showed repentance³²⁵ hoping in turn to be redeemed from their sufferings and sickness. Contrary opinion claim that in view of the language used and the particular terminology employed, it is difficult to make sense of the passage except that it captures a bodily resurrection.³²⁶ The passage is picturing the people as having been ‘killed’ or put ‘put to death’ by JHWH upon whom they in turn looked upon to bring them quickly back to life.³²⁷ This opinion goes further to clarify that an essential element in Israel’s hope of resurrection is diluted in the expectation of healing which is the hope that by the help of JHWH, they will pass from death to life.³²⁸ As much as Hosea 6:1-3 is believed to be ultimately expressing pre-exilic belief in the resurrection within Judaism. Some other thoughts think that the passage is “not concerned with the resurrection of the Israelites personally, but with that of the people as a whole, or, in other words, with a national restoration, which

³²³ Adam Clark’s Bible Commentary – Hosea 6 see, <http://www.godrules.net/library/clarke/clarkehos6.htm> (browsed 01.08.2011).

³²⁴ Franz Zeilinger, *Der biblische Auferstehungsglaube*, 29; Gönke Eberhardt, *JHWH und die Unterwelt*, 304.

³²⁵ Cf. William Rainey Harper, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea*, (ICC), Edinburg, (1979), 282-3.

³²⁶ Günter Stemberger, *Auferstehung. Judentum I/2*, in: TRE 4, 443-450; Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life*, 81-86; Mulzer Martin, *Alarm für Benjamin, Text, Struktur und Bedeutung in Hos 5, 8-8, 14*, (ATSAT 74), St. Ottilien, (2003), 92ff.

³²⁷ Andrew Chester, *Resurrection and Transformation*, 57-8; Robert Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life*, 80-6; Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea, The Anchor Bible 24*, New York, (1980), 418-421.

³²⁸ Robert Martin-Achard, *From Death to life*, 81.

is to take place primarily on the political plane.”³²⁹ On the other hand, the concept of the ‘third day’ articulating Exodus 19:11, 15 culminates the arguments later century exegesis employed to demonstrate resurrection in an eschatological sense³³⁰ when JHWH will establish his covenant with Israel on Mount Sinai.³³¹

The next potential place for the term of the resurrection idea in the OT is the so-called minor Isaiah apocalypse (Is 24-27).³³² The phrase ‘so-called’ is used because the terms ‘Apocalypse’ and ‘apocalyptic’ are said not to be the same. They do not refer to the same thing and do not portray the same meaning.³³³ The joy of salvation in the sense of eschatology was first dramatically proclaimed in an unexpected form in (Is 26:19).³³⁴ In Isaiah 25:5, we read, “He will swallow up death forever and the Lord God will wipe away fears from all faces. The rebuke of his people he will take away from all the earth.” Death was viewed in Canaanite mythology and culture as a hungry god who swallows his victims. The image of JHWH “swallowing” death says much of his absolute power and the universality of his strength. There are strong tendencies showing that this passage actually has nothing to do with the resurrection of the body though it was adopted in the later century to supports belief in the resurrection within Judaism. Its theological

³²⁹ Robert Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life*, 81.

³³⁰ Franz Zeilinger, *Der biblische Auferstehungsglaube*, 29.

³³¹ Gale A. Yee, *The Book of Hosea*, in: *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 7, Nashville, (1996), 250.

³³² U. Kellermann, *Das Gotteslob der Auferweckten, Motivgeschichtliche Beobachtungen in Texten des Alten Testaments, des frühen Judentums und Urchristentums (BThSt 46)*, Neukirchen-Vluyn, (2001), 3; Andrew Chester, *Resurrection and Transformation*, 54.

³³³ See, Rudolf Kilian, *Jesaia II (NEB-AT)*, 154; G.Fohrer, *Das Geschick des Menschen nach dem Tode*, 199.

³³⁴ U. Kellermann, *Das Gotteslob der Auferweckten*, 8. “Those of our people who have died will live again; their bodies will come back to life. All those sleeping in their graves will wake up and sing for joy” (Is 26:19).

assent however lies in the proclamation of the absolute power of JHWH.³³⁵ But Brevard Childs thinks otherwise.³³⁶

3.4.2 Resurrection of the Just - Isaiah 26:7-19

Most of Isaiah's apocalyptic prophecy is assumed to be in chapter 26:7-19. This claim is not a general one because like the whole corpus of Isaiah 24-27, this unit of Isaiah equally is disputed as qualifying for apocalyptic passage despite all the apocalyptic stuffs it contains. Apocalyptic ingredients include the notion of divine transcendence, the development of angelology, fantastic symbolism, cosmic imagery, the use of foreign mythology and the reinterpretation of prophecy. Other considered materials for apocalyptic qualification are visionary form of inspiration, distinctly literary form, cataclysm and judgment, the Day of the Lord, the destruction of the Gentiles, the coming of the Golden Age, the messianic deliverer and the resurrection of the dead.³³⁷ The epoch in which this corpus of Isaiah was composed is another reason for questioning its authenticity as an apocalyptic passage. Some scholars opine that the establishment of the prophecy was pre-exilic while others think it is post-exilic. W. R. Millar thinks that the composition of the corpus dates back to the sixth century BC. He suggests that the unit of (26:11-27) is a "mixed matter" that was incorporated probably much more later.³³⁸ Russell on his own part considers the whole corpus of 24-27 as a homogeneous unit that deals with the final judgment of the nations and the consummation of all things. It is his opinion that this prophecy dates perhaps from the third or fourth century BC.³³⁹ For Wildberger, the prophecy

³³⁵ Rudolf Kilian, *Jesaja II (NEB-AT)*, Würzburg, (1994), 149; Hans Wilderberger, *Königsherrschaft Gottes, Jesaja 1-39*, 173-7.

³³⁶ Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah: A Commentary*, Kentucky, (2001), 188-192.

³³⁷ David S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, London, ²(1971), 91.

³³⁸ W.R. Millar, *Isaiah, 24-27 and the Origin of Apocalyptic*, (HSM 11), Missoula, (1976), 103-4, 119-120; D.G. Johnson, *From Chaos to Restoration: An Interpretative Reading of Isaiah 24-27*. (JSOTSS 61), Sheffield, (1988), 80f.

³³⁹ David S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, 91; Paul Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, Philadelphia, (1975), 313-14.

was later incorporated into the corpus of Isaiah in the fifth century AD.³⁴⁰ In the popular opinion of some other modern scholars the composition of the scroll consists of a groundwork written shortly after the exile to which some later prophecies were added.³⁴¹ These scholars support their opinion by pointing to the discovery of the Isaiah scroll among the Qumran Sect that suggests that this apocalyptic prophecy and its redaction could have taken place in the second century. This argument precludes any part of the scroll originating as late as this period. As a second century document,³⁴² Isaiah 26:19 is assumed to refer to literal, physical resurrection.³⁴³ Nevertheless, this view is contestable.

Those who support the establishment of the doctrine of resurrection within second century Judaism anchor their argument on the justice of God as the *raison d'être* for the general development of the resurrection doctrine in Israel. The exact period of the establishment of the doctrine of resurrection is not precisely known, there are however historical events and documentation that may probably lead to a conclusion of a specified era. There were certain pious people in Israel in the periods of second and third century BC. These pious Jews accepted suffering and martyrdom for their belief in JHWH, his religion and the nation of Israel as God's kingdom on earth. These pious Jews were convinced not only in the eternity of the kingdom of Israel but also in the participation of the people of God in the coming kingdom. Since this kingdom is on earth, the righteous Israel did not doubt sharing in it in body even after death. So in every experience of a 'pogrom' the Hasidim

³⁴⁰ Hans Wildberger, *Jesaja 13-27*. BKAT X/2, Vluyn, (1978), 901-4, 981ff.; idem, *Königsherrschaft Gottes. Jesaja 1-39*, Neukirchener, (1983), 176-7.

³⁴¹ Klaas Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife in Ancient Israel*, 297.

³⁴² Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja übersetzt und erklärt*. HKAT, III, 1, Göttingen, ⁴(1922), 172-194.

³⁴³ Andrew Chester, *Resurrection and Transformation*, 47-77, 54; Gene M. Tucker, *The Book of Isaiah 1-39*, in: *The New Interpreter's Bible* 6, Nashville, (1994), 218-223, 223; O. Kaiser, *Der Prophet Jesaja, 13-39*, (ATD 18), Göttingen, ²(1976), 144-5; Hans Wildberger, *Jesaja 13-27*, BKAT X/2, 892-9.

gave up their with the hope that JHWH will bring his 'dead' back to life from Sheol and that they would join the living in praising JHWH in the new established earthly kingdom. With time the anticipated participation increased, not only the righteous Jews but also the sympathetic Gentiles who looked to the God of Israel for help and longed to have Jerusalem as a home. Looking beyond the establishment of the material kingdom to the expectation of a life beyond this world brings to an end the negative impression of Sheol. This hope in the justice of JHWH redeeming his own seems to be the interpretation of Isaiah 26:19 (25:8), "Your dead shall live, their bodies shall arise, they that dwell in the dust shall awake and sing, for the dew of lights is thy dews, and the earth shall give birth to the shades." This unit seem to be projecting a transcendental hope beyond the grave to a physical resurrection of the dead. Nevertheless, others argue that the precise description of this unit is highly congestible.³⁴⁴ It is not easy to know whether this version is envisaging a political revival of the nation or referring to a radical sense of resurrection of the dead.³⁴⁵ Scholars who doubt the eschatological implication of the text argue that the text is only but an assurance of the rebirth of the Jewish community and nation³⁴⁶ with no connection whatever to a doctrine of individual resurrection.³⁴⁷ This opinion suggests that the passage is a metaphorical interpretation of resurrection.³⁴⁸ Thereby reiterating the expression that the idea of resurrection here is a representation of the frustration the pious Jews were passing through in the hands of the tyrant Babylonians who were oppressing and holding them captive at the time. Usually there are various understanding of the division of the unit of Isaiah 26, the common one is a division into two parts, vv. 1-6

³⁴⁴ Franz Zeilinger, *Der biblische Auferstehungsglaube*, 29.

³⁴⁵ Klaus Bieberstein, *Jenseits der Todesschwelle*, 437.

³⁴⁶ Andrew Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation, Jewish messianic and Visionary tradition and New Testament Christology*, (WUNT 207), Tübingen, (2007), 134f; R.E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, *New Century Bible Commentary*, Michigan, (1980), 216; Wildberger, *Isaiah 13-27*, 567-79.

³⁴⁷ R.E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, 216.

³⁴⁸ Rudolf Kilian, *Jesaja II (NEB-AT)*, 140

and 7-21. In terms of style vv. 1-7 is classified as a song of victory. Prevalent views among modern commentators are that the second section of this prophecy (vv. 7-21) is a petition and complaint to JHWH on behalf of one's community.³⁴⁹ The section in time developed into a faith theology of resurrection in the same way Ezekiel vision of the valley of the dry bones (Ez 37:1ff) and Hosiah 6 did. Above these polemics, one opinion argues that the text of Isaiah 26:19 deals with the revivification of the dead and the resurrection of the body of the chosen people. For Brevard Childs and Günter Stemberger this section of Isaiah's prophecy remains eschatological projecting a life beyond the grave.³⁵⁰ Childs describes the whole of chapters 24-27 as a presentation of a life lived in the end time and not as a systematic description of abstraction physical suffering. It is perplexing according to him to ascribe the passages to dealing with mundane freedom because, at close look at the prophecy one notices that "the particularity of the presentation remains sharply contoured by means of the imagery of apocalyptic speech and the conventions of liturgical language."³⁵¹ At times specific historical events are established using apocalyptic languages. The case of Babylon in the section in discuss is a valid example. This city was never mentioned by name rather, the prophet apocalyptically calls it "a city of chaos" which will receive its punishment. This judgment comes not from a specific known enemy; rather from God. Terror encompasses the world as God opens up the windows of heaven. The usage of Jerusalem was eschatological. It was not named a strong city where God inaugurates his salvation, rather a city wait-

³⁴⁹ Hans Wildberger, *Königsherrschaft Gottes, Jesaja 1-39, Teil 2. Die Nachfahren des Propheten und ihre Verkündigung der Text*, Vluyn, (1984), 227.

³⁵⁰ Cf. Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, 188-192; Günter Stemberger, *Auferstehung 1/2*, 144; Martin Achard, *From Death to Life*, 131. For exhaustive study of scholarly opinions on the polemics of Isaiah 26 see, J. Day, *A Case of inner Scriptural Interpretation*, (JTS 31), (1980), 309-319; D. M. Fouts, *A Suggestion for Isaiah xxvi 16*, (VT 41), (1991), 472-475; H. D. Preuß, *Auferstehung in Texten alttestamentlicher Apokalyptik* (Jes 26:7-19; Dan 12:1-4), *Linguistische Theologie* 3, (1972), 101-172; M. A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, (FOTL 16), Grand Rapids, (1996), 337-334.

³⁵¹ Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, 189.

ing for the righteous to enter. In terms of salvation, the passage did not present it as an escape from earthly oppressors, but as a life with God apart from death and human decay.³⁵² While the passage of Isaiah 25 speaks of a life removed from death, chapter 26 introduced a clear language of eschatological hope. What follows in v. 19 is described as eschatological promise of a resurrection to life after the suffering of death. In this way, the promises of “of v. 19 is said to transcend all the promises of Second Isaiah and has been composed specifically for the larger of chapter 26. The hope for those living between the times is now projected beyond the grave to a resurrection of life, a final victory over death itself.”³⁵³

Günter Stemberger has followed many scholars of the Old Testament guild that accepted certain trajectory of the history of Israel’s religious concepts as valid by arguing for the establishment of the doctrine of resurrection within the apocalypse of Isaiah. For him, Isaiah 26:19 “spricht von einer konkreten Auferstehung zu einem neuen Leben auf dieser Erde.”³⁵⁴ Wildberger concurs that this passage is an oracle of salvation, “...dass die ‘Toten’ Israels zugleich Jahwes Leichen sind, d.h. Jahwe steht dem Tod seines Volkes keineswegs unberührt gegenüber... Es kann nicht anders sein, damit kann Israel rechnen: Seine Toten werden leben, werden auferstehen, werden erwachen, und die im Staube wohnen, werden jubeln können.”³⁵⁵ The expression “thy dead shall live again” has the direct understanding of the response of JHWH ‘my people shall live again,’ they shall be given a new beginning, restored to vitality, strength, pleasure and satisfaction. The view taken here is that the passage has the first reference in the Hebrew Bible to the resurrection of the dead.³⁵⁶ The question arises whether the promise is a general resurrection of the dead or that of only the righteous (Jews?).

³⁵² Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, 189.

³⁵³ Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, 191.

³⁵⁴ Günter Stemberger, *Auferstehung*, 144; Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life*, 131.

³⁵⁵ Wildberger, *Jesaja 13-27*, p.995; idem, *Königsherrschaft Gottes Jesaja 1-39*, 227; Brian Doyle, *The apocalypse of Isaiah metaphorically Speaking: A Study of the Use, Function, and significance of metaphors in Isaiah 24-27*, Peters Publ., (2000), 317.

The striking impression the text made is mainly in the area of demarcation evident from the very beginning (26:1), with the introductory of the bayyóm hahú (“on that day”) formula.³⁵⁷ Using the same eschatological formula of ‘on that day’ of 27:1 the text makes a clear distinction between those to be resurrected from those not to be resurrected. It equates those ‘not to be resurrected’ with the sinners and those ‘to be resurrected’ with the pious innocent Jews. The Jewish Qumran Sect of the second century exercised this spirituality. They believe that “the good souls await a home beyond the ocean, a place troubled by neither rain nor snow nor heat, but refreshed by the zephyr (breeze) that blows ever gentle from the ocean” (Jewish War 2.8.11 §§ 154-56).³⁵⁸ On the contrary, the bodies of sinners will invariably be facing corruption. The emphasis is on category of judgment. Whereas punishment is expected to be given to the body for the imprisonment of the soul, good souls remain immortal forever. This teaching though same with the doctrine of immortality of the soul in Greek philosophy, yet, they make a crucial point in the expectation of a partial resurrection of the dead³⁵⁹ within Judaism of the postexilic times.

The leading themes of the units of chapter 26 are on the fate of the righteous and the justice of JHWH. The passages are characterized by shifting forms of address most often signifying intimacy. The pious petitioner in except vv. 10 and 18 addresses JHWH directly by his name using the informal means of the second-person singular pronoun “you.” Verse 8-10 petitions JHWH for justice against the wicked then there is a reflection on righteousness. For

³⁵⁶ Hermann Eising et al, *Das Buch Jesaja. Teil 1.* Düsseldorf, (1970), 179; Andrew Chester, *Resurrection and Transformation*, 55-7; E. Puech, *La Croyance des Esséniens en la vie future, Immortalité, résurrection, vie éternelle?* (EtB 21), vol. I, Paris (1993), 66-73; Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life*, 130-138.

³⁵⁷ Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39, Introduction to Prophetic Literature* vol. 16, Michigan, (1996), 338.

³⁵⁸ Josephus Flavius, *The Jewish War.* G.A., Williamson, (trans.), Penguin Books, (1959) 1986, 116.

³⁵⁹ Klaus Bieberstein, *Jenseits der Todesschwelle*, 436-7.

when your judgment are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness (9b). Divine judgment therefore is pedagogical and didactic. It teaches right and wrong.³⁶⁰ “The wicked” will not become righteous if “favour is shown” to them (v.10) they are rather destroyed if judgment is shown to them. The fundamental lessons of this unit are in portraying the wicked as those who are incapable of leaning righteousness or perceiving the majesty of JHWH. The clause ‘does not see the majesty of the Lord’ is regarded here in the sense of eschatological sense of not seeing bayyóm hahú (that day), the end-time, when God will appear. In a classical lamentation context, the significance of timelessness includes the ‘inability to enjoy the favour of God.’³⁶¹ The “zeal” of JHWH is to favour the righteous (26:11) and to consume the wicked.

The next unit (26:12) presumes that justice has not yet been established on the earth. Nevertheless, it praises the Lord for what JHWH will do in the future.³⁶² That is, “ordaining peace” for God’s people and for the righteous (26:12). Despite the fact that other lords besides JHWH have ruled over us, we still acknowledge your name alone (26:13). The “other lords” that have ruled over the Jews may refer to political overlords, the Babylonians and Persians who exercise dominion over the Jews. It may equally refer to other gods but even so the loyal Jew remains steadfast to JHWH alone, simply because he has enlarged all the borders of the land (26:15). The expression is striking since it contains a certain hope of the future, rather than to any immediate change in the political fortunes of the post-exilic community in Judah.³⁶³ From (26:16-18) the petitioner begins to report past prayers of God’s people in their helplessness and suffering and their experiences under the Lord’s chastisement and their prayer for help.³⁶⁴

³⁶⁰ Gene Tucker, *The Book of Isaiah 1-39*, 221.

³⁶¹ R.E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, 214.

³⁶² Gene Tucker, *The Book of Isaiah 1-39*, 221.

³⁶³ R.E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, 215.

³⁶⁴ Klaus Bieberstein, *Jenseits der Todesschwelle*, 437; Gene Tucker, *The Book of Isaiah 1-39*, 222.

The mood, tone and tense of the language of verse 19 drastically contrasts vv 16-18. In v.19, the content of the periscope shifted from the expression of suffering to an affirmation of hope that the dead shall live again.³⁶⁵ Unit 26:14 lays parallel with 26:19 in fact, the corpus of the texts set a tone for the coming judgment over the earth. Chapter 26:14 describes JHWH's action against the unrighteous concluding that they are nothing but dead. While the righteous will be resurrected, the wicked will receive nothing beyond death but for shadowy existence in Sheol.³⁶⁶ While the context of 26:14 expresses the consistent perspective of the OT that the dead in Sheol do not praise JHWH (Ps 88), v.19 breaks with the old belief and announces divine reassurance of a coming salvation.

Isaiah 26:19 is one of OT prophecies that went far in speaking of the resurrection of the righteous dead using the concept of the nation represented as one person "thy dead." After this inter-testament writers took up this belief and developed it in a number of ways.³⁶⁷ Certainly, v.19 came to be understood as a reference to the resurrection of the righteous individual. This interpretation of the passages may not have actually been connected with the micro-text of Isaiah 26:16-18, later interpretations see a close connection which does not exclude the interpretation of a future resurrection of the dead.³⁶⁸ The book of Isaiah 26:19 was not the only prophecy that treated selected resurrection. Some other extra-biblical apocalyptic writings equally contemplated resurrection based on the principle of selection.

The animal vision of Ethiopian Enoch composed around 167-164 B.C. portrays Enoch's vision of the history of the world (Jews) from Adam to the

³⁶⁵ R.E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, 216-7.

³⁶⁶ Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life*, 134-137; E. Puech, *Croyance*, vol. I, 68-72.

³⁶⁷ Gene Tucker, *The Book of Isaiah 1-39*, 223.

³⁶⁸ U. Kellermann, *Das Gotteslob der Auferweckten*, 6f.; Gottfried Schimanowski, *Auferweckung im neuen Testament und in der frühjüdischen Apokalypitk*, in: Hans Kessler (hg.), *Auferstehung der Toten*, Darmstadt, (2004), 49-71, 54.

period of the Maccabean revolution.³⁶⁹ This apocalypse is itself part of the Book of Dreams (chaps. 83-91).³⁷⁰ The apocalypse is called animal vision because all the dramatic persons involved are portrayed as animals. 1 Enoch 83-90 only mentions the resurrection of the righteous and not a word about the unrighteous. The resurrection of the righteous is at least the conclusion of 90:31-35, which states that ‘all that had been destroyed and dispersed assembled in that house, and the Lord rejoice with great joy because they were all good and had returned to his kingdom.’ While the remaining unrighteous in Enoch 90:24-27 are forgotten in their dim shadows and because of this aspect of the apocalypse, Klaus Bieberstein opines that Enoch’s “animal vision” is a selected resurrection of the righteous martyrs.³⁷¹ II Enoch 65:10 is another important section of the apocalyptic vision that mentioned selective resurrection for the martyr and the righteous alone.

Besides the animal vision apocalypse, the Psalms of Solomon composed perhaps around 63 BC is another extra-biblical text of the OT that seems like Isaiah 26 to contemplate on the resurrection of the righteous. In these Psalms we read, “He falls and verily grievous is his fall, and rise no more the destruction of the sinner is forever. And he shall not be remembered, when the righteous is visited. This is the portion of sinners forever. But they that fear the Lord shall rise to life eternal, and their life (shall be) in the light of the Lord, and shall come to an end no more” (3:13f). For the righteous, the psalm says “they that fear the Lord shall rise to life eternal, and their life (shall be) in the light of the Lord, and shall come to an end no more” (3:16). Without minding the seeming reservation of the texts of Isaiah 25:8 and 26:19 including the Psalms of Solomon and all the texts already considered these texts have helped in no small ways laying the foundation to the devel-

³⁶⁹ J.T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch. Aramaic Fragments from Qumran Cave 4*. Oxford, (1978), 44; P.A. Tiller, *A Commentary on the Animal Apocalypse of 1 Enoch*. Atlanta, (1993), 61-82.

³⁷⁰ John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, Michigan, (1984), 67.

³⁷¹ Klaus Bieberstein, *Jenseits der Todesschwelle*, 439.

opment of the resurrection doctrine in which the NT resurrection faith is an integral part.³⁷²

All the above mentioned also applies to the series of stories of the righteous sufferers of the Antiochan times. 2 Maccabees 7, written about 164 and 121 BC it draws a close deliberate contrast between the righteous who will be resurrected and the wicked who will not. The book places the ‘righteous’ with the martyrs of Israel and the wicked with the foreign powers. The contrast witnessed in the Antiochen historical revolution the high point being the suffering of a parent, and her seven sons. They prefer to obey the Torah and to die honouring JHWH than carrying out the decree of the king.³⁷³ In the narrative, the mother urges the brothers to accept death. In obedience to God and the plea of the mother (7:6) the brothers one after the other suffered martyrdom whereby the second son (7:9), third (7:10f) and fourth (7:14) suffered martyrdom with the hope of resurrection.³⁷⁴ The emotional speech of the third son shows a solid belief in a physical resurrection of the righteous alone.³⁷⁵ The story indicates that the physically decapitated, tortured and broken bodies (tongues, hands, and limbs, etc) of the righteous will be divinely reconstructed after which they will be given back to their owners on the last day.³⁷⁶ Just before the speech of the last son, the fourth brother contrasts the faith of the righteous from that of the wicked. In his final words, he clearly defines the fate of the unrighteous. For him there is no resurrection for the unrighteous king. Hence, “I am glad to die at your

³⁷² Bernd Janowski, Die Toten loben JHWH nicht. Psalm 88 und das alttestamentliche Todesverständnis, in: Friedrich Avemarie/Hermann Lichtenberger, Auferstehung/Resurrection, (WUNT 135), 3-45, 45.

³⁷³ George Nickelsburg W.E., Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism. London, (1972), 99.

³⁷⁴ Klaus Bieberstein, Jenseits der Todesschwelle, 439-440.

³⁷⁵ Casey Deryl Elledge, Life after Death in Early Judaism, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, (2006), 18.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

hands, because we have the assurance that God will raise us from death. But there will be no resurrection to life for you, Antiochus” (2 Macc 7:14).

This periscope points at two things. First, it emphasized that resurrection is for the righteous Jews alone. Secondly, it points to a belief of a general resurrection in which the wicked (Antiochus) will be excluded. Selected resurrection of the righteous received a precise definition from the Pharisees in 70 AD. “Folgende haben keinen Anteil an der kommenden Welt: wer da sagt, es gibt keine Auferstehung der Toten von der Tora aus ...“ (mSan 10:1b). In general, the Rabbis do not believe in a general resurrection rather that of Israel alone or the resurrection of the righteous Israel alone.³⁷⁷ The resurrection of selected individuals is contained in the second Benediction of the eighteen prayers “I give thee thanks, Adonai! For thou hast redeemed my soul from the Pit and from Sheol-Abaddon thou hast brought me up again to the top of the world. Then I wandered on an endless plain; and I know that there was hope for him whom thou hast formed from the dust (and destined) for the eternal Assembly. Yea, the perverse spirit hast thou purified of a great sin so that he might mount guard with the army of the Saints and that he might enter into communion with the congregation of the Sons of Heaven. Yea, thou hast caused to fall on man an eternal Destiny amongst the intelligent Spirits, that he should praise thy Name in communion (with them) and that he should tell of thy wonders before all thy works.”³⁷⁸ While the above instances strongly indicate originality of the hope of resurrection within the Jewish matrix especially in terms of selective or individual resurrection of the righteous, some other passages evoke the resurrection of both the righteous the wicked.

3.4.3 General Resurrection

Besides the resurrection of the righteous Israel, some apocalyptic books report on a ‘general’ resurrection of the dead the apocalypse of Daniel for in-

³⁷⁷ Günter Stemberger, *Auferstehung I/2*, in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie IV*, (1979), 443-450, 445.

³⁷⁸ Günter Stemberger, 446.

stance. Unlike the apocalypse of Isaiah, the prophecy of Daniel is historical. It was probably written in the intervening period between late 167 and 164 BC in the heat of the Antiochus Epiphanes IV persecution (cf. 1Macc 1:54-65; 2Macc 6-7)³⁷⁹ and the rededication of the Temple.³⁸⁰ In chapter 12:2-3 we read “And many of the them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to everlasting contempt.” Much in this chapter of Daniel seems to comply with the principle of selection but it actually does not argue for a resurrection of both righteous and sinners who would be raised in order to be punished.

This means that the unit of Daniel chapter 12 expresses a general resurrection with a significant difference. It expresses a form of selected resurrection quite different from the common notion of it but very close to a general resurrection. The book of Isaiah 26:19 and the subsequent passages already examined, emphasized resurrection as a reward only for the righteous, resurrection in these books excludes the wicked. In the case of Daniel, one sees resurrection in terms of a “general” phenomenon with a particular emphasis.³⁸¹ In the understanding of the apocalyptic writers, resurrection was initially meant for the Jews. But it still a problem as to whether it was meant for everybody.³⁸² The division among the various Jewish communities evident in Dan 11:30-35 brought about the introduction of a classical separation among the Jews invariably the doubt becomes whether all Jews will be raised to glory.

³⁷⁹ M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus, Studien zu ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2. Jh. v. Chr.*, Tübingen, ³(1988), 319-394; John J. Collins, *Daniel with an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature*, vol. XX, Michigan, (1984), 101.

³⁸⁰ M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus*, 320f.

³⁸¹ Some opinions are in the contrary, Stemberger insists that the Passage speaks of the bodily resurrection of certain selected Jews and not all the Jews. Cf. Günter Stemberger, *Art.*, *Auferstehung. Judentum I/2*, in: *TRE*, Bd. 4, 444.

³⁸² Günter Stemberger, *Auferstehung I/2*, 445.

The line was divided between those Jews who violated the covenant and those who obeyed JHWH. The historical background of this division was witnessed in the tyrannical rule of Antiochus under whose reign many faithful Jews were put to death. During this time, there were Jewish communities that turned to being traitors. For fear of suffering persecution, these Jews embraced Hellenistic ideologies and philosophies thereby turning against the Law and the prophets. Embracing Hellenistic philosophy and thought led to the formation of parties or Sects within Judaism. The NT tells us of the Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, Zealots, Galileans, Samaritans and the disciples of John the Baptist. Other sources tell us of the Essenes, the Ebionites and the Qumran community.³⁸³ These communities influenced perhaps by Hellenism had contrasting aspirations and tenets. And there was no where that this diversity was more obvious than the subject of eschatology.³⁸⁴ Some of the Sects rejected some tenets of Judaism including the belief in resurrection. Many who stood firm with Judaism were martyred for their faith. On the other hand, some (sinners) who embraced foreign religion pitched tent against Judaism. Those who tenet against Judaism died and were buried without judgment been executed upon them in their lifetime meaning that they did not pay the price for wrongdoing. Because they have not received retribution due to their character, they too will be resurrected to face judgment and to receive their recompense. And this is the sense in which the prophecy of Daniel was written. The sense that the unrighteous will not go away with earthly advantages over the righteous that the whole community will experience “resurrection.” In terms of salvation, the community that will be saved does not include completely the Jewish people but the exceptionally righteous few³⁸⁵ or at least a selected number of

³⁸³ For details of some of the sects cf., Klaus und Sabine Bieberstein, *Auferstehung gemäß der Schrift*, in: *Bibel und Kirche*, 74-5 (70-77); Petri Luomanen, *Passion and Resurrection Traditions in Early Jewish-Christian Gospels*, in: *Gelitten Gestorben Auferstehung*, Tobias Nicklas et al (hg.), (WUNT 2, Reihe 273), Tübingen, (2009), 187-208, 192-6,

³⁸⁴ <http://www.religion-online.org/> (browsed 05.09.11).

³⁸⁵ John J. Collins, *Daniel*, 102

the righteous. It is unfortunate that the prophecy of Daniel only mentioned without qualification a certain number of the wicked. The apocalypse did not qualify the status of the wicked some that will be resurrected. Since there is no qualification for the wicked, the consideration of resurrection for the righteous and for the wicked in Daniel seems, mainly, to depict a general resurrection. For Isaiah the resurrection of the righteous is in itself vindication for the righteous. For Daniel resurrection is a means by which both the righteous and the wicked dead are enabled to receive their respective vindication or condemnation. In this way, resurrection in Daniel has gone beyond that of Isaiah since there will be punishment for the wicked who are dead³⁸⁶ as much as there will be resurrection for them. While Isaiah speaks only of a resurrection of the righteous Daniel speaks of a twofold resurrection.

In addition to the book of Daniel 12 the most clearly and intelligible evidence about the belief in general resurrection is found in the account of the Similitude of Enoch and the Test of Benjamin 10.³⁸⁷ Other OT and extra-biblical background about general resurrection includes the apocalypses of Baruch, Esdra and pseudo Philo.³⁸⁸ These apocalypses were written about the end of the first century probably from 200 B.C. to 70 A.D at the time of the Jewish catastrophes. In Enoch 51:1 we read, "In those days shall the earth also give back that which has been entrusted to it, and Sheol also shall give back that which it has received, and hell shall give back that which it owes." Günter Stemberger understands this passage not in the terms of a general resurrection but a resurrection of the righteous only.³⁸⁹ A close reading of the passage contradicts this opinion because it seems this is a partial explanation of the texts. The innovation the text introduces implied a notion

³⁸⁶ George Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*. London, (1972), 19.

³⁸⁷ Klaus Bieberstein, *Jenseits der Todesschwelle*, 442.

³⁸⁸ Günter Stemberger, *Auferstehung*, in: TRE 4, 446.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

of a general resurrection of the wicked and the righteous. The prophecy of Baruch is another passage which is closely related to the prophecy of Daniel and Enoch in witnessing a general resurrection. The date when Baruch was written is imprecise. Many place the writing of the book during the Maccabean era or soon after. A few critics put the composition after A.D. 70 especially the section that presupposes the eschatological scenario.³⁹⁰ It is said in 42:8 that ‘dust will be called, and told to give back that which does not belong to it and raise up all that it has kept until now as its own.’ In addition, 50:2 clearly puts it that “the earth will surely give back the dead at that time; it receives them now in order to keep them not changing anything in their form. But as it has received them so it will give them back. And as I have delivered them to it so it will raise them.” The two cited quotes testify to the evidence that the bodies of both the wicked and righteous will be transformed the one to shame (51:2) and the other to glory (51:3).

One common characteristic of the apocalyptic writings is their focus on the events of the eschaton that reiterates a cease of transgression. The idea of the end of the struggle in the apocalyptic writings has always to do with the introduction of a new beginning. The transformation is about the resurrection of the righteous dead. It is about when they would be resurrected into a new earth (heaven). To bring about the era of righteousness apocalyptic texts never fail to announce an impending judgment. The announced judgments are triggered in the different books by different events mostly but not all the time by historical situations like the Antiochan persecution or the event of natural catastrophes. The judgment proclaimed addresses a particular historical event, offering a common solution to what the composers view as a common theological problem the question of retribution. In most parts of apocalyptic literature, there is a tendency to argue for the concentration on the resurrection of the innocent alone. The constant return to the proclamation of judgment in these texts points to the evidence for a general re-

³⁹⁰ P. P. Saydon, Baruch, in: *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, Reginald C. Fuller et al (eds.), New York, (1969), 628-631, 628.

surrection for the righteous and the wicked alike. The last lines of the Sibylline Oracles IV dated around 80 AD describe resurrection and judgment. These lines state: “God will burn everything up, and there will be sooty ash. But when everything is turned to dust and ashes and God quenches the great fire, as he ignited it, God himself will again form the bones and ashes of men, and he will raise up mortals again, as they were before. And then judgment will take place, in which God himself will pass judgment, again judging the world. And as many as sinned in impiety will be covered by the heap of earth in the cover of dark Tartarus in the black recesses of Gehenna. But as many as are godly will live again on earth, when God gives breath and life and grace to them, the pious (180-190).” There are doubts whether this part of the Sibylline Oracles include the resurrection of the wicked. The Sibylline Oracles as known are inspired oracles and the direct speech of the sibyl.³⁹¹ As it were, the Oracles bear obvious resemblances to the ‘historical’ apocalypses.³⁹² In the historical apocalypse of Daniel 12:1-3 which has somehow resemblance interpretation with the historical events of the Maccabean pogrom (2 Mac 7:9, 14, 23, 36), the authors were sure that resurrection would be for all. But they were equally precise in their belief that the hope of final salvation and the coming into the kingdom will be experienced only by the selected few who were martyred for their faith. Following this pattern of understanding, the historical apocalypse does not strictly apply in this unit of the Sibylline Oracles because it does not make an explicit limitation as to who will be raised. On the other hand, because of the importance of reward and punishment expressed in the prophecy (God will form the bones “of men.” He will raise up “mortals” so that they will be able to stand judgment for their deeds),³⁹³ one finds a concise hope of resurrection that includes all mortals. Besides Isaiah 26:19 and 25:7-8, Daniel 12: 1-4 is clearly

³⁹¹ John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 233.

³⁹² *Ibid.*

³⁹³ Robert Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life*, 141.

the first passage in the Hebrew Bible to declare a general resurrection.³⁹⁴ The above texts make concrete statements on the expectation of life after death comparable to that of the NT.³⁹⁵ On the other hand, the Testament of the XII Patriarchs especially the Testament of Benjamin 10:6 remains the only obvious and clear demonstration of a general resurrection of all the saints and sinners.³⁹⁶ In the preceding apocalypse, we read “then you will see Enoch, Noah, and Shem, and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob rising on the right hand in gladness. Then we also shall rise, each over our tribe, worshipping the king of heaven ... Then all will rise, some to glory and some to dishonour. And the Lord will first judge Israel for their iniquity... And then he will judge all the nations” (Testament of Benjamin 10). Verse 8 is the decisive aspect of this text. In it we read: “Then all will rise some to glory and some to dishonour.” The passage explicitly states that resurrection and judgment will be general and universal. The function of resurrection and judgment is to render proper justice to all men whether saints or sinners.³⁹⁷ We see this also in 4 Ezra and Sibylline Oracles IV. The present unit does not speak of the resurrection of a selected few neither did it particularize on the resurrection of those who have died for the sake of JHWH. The passage laid emphasis on a universal resurrection of the righteous and the ungodly.

It is worth noting that all the passages that were examined in this section have late foundation from the 200 BC – AD 100. During the epoch in question, the concept of the resurrection received a diversity of interpretations. Some believed in general resurrection others in an exclusive resurrection of a selected few righteous alone (Jews?). The extension of this belief helped in forming the background upon which the NT expresses the belief of resurrection as a doctrine of human ultimate hope.

³⁹⁴ Gottfried Schimanowski, *Auferstehung im Neuen Testament und in der Frühjüdischen Apokalypik*, 55.

³⁹⁵ Gene M. Tucker, *The Book of Isaiah 1-39*, 223.

³⁹⁶ Klaus Bieberstein, *Jenseits der Todesschwelle*, 442. Bieberstein argues that the proclamation of the resurrection in these apocalypse is only a partial resurrection.

³⁹⁷ George Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal*, 143.

3.5 Resurrection in the NT

The important statement the OT makes about the texts on resurrection is its emphasis on God's creative power. This power simply culminates in God's ability to bring life out of death.³⁹⁸ The power to give Abraham a child from the "dead womb"³⁹⁹ as well as to the nameless woman of Shunem (2Kg 4: 8-27)⁴⁰⁰ contrasts the Genesis creation tradition of *ex nihilo*. OT idea of the life after death was structurally engraved in the physical reanimation in sheol. The existing shadow in the underworld is the form of the former physical self. This earlier thinking notwithstanding, early Judaism did not define the idea of the doctrine of the resurrection as widely thought. The hope of a resurrection in both the OT and the apocrypha was expressed in a restrained way. This attitude changed in the second century B.C. The cause of this change is attributable to the greater freedom of non-biblical writers of the century enjoyed. They were able to express this belief in a more imaginative way.

As it was with earlier Judaism, the understanding of the concept of resurrection within Christianity is still unclear. The idea had not received a comprehensive and a clear definition. The consequence of this is a diversity of answers to the one question: What is the meaning of resurrection? While some Christians have their personal answers to the question of the belief in the power of God who can do all things including raising the dead from the dust of earth, many others find it more comfortable to settle on the Asian notion of transmigration of soul or reincarnation.⁴⁰¹ Due to the wide variety of the

³⁹⁸ Peter Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, vol. 1. *Grundlegung: Von Jesus zu Paulus*, Göttingen, (1992), 175.

³⁹⁹ Andrew Chester, *Resurrection and Transformation*, 76.

⁴⁰⁰ Christoph Uehlinger, *Totenerweckungen – Zwischen volkstümlicher Bettgeschichte und theologischer Bekenntnisliteratur*, in: *Auferstehung hat einen Namen*, Sabine Bieberstein et al (eds), Luzern, (1998), 17-28, 19.

⁴⁰¹ Klaus und Sabine Bieberstein, *Auferweckt gemäß der Schrift*, in: *Bibel und Kirche* 64, (2009), 70-77, 70.

explanations to this question, it is legitimate to ask what the NT really thinks about resurrection of the dead.

3.5.1 What did the NT really think about the Resurrection of the Dead?

The definition of resurrection in the NT is contingent upon the understanding of the resurrection of Jesus. Evidence of the resurrection of Jesus by the early Christian community was dependent on two descriptions; that of the discovery of the empty tomb and second the post-mortem appearances.⁴⁰² The authenticity of the evidence presented by the two traditions is questionable or rather; attempts have been made to prove the historical truth of these descriptions. Some scholars have developed a theology supporting the resurrection but at the same time rejecting support for resurrection as a historical phenomenon. Rudolf Bultman and Karl Barth are better examples.⁴⁰³ On the other hand, some others have opposed arguments that decline to verify claims of the resurrection through rational argument. Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928) remains one of these scholars.⁴⁰⁴ Others still think that the application of ‘historicity’ to the event of the resurrection add more complexity to the inadequacy of interpretation already facing the early Christian metaphor. For such scholars, the term ‘historical event’ is laden with ambiguity as far as the term is employed in either an ‘ontological’ or an ‘epistemological’ sense because each of the terms is understood differently.⁴⁰⁵ In contrast to an imagined event or something that did not happen, ‘historical’ in terms of

⁴⁰² Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus, God and Man*, Lewish L. Wilkins et al (trans.), Canterbury, (2002), 83; Willi Marxsen, *The Resurrection of Jesus as a Historical and Theological Problem*, in: *The Significance of the Resurrection of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ*, C.F.D Moule (ed.), London, (1968), 15-50, 24.

⁴⁰³ Rudolf Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth*, Hans Werner Bartsch (ed.), New York, (1961), 41; For further reading on neo-orthodox view held by Barth and Bultmann, see Peter Carnley, *The Structure of Resurrection Belief*, Oxford, (1987), 96-147.

⁴⁰⁴ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus, God and Man*, 83-104.

⁴⁰⁵ Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Resurrection of Jesus and Roman Catholic Fundamental Theology*, in: *The Resurrection*, Stephen Davis et al (ed.), New York, (1997), 212-248, 245.

ontology asserts that an event did take place. The kind of occurrence here is what is in question.

A claim is historical when it is demonstrable otherwise the assertion is un-historical. A claim in time of a flying horse may attract attention but is the assertion a historical truth. An event is true when the substance of the proclamation did take place. Anything contrary to this is false. In the case of a flying horse, because the substance of the proclamation did not take place, the claim is not historical. This definition of the persistence of a statement applies also to the issue of knowledge. An event is epistemologically historical to the degree and extent that such an event can be asserted with some degree of certainty.⁴⁰⁶ Available canonical evidence subjected under certain methodology determines what is historical. In the flying horse perspective, if there was indeed a mechanically constructed flying horse would the claim with sufficient evidence make the assertion historical? Historicity is nothing but paying attention to the distinction between an event as having happened and an event for which there is sufficient evidence to prove its occurrence. This is important 'because the claim is made that the resurrection is not a historical event, not because one is contesting the reality of the event, but because one is contesting whether it is historical in the sense that it can be historical demonstrated or verified.'⁴⁰⁷ The nature of this thought allows the flow of the argument from a simple answer of 'I do not know, I am no longer able to discern.'⁴⁰⁸ These answers however, are born out of a prejudiced conviction that the dead do not rise. Since there are elements within Christian theology which would want to avoid making a direct concession

⁴⁰⁶ Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 246.

⁴⁰⁷ Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, *ibid*.

⁴⁰⁸ Marxsen Willi, *The Resurrection as of Jesus as a Historical and Theological Problem*, 15-50; John Crossan, in: *The Resurrection of Jesus*, John Dominic Crossan and N.T. Wright in Dialogue, Robert Stewart (ed.), Minneapolis, (2006), 33.

to historical resurrection and others see the Jesus event as not made certain by faith but is historically demonstrable.⁴⁰⁹

History only becomes problematic when a crisis occurs in a particular historical situation. When that happens, we become conscious that we need. The uncertainty of the fate of the dead before the coming of the Lord among the enthusiastic early Christian community was the driving force that prompted the series of Pauline catechetical and theological reflections (1Thess 4:13-14) about the resurrection. The teaching here directs at reiterating and confirming the reality in the general presupposition contained in the mentality of both testaments that human history is a single history. In other words, it maintains that the essential relationship between persons expresses that the dignity of one person has significant implication for the others.⁴¹⁰ This presupposition, strong as it is, forms the basis for arguing for a historical significance of the resurrection accounted in real terms. Granted, the historical accounts are catechetical in nature, they brought two things in focus, the empty tomb and post-mortem appearances. How these factors are in historical terms depends on the interpretation.

3.5.2 The Empty Tomb

The story of the empty tomb is sometimes applied as a background *sine qua non* in defense of historicity of NT resurrection phenomenon. The “general historical considerations already show that the proclamation of the news of Jesus’ resurrection in Jerusalem, which had established the Christian community, is hardly understandable except under the assumption that Jesus’ tomb was empty.”⁴¹¹ The presupposition considers that the early conception of the resurrection and appearance of Jesus within the NT cannot be logically constructed without the empty tomb. The empty sepulchre in this case is conceived prior to the judgment of the appearances.

⁴⁰⁹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus, God and Man*, 99.

⁴¹⁰ Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*. William Dych (trans.), New York, (2006), 283.

⁴¹¹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus, God and Man*, 99.

The traditional material that constitutes the basic arguments for the empty tomb is contained in the four Gospels (Mk 16:1-8; Mt 28; Lk 24; and Jn 20). The stories are widely recognized to differ in matters of details. For instance, Mark, believed to be the earliest of the Gospels, narrates the story quite differently from the other Gospel narratives. Though the writer of the Gospel seems to be aware of the appearances to both Peter and the rest in Galilee, the writer placed more emphasis on the empty tomb than on the appearances.⁴¹² The discovery of the empty tomb is associated with two women, Mary and Salome. The Gospel of Mark, the evangelist narrates how the women at the gravesite met with a 'young boy.' They thought this young boy to be an angel. He informed them of the resurrection and the need to take this information to the disciples as well as the importance of moving towards Galilee where they will meet the resurrected Jesus. Mark's resurrection narrative is very much associated with the empty tomb. But would the empty tomb serve as authentic proof for the historical resurrection of Jesus? Willi Marxsen answers this question in the negative.

For him the empty tomb does not play any important role to the historical definition of the resurrection of Jesus.⁴¹³ In addition to many other reasons, our scholar insists that the conception of resurrection in connection with the empty tomb is a question of interpretation. He followed the age long suggestion of Celsus assented in the lie theory contained in Mt 27: 62-64, 28:13-15 and Jn 20-1-18. This critic has been recurrent in the tradition of polemics against the resurrection. In his *Contra Celsus*, Origen directed his attacks against Celsus a second-century philosopher and critic of Christianity who used this argument against Christianity.⁴¹⁴ Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768) systematized this hypothesis during the later part of the enlightenment period. His argument was that the 'disciples stole the

⁴¹² Reginald H. Fuller, *The Foundation of the Resurrection Narratives*, London, (1972), 2.

⁴¹³ Willi Marxsen, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 23-25.

⁴¹⁴ *Contra Celsum*, II, 55, 70.

corpse, after which they claimed that Jesus is resurrected.⁴¹⁵ The stealing of the body from the tomb and the claiming of the resurrection by the disciples is the reason for the emptiness of the tomb.⁴¹⁶ This argument seems to be suggesting that the proclamation of the resurrection meant to serve two purposes. One purpose was for preaching and the other is that of authenticating the resurrection belief of the OT. Marxsen seems to be saying that the empty tomb surfaced very much later, after the resurrection had become part of the preaching by the apostles that God raised Jesus from the dead. Another reason to assent to the resurrection and the empty tomb is to believe in the legendary formulation of Mk 16:6 that claimed Jesus is risen.⁴¹⁷ In terms of rendition, this text (like 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)⁴¹⁸ is the oldest NT text to mention the empty tomb. Of course, the text was not the first to mention the resurrection. The composition of the Mark Gospel was probably around 70 AD whilst the resurrection formula known to Paul (1Cor 15:3a) and the early Christian community was in circulation from the 40 A.D. Therefore, the resurrection story of Mark that tells of the discovery of the empty tomb by the women is a later development. It tries to imagine or formulate a resurrection of Jesus through the mighty power of God. The Gospels, in general, give detail accounts of Jesus' earthly life, death, resurrection and appearances to Peter and to the others. In the course of time, the disciples longed to incorporate that the resurrected one is no more in the tomb and that the tomb is now empty. The debate on the non-historicity of the empty tomb based its contention on the fact that the older texts on the resurrection of Jesus did not mention the grave or the empty tomb. Instead

⁴¹⁵ H. S. Reimarus, *Über die Auferstehungsgeschichte*, in: G.E. Lessing, *Werke* Bd. 8. Darmstadt, (1976), 439 and 457.

⁴¹⁶ Willi Marxsen, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 25; Gerd Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Jesus, History, Experience, Theology*, Minneapolis, (1994); A. Özen, *Was mit Jesus wirklich geschah*, Stuttgart, (1995), 127.

⁴¹⁷ John Dominic Crossan and N.T Wright in *Dialogue*, 33.

⁴¹⁸ The text of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 is commonly referred as the small apocalypse. It is the oldest unit of the NT to teach resurrection of the dead. Cf. Gottfried Schimanowski, *Auferstehung im Neuen Testament und in der Frühjüdischen Apokalyphtik*, 50.

of an emphasis on the grave, the formulation we meet in 1Cor 15:3b and in later Nicean and in the Apostolic Creed only emphasized the death and burial of Jesus. The intention of this passage is to give credence to the reality of the death of Jesus and not to the empty tomb or otherwise. This silence about the grave in these formulations shows the unimportance of the empty tomb in biblical consciousness. Marxsen insists that since the empty tomb is not subjected to historical investigation it will be impossible to check their correctness therefore not being subject to objective historicity but that of subjective interpretation. As an interpretation, the empty tomb is not a subject of history.⁴¹⁹ Thereby suggesting that the discovery of an empty tomb is not the foundation for the belief in the resurrection, hence the proclamation of the Easter resurrection was not dependent on the fact of the empty tomb.⁴²⁰ Marxsen concludes that the empty tomb would be in no way be a 'proof of Jesus' resurrection. Rudolf Bultmann as well as Karl Barth have tried to integrate the empty tomb as a part of history by the employment of the concept of faith. For them resurrection and the empty tomb is a thing of faith belief.⁴²¹ In fact "...the resurrection of Jesus were not in fact the secret denial of the very thing which we would fain assert, the resurrection as the deed of God, whom no human heart, neither outwardly nor inwardly, not subjective and not objective, not mystical nor spiritistic and not flatly objective, but as a historical divine fact, which as much as only to be

⁴¹⁹ Willi Marxsen, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 25.

⁴²⁰ Willi Marxsen, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, *ibid*.

⁴²¹ Bultmann consistently emphasized the earliest version of resurrection in terms of an article of faith rather than an active ingredient in the origin of faith. Since such article of faith is not unknown to mythology but whose fundamental end in the NT is for the purposes of kerygma and for preaching the Easter message. This states that the NT is interested in the resurrection and in the empty tomb as an 'apologetic legend', which sets out to prove that the cross has the cosmic and eschatological significance ascribed to it. Indeed in a variety of ways, the cross and resurrection form a single, individual cosmic event which brings judgment to the world and opens up for men and women the possibility of authentic life. Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth*, 39.

grasped in the category of revelation and in none other.”⁴²² The historical resurrection from the dead that involves the empty tomb is considered utterly inconceivable⁴²³ not only because St. Peter did not mention it in his Pentecost homily (Acts 2:22,23) more importantly, that St. Paul the most prolific writer of the early Christian times did not know anything about it.⁴²⁴ None of the writers placed emphasis on the empty tomb. As aforementioned, in the Pentecost preaching Peter was convinced that the crucified Jesus was the one prophesied by King David in Psalm 16. The summary of the verse 9-11 (found in Acts 2:26-28) reads: “And so I am filled with gladness, and my words are full of joy. And I, mortal though I am, will rest assured in hope, because you will not abandon me in the world of the dead; you will not allow your faithful servant to rot in the grave.” Despite the fact that Peter knew the tradition about the death and resurrection of Jesus according to the prophecy of David, not once did he depend his argument on the empty tomb to demonstrate the resurrection of Jesus. So that the story of the empty tomb is therefore not important in the argument about the historicity, that God raised Jesus from the dead. It’s essentiality is only recorded in a secondary way. Its significance is in its functionality, it helped the early community to preach the Easter message.

In a sharp contrast, some scholars in unequivocal terms have accepted the historicity of the empty tomb as *sine quo non* to the argument that Jesus was raised by God in the tomb.⁴²⁵ Wolfhart Pannenberg is one such defender of this proposition. For him, the historicity of the empty tomb dispensed the necessity with the appearances whereby the explanation of one without the other would be too vague and imprecise. If the tomb where Jesus’ body was sealed was discovered to contain the body as the story of the ‘appearances’

⁴²² Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead*. H. J. Stenning (trans.), Oregon, (1933), 138.

⁴²³ Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth*, 39.

⁴²⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁴²⁵ A number of recent scholars have proffered scholarly arguments and voluminous literatures in support of the story of the empty tomb. See the arguments of, Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus, God and Man*, 98; J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, London, (1975), 120.

were circulating then it would be illogical to continue the story, otherwise it would be giving credence to the possibility of a hallucination. This argument rests on the absence of Jewish anti-Christian polemic. Apart from the reports of the Gospels, the Jewish polemic is most often included among the general historical arguments that speak for the trustworthiness of the empty tomb. Antagonistic as the Jewish polemic antagonistics were, surprisingly it sometimes compliments the early Christian resurrection narratives. The polemic shared the same conviction with its Christian opponents that Jesus' tomb was empty.⁴²⁶ At least in its bid to suggest some sort of foul play the Jewish polemic explained the emptiness of the tomb in other ways. For instance, it accepted that the body of Jesus was stolen or that the women had unknowingly gone to the wrong grave, or even that Joseph of Arimathaea, for personal reasons removed the body or the gardener, in order to avoid visitors damaging his lettuce removed the body. In a similar claim, the apparent death hypothesis argues that the tomb was assumed empty because Jesus did not die. The contention of this claim is that Jesus survived his crucifixion but because his disciples and friends (even Joseph of Aramathaea) forsook him, he went in frustration to live in hiding among the Essenes⁴²⁷ in their community.

⁴²⁶ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus, God and Man*, 98, idem, *History and the Reality of the Resurrection*, in: *Resurrection Reconsidered*, Gavin D'Costa, (ed.), Oxford, (1996), 62-72 here in 69. Michel Deneken concurs with Pannenberg. According to him, though the empty tomb was not mentioned in the accounts of Paul and Acts but it was incorporated into the kerygma of the early church. Deneken agrees with the argument of Karl Barth that the empty tomb is a necessary precondition for the acceptance of the reality of the appearances. Cf. Michel Deneken, *La foi pascale: Rendre compte de la Résurrection de Jésus aujourd'hui*, Paris, (1997), 303-7.

⁴²⁷ Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*, 30; L. Gordon Tait, *The Promise of Tillich*. New York, (1971), 68; Paul Hoffmann, *Die historisch-kritische Osterdiskussion von H. S. Reimarus bis zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts*, in: *Zur neutestamentlichen Überlieferung von der Auferstehung Jesu*, (WdF 522). Paul Hoffmann (hrsg.), Darmstadt, (1988), 15-67, 22-24; Wolfgang Klausnitzer, *Glaube und Wissen*, Regensburg, (1999), 132.

The objections raised against resurrection by the Jewish polemics eventually benefited the argument for the empty tomb. As already seen, the Jewish polemic never argued that the tomb was the repository of Jesus' corpse. It did not insist that the tomb was full of bones. If the body was rotten and the grave full of bones as Lüdemann tries to portray⁴²⁸ anyone would have scarcely believed the disciples about resurrection story. Even if they had, their "Jewish opponents could have exposed the whole affair by pointing to the occupied tomb, or perhaps even displaying the body of Jesus, as the medieval Jewish polemic portrays them doing (Tolédot Yeshu)."⁴²⁹ Jewish polemics seems to suggest that Jesus was actually crucified and the body was really taken down from the cross. It implied the body received a proper burial according to Jewish custom and tradition thereby negating that the body was thrown into an unknown grave or even that it was covered with lime or left as carrion for animals. As it were, critics of the empty tomb based their arguments on the impossibility of corpses rising from the dead. It is not a surprise that, these critics opine that a phenomenon of resurrection of a dead person to imperishable life would be contrary to the law of nature.⁴³⁰ Therefore, resurrection as a historical event is improbable. Crossan himself accepts that he does not believe that dead people can rise from the dead. For him, this general principle applies also to the historical Jesus.⁴³¹ According to his proposal, the fact that the disciples scattered and some

⁴²⁸ Gerd Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 180.

⁴²⁹ Tolédot Yeshu (or the biography of Jesus) is a medieval version of the story of Jesus from a non-Christian perspective and an expression of vulgar Jewish polemics written in reaction to the no less vulgar attacks on Judaism in popular Christian teaching and writing of that time. William Lane Craig, John Dominic Crossan on the Resurrection of Jesus, in: *The Resurrection*, Stephen Davis et al (ed.), 253.

⁴³⁰ Cf. *Contra Celsus*, 5.14; M. Hengel, *Das Begräbnis Jesu bei Paulus und die leibliche Auferstehung aus dem Grabe*, in: F. Avemarie, *Auferstehung – Resurrection*, Tübingen, (2001), 119-183, 143; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus, God and Man*, 95.

⁴³¹ John Dominic Crossan and N.T. Wright in *Dialogue*, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 16-47 and 166.

probably went back to families reduces whatever argument that supports the fact that the disciples knew some details of the crucifixion.

For Crossan, “Jesus’ followers knew almost nothing whatsoever about the details of his crucifixion, death, or burial. So what we have now in those detailed passion accounts is not history remembered but prophecy historicized.”⁴³² Thus it becomes apparent from the point of the defenders of the historicity of the empty tomb, that the general historical consideration for the empty tomb is based on the concept of the general universal and physical resurrection anticipated in the apocalyptic prophecies. It signals that the question of the historicity of Jesus’ empty tomb does not precede independent of the judgment of pharisaic belief about bodily resurrection that belongs to the apocalyptic prophecy. The sense of prophecy in Crossan’s thought excludes texts, events, or persons that predicted or foreshadowed the future rather it implies retrospection and sorting out past events to match future occurrences. It seems to say that the events of Jesus’ life were already known and his followers declared that texts from the Hebrew Scriptures had been written with him in mind. Prophecy in this sense is a knowledge a-posteriori. It was known after rather than before the fact.⁴³³ The OT teaching on the resurrection which overlapped into the NT in the teaching of the Rabbis shows a close connection between the two testaments on this doctrine. In the NT the Rabbis interpreted Psalm 16:9-10 as a reference to resurrection in terms of physical restoration of the body beyond death. We have already seen that Peter quoted this psalm in Acts 2:27 from its original LXX text. He made use of it on the day of the Pentecost to show the prediction of the resurrection of Jesus by OT prophets. In Antioch in Pisidia, Paul concisely referred to this psalm in defense of Jesus’ bodily resurrection (Acts 13:35). Proponents of non historicity of the resurrection adduce to these expressions to show how the NT belief in the resurrection and the Pharisaic considera-

⁴³² John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, San Francisco, (1994), 145.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*

tion of it sums up in a mundane preservation necessitating the emptiness of the tomb.

This claim is not absolute. It must be contended that there was a sort of mitigation in Pauline theology. With his talk of ‘the spiritual body’, Paul holds a sort of spiritual understanding of the resurrection. He acknowledges the reality of a spiritual body, a *sóma pneumatikon* that he saw on the road to Damascus. The person he saw was not one with a mundane body but a person with a spiritual body. In spite of this opinion, it is incontestable that early apologists and church fathers reversed to the status of mundane restoration and to the historicity of the empty tomb as an establishment of a resurrection calculated in physical understanding as also seen in the thought of some modern systematic theologians.⁴³⁴ In conclusion, if the story of the death and burial of Jesus as narrated by the Gospel accounts are reliable, the possibility that the tomb was known becomes overwhelming. In this case, the inconsistency of the empty tomb notwithstanding the testimony of the Gospel accounts about it stands in early Jewish as account as well as modern imagination as one empirical prove of the assertion of its historicity.⁴³⁵ The presence of a corpse in the tomb would not have made history. Contrary to the suggestion of Andreas Lindemann⁴³⁶ it is my opinion that if modern archaeology were to discover an ancient grave in Jerusalem containing the bones of Jesus that would not be historical because the fact that death and wasting of the bones in a grave is daily human experience. Moreover, the presence of rotten bones in the grave would make it impossible to sustain the resurrection faith though it is a unique event that transcends faith. Finally, the claim of the apostles and the early community that Jesus was resurrected and had left the tomb empty has never been contradicted by

⁴³⁴ Paul Althaus belongs to this class, see, *Die Wahrheit des kirchlichen Osterglaubens: Einspruch gegen E. Hirsch*, Gütersloh, C. Bertelsmann, (1940), 25. Wolfhart Pannenberg also belongs to this category of modern theologians.

⁴³⁵ Hans Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden nicht bei den Toten: Die Auferstehung Jesu Christ in biblische, fundamental-theologische und systematische Sicht*, Würzburg, 488-492.

⁴³⁶ Andreas Lindemann, *Auferstehung*. Göttingen, (2009), 39.

any historical or scientific demonstration. No one has proved or discovered his body laying waste in any grave or reburied elsewhere not even in Kashmir.⁴³⁷ On the whole, the historicity of the empty tomb is still something strange for those who overlook what it involves. They are accustomed to think it is something of an act of faith in comparison with the appearances.

3.5.3 The Post-Mortem Appearances

The post-mortem appearance is the second category of evidence of the resurrection story. This suggests that Jesus appeared alive after his death not only to his disciples but also to a certain number of other individuals and groups. The appearances probably took place within a space of three years though not all the places of the appearances are geographically located. Most writings believe the appearances took place in Galilee (Mt 28:16-17; Mk 16:7).⁴³⁸ It is undisputable that Jerusalem remains the scene of the empty grave. But some writings (Acts 1:4) and scholars argue for the precedence of Jerusalem as the place of appearances. M. Albertz for one opines that Peter could not have encountered the resurrected Jesus outside Jerusalem since it is believed he may have stayed behind in Jerusalem after the crucifixion.⁴³⁹ There is the appearance en route to Damascus. Paul and some members of his crew experienced resurrection appearances on the way to Damascus. The opinion that the disciples were in Jerusalem when they were informed of the empty tomb and the promise to return to Galilee where they will meet the risen one has raised some arguments. For instance, if the disciples were in Jerusalem before or during the trial and eventual crucifixion why did they not show much presence and participation? Why did

⁴³⁷ Wolfgang Klausnitzer, *Glaube und Wissen*, 130.

⁴³⁸ Willi N. Marxsen, *Der Evangelist Markus: Studien zur Redationsgeschichte des Evangeliums*, Göttingen, ²(1959), 49 and 73ff; Hans von Campenhausen, *Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und das leere Grab*, Heidelberg, (1966), 44; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus, God and Man*, 102.

⁴³⁹ M. Albertz, "Zur Formengeschichte der Auferstehungsberichte," in: *Zur neutestamentlichen Überlieferung von der Auferstehung Jesu*, Paul Hoffmann (hg.), Darmstadt, (1988), 259-270, 270.

the disciple not play a significant role in the burial rather than ignoring the body to the Sanhedrin (Joseph of Arimathea). The legitimacy of these assumptions raises objections about the account of the empty tomb and the appearances.

In testifying to the Christ who died for our sins and lives, Paul joined the entire Corinthian Church and the early Christian community to proclaim the faith already known to them. In 1 Cor 15:3-8 Paul calls the attentions of the Corinthian Church on the tradition they already knew about the experience of Jesus. In relating the tradition Paul writes: “For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.” (1 Cor 15:3-8). This citation is the earliest NT citation to demonstrate resurrection in terms of bearing witness.⁴⁴⁰ In this passage, Paul cites not only the creedal formula that was known within the circle of the early Jerusalem community which was then later taught to him but also what was revealed to him earlier on the way to Damascus. The creedal formula was well known to the Corinthian community. It was probably handed over to them in AD 50. Paul could have received it around the first half of that century.⁴⁴¹ This shows that the formula was not a direct invention of Paul. No precise account records its origin. Nevertheless, the *Religionsgeschichte Schule* assumes the formula was re-

⁴⁴⁰ Gerhard Delling, *The Significance of the Resurrection of Jesus for Faith in Jesus Christ*, in: *The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ*, London, (1968), 77-104, 78.

⁴⁴¹ William Lane Craig, John Dominic Crossan on the Resurrection of Jesus, in: *The Resurrection*, Stephen David et al (ed.), New York, (1997), 249-271, 263; Gerhard Delling, “Significance of the Resurrection of Jesus for the Faith in Jesus Christ”, in: *Significance of the Message of the Resurrection*, 78.

ferring to a tradition inherited from religious cultism. Despite its non-Pauline origin, there is no specific prove to show that this tradition originated outside the early Christian times. Modern scholarship may try to find the events of the resurrection of Jesus prophesied in the OT but there is no sufficient reason to insist that the Easter event of the NT is strictly contained in the prophecy of the OT. The Easter event cannot be said to be a continuation of Isaiah 52:13-53: 12; Ps 17(16): 9-15; or the Hos 6:1-3 formulations. The nature of this tradition shows that its origins strictly lie in the very days in which the disciples became certain of the resurrection of Jesus.⁴⁴² However, the eye witnesses mentioned in the appearances serve in all probability as a foundation for Paul's argument for a historical demonstration of the Jesus resurrection. Hans Kessler approaches the above question in the affirmative.⁴⁴³ Nothing whatever so supplied a historical proof than the listening the evidence of witnesses. Almost everybody in Corinth had a need for historical proof of the resurrection of Jesus. For this reason, the purpose of listing the names was to adduce historical proof because there is clear evidence that the Corinthians deny the resurrection (1 Cor 15:12-18). Some other scholars doubt the truism of this apology.⁴⁴⁴ For them history is perceived empirically in terms of past events and not in terms of eschatology or faith. In the case of the resurrection, it certainly made history but it is not a historical event. The empty tomb and the appearances for instance in their innermost essence contain ingredients of history but they are not open to historical investigation, to neutral observation or verification. They are only open to revelation, pointing eventually towards eschatology.⁴⁴⁵ The stand to historical claim is in the sense that the disciples including the many witnesses mentioned in the creed experienced the Easter event

⁴⁴² Gerhard Dellling, *The Significance of the Resurrection of Jesus for Faith in Jesus Christ*, 79.

⁴⁴³ Hans Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden nicht bei den Toten*, 148, 153; William Lane Graig, John Dominic Crossan on the Resurrection of Jesus, in: *The Resurrection*, Stephen T. Davis et al (ed.), 249-271, 253.

⁴⁴⁴ Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, 142-3.

⁴⁴⁵ Reginald Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives*, 48.

as an occurrence that involved a ‘vision of light.’ Jesus discloses himself to the recipient of the vision of light probably accompanied by sound audition. In this sense, the appearances are not ‘objective vision’ they are rather subjective revelation. They contain a mixture of this worldly and historical aspect with the otherworldly eschatological and theological aspect.

Furthermore, Reginald Fuller describes the nature of the appearances as a visionary experience of light. The mention of light from heaven dominates Luke’s Damascus appearance narrative (Acts 9:3; 22:6; 26:13). The light which shone round Paul and the people traveling with him is said to have been brighter than the sun. This experience seems to be interpreted by Fuller in the same line of thought as some other scholars⁴⁴⁶ as a sure sign of a confirmation of the call to apostleship to the Gentiles.⁴⁴⁷ In Galatians 1:15-16 Paul compares his Damascus experience as a revelation and an invitation by God to proclaim Jesus and his Gospel to non-Jews. This also goes to 1Cor 9:1. Here Paul understands his vision of the resurrected one in the light of his office as an apostle. He rhetorically asks; I am not a free man. Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? The automatic answer to these questions is a ‘yes.’⁴⁴⁸ The visionary elements of light narrated in the letters have the same implication for those described in Acts. They intend to present the Damascus vision as a conversion call to discipleship and not as resurrection evidence. “The basic Tendenz of Luke’s treatment of Paul in Acts is to downgrade him. He is not an apostle (despite Acts 14:4, 14), but one who stands in apostolic succession. For Luke, an apostle must satisfy the strict requirements of Acts 1:21-22, so that Paul, who did not accompany the early Jesus, cannot be an apostle. Consequently his Damascus experience could not be for Luke a resurrection appearance or an apostolic call, but precisely a conversion ... it is merely a post-resurrection vision, precisely an optasis (Acts 26:19).”⁴⁴⁹ In Acts 9:17 and 26:16 Luke applied

⁴⁴⁶ See, Andreas Lindemann, *Auferstehung*, Göttingen, (2008), 34.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Reginald Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives*, 45.

Paul's common verb of describing appearance. The Greek word, *ophtheis*, means "to appear." 'He appeared' could equally designate he was seen, he testified, he showed himself. The complexity of this neutral verb compiles in the various ideas to which the appearance was seen was only capable of converging appearance into an understanding of vision that denial external visibility. For Fuller this neutral verb could be used for any visionary experience without necessarily carrying a strongly objective sense as seen in 1 Corinthians 15:3f.⁴⁵⁰ From here Fuller joins past commentators like von Harnack⁴⁵¹ in referring to the appearance as a none historical proof of the resurrection but rather as a proof of a historical leadership struggle within the early Christian community.

John Dominic Crossan has joined Reginald Fuller in stressing that what happened at the Easter appearances was history as much as it remains subject of discussion and not historical because it is not an event of objective discussion. For them the resurrection was an example of an illusionary event, one of hallucination, vision, and subjective apparition. The appearances only serve as a symbol of Jesus' presence in the community and individual leadership.⁴⁵² The NT testimonies of what the apostles experienced is unequivocally expressed but they are not historical, what 'happened historically is that those who believe in Jesus before his execution continued to do so afterward. Easter is not about the start of a new faith but about the continuation of an old one. That is the miracle and the only mystery, and it is more than enough of both the empty tomb and the appearances.'⁴⁵³ The appearances are described in all the Gospels and in some letters of the NT. Though it seems almost improbable to prove the historicity of the events of the resurrection and appearances, there is however, a basis to hold certain

⁴⁵⁰ Reginald Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives*, 46

⁴⁵¹ John Dominic Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, Harper Books, San Francisco, (1991), 397-8; idem, *Who Killed Jesus?* San Francisco, (1995), 203.

⁴⁵² Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 407.

⁴⁵³ Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, San Francisco, (1994), 190.

reasons as credible to their historicity as claimed in some quarters. History is always associated with events, things or persons. Subjects are what give history its meaning and definition. In the case of the resurrection, it is almost empirically difficult to calibrate. But unlike legendary or mysterious cultic stories, the resurrection which happened to Christ is associated with the testimonies of a certain given people who lived in a real time of a certain era. The fact that the disciples experienced appearances of Jesus, as attested in the Gospels, serves as a good basis to place the event within a historical perspective especially when the credibility of the disciples is not in question.⁴⁵⁴ The totality of the sincerity of the disciples permit no reasonable doubt that Jesus had risen and appeared to a number of people as seen from the list in 1 Cor 15. "From these reports we may infer with good probability that both groups and individuals under varying conditions witnessed post-mortem appearances of Jesus."⁴⁵⁵ Given this conclusion, the question of the alleged subjective vision hypothesis has been transcended. The question now remains, what then has the belief in the resurrection achieved?

3.6 Resurrection Appearances and Faith Transformation

In addition to the historical establishment of the resurrection, the account of the encounter with the young Christian community may help to sustain whatever evidence there is for its establishment. The experience of the early Christian community actually transformed their faith. Starting with the passion and crucifixion, the death of Jesus on the cross was for the disciples an absolute catastrophe. Their hope and expectation of Jesus was that of a 'messiah' from God. For the Jews his crucifixion was a death of a renegade. Nevertheless, as the disciples struggled to understand the events in full (of Good Friday), rumors of his resurrection started to go round. The proclamation of the miracle of resurrection changed the whole scene. It encouraged

⁴⁵⁴ Wolfgang Klausnitzer, *Auferstehungskonzeptionen der Theologie im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, in: (Bamberger Theologische Studien 20), Frankfurt am Main, (2003), 275-294, 283.

⁴⁵⁵ William Lane Craig, *John Dominic Crossan on the Resurrection of Jesus*, in: *The Resurrection*, Stephen T. Davis et al (ed.), Oxford, (1997), 248-271, 264.

the disciples by dispelling their fear and timidity. From this moment, the complex theology of the resurrection and Christology started to emerge⁴⁵⁶ giving rise to two groups of thought. From the start, there is one group of believers for whom the physical resurrection of Jesus is present and another group for whom it is not. For the former, their faith matches those of the first generation (of disciples) who experienced the empty tomb and in whose presence the resurrected Lord made his appearance. These came to the resurrection faith though not without difficulties. In John 20:11-18 we read the account of the story of the resurrection and the apparition with Mary. In the story, one notices that there is no cause for Mary to return to the grave after others had gone back home or had gone to buy spices. Nevertheless, the darkness of the early morning sets the atmosphere. It accounts for Mary's misunderstanding of the persons she saw at the grave side and the introduction of her unbelief. Thus we read: But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have laid him." Saying this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" Whom do you seek? Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mariam." She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and said to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her (Jn 20:11-18). The narrative presents Mary standing outside the tomb wailing and weeping. She did not

⁴⁵⁶ Wolfgang Klausnitzer, *Glaube und Wissen*, 131.

look into the tomb irrespective of the earlier announcement that the body had been removed or stolen (Jn 20:2). This attitude shows Mary's ignorance of the scripture that He will rise from the death since God will not abandon the righteous to the powers of death (Ps. 16:8-11; 1 Cor 15:4). As she continues her weeping an angel (angeloi) confronted her and demanded the reasons for her wailing. In her frustration and lack of faith, she replied in almost the same words that she used to announce the news of the open grave to the disciples, "they have taken away the body of my Lord away. And I do not know where they have put him" (v.13). Even when she turned and saw Jesus standing near, her lack of faith in the resurrection grew by her inability to recognize Jesus (v.14). In this graveside encounter, Mary was incapable to of imagining a resurrected Jesus.

The intensity of her lack of faith is exhibited in her inability to recognize Jesus whom she had known throughout his earthly ministry she mistook Jesus for the gardener (ho k  pouros). She asked the supposed gardener (Jesus) to be kind and show her where he (Jesus/gardener) had taken the body. One meets an ironic situation here. Jesus is asked where he has laid his own stolen body, v.15. So far, there is no suggestion here that Mary like the other disciples (John the beloved), knew about the scripture⁴⁵⁷ and neither was she aware of the legendary resurrection stories in pagan cults in the portrayed opinion of the later *Religionsgeschichte Schule*. She remained in her na  ve state. Somehow concerned that Mary was still unable to apprehend the scriptures or at least recognize him, Jesus did the extraordinary. He called her by name (Mariam). Calling her by her name brought about a transformation that made Mary believe in the resurrection faith. In recognizing the resurrected one, Mary immediately turned and called Jesus by the Aramaic name used throughout his ministry attaching the first person possessive ending, Rabbouni: "my master" (v. 17; cf. 1:38, 49; 3:2; 4:31; 6:25; 9:2; 11:8) in other words 'teacher.'⁴⁵⁸ Now that Mary has arrived at a partial faith in the resurrection, she wanted proof that the resurrected one was the

⁴⁵⁷ Andreas Lindemann, *Auferstehung*, 37.

Jesus she had known throughout his earthly ministry. She therefore tries to cling to him (v.17).

For the early generation of believers seeing is not as important as touching. Vision could be blurred but touching dispels whatever doubt there may be needed to prove that the figure seen was Jesus of Nazareth whom they had followed. Closely associated with the vision of site and the proclamation of the resurrection Jesus avoided Mary touching him and simply sent her to go and announce the resurrection to the disciples (v.18a; cf. v.17b). At the upper room, the disciples locked themselves in for fear of the Jews, who might subject them to persecution and death. The disciples needed proof to believe the story of the resurrection. Thus without specifically demanding for one and knowing the importance of signs, Jesus in addition to the greetings of peace (v. 20a: *kai touto eipon*) shows them his hands and his side (v. 20b) and the disciples rejoiced (v.20).

The absence of Thomas, one of the twelve disciples introduces a new twist to the narrative. Thomas called the twin, was not with them when Jesus came (20:24). He was probably not there at the upper room when Mary Magdalene announced the resurrection (v.18) and definitely of Jesus' appearance and commissioning (vv. 19-23). When the disciples tried to describe Mary's experience and the appearance of Jesus, Thomas like Mary expressed doubt. He is not ready to believe the resurrection "unless" (*ean mē*) Jesus fulfills a condition. As Mary wished to cling to the body of Jesus, Thomas asks that he gets physical evidence of the risen body of the person who was crucified by actually seeing the nail-marks and placing his finger into the wounds and by placing his hand into his side. Like Mary, whom the risen one refused close contact, there is no evidence in the text that "Thomas performed a touching ritual. The requested ritual is forgotten as Thomas accepts the challenge of faith, responding: 'My Lord and my

⁴⁵⁸ Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, Daniel J. Harrington (ed.), Michael Glazier Book, Minnesota, (1998), 537.

God.”⁴⁵⁹ This prompted Jesus to add, “You have believed because you have seen me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe” (v.29). This reply is the climax of the Gospel of Saint John. It was not an exclamation but a profession of faith. It honors the Son as well as the Father thereby making inclusion of the teaching in the prolog about the logos; “in the beginning the Word already existed; the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (Jn 1:1). Both statements speak of the ‘Divinity of the Logos’ and as well as the ‘Divinity of the resurrected One.’ The statement should therefore be seen from the point of the relationship and equality of the Father and the Son (cf. Jn 10:30, 38; 17:5). The resurrected Lord is one with the Divine Head from which he emanates and into which he returns.⁴⁶⁰ It is fitting to say here that of all the encounters of the resurrected Lord with Mary Magdalene and the disciples none of them approached the event with faith. John writes that the presence of the empty tomb did not help the disciples to reflect on the prophecy of the scripture about Jesus’ resurrection.

Before leaving Jerusalem, the Emmaus disciples were already acquainted with the empty tomb story. Even when the resurrected one approached them on the way, not even his burning words could inspire them to think of the possibility of resurrection. From these perspectives, one may conclude that the resurrection belief was not a prior conviction not from scriptural perspective nor from legendary knowledge of resurrection belief in ancient religions. The disciples were skeptical about the event. Was it not Mary who was begging to be shown where they have put him so that she will go and take him (Jn 20: 15)? However, all the characters in the story (Mary, John, Thomas and the Emmaus disciples) later progressed from the situation of doubt to one of partial belief then to a state of transformation. From the darkness of unbelief to a discovery of a partial faith, Mary announced her transformation of belief in the words “I have seen the Lord (ton kyrion)”

⁴⁵⁹ Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 537.

⁴⁶⁰ Karl Hermann Schelkle und Heinz Schürmann, *Geistliche Schriftlesung, Das Evangelium nach Johannes 4/3*, Düsseldorf, (1977), 189.

(v.18b) and Thomas making his act of faith proclaimed: “My Lord and my God” (v.28). Put in another way the exclamation identifies Jesus as the crucified and risen one. It identifies Jesus as equal with the father and one with humanity.

Mary Magdalene, the beloved disciple, Peter or even the Emmaus disciples and Thomas, all journeyed the way to the faith in resurrection faith through disbelief and ignorance. On the other hand Mary and Thomas’ were both “dependence on the physical presence of Jesus which is evident in Mary Magdalene’s wish to cling to Jesus (v.17) and Thomas’ demand to touch Jesus’ wounds and place his hand in the pieced side (v.25)”... The risen Jesus led these confused disciples through their hesitation into authentic belief, yet the faith of those who believed without seeing matches that of the greatest disciples (v.29; 8). They have come to faith in the absence of Jesus.”⁴⁶¹ The importance of the empty tomb and the appearances lies not only in its historical but also in its theological implications. It helped to heal the decimated spirit and faith of the early Christian community. Jesus’ appearances show the perviousness in the diving line between life and death as it opens not only a new perspective to earthly existence, but also in a physical sense. It illustrates significantly the death of death and its powerlessness over life (1 Cor 15:51-57). His appearances in the flesh clarifies that the living and the dead now form a unity in the transformed *sóma* Christou, body of Christ, that the worldly and the otherworldly are no longer strictly divided. They are inseparably united.⁴⁶² The functionality of empty tomb and the appearances witnessed in the transformation of faith interprets the eschatological dimension of resurrection in a time space continuum.

⁴⁶¹ Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 538.

⁴⁶² Claudia Janssen, *Mit welchem Körper werden wir auferstehen?* In: *Bibel und Kirche*, 64. Jahrgang, 2. Quartal 2009, (93-98), 97.

3.7 Conclusion

In wanting to explain the meaning of resurrection especially the experience of Christ, some scholars think that early Christian invariably the NT thought about eschatology and resurrection was influenced by myths of religious history within which the OT theology developed. The old Religious-geschichte Schule movement of the 19th century believes that the resurrection is prevalent in ancient thought and philosophy. Martin Buber (1878-1965) agrees with this opinion when he points to the predominance of the idea of resurrection in the Hellenistic cult of the dead.⁴⁶³ From the perspective of a religious belief, resurrection has been part of human history but from the perspective of the NT, it is an old concept with a new understanding and interpretation. It reflects mainly on a temporary internal separation between a general and individual resurrection developed within the framework of the apocalyptic tradition of the second century BC. This century forms the most vital period for the proper understanding of the resurrection doctrine and the context in which it came about.⁴⁶⁴

The second century BC was a time of intense political tension and international upheaval. The tension of the time is the consequence of the rapid spread of foreign belief that eventually influenced the Eastern Mediterranean World of the time. The Jews too were caught up in the cultural ferment that unsettled the Eastern world especially in the area of eschatological belief. Before the historical events in this era, the idea of resurrection was deficiently condensed in several texts of the OT literature in different forms.⁴⁶⁵ In the end, the resurrection doctrine clearly received a definition in the prophets and in the apocalyptic genera of the second century that was very close to the time Christianity was born. This goes to say that the OT re-

⁴⁶³ See, Martin Buber, *Zwei Glaubensweisen*. Darmstadt, ²(1994), 13-29; J. Weiß, *Das Unchristentum*, (hg.). Und ergänzt von. R. Knopf, Göttingen, (1917), 66-69; as cited by Wolfgang Klausnitzer, *Glauben und Wissen*, 243.

⁴⁶⁴ Klaus Bieberstein, *Der Lange Weg zur Auferstehung der Toten*, 3.

⁴⁶⁵ Harris Birkeland, *The Belief in the Resurrection of the Dead in the Old Testament*, 77.

mains the undisputable background to the foundation of the doctrine in the NT. There is no fundamental break in the real sense of the word. There is no immense difference between the thinking of OT from that of NT on this issue. The NT simply inherited this form of future hope from the OT. The Jewish belief in an eschatological resurrection became part of the Christian expression of hope.⁴⁶⁶ Despite their common roots in the OT resurrection as expressed in the NT is characteristically different from that of the OT. It is based on the experience of Jesus distinguished by the three characteristics as Christological, historical and eschatological.

The Christological aspect of the NT resurrection as it was has the same meaning as the notion of salvation directly related to the concept of liberation. The concept of Christology and salvation are related. They have their roots in the OT term of 'apolutrósís' "redemption" (Ps 111:9; 130:7), "buying back" normally through ransom. Buying back via ransoming expresses the salvation wrought by Christ.⁴⁶⁷ The expression of salvation connected to liberation may have some other implications. That Jesus is a wonder worker and healer is historically indisputable.⁴⁶⁸ The healing aspect of his nature are evident in the Gospels where he is described as a liberator of human suffering (Mk 1:32-34 and parallels, 3:7-12 and parallels, 6:53-56). Again, the NT resurrection differs from the speculative idea held in the OT about it. While its non-historicity is not debatable in the OT, the opposite is the case in terms of NT understanding. One side of the debate opines for the historicity of the NT resurrection imagination but the second opinion suggests that the resurrection of Jesus is not a historical event because it is not historically attestable not even by the primitive community.⁴⁶⁹ On historicity, the NT is very clear on certain things about Christ. It has a full documentation of his birth, ministry, the conflict with the Jewish authority and his eventual cruci-

⁴⁶⁶ <http://www.religion-online.org/> (browsed 05.09.11)

⁴⁶⁷ Leopold Sabourin, *Christology*, New York, (1984), 200-1.

⁴⁶⁸ Wolfgang Klausnitzer, *Glaube und Wissen*, 123; O. Kus, „Bruder Jesus.“ Zur „Heimholung“ des Jesus von Nazareth in das Judentum, in: *MThZ* 23, (1972), 284-296.

fixion. There are details about his orderly burial by some members of the Sanhedrin. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus are credited to have emerged from the dark to bury the body of Jesus according to Jewish burial tradition (Jn 19:38-42). These facts stand less to oppositions. But the events of his resurrection culminating in the empty tomb and the appearances are dramatically debatable. This is so because no one was there at the resurrection site to take records, no surveillance camera was installed to observe the rolling away of the stone. In effect, no single person would account for how or when the resurrection of Christ took place. From the point of the absence of a "credible eyewitness," the whole issue of the resurrection becomes but a story, a claim to an imagination of what happened. As already implied, the crucifixion on Good Friday sent a shocking wave to the early community and to the disciples. As a result, many of them were scattered around Jerusalem and Galilee. In this condition of fear and hopelessness, many of them probably went back to their homes and families.

Over and above Good Friday, the NT further testifies that something did happen to the experience of the disciples on early Easter Sunday. This brought the scattered disciples once again to fellowship. When they later came together, they were now able to proclaim what they believed and narrate their experiences. The proclamation and their experiences changed their initial status from fear to courage, from timidity to bravery. The sadness of the empty tomb was pacified by the appearances of the resurrected Jesus in the body. Granted that the Easter accounts still face enormous discrepancies, the reason for the disciples coming to faith after the death of Jesus remains a unique guarantor for the historicity of the appearances and the empty tomb. History as a past event is never problematic it only becomes so, when a crisis occurs in a particular historical configuration. When that

⁴⁶⁹ Willi Marxsen, *The Resurrection of Jesus as a Historical and Theological Problem*, in: *The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ*, London, (1968), 15-50, 24; Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Resurrection of Jesus and Roman Catholic Fundamental Theology*, in: *The Resurrection*, Stephen Davis et al (ed.), New York, (1997), 213-248, 247.

happens, we become conscious of the distance – or, indeed, the contradiction – between history and being, between our historical and our ontological nature.⁴⁷⁰ To arrive at the meaning of history, it is better to search for the union between being and history and the way history has changed the being. Which means to arrive at history is not by invalidating what transformation history has made as to conceive the transformation it has made in the present. His physical appearance is the course of transformation of history. His appearance in the flesh, points to the emptiness of the tomb. It identifies the living with the dead, the transcendental with the cosmological.

⁴⁷⁰ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, Mary Francis McCarthy, (trans.), San Francisco, (1987), 153.

4 The Resurrection in History and Theology

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter placed emphasis on the development of the doctrine of resurrection starting from the Judaism of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the prophets. The excursus ended with the definition of resurrection as an eschatological event in the second century when Rabbinic Judaism connected the OT with the NT. One outstanding argument of the chapter is its insistence that Israel religious history of eschatology is a unique one. Its confrontation with neighboring cultures, cults and religions did not quite break the matrix of its belief. Their total repose of confidence in the power, mercy, faithfulness and miracle of God, who is God of life, and God for the living and not for the dead⁴⁷¹ resonated later in the miracle of the Easter Sunday. The resurrection of Jesus answered the key questions found in the history of humanity about death, whether God will abandon his faithful to the power of death (Ps. 16:9-11). The Gospel writers together with Paul provided the resurrection stories in forms and shape said to be bodily opposed to luminous appearances that attributes the phenomenon as conventional story. In 1Cor 15:42-51 Paul explains the difference between the physical, earthly body and the spiritual, risen body. This differentiation recaptures the point that a religious experience must not be based on the level of the spirit, on the experience of something or someone, who is ghostly and disembodied. If the tradition of the NT did not see the resurrection and appearance in the light of a ghost that appeared in a disembodied state,⁴⁷² it is pertinent to ask how subsequent the Christian era portrayed the resurrection. This chapter discusses in a brief manner some Fathers and their writings on the resurrection. The greater percentage of these writings is in apologetic form. To be

⁴⁷¹ Cf. Hans Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden nicht bei den Toten: Die Auferstehung Jesus Christi in biblische, fundamental-theologische und systematische Sicht*, Würzburg, (1985), 68.

⁴⁷² Gerald O'Collins, *Jesus Risen: The Resurrection, what actually happened and what does it mean?* London, (1987), 211-2.

discussed is also the conclusion of some of the Church Councils in addition to contemporary theological research on the resurrection of the dead.

In all the fundamental question remains: What was the aim and end of early Christian apologetic activities. The consideration for an answer begins with a discussion of the early Christian tradition that was not exclusively gnostic but was with time submerged in gnostic controversy.

4.2 Gnosticism: Origin and the Problems of Definition

Gnosticism is a late first century, growing, unorganized “middle class” group. They assumed they themselves were philosophers and wanted to be regarded so. Gnosticism sought opportunity of regular philosophers, they confused knowledge with esoteric and pseudo scientific practices. Another well-known characteristic of this group is their impression of themselves. They boast of possessing a perfect superior knowledge beyond others. They claim to have received revealed secret knowledge of both Christ and the NT. According to them, Christ revealed the secret tradition they have received. This tradition was due to their obedience and submissiveness to him.⁴⁷³ Gnostic evidence suggests bilateral relationship with many Graeco-Roman cults whose *modus operandi* lacks structure.⁴⁷⁴

PHEME PERKINS in his book, ‘The Gnostic Dialogue’ concurs with some other scholars, that because of the diversity of Gnosticism, a definition and origin would be difficult. This difficulty of a definition became evident in 1966, when a congress of scholars on “The Origins of Gnosticism” was held in Messina. Among the primary reason for this convocation was to determine among other theological issues the harmonization of the term, Gnosticism. At the end of the section the following terminologies emerged, “Pre-Gnostic” and “Proto-Gnostic.” These terms were agreed to be used in differ-

⁴⁷³ Cf. Adv. Haer., 1.8.1-5.

⁴⁷⁴ PHEME PERKINS, *The Gnostic Dialogue: The Early Church and the Crisis of Gnosticism*, Toronto, (1980), 10.

entiating the stages of Gnosticism. Granted that pre-Gnostic was indeterminate before mature Gnosticism, it has to be applied as an element of knowledge in existence before proto-Gnosticism. This is the early form of Gnosticism which became fully developed into mature Gnosticism in the second century. Despite the effort to harmonize, Edwin M. Yamauchi, points out that some scholars object to the parallel treatment between pre and proto Gnosticism. Some of these scholars include J. Munck, Kurt Rudolph, G. Kümmel, and H. Koester. It seems they were uncomfortable about a clear-cut definition. Instead of parallel relationship, these scholars preferred extensive relations that will emphasize links and continuity.⁴⁷⁵ Theodoor Petrus Van Baaren agrees on the difficulty of finding a definition of Gnosticism, or, at least, a description that could be theologically valid among scholars. For him, any attempt to define Gnosticism as a “phenomenological complex must be doomed to failure; the only way of coming to a satisfactory definition is that of considering Gnosticism as a historic complex belonging to a certain age and a certain place and forming part of a certain culture.”⁴⁷⁶ This seems to argue that Gnosticism is localized within a culture and can only be defined as culture bound. Gnosticism infiltrates and assumes a definition given to it by every epoch of its infiltration. This is true from the definitions of Charles Ezekwugo as he has followed the Dutch scholar G. Quispel (*Gnosis als Weltreligion*, 1951) to identify Gnosticism as modern religion. G. Quispel gave Gnosticism a psychological approach. He discerns modern Gnostic in Rosicrucianism, the Freemans, and in Carl Jung as modern and world religions.⁴⁷⁷ Ezekwugo in this same vein identified modern Gnosticism by reconciling it with sectarian movements in America, called: Rosicrucian Fraternity, Rosicrucian Fellowship and the Pa that claim antiquity in Egypt.⁴⁷⁸ Having concluded that a strict definition of Gnosticism is difficult, Van Baaren proceeds to make a list of sixteen identifiable characteristics of

⁴⁷⁵ Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism*, London, (1973), 18.

⁴⁷⁶ Theodoor P. Van Baaren, *Towards a Definition of Gnosticism*, in: *Le Origini dello Gnosticismo*, Ugo Bianchi et al (eds.), Leiden, (1967), 174-180, 175.

⁴⁷⁷ Edwin Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism*, 17.

mature Gnosticism.⁴⁷⁹ These difficulties notwithstanding, Perkins opines that we may trace Gnosticism back to the (second) century, when it was attacked as an identifiable group by Christian heresiologists⁴⁸⁰ and by the Church Fathers who knew them and were themselves their contemporaries. Using a metaphoric language, Timothy Hamilton Baird describes how the early Fathers and contemporaries of the Gnostics were like medical personnel operated upon the ideologies of the Gnostic heresy. Thus he writes “in

⁴⁷⁸ Charles M. Ezekwugo, *Philosophical Concepts: Esotericism, Religiosity, Metaphysics*, Enugu, (1992), 11.

⁴⁷⁹ 1. “Gnosis considered as knowledge is not primarily intellectual, but is based upon revelation and is necessary for the attainment of full salvation.

There is an essential connection between the concept of gnosis as it appears in gnosticism and the concept of time and space that is found there ...

Gnosticism claims to have a revelation of its own which is essentially secret: It has its own traditions and its literature which are generally secret too. In so far as it feels itself to be part of Christianity it also makes use of the Christian revelation, tradition and literature, although in most cases the interpretation given differs from that of the church.

The Old Testament is usually rejected with more or less force. If not fully rejected it is interpreted allegorically. The same method of exegesis is as a rule chosen for the New Testament.

God is conceived as transcendent ... God is conceived as beyond the comprehension of human thought and at the same time as the invariably good. In some system, at least, God is defined as the Divine Stranger... Nearly always evil is inherent in matter in the manner of a physical quality. The cosmological opposition between God and matter is correlated with the ethical opposition of good and evil. God’s transcendence may be qualified by the appearance of various beings intermediate between God and the Cosmos, usually called aeons. These beings are as a rule conceived as divine emanations.

The world is regarded with a completely pessimistic view. The cosmos was not created by God, but, at most, it is the work of a demiurge who made the world either against God’s will, or in ignorance of it ...

In the world and in mankind pneumatic and material elements are mixed. The pneumatic elements have their origin in God and are the cause of the desire to return to God...

Human beings are divided into three classes, according to whether they have gnosis or not. The pneumatics, who possess full gnosis, are by their nature admitted to full salvation. Those who have only pistis (“faith”) may at least attain a certain degree of salvation. Those who are fully taken up with the material world have no chance of salvation at all.

Gnosticism makes a clear difference between pistis and gnosis.

the manner of a surgeon performing a major operation, though not quite so methodically, Irenaeus, in the first book of the *Adversus haereses*, begins to lay bare the nerves and sinews and so take us to the very heart of the Gnostic heresy which he knew from all to close acquaintance...⁴⁸¹ Where did Gnosticism originate? In the valley of Rhone as mentioned by Irenaeus or around the province of Asia?

The exact time and place of the origin of the movement is disputable. There are suggestions that the movement originated before Christianity began. Sermone Pétrement draws this conclusion from the point of analysis. For her, the word “Gnosis” is translated literally as knowledge. She concludes that since knowledge has always been with humanity, Gnosticism pre-existed Christianity.⁴⁸² On his own part, Jean Daniélou maintains a *pre and a cum pro-Christianity* Gnosticism. That is, a Gnosticism that originated be-

The essentially dualistic world-view leads as a rule to an extremely ascetic system of ethics, but in some cases we find an “Unwertung aller Werte” expressed in complete libertinism. Gnosticism is a religion of revolt.

Gnosticism appeals to the desire to belong to an elite.

In connection with the basic dualism, there is a strong tendency to differentiate between the Heavenly Saviour and the human shape Jesus of Nazareth. This has led to varying solutions of which Docetism is the most prominent one.

In most systems Christ is regarded as the great point of reversal in the cosmic process. As evil has come into existence by the fall of a former aeon, so Christ ushers in salvation because he proclaims the unknown God, the good God who had remained a stranger until that moment.

In connection with the person of the savior we often find the conception of the *salvator salvatus* or *salvandus* (the “redeemed redeemer”).

In connection with the basic dualism, salvation is usually conceived as a complete severing of all ties between the world and the spiritual part of man. This is exemplified in the myth of the ascension of the soul.” See, Theodoor Petrus Van Baaren, *Towards a Definition of Gnosticism*, in: Ugo Bianchi, 178-80.

⁴⁸⁰ PHEME PERKINS, *The Gnostic Dialogue*, 12.

⁴⁸¹ TIMOTHY HAMILTON BAIRD, *The Early Christian Apologists and Greek Philosophy*, Van Gorcum and Company, Assen, (1972), 23; Mlle Pétrement, in: Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism*, 20.

⁴⁸² Sermone Pétrement, *Le Colloque de Messine et le Problème du gnosticisme*, in: *RMM* 72, (1967), 371; see also Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism*, 16.

fore Christianity and one, which started with it.⁴⁸³ In any case, whether pre or pro-Christianity, Gnostic did not excel in logical thinking. Their thinking was often speculative and esoteric, expressed in a language intelligible only to the initiated. They stress that salvation comes through learning spiritual truths, which frees humankind from the material world. Their interest in abstract subjects stems from their abhorrence of this world and its history.⁴⁸⁴ Timothy Hamilton Baird suggests that Gnosticism may have originated almost at the same time with Christianity but the particular environment of its origin remains indeterminate. It lacks, in the first place, supposedly proposed roots in Egypt.⁴⁸⁵ Class J. Bleeker has shown contrary to what M. E. Amélineau explains in his book “*Essai sur le gnosticisme égyptien*” that Valentinus (and Simon Magnus, of Menander, Basilides a pupil of Menander in Antioch, and Carpocrates assumed founders of Gnosticism) were present in Egypt at one time or the other during the second part of the second century. Like the others, Valentinus worked in Egypt. During his time there, Amélineau claims that it was possible that Valentinus could have been influenced by the mysterious doctrines of the Egyptian sanctuary. With this background influence, he was able to found the Gnostic movement. For Bleeker, this claim of Amélineau could have held sway in 1887, when he wrote his seminal work, but not any more after the discovery of the Nag Hammadi manuscripts.⁴⁸⁶ Then, Egyptian Gnosticism is not autochthonous and since it is not a native of Egypt, it cannot be original.⁴⁸⁷ Van Baaren himself argues to the contrary. Like Amélineau, he opines the different origins of Gnosticism. There could have invariably been Egyptian origins of Gnosticism just as there were Iranian, Near Eastern, Greek, Judaic and Christian traits.⁴⁸⁸ These whole arguments come down to one point. That is, that we may not confirm one single region as the place of origin of

⁴⁸³ Cf. Jean Daniélou, *Theology of Jewish Christianity*, John A. Baker (ed.), Longman and Todd, (1977), 369.

⁴⁸⁴ Willem Cornelis van Unnik, ‘*Epistle to Rheginos*,’ in: *JEH* 15, (1964), 153.

⁴⁸⁵ Timothy Hamilton Baird, *The Early Christian Apologists and Greek Philosophy*, 23.

Gnosticism. It may not be said with absolute certainty that it originated in Iran, or in Syria, neither that it was from Mesopotamia.⁴⁸⁹ It rather spreads across these areas. It may probably be difficult to trace resurrection discussions to the first century since there seems to be no surviving records. However, the late second century saw the first sustained expression in form of theological debates. Willem Cornelis van Unnik agrees that the available evidence suggests that the second century was preoccupied with debates over the significance of resurrection, so that at this period the doctrine introduced by the Pauline epistles, was challenged, debated, reaffirmed or redefined to a degree that has never been paralleled before.⁴⁹⁰ Following the intellectual threat by the emergence of Gnosticism, the Church Fathers provided contrasting arguments.

4.2.1 Resurrection and the Gnostic Code

The Gnostic code is segmented into tracts. A tract in Codex 1 in the fourth treatise treated the resurrection and this tract is the epistle to Rheginus (Rheginos). The anonymous teacher or author of this Gnostic writing in-

⁴⁸⁶ Little was known about the Gnostic writing until the discovery of the Nag Hammadi codices in 1945. This corpus, a collection of Gnostic writings was discovered buried in the sand of the Nag Hammadi region of Upper Egypt by some Bedouin farmers excavating nitrates. There are 12 codices in all. There is an additional eight leaves from a 13 tucked inside another. The codices contained a total number of 52 tractates. Perkins warns against taking these discovered codices as representative of Gnostics sacred scripture like the Christians Bible since this cannot suffice. In short, unlike Judaism and Christianity, we may not say that Gnosticism devoted time composing sacred writs and may not claim to have one. Cf. Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Treatise on Resurrection From Nag Hammadi*, Montana, (1979), 2; Timothy Hamilton Baird, *The Early Christian Apologists and Greek Philosophy*, Assen, (1973), 7; *The Nag Hammadi Codices in:* <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A291674> (accessed 15.04.09); PHEME PERKINS, *The Gnostic Dialogue*, 13.

⁴⁸⁷ Class J. Bleeker, *The Egyptian Background of Gnosticism*, in: *Le Origini Dello Gnosticismo*, Ugo Bianchi et al (eds.), Leiden, (1967), 229-237, 229-31.

⁴⁸⁸ Theodor P. Van Baaren, *Towards a Definition of Gnosticism*, in: Ugo Bianchi, 176.

⁴⁸⁹ Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism*, 20.

⁴⁹⁰ Willem Cornelis van Unnik, 'Epistle to Rheginos,' in: *JEH* 15, 153-55; See also PHEME PERKINS, *Resurrection: New Testament Witness and Contemporary Reflection*, London, (1984), 331.

structs his pupil Rheginus, not to dwell on fruitless speculation nor live in conformity with the flesh. Instead he should perceive himself as one, who is already risen and brought to life (CG 1.49.9-25). The full detail of the text reads; “therefore do not concentrate on particulars, O Rheginus, nor live according to the dictates of this flesh; do not, for the sake of oneness. Rather, leave the state of dispersion and bondage, and then you already have resurrection. For if the dying part (flesh) knows itself, and knows that since it is moribund it is rushing towards this outcome (death) even if it has lived many years in this present life, why do ‘you’ (the spirit) not examine your own self and see that ‘you’ have arisen? And you are rushing towards this outcome (separation from the body) since you possess resurrection.” “Yet you persist as though ‘you’ were dying, even though it is the former (the moribund flesh) that “knows” it has died. Why then am I so lenient, except because of your inadequate training? Everyone should practice in many ways to gain release from this element (the body), so that he might not wander aimlessly but rather might recover his former state of being” (CG 1.49:26-36).⁴⁹¹ This text reclines to platonic soul exaltation. It assesses resurrection as something spiritual. It sees the body as something to be rejected in order to enable the soul to regenerate. In opposition to Christian orthodox teaching on the unity of the ‘body and soul, the unknown author of the Gnostic code (CG 1. 47: 4-24) rejects bodily resurrection in the coming immortal aeon. That is in the coming age or next life. In the last section of the tract, the author assumes to provide answers to the problematic questions of Christian resurrection belief. The author thinks that Christians, who believe the resurrection as referring to the flesh as well as the soul, are already in error.⁴⁹² The Gnostic teaching emphasizes salvation for the soul alone, independent of the flesh. As a heretical Christian movement,⁴⁹³ its writings were

⁴⁹¹ Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Treatise*, 29-31.

⁴⁹² PHEME PERKINS, *Resurrection*, 360.

⁴⁹³ Robert McL. Wilson, *Gnosis, Gnosticism and the New Testament*, in: *Le Origini Dello Gnosticismo*, Ugo Bianchi et al (eds.), 511-527, 512.

rejected. Willem Cornelis thinks that this anonymous epistle could be a product of Valentinianism as it existed about A.D. 150. The anonymous writer in as much as he wanted to accept Christian teaching on the resurrection gave it a different turn.⁴⁹⁴ When these were refuted, a completely new controversy arose giving room for the type of apologetics seen in some earlier patristic exegetes.

Before exploring the contributions of the Fathers in counteracting Gnosticism, let us take a glance at the polemics occasioned by the distinctive teaching between the resurrection of flesh and that of body. The content of their differences will be treated by first considering the creeds.⁴⁹⁵

4.2.2 What is a Creed

The Apostolic creed or the old Roman creed is the oldest form of the Christian creed. The English word 'creed' has its root in Latin, "credo." Its equivalent translation in English is "I believe." The creed refers to the general belief of Christians. Creed or credo is very much different from denominational confession of faith. The Apostles' Creed for example calls all Christians to three basic principles of faith. First, it calls them to a belief in one God the creator of heaven and earth. It calls to a belief in the incarnation and the virginal birth. Thirdly, it expresses the belief in the Holy Spirit. Other ingredients of the creed include, belief relating to the unity of the church, judgment, resurrection and the world to come. The unity of the church emphasized in the creed as we see it today speaks more of the unity on the "path of Rome" not perhaps on the "path to Rome." The belief of the church brings us together; the doctrines of the churches (Roman Catholic, Protestants, Evangelicals, African independent Christian movements etc) divide the Church. The confession of the Apostles' Creed qualifies a denomination with the name, Christian church anything less than this would make such organization a sect (perhaps one of Christian sects). The Apostolic creed is quite different from denominational confessions, or as otherwise

⁴⁹⁴ Willem Cornelis van Unnik, *Epistle to Rheginos*, in: JEH 15, 165.

⁴⁹⁵ Cyril S. Rodd (ed.), *Foundation Documents of the Faith*, Edinburg, (1987), 37-82.

called manifestos of Reformation, for example, the Lutheran Augsburg Confession (1530), the Scots Confession (1560), or the Reformed Westminster Confession of Faith (1647-49). False teachings largely necessitated the formulation of the apostolic creed. The inclusion of the belief in the resurrection in creeds signals that there was doubt about it. This reservation necessitated the formulation of creeds demanding a belief in the resurrection of the entire person. To correct heresies, Councils were convoked and creeds formulated. The Apostolic creed is one of the earliest formulations of the Fathers against inauthentic and Gnostic teachings.

4.2.3 The Apostolic Creed

Creeds are religious formula adopted by religious bodies as binding. The Christian Church has two main creeds, the Apostolic and Nicene creeds. The Roman creed or baptismal creed conventionally described as “R” is the earliest formulated creed of the Christian church. It was formulated almost at the close of the second century.⁴⁹⁶ For many centuries, Christians believed that the twelve apostles of Jesus were responsible for the formulation of the ‘Apostolic creed.’ Legend has it that each of the apostles contributed an article of faith to the twelve articles that form the whole creed.⁴⁹⁷ Arthur Ashley (1683/4-1756)⁴⁹⁸ suggests that the so-called apostolic creed in its present form is not a direct work of the Apostles.⁴⁹⁹ The present apostolic creed was later “elevated to a position of unique authority as the baptismal formula of Rome and the West generally, is merely one among R’s many descendants.”⁵⁰⁰ The old Roman creed was used in the western Church where it exercised dominant influence over western great Churches. Be-

⁴⁹⁶ G.C. Stead, *The Apostle’s Creed*, in: *Foundation Documents of the Faith*, Cyril S. Rodd (ed.), Edinburg, (1987), 3-4.

⁴⁹⁷ The legend, that the Apostles formulated the creed is treated in the treatise “*Commentarius in symbolum apostolorum*,” cf. P. L. 21.333-86.

⁴⁹⁸ Sykes Arthur Ashley, *An Enquiry when the Resurrection of the Body or Flesh was First inserted into the Public Creeds*, London, (1758).

⁴⁹⁹ Sykes Authur Ashley, *An Enquiry when the Resurrection*, 1.

⁵⁰⁰ John N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, London, ²(1967), 101.

cause of general acceptance, it became the established version of the so-called apostolic creed.⁵⁰¹

However, many continue to hold the creed as apostolic, it is so in the sense of its dependence on the fundamental teachings and theological formulations of the apostolic time. According to John N. Kelly, our knowledge of the earliest form of the Roman creed comes from the letter of Marcellus of Ancyra to Pope Julius I of Rome in 310.⁵⁰² The concept “Apostles’ Creed” seems to have originated from Rufinus and Ambrose in the fourth century. It is because of the amalgamation of Christological and Trinitarian formulae discovered in the profession of faith in the apostolic church. The Christological formula goes back to 1Cor 12:3; 15:3-6, whilst the Trinitarian formula is identified in Mt 28:19, 2Cor 13:12. There is no substantial authority supporting that the Apostles composed this creed since the post apostolic church influenced its composition.⁵⁰³ There are three reasons to argue against the notion that the formation of the apostolic creed was by the Apostles.

Firstly, the creed was not a product of one single Council. It was rather formulated from time to time because of a progressive understanding of the NT baptismal articles by Roman churches. Secondly, it was formulated as a combating doctrine to oppose heretics, who arose in the early days of Christianity. Thirdly, it was also partly formulated in opposition to Gentilism and the inauthentic doctrines they introduced after they were converted to Christianity.⁵⁰⁴ John N.D. Kelly writes of the Roman creed as the most important and most credible document in the history of creeds.⁵⁰⁵ Early Christian creeds were prompted by particular situations in the church; the most likely

⁵⁰¹ John H. Leith, *Creeds, Early Christians*, in: *ABD* 1 (1992), 1205.

⁵⁰² John N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 101.

⁵⁰³ Josef Neuner and Jacques Dupuis, *The Christian Faith: In the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, New York, 7(2001), 2.

⁵⁰⁴ Sykes Arthur Ashley, *An Enquiry when the Resurrection*, 1-2

⁵⁰⁵ John N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 104.

reason is its association with baptism.⁵⁰⁶ Kelly on the other hand, rejects the exclusive emphasis on baptism as a determining factor for the formulation of creeds: he included the day-to-day polemic experienced by early Christianity as an equal determinant for the drawing of the creeds. He writes, “Whether against heretics within or pagan foes without, these provided another situation propitious to the production of creeds.”⁵⁰⁷ Creeds are not accidental formulations. They are created at moments of trouble. They come into formulation in order to solve a particular problem or problems of a particular epoch.

The Apostolic creed formulated at about the first or second century of the Christian era was to correct Gnostic errors. It was formulated to correct the Marcionites mistakes and later Manichaeism that denied the humanity of Jesus (1Jn 4:1-3). The creed proclaimed the true human nature of Christ. Contrary to the Gnostic teaching that the physical universe is evil and that God could not have created it neither could the son of God have taken material body, the Apostolic creed refuted such teaching. It insisted that Christ took on a human body. The Nicene Creed drawn in the fourth century makes claim to the Deity of Christ and was created to counteract Arianism. Arius denied that Christ was fully God.⁵⁰⁸ The creed of the Council of Trent was formulated in the sixteenth century. It addressed the issues of the differences between the Roman Catholics and the Protestant churches.

Bishops and leaders of early Eastern and Western local churches had formularies that acquired a symbol of faith. The word symbol has the Igbo equivalent meaning of akara, which are marks or signs that distinguish one thing from the other. Local churches did later develop Christian symbols turning them to local creeds. The creed of the Roman Church following the inauguration of the common symbol that is, the creed of the Council of Nicaea, the

⁵⁰⁶ G. C. Stead, *The Apostles' Creed*, 3.

⁵⁰⁷ John N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 14, (Italics mine).

⁵⁰⁸ Jacques, Liébaert, *Arianismus*, in: *LThK*², vol. 1 (1957), 846-847.

Roman creed was elevated, it became more than a local creed. Because the Roman creed acquired a high precedence, it influenced all other creeds. The formulation of the early creeds, whether in the Western or in Eastern Church, is to defend the general theology of the early Church. As a compendium of popular theology, the Roman creed and creeds, in general, point the way to the faith and hope of the early church⁵⁰⁹ against heresy and the struggle against Gnosticism.

4.3 The Doctrine of Resurrection and the Creed

The terms, body or flesh are fundamentally interchangeable and sequel the definition of the resurrection of the dead in the understanding of the NT.⁵¹⁰ Christian apologists did understand the terms as related and they did apply it so. The doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh, that of the body or the dead, came to be enshrined in the apostolic creed as an article of faith during the years of (theological, religious, and doctrinal) conflict. Due to its paramount importance in the life of man, Arthur Ashley contends that the resurrection is limited to human flesh or body alone. Rather than the resurrection of the flesh the NT often uses the phraseology “resurrection of the dead” (Mt 22:31; Lk 20:27; Acts 17:18; 1Cor 15:12; 27-33; Heb 6:2). Before Felix, Paul makes a confession for a universal resurrection (Acts 24:15; 21). The NT has also other lesser ways of expressing the resurrection of the body or flesh. The following passages discuss resurrection in a lesser sense, Mt 27:52; 1Cor 15:35:44; Rom 8:11:23; Phil 3:21.

Ashley however, explains the above expressions as not meaning fixed phrases as the resurrection of the dead. Which means, Paul’s usage of bodily resurrection is devoid of any Platonic or Gnostic tendencies? For example when Paul writes “and if the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead has made his home in you, then he who raised Christ Jesus from the

⁵⁰⁹ John N. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 131.

⁵¹⁰ Wolfgang Klausnitzer, *Auferstehungskonzeptionen der Theologie im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, in: (Bamberger Theologische Studien 20), Frankfurt am Main, (2003), 277.

dead will give life to your own mortal bodies through his spirit living in you” (Rom 8:11). Here Paul is not expecting redemption from this mortal body as resuscitation. He is rather confident that through the spirit of Christ that dwells in us, dead bodies will receive a new life of the spirit of Christ. He definitely believes it is not incredible for God to raise the dead (Acts 26:8) since he is the God of the living, not of the dead (Mt 22:32).

Didache 16:7 speaks of the resurrection of the saints. For this author, the resurrection of the saints is nothing short of the resurrection of the dead. This resurrection in any case is not a general resurrection. It laid emphasis to the resurrection of a particular group of people. It is a resurrection only for the saints, as a reward for endurance and a sign of triumph.⁵¹¹ Barnabas and Clement of Rome mentioned the resurrection without classification into the resurrection of the flesh or body. Ashley went ahead and referred the emergence of the resurrection of either flesh or body in the public creed that took place in the second century. In his argument, the resurrection of the flesh in the creed was a later incorporation. In trying to counteract Gnosticism apologists, Christian writers incorporated the belief in the resurrection of the dead in the creed, hence, it stopped being a private proclamation and became a public baptismal acclamation.

One may ask what the theological implication of the word flesh is. Alternatively, this asks the question of the meaning of the flesh and body in relation to the resurrection of the dead in the creed. As much as Gottfried Schimanowski is concerned, there is no serious tension between flesh and body. There is no significant difference in the terminologies except that the flesh terminology was the earlier formulation found in the Greek text of old Roman Symbols of Baptism while the body notion was contained in the version of the ecumenical Text of the apostolic creed.⁵¹² In any case, both pro-

⁵¹¹ Robert A. Kraft, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary*, Vol. 3. Barnabas and the Didache, New York, (1965), 176.

⁵¹² Gottfried Schimanowski, *Auferstehung im Neuen Testament und in der Frühjüdischen Apokalyphtik*, in: *Auferstehung der Toten*, Hans Kessler (hg.), Darmstadt, (2004), 48-71, 48.

claim belief in the resurrection of the dead and both terminologies have been around from the early days of Christianity.⁵¹³ Considering the foregoing arguments, G.C. Stead stresses the implication of 1Cor 15 in relation to the body. For him, St. Paul's classic discussion on the resurrection here suggests no clear-cut distinction between body, flesh and the dead. 1Cor 15:35-42 would rather have suggested 'resurrection of the dead or of the body' (1Cor 15:44); indeed it teaches that like Christ (Lk 24:37), we shall be given another body, a spiritual body which resembles our present physical form. The new body will be imperishable and fitted out for life in heaven. This spiritual or ethereal body however, will not exclude this present body. By proclaiming the resurrection of the flesh, the creed affirms that even our physical impulses and affections can be glorified and transformed. The implication of this, is that total sanctity is possible in our life on earth.⁵¹⁴ The *Fides Damasi*, which perhaps originated in southern Gaul in the late fifth century, precisely puts it this way "we believe that we who have been purified in his death, and in his blood, will be raised on the Last Day in that flesh in which we now live."⁵¹⁵

In as much as the variation in usage, flesh, body and the resurrection of the dead is a dogmatic issue, Ratzinger concludes that it is mainly a historical matter. For him, whilst the Greek Eastern churches make confession to the resurrection of the dead, the western churches continued the Jewish terminology for resurrection adopted by Johannine theology which makes confession to the resurrection of the flesh.⁵¹⁶ There is a linguistic dichotomy between the Greek and Jewish application of the word flesh. This distinction however, is not apparent especially in the Pauline Greek mentality. Pauline Greek theology speaks of the individual as a 'body' meaning the total personality (inner and outer aspects),⁵¹⁷ whilst the western Jewish thought

⁵¹³ Cf. A.J.M. Wedderburn, *Beyond Resurrection*, London, (1999), 118f.

⁵¹⁴ G.C. Stead, *The Apostle's Creed*, 9.

⁵¹⁵ DH 71.

⁵¹⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology, Death and Eternal Life*, Washington D.C., ²(1988), 134.

⁵¹⁷ Cf. John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life*, Kentucky, (1994), 195.

adopted the all-inclusive language of *universum*, ‘flesh’ meaning humanity. All flesh (in Ps 136, 65, 25, 3; Jr 25, 31) denotes humanity.⁵¹⁸ The usage of flesh here is in recapitulated form. God sums up all flesh (humanity) in the body of Christ and he (Christ) became the head not only of his body, the church, but the entire human race.

The concept of the recapitulation was largely used in 1Cor 15: 24-28 after which Irenaeus became the first to develop it. Writing on salvation and resurrection in Christ by recapitulation, Irenaeus writes. “Thus there is one God and Father, as we have shown, and one Christ Jesus our Lord, who comes by a universal dispensation and recapitulates all things in himself. But in ‘all things’ man also is comprised, a creature of God; therefore he recapitulates man in himself. The invisible is become visible, the incomprehensible is become comprehensible, and the impassible passible; and the Logos is become man, recapitulating all things in himself. Thus, just as he is the first among heavenly, spiritual, and invisible things, so also is he the first among visible and corporal things. He takes the primacy to himself and by making himself the head of the Church; he will draw all things to himself at the appointed time.”⁵¹⁹ Coming from this background, the Christian creed confesses life through bodily resurrection in Christ who died and resurrected with his same body (Lk 24:37).

As already established, the creation of the creeds was primarily to encounter Gnosticism and Hellenic teaching. These thoughts are that the flesh is nothing but foul, weak, degraded and mortal. Since the body is a polluted thing the Savior has no more part in it, he is no longer one with our human race. He has no longer any part in our human nature.⁵²⁰ The creed is to correct these errors and the integration of the flesh terminology in it, goes back to

⁵¹⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, *ibid.*

⁵¹⁹ *Adv. Haer.*, 3.16. 6; See, Johannes Quasten, *Patrology, The Beginning of Patristic Literature*, vol.1. Brussels, (1949), 229-300.

⁵²⁰ G.C. Stead, *The Apostle’s Creed*, 9.

the Johannine affinity to the flesh. This affinity equally influenced both Justin and Irenaeus.⁵²¹

4.3.1 Sources of Knowledge of the Resurrection

When the word, “resurrection” is considered within Christianity, the following question is asked – what sources do we have? There is more than one source that refers to the resurrection. The NT is the major source. It makes claims to many events to demonstrate the resurrection; the account of the empty tomb and the appearances are examples. Some extra-biblical sources also relate the knowledge of the resurrection. The Didache is an example. The word literally means the “Lord’s Instruction to the Gentiles through the Apostles.” Didache is an abbreviated word for this early Christian compilation. The author or authors of this important sub-apostolic document remain anonymous. In addition to teaching morals, the document testifies to the structural organization of early Christian community. It teaches regulations regarding liturgical ceremonies and functions in the second century of Christianity.⁵²² The book treated resurrection when it talks of the Parousia⁵²³ or the second coming of the Lord.

⁵²¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 134.

⁵²² J. Armitage Robinson, *Barnabas, Hermas and the Didache*, MacMillan company, (1920), 41-7; Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, Vol. III, (1960), 54; Robert Kraft, *The Didache and Barnabas*, Thomas Nelson, (1964), 1.

⁵²³ Edward Schillebeeckx juxtaposes the concept of exaltation with parousia connecting it with the coming of the Lord as a time that will prove Jesus’ Lordship of the universe, “das Motiv von der Auferstehung der Toten und die ‚Entrückung‘ der noch Lebenden ist hier die baldige Ankunft Jesu als Herr, d.h. als Richter über Gnade und Verurteilung....während die kommende Parusie oder das Erscheinen des Menschensohns ... die Verkündigung des kommenden Reiches Gottes wird von ihr in einer Verkündigung der bald kommenden, endzeitlichen Parusie Jesu aktualisiert, zumindest so, daß das ‚kommen der Gottesherrschaft‘ und das ‚kommen des Jesus-Menschensohnes,‘ des Richters der Welt, noch ziemlich nebeneinander stehen, aber offensichtlich nicht ohne irgendeinen, wenn auch nicht thematisierten inneren Zusammenhang.“See Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesu: Die Geschichte von einem Lebenden*, Herder Freiburg, ³(1975), 358-62.

The coming of the Lord or the Messiah at the end of time was an established awareness within the circle of early Christianity, the moment of arrival remains elusive (Mt 24:42, 44; Mk 13:35; Lk 12:40). The coming of the Messiah was associated with the fulfillment of which will take place at the resurrection. The Parousia, the Day of the Lord and the resurrection are all related terminologies. Didache (16:1) named three major signs that will herald the Parousia. The first sign underlines that, the Last Day or the Day of the Lord will be manifested by the appearing of false prophets and teachers (see also Mt 24:10). The second sign stresses wickedness. It accentuates that towards the last day, there will be a multiplication of wicked people and an art of wickedness (Mt 24:12). In fact, the Parousia is necessary in order to vindicate the just. Third, and last of the signs, is the manifestation or the coming of a false Messiah. The deceiver will work signs and wonders (Mk 13:22). He will commit many atrocities, the worst since creation came into existence (Dn 12:1; Mk 13:19)⁵²⁴ and after all these signs, the Parousia will take place and the Lord will come.

Robert Kraft contrasts the Parousia with the resurrection in the same way that Edward Schillebeeckx has used the terminology of exaltation for resurrection. The first Christians used the two terminologies (resurrection and exaltation) interchangeably. They used them to affirm the resurrection of Jesus. Kraft identified resurrection with Parousia in the apocalyptic conclusion section of the Didache (16:6-8).⁵²⁵ There are doubts whether Didache goes down to the apostolic era. The book belongs to what Kraft calls, “evolved literature” which is a literary piece of ‘author editors.’ The author editor reproduces and reworks older literary materials or works.⁵²⁶ Nevertheless, there seems to be limitations in the way the book understands Parousia. In its apologetic arguments on the expectation of the Messiah, the book identified Jesus with the eschatological prophets. It emphasizes, when

⁵²⁴ Robert Kraft, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. III, 176; Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 1. 35.

⁵²⁵ Robert Kraft, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. III, 3, 1-14.

⁵²⁶ Robert Kraft, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. III, 1.

‘My Lord, will come’ (Zch 14:5b) summarized in the Aramaic word, “maranatha.” The word and its implication first identified Jesus with the eschatological prophets.⁵²⁷ We do not really know whether the *Didache* was apostolic or post apostolic, but the major point is that it gives some accounts of the resurrection.

The witnesses of the early Fathers and Christian writers, remain another source of knowledge of the resurrection. The first Christian apologist Justin Martyr (ca.100-165) in his *Dialogue with Trypho* (no.108) and Tertullian (ca.155-220) in *De Spectaculis* (no. 30)⁵²⁸ reiterate in detail the Jewish alibi of the stolen body. Other sources include the Jewish polemics and the subsequent arguments from Celsus to Origen’s contradiction of Celsus, Hermann Samuel Reimarus to David Friedrich Strauss and some present continental theologians.⁵²⁹ Wolfgang Klausnitzer identifies all the contemporary arguments as a continuation of Celsus polemics that is connected with Matthew 27:62-28, 15 and the Jewish apologetics.⁵³⁰ In keeping with Jewish anthropology, the Fathers agree that the “dead do not return to nothingness but await the resurrection in Hades in a manner appropriate to their form life.”⁵³¹ The Christian church, following the early Christian community de-

⁵²⁷ See, Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 359-340.

⁵²⁸ Kenan B. Osborne, *The Resurrection of Jesus: New Considerations for Its Theological Interpretation*, New York, (1997), 53.

⁵²⁹ See, Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 2, 55; Hermann Samuel Reimarus, *Über die Auferstehungsgeschichte*, in: Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Werke*, Bd. 8, Darmstadt, (1976), 339, 457; Willi Marxsen, *Die Auferstehung Jesus als historisches und als theologisches Problem*, Gütersloh, (1964); Gerd Lüdemann, *Die Auferstehung Jesu, Historie – Erfahrung – Theologie*, Göttingen, (1994); John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus, the life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, San Francisco, (1991); Paul Hoffmann, *Die historisch-kritische Osterdiskussion von H.S. Reimarus bis zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts*, in: *Zur neutestamentlichen Überlieferung von der Auferstehung Jesu* (WdF 522), Paul Hoffmann (ed.), Darmstadt, (1988), 15-67, 22-24.

⁵³⁰ Wolfgang Klausnitzer, *Auferstehungskonzeptionen der Theologie im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, in: (*Bamberger Theologische Studien* 20), 285; idem, *Glaube und Wissen*, Regensburg, (2000), 133.

⁵³¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 133.

veloped this doctrine as the pride of its confession. The Fathers as well as the creeds and the rule of faith (*regulae fidei*) speak of it in terms of a belief, which, when contradicted merits anathema and sanctions.⁵³² The adopted measures by the Fathers and the Councils were mainly against Gnosticism and Hellenistic misinterpretation of the resurrection (1Cor 15:12; 2 Tim 2:17-18). This evolved, as it were, into the formulation of the creeds. Let us consider the statement that the belief in resurrection makes only sense when connected with the Christ event.

4.3.2 The Patristic Period, ca.100-451

It is common to get diverse views about Christianity, the church and its belief. There are opinions about the progress and the decline of Christian faith in society. Christianity discovered its stronghold in the Western culture. In the opinion of Norman O. Brown, this society has remained religious no matter how secular it claims to be, the influence of Newton and the discovery of atomic physics and scientific revolution notwithstanding.⁵³³ In another instance, Alan Segal has written about the strong religious belief exercised by the Americans. For him, Americans believe in the mystery of life through faith in religion (Christianity remains US' major religion). This shows that Americans are not losing their faith neither is the society secularizing.⁵³⁴ Christianity is one of the religions that originated in Palestine, precisely, the region of Judea, and the city of Jerusalem. Since its inception, Christianity has presented itself in various forms to different people, or rather; different people at different times have comprehended Christianity in various and different ways. George MacRae, for example, grouped Christianity and Gnosticism as heretical movements within Judaism⁵³⁵ but Alister

⁵³² Cuthbert Hamilton Turner, *The History and Use of Creeds and Anathemas in the Early Church*, London, ²(1910), 28.

⁵³³ Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death*, London, (1973), 5.

⁵³⁴ Alan F. Segal, *Life after Death: The Social Sources*, in: *The Resurrection*, Stephen T. Davis et al (eds.), New York, (1997), 90.

⁵³⁵ George MacRae, *Nag Hammadi and the New Testament*, in: *Gnosis*, B. Aland (ed.), Fest. H. Jonas, Göttingen, (1978), 150; PHEME PERKINS, *The Gnostic Dialogue*, 17.

McGrath contrasts this opinion. He has written that “Christianity regarded itself as a continuation and development of Judaism, and initially flourished in regions with which Judaism was traditionally associated, supremely Palestine.”⁵³⁶ Though Christianity found itself within the Jewish tradition, it is not another brand of Judaism and it cannot be heretical because it is not a movement within Judaism.⁵³⁷ Christianity started in Palestine but it did not stop there.

After its foundation in Palestine, the Christian church or movement continued to spread beyond the borders of Palestine. Early Christian evangelists (Paul, the man from Tarsus readily comes to mind) made this possible through active evangelization. Through the activities of these early Christians, Christianity was able to spread to other parts of the ancient world. By the close of the first century, Christianity has become a major religion within the Mediterranean world, including Rome, the then capital of the Roman Empire. As the church in Rome became extremely powerful, tension began to develop between Eastern (Constantinople) and Western (Rome) Christianity.⁵³⁸ The tension snowballed into a schism, thereby empowering the establishment of theological debates. Various schools of thoughts grew from Rome, another from Constantinople and this brought division. Only three of the major apologetic theological schools of thought of this time will be considered here.

The first of these schools is the Alexandrian school, in the city of Alexander in modern-day Egypt. The Alexandrian school was popular for its Christological debate. About 325 AD, the fathers of the Eastern Church concluded that Jesus was “of one substance” (homoousios) with God. The English translation of this Greek word is “Consubstantial,” that is, one of the same nature with God.

⁵³⁶ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, Massachusetts, (1994), 5.

⁵³⁷ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 5.

⁵³⁸ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 5.

The Alexandrian school emphasized the “Divinity of Christ.” The trust of the Eastern Church was that Christ was the Word of God that became flesh and had its dwelling among us (Jn 1:14). The second school was the Antiochene School, in the city of Antioch in modern-day Turkey. Antioch and its surrounding neighbors, Cappadocia belongs also to the eastern Mediterranean world. The significance of Antioch is its debate and emphasis on the humanity of Christ. There was also a third theological school at that time, the theological school of the West. This theological school comprises the Western North Africa, especially the area of modern-day Algeria. Christian writers of this area include Tertullian, Cyprian of Carthage, and Augustine of Hippo. Other cities within the Mediterranean areas where theological debates could have taken place include Rome, Constantinople, Milan, and Jerusalem.⁵³⁹

4.3.3 Two Stages of the Patristic Era before the Division

During the first century, the Fathers were concerned with the organization and definition of Christianity. They were interested in sorting out differences and relationships between Judaism and its relationship to the interpretation of the OT, which included doctrinal and practical ethical issues. For example, they were much concerned with the correct interpretation of circumcision. The question at this time was whether Gentiles (non-Jews) converts, who were though adults, should be received into Christianity without undergoing circumcision which was the Jewish ritual of initiation. The issue of initiation via circumcision was the major cause of the first convoked church council of Jerusalem. The Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15; Gal 2:1-10) is presumably the first ever known ecumenical council. The council involved the meeting of Peter, James, Paul, Barnabas and others in Jerusalem. Despite the fact that this council is a model of councils, it remains mostly outside the list of the twenty-one councils considered “General” or “Ecumenical.”⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁹ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 7-19.

⁵⁴⁰ Christopher M. Bellitto, *The General Councils*, New York, (2002), 5-6.

There is no time in the long history of Christianity that the issue of the resurrection of the dead has been so much debated as during the second century.⁵⁴¹ This does not diminish the fact of the debates of the third and subsequent centuries nor did it exclude the apologetics of the first century. From the very beginning of Christianity, the doctrine of the resurrection has been a part of its teaching and subject of its apologetics against the mocking criticism of the Sadducees (Acts 23: 6-11). Analyzing the OT, Jesus in the first century defended the belief (Mk 12:18-27).⁵⁴² Talking to the Athenians about the long patience of God and the day of his judgment, St. Paul defended the belief in the resurrection as the crown of Christians hope (Acts 17:32). It is worth reiterating the persecution of the early Christians for believing in the resurrection. There is also evidence of first century apologetics being against the glamour of Gnosticism and the fun it made out of the doctrine. At any rate, whilst the first century apologetic was intensively based on defining orthodoxy, the second century intensified the resurrection apology.

Gnosticism in the early days of the life of the Church, necessitated a counter activity known as apologetics. Since early Christian writers are defenders of orthodoxy and developers of doctrine, it may not be wrong to call all of them apologists. For the interest of clarity, early Christian writers will be categorized into the Apostolic Fathers, Apologists and Christian teachers of faith.

4.3.4 The Apostolic Fathers

The Apostolic Fathers belong to the early Christian writers who wrote in the second half of the first and early second century. They were the disciples to the Apostles of Jesus or had personal experience of the Apostles. Their teachings and writings reflect that of the Apostles in context and style, though these teachings are not part of the NT. The writings of the Fathers have no place in the canon of scripture, but they provide a connecting link

⁵⁴¹ Van Unnik Willem Cornelis, *Epistle to Reginod on the Resurrection*, in: JEH, 156.

⁵⁴² Van Unnik Willem Cornelis, *Epistle to Reginod on the Resurrection*, in: JEH, 155.

between the time of revelation and the time of tradition.⁵⁴³ The Apostolic Fathers have been brought under the following ecclesiastical writers: Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, and Polycarp of Smyrna. Others are, the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas (Hermas). There are additional writings that have been included in later years as belonging to the Apostolic Fathers; these are the Paia of Hieropolis, and the Epistle of Diognetus (whose author is unknown). In modern times, the Didache is accepted as belonging to the Apostolic Fathers. Johannes Quasten locates the Shepherd of Hermas and the letter of Barnabas as Apocrypha. He included the Letter to Diognetus as belonging to the writings of Greek Apologists.⁵⁴⁴

The use of the term “Apostolic Fathers” as a theological language emerged for the first time in the 17th century in the writing of Jean-Baptiste Cotelier (1629-1686), *SS. Patrum qui temporibus apostolicis floruerunt opera* (works of the holy fathers who flourished in the apostolic times).⁵⁴⁵ Unlike other Christian traditional theology, Catholic theology makes subtle distinction between the Apostolic Fathers other first teachers of the Christian faith otherwise called Church Fathers.

The language about resurrection of the Apostolic Fathers is in continuation of early Christian teaching on eschatology, the second coming of Jesus that was regarded then as imminent. The early Christian community firmly believed in the imminent end of the world.⁵⁴⁶ Because of this belief, there was no theological debate or argument on the expectation of the second coming of the departed messiah. This is also true of resurrection. The Fathers were

⁵⁴³ Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 1, 40.

⁵⁴⁴ Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 1, *ibid.*

⁵⁴⁵ Joseph Anton Fisher, *The Apostolic Fathers*, in: *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, (2003), 587-589, 587.

⁵⁴⁶ As one feature of modern theology, the question of eschatology was one of the concerns of the theological works of Albert Schweitzer. In his classical book on the Biblical historical criticism published in 1906 under the title “*Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung – History of Life of Jesus Research*”, Schweitzer opines that Jesus and his disciples expected the imminent end of the world.

less interested in the scientific or historical proofs of it. They were rather concerned with doctrinal definitions.⁵⁴⁷ This means the Apostolic Fathers were not very much into the polemics of the resurrection debate. From their writings, one notices the strong conviction on bodily resurrection, thus Collins writes; “while resurrection was accepted and confessed in the writings of these early writers, it was not a distinct theme to be considered in its own right.”⁵⁴⁸ Barnabas and Didache (16.6-7) applied very much, to what PHEME PERKINS referred to as paraenetic traditions that emphasizes reward as motivating factor to obedience.⁵⁴⁹ In concluding this two ways exhortation tradition, Barnabas (21.1c), makes use of the resurrection,⁵⁵⁰ which is understood in the sense of recompense. The conclusion to the two ways of Barnabas reads, “there it is fitting that when one has learned the ordinances of the Lord as many as have been written he walks in them. For he who does these things will be glorified in God’s kingdom; he who chooses those will perish with his works. For this reason there is resurrection, for this reason there is recompense.” (Barnabas 21:1). Barnabas 5.6 emphasizes that resurrection is bodily since the body is the identifiable entity for judgment, and invariably reward or punishment. In Barnabas 15, the resurrection is connected to the Christian Sunday that has overtaken the Jewish Sabbath and demands its wholesomeness. In order to attend the resurrection, Barnabas makes emphasis on legalistic living. Legalistic living is nothing but a preference for death instead of living. Legalistic living places value upon dying in a state of Grace instead of living in order to merit resurrection. Thus, Barnabas places priority to death and resurrection as recompense more than living.

Phil 2.2 reflects the paraenetic tradition of the resurrection as the reward for righteousness and for those who remain faithful and obedient to God’s ordinances. Shepherd of Hermas on its own part equally makes a connection to

⁵⁴⁷ PHEME PERKINS, Resurrection, 334.

⁵⁴⁸ GERALD O’COLLINS, Jesus Risen, 8.

⁵⁴⁹ PHEME PERKINS, Resurrection, 336.

⁵⁵⁰ ROBERT KRAFT, The Didache and Barnabas, 161.

the paraenetic tradition, relating resurrection to the purity of flesh. On the other hand, Polycarp tied incarnation, resurrection and judgment together. He cautions those who deny the incarnation as denying resurrection.⁵⁵¹ First, Clement did not really discuss resurrection neither did second Clement. However, it ties resurrection to the “two ways” judgment, reward or punishment and sees our present body as the material form that will face reward or punishment.⁵⁵² All these authors indeed demonstrated a convincing concern that the body will be resurrected.

Because the issue of the resurrection at that time was not a theological problem, the Fathers left theology at the level of doctrinal interpretation. At the close of the second century the introduction of a different understanding came into the discussion. At this time, the resurrection, like some other doctrinal teachings, became a theological and fundamental issue. Pagans and Gnostics championed this by their teaching and the Fathers responded. The early Christian writers who defended Christianity against this rational debacle are called apologists. Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Tatian, Theophilus, etc, are a few of the many apologists. Only two from this group will receive attention here.

4.3.5 The Apologists

Second century apologists on the resurrection, defended Christianity against the intense criticism of Gnosticism, the antics of heretics and the objections of pagans.

4.3.5.1 Justin Martyr (ca. 100 – ca. 165)

Some early Christian writers and apologists were fascinated by the abstruse and abstract thinking of the Gnostics (philosophers?) that they sometimes applied their pattern of philosophizing to defend the soundness of the Gospel message and the Christian belief. Justin Martyr (ca. 100 – ca. 165) be-

⁵⁵¹ Cf. Epistle to the Philippians chapter 7.1; PHEME PERKINS, *Resurrection*, 335; JOHN N. KELLY, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 463.

⁵⁵² PHEME PERKINS, *Resurrection*, 336-338.

long to this group. In his dialogue with philosophers and Gnostics, he applied all the measures of traditional arguments. He remains one of the first to relate theology to Greek philosophy. His disputation with Trypho brings this to the fore. . In the Dialogue with Trypho, Justin maintains that all the righteous that have died and all those under the law will be saved by Christ on the last day. Justin sees the resurrection in the light of universal Judgment and salvation. He argues that God is the eternal one who inscribes his laws within the human heart.

Applying a philosophical methodology, Justin believes that all who live according to natural law, the Law of Moses and eternal law will be saved by Christ no matter which generation. Justin explicitly defines that Jesus is significantly the Christ of universal salvation. He extensively answers Trypho in this form:

“...Those who regulated their lives by the Law of Moses would in like manner be saved. For what in the Law of Moses is naturally good, and pious, and righteous, and has been prescribed to be done by those who obey it; and what was appointed to be performed by reason of the hardness of the people’s hearts; was similarly recorded, and done also by those who were under the law. Since those who did that which is universally, naturally, and eternally good are pleasing to God, they shall be saved through this Christ in the resurrection equally with those righteous men who were before them, namely Noah, and Enoch, and Jacob, and whoever else there be, along with those who have known this Christ, son of God ...”⁵⁵³

Justin relates his argument to Danielic theology on resurrection (Dn 12) whose implication is that all will be raised, some to glory some to damnation. Those who will resurrect to glory include all who did what is universally, naturally and eternally good and pleasing to God, these shall be saved by his Christ in the resurrection. There will also be universal resurrection unto

⁵⁵³ Justin Martyr, Trypho, 45.

punishment and damnation for those who blasphemed the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

In his “First Apology,” chapter 18, Justin refutes the argument that the human person does not survive death, that is, death ends in insensibility.⁵⁵⁴ Justin pressed further his argument by appealing to ‘pagan fetish’ belief. According to him, ‘pagan’ faith in the resurrection leads them to the belief in necromancy, divination, invocation of the spirits of the dead, and in the consultation of oracles. The ‘pagans’ equally believe in the teaching of afterlife noticed in the works of pagan playwrights, poets and philosophers such as Homer, Empedocles, Plato, and Socrates. Justin concludes his argument by saying that Christian teaching and belief in the resurrection is of a greater value and should equally be granted the same favor than that given to the ‘pagan’ teaching. Thus, he says; “since we (Christians) expect to receive again our own bodies, though they be dead and cast into the earth”⁵⁵⁵ this will only be for a while. This is so because with God all things are possible. Now ‘pagans’ resurrection expectation is based on reanimated bodies, but Christians resurrection expectation is based on raised spiritual bodies (1Cor 15:44). In chapter 19 of the ‘First Apology,’ Justin applied a cosmological argument by making deduction to the miracle of creatio ex nihilo. If God was able to make a drop of semen into a full-fledged human, then with God all things are possible (Mt 19:26) including raising the dead to life.⁵⁵⁶ Influenced by this NT thought, the erudite apologist, theologian and philosopher from Athens, Athenagoras (ca. 177) attacked the skepticism against belief in the resurrection of the body.

⁵⁵⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger used the concept of nihilism to represent the thought that death ends in insensibility. For Nietzsche as well as Heidegger, existence is only but a movement within a vicious circle explained in the sense of absolute nothingness. Hence, for both thinkers the human is a being unto death. Death and the grave complete the process to nihilism. See Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology: The Word of Nietzsche*, New York, (1977), 53-77.

⁵⁵⁵ 1 Apology 18.

⁵⁵⁶ 1 Apology 19.

4.3.5.2 Athenagoras (ca. 177)

Most of the works of this second century apologist are lost to history, however, two of the works have survived, these include the “Apology” or “Embassy for the Christian” or “Legatio or Plea”⁵⁵⁷ and a Treatise on the resurrection. Granted, the question of erroneous teaching by the Gnostics was the provocative matrix for Christian apologetics there are still more to that. The defense of the doctrine of resurrection became an issue for Athenagoras when Christians were accused of being involved in cannibalism. The ancient detractors of Christianity failed to understand the context and the meaning of the Christian’s participation in the Eucharist. Like the Jews of the time of Jesus, Christianity in the first century was accused of practicing cannibalism. To the contrary, early Christianity used their strong belief in the resurrection of the body to counteract the cannibalism accusation. They equated cannibalism to imprisoning the to-be-resurrected body so that they hated cannibalism and abhorred it. Athenagoras expresses it this way: “When a man believes in the resurrection, how could he make himself a tomb to receive those who will rise again? Indeed, the same man cannot believe in the resurrection of his own body and then eat human bodies as if they were not to rise again, nor can he expect the earth to give up its dead and not to be asked himself to render up the dead he has buried within himself.”⁵⁵⁸ We see that in objection to this accusation Athenagoras projects the belief in the resurrection of the body and concludes that Christians are believers of this doctrine therefore, participation in the unwholesome act of cannibalism is impossible. Accusing Christianity of cannibalism started much earlier. It started during the early times of the Church in Jerusalem. The Jews accused Jesus of forcing them into eating his flesh (Jn 54:51-56).

⁵⁵⁷ Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity*, New York, (1995), 32.

⁵⁵⁸ Athenagoras, *Embassy for the Christians, the Resurrection of the Dead*, Joseph Hugh Crehan (trans.), London, (1956), 36.

The argument of Athenagoras shows the impossibility for Christians and believers of resurrection to turn their bodies into graveyards for the dead who are awaiting resurrection. I see here the possibility that Athenagoras refers to pagans as cannibals since he called them adulterers, paederasts, law-breakers and predators. Pagans are the cannibals who swallow whole whatever that comes their way.⁵⁵⁹ The strongest word he evoked to demonstrate his conviction is the derogatory word ‘fish.’ The ancients “believed that fish were more hasty and violent in copulating than any animal. This mention of fish leads Athenagoras on to speak of the cannibalism of fish.” He purposely called pagans fish thereby differentiating them from the Christians.⁵⁶⁰ Pagan’s gullibility is compared with that of fish.⁵⁶¹ The fish in early times is understood more by its unwariness as a sea monster typified in the whale that swallowed Jonah. Athenagoras is one in opinion with early apologists like Justin Martyr and Tertullian. On the identity of the resurrected, he argues that there is nothing impossible before God. He can heal the sick, restore the body to wholeness, so too, at resurrection God will bring back the compositum to its former perfect state.⁵⁶² The word *compositum*⁵⁶³ as found in the major writings of later Scholastic philosophy is believed to be found

⁵⁵⁹ Athenagoras, *Embassy for the Christian*, 34.

⁵⁶⁰ Athenagoras, *Embassy for the Christian*, note 298 in page 166.

⁵⁶¹ For the symbolism of fish, see Lothar Altmann, *Fish*, in: *Christliche Tiersymbolik*, Florian Trenner et al (eds.), München, (2010), 108.

⁵⁶² Robert A. Kraft and J. Donaldson (eds.) *ANF*, vol. 1, (1978), 295. Justin and Tertullian could have exaggerated the understanding of the resurrection. They supposed the person will remain the same, the same hair, eyes and teeth; cf. *De res. carn.* 35. This opinion confuses St. Paul’s teaching of the incorporeal bodies. “There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, the heavenly have a splendor of their own, and the earthly a different splendor” *1Cor 5:40*. In the context of the nature of the resurrection, Jesus means, at resurrection, men and women will be like angels in heaven (*Mt 22:28*) and all we know about angels is that they possess ethereal bodies.

⁵⁶³ *Composition*, man is a composition not only of body but also of soul. A composed entity is endowed with faculties of reason, intelligence and judgment; See *De res.* 15,21.

first in that treatise of Athenagoras on resurrection titled *De Resurrectione*.⁵⁶⁴ The word *compositum* makes the body more accessible and understandable in phenomenological tradition.⁵⁶⁵ There is a difference in the categorization of the body from flesh.

The body as a spiritual entity is a compendium within which other faculties are submerged. On the other hand, the flesh as a substance is a means whereby the physicality deals with the materiality. The body as a *compositum* is the form of the person.⁵⁶⁶ It is through the body that one makes contact and communicates with the cosmos and the environment.⁵⁶⁷ The flesh is both an individual and a social entity. It is a means of communication and contact with the others. The flesh is a structural unity, a member of a structure that is not in terms of divisible entities but indivisible unity. The body of a person gives the person its identity.⁵⁶⁸ It is unthinkable to find a person without a body. In as much as the person is not the flesh, the flesh presents the person visibly on the physical sphere while body or self opens the person to inner perspective. The flesh is apparent and visible, the body or self is imperceptible and invisible. The self is in the middle. It attracts other components known in classical language as faculties itself. The self is neither flesh nor soul. It is a unity of faculties (soul, body, flesh). *Compositum* suggests the survival of the individual in its inseparable sameness of a trans-

⁵⁶⁴ Cf. Leslie W. Bernard, *Athenagoras: A Study in Second Century Christian Apologetic*, *Théologie Historique* 18, Beauchesne, (1972), footnote 48. There are still doubts whether Athenagoras was the progenitor of this word as a philosophical terminology or whether he was the first Christian philosopher user of it.

⁵⁶⁵ Cf. Merleau-Ponty Maurice, *Phänomenologie der Wahrnehmung*. Übers. und erläutert von R. Boehm, Berlin, (1974), 89-235; Wolmuth Josef, *Anthropologische Dimensionen christlicher Eschatologie*, in: *ThQ* 187, (2007), 132-145. On the phenomenology of the body, see Schmitz Hermann, *System der Philosophie*, 2. Bd., 1. Tl.: *Der Leib*, Bonn, (1965); Wendel Saskia, *Affektiv und inkarniert, Ansätze Deutscher Mystik als subjekttheoretische Herausforderung*, Regensburg, (2002), 283-291.

⁵⁶⁶ Merleau-Ponty, *Phänomenologie der Wahrnehmung*, 23 and 166f.

⁵⁶⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *Phänomenologie der Wahrnehmung*, 229-233.

⁵⁶⁸ Merleau-Ponty, *Phänomenologie der Wahrnehmung*, 179-182.

formed body and soul. If old Greek belief is that the soul survives after death⁵⁶⁹ and Pythagoras, Plato and ancient pagan philosophers exulted and taught that the body will rise again, it is superfluous according to Athenagoras for Christians to reiterate this point,⁵⁷⁰ for nothing will hinder the body which is an integral part of the composition from surviving at resurrection.⁵⁷¹ Contrary to Justin, Athenagoras attests that resurrection is based on the mercy and God's power of creation that is synonymous with redemption and not necessarily on judgment.

However, there will be judgment culminating to reward or punishment, the judgment is going to be holistic meant for the body as well as the soul. This means, none of the composite parts will suffer annihilation.⁵⁷² Fundamentally, all will arise; there will be no annihilation for any one. Nevertheless, there is an implication to this, not everyone will be saved. The interesting aspect of this apology is the exclusion of Christological argument for academic defense of a belief. It seems all the arguments of these earliest apologists are practically on the physical resuscitation of the dead body, the calling up of the dead to a new physical life. However, is this resurrection of the dead? In which type of body will resurrection take place? These questions take us to another phase of the debate, between the Gnostics and the group this work classifies as Christian teachers.

4.3.6 Christian Teachers

In our contemporary situation especially in debates involving doctrine and belief of a particular Christian denomination, one often hears: 'Where is it in the Bible?' This is telling the other debating party to prove the point of the argument by pointing to particular passages in the Bible which supports

⁵⁶⁹ According to Old Greek belief, the soul survives at death as a manikin. As a survived soul, the manikin is dwarfish in nature. Cf. Athenagoras, Embassy for the Christian. Note 308, page 168.

⁵⁷⁰ Athenagoras, Embassy for the Christian, 36.

⁵⁷¹ Legatio 36.

⁵⁷² Leslie W. Bernard, Athenagoras, 130.

a claim of one's assertion, the correct exegesis of the Bible at this point is not in question. This way of using the Bible as one adopts the law books for offense and defense is traceable to the teachers of Christian religion especially in their various debates with pagans and against Gnosticism. Most of the Fathers used the Bible in this form including Origen, Tertullian, and Irenaeus of Lyons etc.

4.3.6.1 Irenaeus (ca. 130 – ca. 200).

Irenaeus was a church Father and a Greek bishop of Lyons. Church Fathers are harbingers of church traditions. Characteristically, they belong to the antiquity or the apostolic age. It is commonly believed that Irenaeus was born in Smyrna (modern day Turkey). It is also believed that he saw the Holy Polycarp of Smyrna about 155 with the eyes of a boy.⁵⁷³ Polycarp was a disciple of St. John the Apostle. Polycarp later became the bishop of Smyrna. In his letter to Florinus, Irenaeus records his youthful memory of St. Polycarp. In this letter, he revealed the mutual relationship he noticed during his youth that existed between the blessed Polycarp and his master John. Importantly, this letter records how anxious Florinus wanted to gain the good opinion of St. Polycarp. All these happened when Florinus was only a man of rank in the royal hall, perhaps in the house of Polycarp. This account is to justify the claims that our church Father belongs to the apostolic age. He greatly contributed to the theology of the early church through his brilliant theological writings. He opposed and refuted Gnosticism and their heterodox system.

Irenaeus was made the bishop of Lyon in 178. As a vigorous defender of Christian orthodoxy, he used the narrative elements of the Gospels and Acts against Gnostic views knowing too well that his challengers would always argue for a spiritual survival instead of a total transformation. Gnosticism emphasizes a one sided theology of the resurrection, that is, it emphasized that resurrection of the soul alone. Their theology reclined so much to the

⁵⁷³ Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 1, 287.

philosophy of Plato that rejects salvation for the body (matter). The rejection of the body implies rejection of Christ's resurrection in the body for the exaltation of his spirit. This theology became the object of attack by Irenaeus in his seminal work "Against all Heresies." This work promoted the Christian understanding of resurrection as salvation. Irenaeus' theology of the resurrection is immersed in the resurrection of the flesh objected to by Gnosticism. To show that the body will be resurrected Irenaeus appeals to 1 Corinthians. Following Paul, he argues that the resurrection is related to the events of the last days and to Christ who took flesh during the last days and suffered in the flesh so that at the end, "this mortal body shall put on immortality, and this corruptible shall put on incorruption" (1 Cor 15:54).⁵⁷⁴ It seems from all indications that Irenaeus understands Paul's above discussion of not dealing with a spiritual resurrection but a transformation of the mortal body in order to make it immortal.

"Adversus omnes Haereses" (Against all Heresies) is one of Irenaeus most significant works against Gnosticism and Marcionism. Extreme Gnosticism and Marcionism belong to early century's heretical movements which early Christian writers attacked. The two movements abhor matter and see the body as inconsequence for salvation. They rejected the OT texts. In addition to rejecting the OT, Marcionism rejects some NT texts as part of the sacred scripture. Granted their similarities, there are also glaring distinctions. While Gnosticism ended up as an academic movement involved in the founding of schools, Marcionism eventually became a religious movement. After the Church of Rome excommunicated Marcion, he ended up founding his own church. Irenaeus states that Cerdon was the predecessor of Marcion. Cerdon was a Gnostic from Syria and a fellow of Simon. He came to Rome in the episcopate of Hyinus. The name Simon remains and represents the pre-Christian figure of Gnosticism. He was a contemporary of the apostles. He was the magician from Samaria reported in Acts 8:9-24 that tried to

⁵⁷⁴ Adv. Haer., 1.10.3.

acquire the power of miracles by giving bribes. Like other Gnostics, Cerdon rejected the OT. He took his system from Simon and taught that: “The God proclaimed by the law and the prophets was not the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the former was known, but the latter unknown; while the one also was righteous, but the other benevolent.”⁵⁷⁵ However, “Marcion of Pontus succeeded him, and developed his doctrine. In so doing, he advanced the most daring blasphemy against him who is proclaimed as God by the law and the prophets, declaring him to be the author of evils, to take delight in war, to be infirm of purpose, and even to be contrary to himself.”⁵⁷⁶

Gnostics over emphasized spiritual transformation and write about it as something that will take place in the future. For Irenaeus the passage 1Cor 15: 36; 42-44 is referring to the resurrection of the body. The passage reads, “When you sow a seed in the ground, it does not sprout to life unless it dies... this is how it will be when the dead are raised to life. When the body is buried, it is mortal; when raised, it will be immortal. When buried, it is a physical body; when raised, it will be a spiritual body. There is, of course, a physical body, so there has to be a spiritual body.” He cautioned against Gnostic understanding that resurrection is solely a spiritual event that will take place in the future. For him neither soul nor spirit alone is the man, a complete man is a commingling of the soul. The soul is the spirit of the Father while flesh is the image identity of God.⁵⁷⁷ Invariably rejection of a constituent of the personhood amounts to heresy.

The resurrection, according to Irenaeus’ thought is not only a futuristic event. The future is not the only condition for the resurrection to take place. The ongoing transforming activities of the Spirit in the present are a foretaste of that future event. However, we have not been completely transformed therefore we cannot see God until we are perfected. Nevertheless,

⁵⁷⁵ Ad. Haer., 1.27.1.

⁵⁷⁶ Ad. Haer., 1.27.2.

⁵⁷⁷ Adv. Haer., 5. 6. 1.

the ongoing process of the spirit transforms us.⁵⁷⁸ Making another point from the perspective of ecclesiology and the Eucharistic mystery, Irenaeus doubts the possibility of excluding the body from rising since our bodies are members of the church whose head is Christ. In addition, the flesh of Christ in the Eucharist is received to nourish the body, how then can the body that partakes and has been joined to the body of Christ go to corruption? He contended that since man is a unity of body, soul, and spirit, his salvation would be incomplete without the physical frame. Be that as it may, he concludes that the resurrection is that of a substance, one that is a union of body and soul and never one of incorporeal spirits.⁵⁷⁹ God needs not create again a different material world out of nothing; the present human nature will not be destroyed it will only pass through a process of transformation.⁵⁸⁰ This transformation will only take place in resurrection.

The whole argument of the survival of the body in Irenaeus brings him closer to early Greek materialist (philosophy) that reduced almost every aspect of existence to materials.⁵⁸¹ In reiterating the interconnectivity within the faculties, Irenaeus defines the dependability of tripartite nature (flesh, spirit and soul) of the person as a reason for the defense for the resurrection of the flesh. It is his opinion that, though matter suffers quality change, the substance of the matter remains constant, for instance, a sick person remains the human being, despite bodily infirmity and deformity.

The unity of material and its connection to resurrection is further illustrated by the reference to one of Jesus' miracles of healing. He stressed that the

⁵⁷⁸ Adv. Haer., 5.8.1

⁵⁷⁹ Adv. Haer., 4.18.5; 5.8.2; 5.6.12.

⁵⁸⁰ Concerning the survival of this material world, this is how Paul Althaus puts it. "Daher, wartet das sehnsüchtige Harren der Kreatur auf die Offenbarung der Söhne Gottes. Gott schafft nicht einen anderen Kosmos aus dem Nichts, sondern macht diesen jetzigen frei am Tage der Auferstehung." Cf. Paul Althaus, *Die Letzten Dinge*, Gütersloh, ¹⁰(1970), 350.

⁵⁸¹ The way Irenaeus treated the resurrection issue compiles the thought that he is engraved in absolute materialism.

healing of the blind man by Christ was made possible by the presence of a material thing, the dust. The matching of the dust into paste facilitated the healing.⁵⁸² The NT promised of resurrection according to him refers to the resurrection of the body he compared our resurrection with Christ's own resurrection in the body. Like Christ, all believers will rise with their own bodies.⁵⁸³ To put this thought into perspective, Irenaeus means that the human being dies as a composite being but like Christ, it resurrects as a total and complete self. The subtle theology of change, not destruction nor annihilation that we see in Augustine, Gregory the Great, Thomas Aquinas and the whole of the middle age theology to the present catholic dogmatic theology stem from Irenaeus.⁵⁸⁴ Despite the belief that the resurrection is a progressive event, like Justin he expected the general resurrection to come at the end of time.

Irenaeus' end of age is understood as the Day of Judgment. It is a time of judgment for all humans and fallen angels alike. At the end of judgment, fallen angels and Satan will be condemned. He puts it this way: "And there is therefore in this beast, when he comes, a recapitulation made of all sorts of iniquity and of every deceit, in order that all apostate power, flowing into a being shut up in him, may be sent to the furnace of fire. Fitting, there, shall his name possess the number six hundred and sixty-six, since he sums up in his own person all the commixture of wickedness which took place previous to the deluge, due to the apostasy of the angels."⁵⁸⁵ On the last day, which is the end of the age, Satan, demons and the fallen angels will be sent to eternal damnation in hell. The saints and the martyrs of the Lord will reign with God in his kingdom. After this has taken place, it is the opinion of Irenaeus that the material creation will be resurrected and renovated into

⁵⁸² Adv. Haer., 5. 9-12.

⁵⁸³ Adv. Haer., 5.7, 1.

⁵⁸⁴ Paul Althaus, *Die letzten Dinge: Lehrbuch der Eschatologie*, Gütersloher, ¹⁰(1970), 350.

⁵⁸⁵ Adv. Haer., 5. 29,2

incorruption and when resurrection has taken place, when eschatology has been completed, then Christ will be all in all (1Cor 15:28).⁵⁸⁶

The Pauline/Irenaeus recapitulation doctrine has been contradicted and complimented by the later idea of the doctrine of “apocatastasis.” This idea sometimes referred as ‘summary’ or ‘reintegration’ stems from Col 1:19-22 and 2Cor 5:18-20.⁵⁸⁷ Origen applied these passages to justify the universal integration of creation into the lordship of Christ. Using his doctrine of apocatastasis Origen contradicts the recapitulation doctrine. He maintains that all creation including Satan and his angels will be reconciled with Christ at the end of time.⁵⁸⁸ He seems to be reconciling and reading back the *Erit Deus omnis in omnibus* (‘God will be all in all’ 1Cor 15:28) into universal salvation. On the other hand, despite what seems to be a propagation of universalism of salvation by Origen, Irenaeus to some extent followed the thought of Origen. He however, refutes and excludes Satan and the fallen angels from his recapitulation doctrine. Though the “apocatastasis” theology was propounded by Origen it was Gregory of Nyssa who discussed it extensively.⁵⁸⁹ For his own part Gregory agrees that reconciliation with Christ is only possible for those whose sins have been purified. “When, over long periods of time, evil has been removed and those now lying in sin have been restored to their original state, all creation will join in united thanksgiving, both those whose purification has involved punishment and

⁵⁸⁶ Franz Dünzl, Irenaeus, in: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, bd. 5, Freiburg, ³(2006), 583-585, 584.

⁵⁸⁷ The passage reads, „All this is done by God, who through Christ changed us from enemies into his friends and gave us the task of making others his friends also. Our message is that God was making the whole human race his friends through Christ. God did not keep an account of their sins, and he has given us the message which tells how he makes them his friends. Here we are, then, speaking for Christ, as though God himself were making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ’s behalf: let God change you from enemies into his friends!” 2Cor 5:18-20.

⁵⁸⁸ Origen, *De Principiis* III.6.6

⁵⁸⁹ See, A.D. Turney, Apocatastasis, in: *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Washington, D.C., (2003), 548; New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01599a.htm> (accessed 10.1.2011).

those who never needed purification at all.”⁵⁹⁰ The usage of the phrase “long time” seems to embrace the notion of a place of purification, which seems to indicate the idea of purgatory. Nevertheless, following Origen, Gregory agrees that all things are to be restored in Christ. But parting thought with him he reclines more to Irenaeus by maintaining that restoration depends on rational nature’s own accord. That is, human mission in this physical world “...requires us to work relentlessly at our reconciliation with God, thereby migrating from our current state towards God.”⁵⁹¹

4.3.6.2 Tertullian of Carthage (ca.155-ca.225)

Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullian was originally a jurist from Carthage in North Africa and a pagan convert to Christianity.⁵⁹² History books lack authentic information about the precise time the North African church was established. The most that is known about its foundation, is the later historical contribution it made in Christianity. Before its foundation, the churches of Greek East and some others of the Latin West were already flourishing. This notwithstanding, it is said that the prolific Christian literary contributions of the North African Fathers surpassed that of Rome. Johannes Quasten alludes to this when he implied that North African Christianity gave the Church and Latin Christianity the most original thinkers of the ante-Nicene period.⁵⁹³ “A special peculiarity of the North African church is that it had a very large number of bishops compared to Europe or to Asia. By the year

⁵⁹⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, Catechetical Oration, 26.

⁵⁹¹ <http://homepage.mac.com/s.babayan/Apokatastasis/Blog/files/tag-origen.html>

⁵⁹² Cf. Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. II, *The Ante-Nicene Literature After Irenaeus*, Spectrum Publ., (1952); Timothy Hamilton Baird, *The Early Christian Apologists and Greek Philosophy: Exemplified by Irenaeus, Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria*, Van Gorcum, (1973). Tertullian called Enoch and Elijah candidates for resurrection because “exempted from corruption, both in body and soul, they were received into the custody of God,” by so doing, Tertullian propagates a bodily resurrection of the person. See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Henry Beveridge, (trans.), bk., III, chapt 25, 7, Arnold Hatfield, London, (1599).

⁵⁹³ Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. II, 243.

411 there were 470 catholic bishoprics and by 430 they were almost 600.”⁵⁹⁴ In addition, according to Quasten worth mentioning is the great literary contributions of some North Africans, the martyr bishop, Cyprian, and two lay divines: Arnobius and Lactantius.

Tertullian is regarded as the father of Latin theology.⁵⁹⁵ Figuratively, he is referred to as a fighter and as one with quarrels in his hands. He voraciously defended the Christian faith during the difficult times against Marcionism and the unity of the OT and NT, against pagan philosophy and Gnostic teaching on spiritual resurrection.⁵⁹⁶ Gnosticism propagates the doctrine that resurrection depends on the ability of acquiring knowledge (Gnosis), which means anyone who transcends ordinary common material experience and has knowledge has already resurrected. This teaching for Tertullian has no foundation in reality. Tertullian jarred at its foolishness and called it a hypothetical speculation. He rabble-roused philosophy and corked it up in the totality of the Thales Miletus’ experience. In his exact words, he writes; “It therefore served Thales of Miletus quite right. When stargazing as he walked with all the eyes he had, he had the mortification of falling into a well, and was unmercifully twitted by the Egyptian, who said to him, ‘is it because you found nothing on earth to look at, that you think you ought to confine your gaze to the sky?’ His fall, therefore, is a figurative picture of the philosophers; of those, I mean, who persist in applying their studies to a

⁵⁹⁴ Peter D. Akpunonu, *The Church in Africa: Issues Relating to the Church as a Human Society*, in: *The Church in Africa and the Special African Synod*, Justin S. Ukpong et al (eds.), CIWA publications, (1993), 100; H. Jedin and J. Dolans (eds.), *History of the Church*, vol. II, Burns and Oates, (1980), 185.

⁵⁹⁵ Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. II, 243.

⁵⁹⁶ Timothy Hamilton Baird, *The Early Christian Apologists and Greek Philosophy*, 40. Quasten describes Tertullian as one who remained forever a fighter. He fought against pagans, Jews, heretics and later when he joined the Montanists and became the head of a special sect within it called Tertullianists, he turned against the Catholics and fought them. Cf. Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol.II. 247.

vain purpose, since they indulge a stupid curiosity...⁵⁹⁷ Among the illusive speculators here referred to by Tertullian is Plato, the progenitor of speculative knowledge whose philosophy of immateriality was adopted by both Gnosticism and Marcionism. Like other middle second century apologists, Tertullian attacked his opponents (Gnostic teachers and their sects, Marcion, Apelles, Basilides and Valentinians). He attacked them not only for rejecting the material world but also by proposing that matter is irrelevant for salvation. Gnosticism held flesh in contempt and insisted on its inability to resurrect. Tertullian had two treatises that simultaneously dealt with the resurrection, *De carne Christi* (on the Flesh of Christ) and *De resurrectione carnis* (on the resurrection of the Flesh), the former being a preface to the later. The purpose for this second treatise was to prove the reality of the Flesh that was truly born, and died, and rose again. The main purpose was to demonstrate what kind of body it was that rose again in Christ.⁵⁹⁸ Tertullian wishes to achieve one primary point in the entire treatise of the resurrection of the flesh. It is his intention to establish the substantiality of Jesus' body. He intends to convince Gnostics, that the body of Christ existed as a material substance and not as a spiritual, immaterial body. In other words, Christ participated in the human body of the Virgin Mary, and this participation was material and not spiritual. The establishment of this logical foundation according to Tertullian will be the first step to convincing Gnostics (Marcion, Apelles, Valentinus and all other modern Sadducees) of the reality of our own bodily resurrection.⁵⁹⁹ This means that, the same body that suffered, was crucified, died, was buried was the same body that experienced the resurrection. This is the same flesh that came to Peter and his comrades and said to them; "Lay hold, handle me, and see that I am not an incorporeal spirit. And immediately they touched him, and believed, being convinced both by his flesh and spirit."⁶⁰⁰ Gnostics who refuse to acknowl-

⁵⁹⁷ *Ad Nationes* II.IV.

⁵⁹⁸ *De Carne Christi*, 25.

⁵⁹⁹ *De carne Christi*, 1.

⁶⁰⁰ Cf. Ignatius, *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans*, 3.

edge this corporeality cannot, in Tertullian's opinion, claim to teach the resurrection of Christ. Tertullian is convinced "the flesh shall rise again, wholly in everyman, in its own identity, in its absolute integrity wherever it may be, it is in safe keeping in God's presence"⁶⁰¹ and even the unburied body will equally rise again.⁶⁰² He makes a precise summary of this point when he writes. "Man is as much body as he is soul."⁶⁰³ In other words, the flesh and spirit make a single whole of the human personality, one like the other is indispensable for salvation.

Tertullian concludes his polemics in chapter 11 of *De resurrectione carnis* by using the cosmological argument to demonstrate the power of God. He argues this way. "If God produced all things whatever out of nothing, He will be able to draw forth from nothing even the flesh which had fallen into nothing; or if He molded other things out of matter, He will be able to call forth the flesh too from somewhere else, into whatever abyss it may have been engulfed. Surely, He is most competent to re-create who created, inasmuch as it is a far greater work to have produced than to have reproduced, to have imparted a beginning, than to have maintained a continuance. On this principle, you may be quite sure that the restoration of the flesh is easier than its first formation."⁶⁰⁴ The sensibility of a talk of spiritual resurrection in this sense is not given.

In Tertullian, we understand the talk about resurrection of the spirit or soul as no different to the unity of the flesh. The eschatology interpretation of Tertullian's defense proves that resurrection cannot make sense except within the context of indivisible matter and form, body and spirit. It all means, "...the flesh is the very condition on which salvation hinges, the flesh is washed in order that the soul may be cleansed, the flesh is anointed

⁶⁰¹ *De res*, 63.

⁶⁰² Tertullian, *De res. carn.* XXXII,

⁶⁰³ Tertullian, *De res. carn.* XXXII,

⁶⁰⁴ Tertullian, *De res. Carn.* XI

that the soul may be consecrated.”⁶⁰⁵ Resurrection here is tied with the incarnation which brought about the worthiness of human flesh for salvation, having direct connection to the soul. It is tied also to the waters of baptism so that whatever is done to the body affects the soul directly. The sacramental baptism that washes the body, prepares the soul for resurrection since the body is the window to the soul.

4.3.6.3 Origen (ca.185-ca.253)

Origen⁶⁰⁶ or Adamantius “Man of Steel” as Eusebius⁶⁰⁷ preferred to call him, remains one of the best minds the intellectual world has seen. He reigned in the first half of the third century and he remains one important defender of the Christian belief in the century mentioned. Born probably in a large Christian family in Alexandria, he had rigorous studies in religious and secular classics. Origen was a student of Clement. After the flight of Clement, he took over the position of Clement and eventually became in charge of the catechetical school of Alexandria. He was appointed to head the school by Bishop Demetrius. Origen in this way succeeded Clement. His theology differs in various ways from the traditional orthodoxy of both Irenaeus and Tertullian. With the introduction of his speculative theology, Clement tried to mend fences between Pistis (faith) and Gnosis (knowledge) instead of jettisoning philosophy over board, Clement believed a proper harmonization with faith would bring a deeper penetration of faith. He however believes, “faith is something superior to knowledge and is its criterion.”⁶⁰⁸ Origen was a theologian, exegete, apologist, and a man of deep faith. He had many friends, but also just as many enemies. None had ever had it so as he did.

⁶⁰⁵ De res 9.

⁶⁰⁶ Karl Rahner, *Sämtliche Werke: Spiritualität und Theologie der Kirchenväter*, vol. III, Andreas R. Batlogg et al (eds.), Benziger, (1999), 188-194; Hugo Rahner, *Die Gottesgeburt, Die Lehre der Kirchenväter von der Geburt Christi im Herzen des Gläubigen*, in: *ZKTh* 59, (1935), 351-358.

⁶⁰⁷ Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol.II, 38.

⁶⁰⁸ Cf. Strom 2.4.15.

The impact Origen made in Christian theology may be looked at from three perspectives. We will look at his first contribution from the perspective of his development of the allegorical interpretation of the Bible. Allegorical interpretation is a hermeneutical (interpretive) method used to uncover hidden or symbolic meanings of a biblical text. This methodology is rooted in the techniques developed by Greek thinkers who attempted to overcome the problems posed by literary interpretation of ancient Greek myths. Jewish scholars such as Philo of Alexandria in the 1st century equally developed Jewish allegorical methodology. Granted, Origen is well known for the development of this methodology within Christianity, he has some place for other interpretations such as literary interpretation. This means he is not a “pure” allegorist.⁶⁰⁹ The literal interpretation of the Bible involves knowledge of the text’s original language, its literary form, historical circumstances of both the author and the recipients. Literary interpretation points to the historical reality of biblical narratives. The allegorical interpretation was dominant until the medieval times. The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century rejected most interpretations of the Bible through this methodology, preferring literary interpretation of the Bible for allegorical interpretation.⁶¹⁰ Allegorical interpretation of the Bible brings out the relationship between the events in the OT and their fulfillment in the NT. For instance, the crossing of the Red Sea in the OT is a prefigurement of Christ’s victory on the cross and resurrection. This could be compared to our escape from the hold of original sin by means of sacramental baptism. Origen insisted that the surface or banal meaning of some biblical passages should be differentiated from the other aspects of their spiritual dimensions. Texts have a double meaning.⁶¹¹ Rudolf Bultmann in the 19th century reintroduced the is-

⁶⁰⁹ Dan G. McCartney, *Literary and Allegorical Interpretation in Origen’s Contra Celsum*, in: http://www.earlychurch.org.uk/article_origen_mccartney.html (accessed 01.12.10).

⁶¹⁰ Walter Robinson II, *The „Origen“ of Allegorical Interpretation and Augustine*, in: <http://www.lastchanceministries.com/Origen.htm> (accessed 01.12.10).

⁶¹¹ Dan G. McCartney, *Literary and Allegorical Interpretation in Origen’s Contra Celsum*, *ibid.*

sue of the ‘allegory in the Scripture’ a problem he wished to address by way of de-mythology.

The second perspective of Origen’s contribution to Christian theology, is the aspect of Christology. Whether this was, a positive contribution remains debatable. However, Origen made a distinction between the divinity of the Father and that of the Son. He placed the divinity of the Son a little less in equality to that of the Father. This categorization prompted the Arian heresy. Arius emphasized Jesus’ humanity at the expense of his divinity. The first General Council of the Church in Nicaea I (325) intended counter-acting this heresy. The council defined the equality of Christ divinity with God. It did this by adopting the Greek word, “homo-ousios.” Translated into the English language, the word means ‘co-substantiation,’ that is, ‘one of the same being or nature or same substance’ with the Father. Nicaea I condemned Arius and his teaching. Arianism has many implications, the most prominent one being the denial of the salvation wrought by Christ. For Arius, God is the only one who can save creation. Since Christ is not God, he cannot save. For him, Christ is like any other creature. Like other creations, he equally needs salvation. This implies that his death and resurrection possess no saving character, it is not a saving act.

Thirdly, Origen is credited for his ingenuity especially his development of the doctrine of Apocatastasis.⁶¹² In fact, he was the first classical theologian to introduce the concept into theology. Apocatastasis emphasizes the universal salvation or restoration of creation in their original, purely spiritual state. In *De Principiis*, Origen propagates that all will be saved, sinners, those condemned to hell, demons, even Satan himself will be reconciled to God through the universal salvation made possible by the death and resurrection of the logos, the incarnate Christ. “According to Origen all punishment, whether in this world or in the next, is educative and is therefore not eternal.”⁶¹³ The synod of Constantinople in A.D. 543 rejected the idea of

⁶¹² See, DH 411.

⁶¹³ Anna David Turney, Apocatastasis, in: *New Catholic Encyclopedia* 1, (2003), 548

universal salvation that included the reconciliation of Satan and the wicked. The synod condemned Origen, his followers and all who propagate this heresy.

We do not really know much about the writings of Origen concerning the resurrection. It is likely that most of his works on the resurrection did not survive the difficult situation of the third century. However, we know his position on the resurrection from deduction, from his arguments with Celsus. Celsus was a great admirer of Gnosticism. He may have been a member. Origen engaged with Celsus in arguments in defense of the resurrection against pagan misconstruction represented by Celsus. In one of the disputes with Celsus, Origen offered proof of the resurrection by referring to the pagan adoption of the doctrine of Plato on the resurrection of Erus, the son of Armenius, who rose from the funeral pile twelve days after he had lain upon it. He also pointed to the testimony of Heraclides and many other pagans who were recorded to have risen from their tombs. These people, according to mythology, resurrected not only on the day of their burial but much later after their funeral. Origen's question was, if these pagans were able to rise from their tombs how much more the soul of Jesus who performed so many miracles while alive including raising the dead. Quoting the Gospel of John,⁶¹⁴ Origen concluded that Jesus laid down his life in order to take it again at the resurrection.⁶¹⁵ Origen did well to reply to these arguments. But he departed from the then traditional assumption that the flesh is a *conditio sine qua non* for resurrection. Of course, he has a lower view of matter, marriage and the body. He does not seem to tolerate a physical resurrection.⁶¹⁶ Unlike Tertullian, Athenagoras and others who dealt on the "physiological"⁶¹⁷ nature of the resurrection, Origen, following Plato, dwelt on the astral and spiritual nature of the soul, which has no relationship with the

⁶¹⁴ „No man takes my life from me, but i lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” (Jn 10:17-18).

⁶¹⁵ Contra Celsum 2.16.

⁶¹⁶ Dan G. McCartney, *Literarl and Allegorical Interpretation in Origen's Contra Celsum*, *ibid.*

physical or earthly body. Origen invariably evoked the spiritual aspect of the resurrection. It is not only from Methodius that we learn something about this Platonic aspect of Origen's theology that, "the soul alone is man,"⁶¹⁸ Origen himself defined man, as a "soul using a body."⁶¹⁹ He thereby, rejected the idea of a material identity of the person after the resurrection. Methodius confirmed this when he writes; "whatever is composed and consists of pure air and pure fire, and is of like substance with the angelic beings, cannot have the nature of earth and water; since it would then be earthy. And of such nature, and consisting of such things, Origen has shown that the body of man shall be which shall rise, which he also said would be spiritual."⁶²⁰ Following Clement of Alexandria, Origen maintained a similar perspective that the soul is the wholeness of human identity. It is worthy of resurrection because it bears the image of God and not the body.⁶²¹ The resurrection in the Christian perspective seems in Origen consisted in the salvation of the soul and not the body. From the above, it seems Origen does not give countenance to physical resurrection.

4.4 Summary to Early Christian Teachers

Early Christian apologists understood the resurrection as the death of death, an event of sleep that lasts for one minute and then a bodily transformation that lasts to eternity. Death and martyrdom at this period are of little meaning. This means that early Christians believe that Christ is the salvation of

⁶¹⁷ Physiologists are materialists, their interest is more on what happens to the physical body of a person after death. Tertullian believes the same physical body will be resurrected it does not matter whether the body was cannibalized, eaten by fishes of the ocean or devoured by wild beast of the forest. He insists human physical characteristics, sex, limbs even the genital organs will be restored for a proper identification of the person. Thus, though the human genital organs would be ineffective, they however, will be resurrected with the body. Cf. *De res.* 6, 32, 60.

⁶¹⁸ Cf. Methodius, *Discourse on the Resurrection*, part 3, I, IV.

⁶¹⁹ *Contra Celsum* 7. 38; *De principiis*, 4. 2.7.

⁶²⁰ Cf. Methodius, *Discourse on the Resurrection*, part 3, II, X.

⁶²¹ *Contra Celsum* 8. 49.

his people, as a result, death and loss of life does not matter, for there is no salvation outside the name under heaven given among men whereby we must be save (Acts 4:12). In fact, because of the resurrection expectation, death becomes a welcome aspect of life. Secondly, life or death does not make much difference since life is never destroyed it only passes through a process of change. Thus, life here on earth is conceived as a continuation of the same physical experience in the next. In addition, salvation is tied to the transformation of the physical body, without which, it is incomplete. With Origen this basic early orthodoxy was to take a different understanding. His contribution to our discussion lies in his invocation of the re-examination of early traditional teaching on the material continuity of the resurrected body. Origen's teaching is noticeably different from what Athenagoras thought. While Athenagoras made a distinction between the human being and animals, Origen's lack of distinction supported his idea that even animals like the human beings are subjects of salvation.

Athenagoras enquires about what makes the difference was human continuity, and the continuity of other immortal existences, plants and animals if not waking up from the sleep of the resurrection. Human beings look forward to the sequel of life, a change from mortality to immortality. The reconstitution of the physical human body at the resurrection, differentiates human death from the death of irrational animals.⁶²² Justin Martyr, Tertullian and some others brought to the centre of their theology the issue of the cannibalized bodies⁶²³ and what happens to them at resurrection. On the fate of the cannibalized bodies, Origen departs from the reconstitution concept of resurrected body, to a calling up of identifiable spiritual body. Referring to (1Cor 15:36-44)⁶²⁴ that says, what is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable and spiritual thereby alluding to a spiritual transformation of matter, the body.⁶²⁵ Explaining to Celsus the deep meaning of Christianity and the resurrection, Origen says that Christians believe in different types of

⁶²² De res 16.

⁶²³ De res 4, 8, 32.

body what will be resurrected is but that other type of body, the spiritual body transformed from matter by the divine word.⁶²⁶

This argument takes the Fathers of the Church to another level of understanding of the resurrection which of course did not contradict early orthodoxy neither did it totally reject the insight of Origen. At this point, let us turn to the Western Latin Fathers of the church that came after Origen. We shall only look at two of these Fathers, Augustine of Hippo and St. Thomas of Aquinas.

4.5 Augustine (354-430) and Western Latin Thought

The differences in the theology of the resurrection of the early apologetic Fathers are characterized by three phrases. The phrases are, “identity, entirety, and immortality.” It is sometimes difficult to understand how these phrases function within the context of their usage. However, the texts of Augustine reshape, sharpen, and connect these early discussions to the middle Ages discussion on the resurrection.

Born in Thagaste in North Africa, Aurelius Augustinus became the bishop of Hippo (modern Algeria) in 395. The first four centuries of Christianity

⁶²⁴ “Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. Not all flesh is alike, but there is one flesh for human beings, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. There are both heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one thing, and that of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; indeed, star differs from star in glory. Therefore, it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, ‘the first man, Adam, became a living being’; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual.”

⁶²⁵ *Contra Celsum* 5.22.

⁶²⁶ *Contra Celsum* 4.57.

paid attention mainly to the practice of apologetics and the defense of the Christian faith against heretics, pagans and Gnostics. The thought of Augustine in the 5th century and his concept of resurrection of the body made of flesh in the coming world were to dominate Western theology for centuries. The major contribution of Augustine could be said to be in the combination of apologetics with a systematic development of Christian theology. He was keen to give a systematic definition to Christian teachings, the doctrine of the resurrection in particular. According to him, “no doctrine of the Christian faith is so vehemently and so obstinately opposed as the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh” (Ps lxxxviii, sermo ii, n.5). The awareness of this ambiguity induced him into attempting a systematic synthesis of Christian thought on the resurrection, an attempt that yielded the production of three of his major works: *De civitate Dei* (On the city of God, book 22 deals particularly on resurrection), *The Enchiridion* (especially chapter 23), and the *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*.⁶²⁷

With a subtle variation consequent upon the implication of Origen’s doctrine of the resurrection, Augustine continued the early patristic exegesis on the resurrection as a restoration of the selfsame material body destroyed at death. He maintains a restoration and material identity between the dead body and the resurrected body. Which means, at “the resurrection, the substance of our bodies, however, disintegrated shall be entirely reunited.”⁶²⁸ It is interesting to note that the *Enchiridion* Augustine made this doctrine a fundamental Christian principle. In the first place, it was difficult for Augustine to find a logic to express and explain the sensitive doctrine of the resurrection. However, in the absence of logical explanation, he defined and declared the doctrine as a basic principle of hope for all Christians. This is the way he expressed it, “now, as to the resurrection of the body ... the bod-

⁶²⁷ Unlike the city of God, which is an apologetic work and a tale of two cities (the city of the world and the city of God), *De Cura pro mortuis gerenda* pre-empted and provided solutions to the many arguments that will prop-up in the middle Ages on the resurrection.

⁶²⁸ *De civitate Dei*, 22.20; *Enchiridion*, 88.

ies of all men, both those who shall be born, both those who have died and those who shall die, shall be raised again, no Christian ought to have the shadow of a doubt.”⁶²⁹ Like Athenagoras and other ancient thinkers, there is a sense of a continuation of material undertone of resurrection here. Unlike the early apologists, this material identity is limited in a sense. Though the body will be resurrected as a whole, it is only those essential for proper identification that will be restored since the restoration of every material endowment from creation will be monstrous and incredible.⁶³⁰

What is the essence of this restoration? For Augustine, the restoration of essential bodily parts adds to beauty and not essentially, for utility, it is for comeliness rather than necessity.⁶³¹ In this way, Augustine comes closer to Tertullian and differs from Origen and the other hetero-somatists. Origen belongs to first classical hetero-somatist. Hetero-somatism teaches the resurrection in a new body. According to hetero-somatists, Christians at the general resurrection will not have their physical bodies restored in a glorified form. They would rather be provided with new bodies. This opinion is contrary to Catholic dogmatic teaching though it remains a fundamental doctrine of the Anglican Communion and some other protestant denominations.⁶³² In its catechesis, the Catholic Church “insisted that Jesus’ risen body was the body that had lain in the tomb, and likewise that in the general resurrection men will rise in their earthly bodies, though now transfigured. Thus this view affirms a strong continuity between the natural and the spiritual body: as the seed has mysteriously become the wheat – instead of perishing and something else being created in its place – so the physical body is mysteriously transformed into a body of glory.”⁶³³

⁶²⁹ Enchiridion, 84

⁶³⁰ Enchiridion, 89

⁶³¹ De civitate Dei, 22. 24.

⁶³² Cf. Murdoch E. Dahl, *The Resurrection of the Body, A Study of 1Corinthians 15*, London, (1962), 7 and 46.

⁶³³ John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life*, 185-6.

Going back to Tertullian, we notice how he insisted that minute organs, even the genitals, would be restored at their parts and location. In Tertullian's opinion, mouths and teeth would be restored even though they may not be used,⁶³⁴ perhaps because their absence will present a ridiculous, ugly and horrible appearance or because their absence may bring the truth of objective identity to question. On the other hand, Augustine attacks the Platonic argument that physical weight or earthly body cannot inhabit heaven. He defended the bodily resurrection by saying that all depends on the power of God who created the earth out of nothing and remains its invisible foundation. By this same ability to support the created universe, resurrected bodies in the same way will be equipped with agility, mobility, impassibility and lightness.⁶³⁵ Like Origen,⁶³⁶ Augustine followed Paul's classification of bodies (1Cor 15:39-40).

He calls the earthly transformed bodies, celestial or spiritual bodies and mentions them as; incorruptible, unblemished, unencumbered, and impassible. Augustine associated the spiritual bodies only with the bodies of the saints whose agility shall be as great as their happiness. He warns that the concept of spiritual bodies does not confer to the resurrected bodies the qualities of a spirit, thus spiritual bodies are "undoubtedly bodies not spirits," which means the dead are to be raised not as mere spirits rather bodies of physical flesh.⁶³⁷ The ability to resurrect, lies in God's power to do all things. In all these, Augustine seems to be saying that, doubt about bodily resurrection is doubt about the omnipotence of God. However, since God is a perfect worker, he can allow the human body to pass into eternity and dwell in heaven. The way Augustine handled the theology of the resur-

⁶³⁴ De res, 61.

⁶³⁵ Serm 242, 8, 11; De civitate Dei, 13. 18; 22. 11.

⁶³⁶ Contra Celsum, 4.57 „For we, too, know that there are „bodies celestial, and bodies terrestrial;’ and that ‘the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial another;’ and that even the glory of the celestial bodies is not alike.”

⁶³⁷ De civitate Dei, xiii. 22-33; Enchiridion, 91.

rection of the fleshy body seems to have superseded that of Jerome and Tertullian. The correctness of this argument may be attributed to the influence of the Augustinian doctrine of the fleshy body in the middle Ages. His theology brought about a major shift in medieval theological discussions. Medieval discussions were centered on some problems he raised. These problems include: What will be the fate of aborted children and fetuses at the resurrection? In the cases of Siamese twins, will they be two persons or just a single individual at resurrection? What kind of sex shall the human person take at the resurrection? Will they be male or female? What about height, will the dead have the same height as they possessed here on earth? Moreover, their age, what age will the dead assume at the resurrection? Will they have to eat?⁶³⁸ Building on the foundation of Augustine and the early patristic writers, the medieval period steps up the investigation on the connection between the present physical body with the resurrected body.

The medieval writers tried to capture the fundamental Christian truth about the resurrection. Christian belief about the dead and after life does not emphasize the restoration of a physical body that is devoid of the soul and vice versa. Christian doctrine on the resurrection lays premium on integral cooperation and resurrection. Christian teaching holds that, whatever God has proposed, whatever promise of salvation he has made to the soul, was not simply made to it alone but to the body also.⁶³⁹ The medieval thinkers recall once again the truth of eternal existence of spiritual beings, whose identification is defined by the presence of appropriate organs of expression, the body that bears the same relation to the same spiritual entity,⁶⁴⁰ the spirit. According to Leslie W. Barnard, in as much as the early second century writers talk of resurrection as physico-chemical constituted existence, what is realized by this thought is the continuity of the form which is comprehensive composition, that is, the human person. The continuous insistence by

⁶³⁸ Enchiridion, chapters 23-29, *De civitate Dei*, bks 13, 19-22,

⁶³⁹ *De res*, 5.

⁶⁴⁰ Bernard W. Leslie, *Athenagoras*, 134.

early writers on the concept of composition after death, says how much they deny the idea that resurrection is about the existence of ghosts. The resurrection is not a continuation of spiritual phenomena; it demands appropriate attention of the physical body. In this perspective, the resurrection is about the unity of the form or personality called *compositum*. In addition, “once the belief that man is a *compositum* of body and spirit is accepted then it would seem that belief in a resurrection of the body, in some form, is a necessary corollary on any Christian view of human destiny.”⁶⁴¹

At this conclusion, we turn to the medieval times and its invocation of Augustine whose “various discussions of the weightlessness, beauty, impassibility, and incorruption as will gain in heaven form the background to the doctrine of the dowries of the glorified body developed in the high Middle Ages. His repeated emphasis on the yearning of the separated soul for the body becomes an important component of the medieval notion of flesh as essential to personhood.”⁶⁴² Appealing to the concept of indispensability in the matter-form relationship, scholastic theology emphasized how matter (body) as well as form (soul) yearns for one another. Prominent among the scholastics is St. Thomas Aquinas, whose theology on resurrection we shall briefly examine.

4.5.1 Aquinas and Medieval Theology before the Reformation

St. Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1224/5-1274) was born in the castle of Roccasecca in Italy. The angelic doctor (as he is called because of his proficiency in theological writings and matters) joined the “Order of Preachers” or “Dominicans” in 1244. His family objected to his choice of joining the Dominicans for several reasons, including the fact that he was very young at the time. Thomas Aquinas remains one of the strongest voices and intelligent

⁶⁴¹ Bernard W. Leslie, *Athenagoras*, 134.

⁶⁴² Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity*, 100; See *De civitate Dei*, 13. 20.

heads of the medieval era. His influence right up to our present Christian theology still holds sway.

Our concern in this part of our discussion is to examine how the medieval era connected the patristic epoch and the theological thoughts before the reformation on the fate of the dead. The patristic era provided for the middle Ages the enabling foundation needed to adopt the rubrics of Greek philosophy for the benefit of Christian theology. Thomas Aquinas was one character that adopted the ingredients discovered in Greek philosophy, to provide the connection for the theology of the resurrection. Because Thomas Aquinas used the rudiments of ‘soul’ survival discovered in Greek philosophy in his theology, it is not arguable that he remained one medieval thinker who was able to vividly convey the understanding of the resurrection. Through his adoption of the essentials in Greek thinking, he was able to assure humanity that it will not be stored up after death in caves and chambers like chattels. Rather, humanity will return to immortality, which is a divine kind of life. Aquinas theology of the resurrection assures humanity, that that person whose love embraces us all, will clasp it⁶⁴³ at death by giving it resurrection.

Thomas Aquinas has numerous prominent writings to his credit. Amongst them, are the *Summa contra Gentiles* (1264) and *Summa Theologiae* (1267). Though he began the *Summa Theologiae*, it is doubtful whether Aquinas himself completed this work. The *Summa contra Gentiles* is a medieval apologetic and a basic fundamental theological work.⁶⁴⁴ Book 4 of this influential writing, treated the resurrection without extra ordinary specification to the Christ event. The primary purpose of this work includes; firstly, equipping Christian missionary workers with arguments showing the superiority of the Christian religion when compared with other religions. Secondly, making converts to Christianity, especially among the Jews, Muslims, and atheists. Thirdly, the book is directed against those who have been

⁶⁴³ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 130-1.

⁶⁴⁴ Wolfgang Klausnitzer, *Gott und Wirklichkeit*, 127-8.

diversely affected by the mundane philosophy of Averroes. Another point to mention here is that the *Summa contra Gentiles* enters into apologetics showing how inferior the Koran is to the Bible particularly in understanding life after death and the resurrection.

In chapter 83 of the book, Aquinas makes non-sense of the idea of bodily resurrection, the very opposite discovered in Jewish, Saracens⁶⁴⁵ even in Islamic religions with regard to active life and the usage of sexual organs. Resurrection according to Aquinas, is characterized by an abrupt halting of sensual activities of previous life that betray resurrection as reanimation or resuscitation. According to him: "From what has been set down it follows that among those who rise there will be no use of sexual activity or of food ... which means, all the business of the active life, it seems ordered to the use of food, to sexual activity, to the other necessities of the corruptible life, will come to a halt. Therefore, only the occupation of the contemplative life will persist in the resurrection."⁶⁴⁶ Unlike Aquinas, in Islam, sensory activities are still active after resurrection. Thus Sandra Miesel writes, in Islam "sensory pleasures are multiplied a hundredfold but the chief pleasure of paradise (gain after resurrection) is the society of the blessed, in perfect peace and joy. Each woman will have her favorite husband and each man will have two wives, plus the company of virginal heavenly brides called *houris*."⁶⁴⁷ According to Aquinas all will rise in due quantity, there will be a

⁶⁴⁵ *Summa contra Gentiles* 4. 84, 14, (henceforth SG).

⁶⁴⁶ SG 4. 83, 1, 24.

⁶⁴⁷ Sandra Miesel, *Islam and the Hereafter*, in: *Catholic International, The Documentary Window on the World*, vol. 15, no.1, (2004), 74. (Italics mine).

Christianity and Islam share some kind of relationship. They share the same idea of monotheism. That is, both believe in one God Almighty, creator of heaven and earth, things visible and invisible. Both faiths believe in the prophets, in the remission of sin and in eschatology, the last four things, death, judgment, heaven, hell. Christianity, Islam looks forward to the end of the world and a time of general resurrection with reward and punishment as the climax of eschatology (Surah 101:5). Christianity venerates the Person of the Living Logos (Jesus). Through this way, they venerate the Bible without regarding itself as the religion of the Book. Islam on the other hand calls itself the religion of the Book.

relationship between physical life and resurrected existence. Even though there will be a type of physicality, this physical life does not allow for flux. Which is a characteristic of change and imperfection in which copulation and the use of the sexual organs is most prominent.

Resurrected life is marked by immortality and perfection while earthly life is dotted by corruption. Aquinas faults Plato, and differs from Origen's conception of spiritual resurrection. His analysis suggested that for the identity of the resurrected body it must be the same body with the present life. For him, resurrection, short of totalistic and holistic presence of the complexities of numerical human identity parts is not worth the implication. If the resurrected body lacks flesh, bones and other necessary component parts, the one who rises will not be numerically said to be the same person.⁶⁴⁸ The difficulty the language of numerical identity possesses was approached by the application of Aristotelian principle of participation that was finely adopted by Aquinas for doing Christian theology. Matter and form, as a Aristotelian metaphysical concept, was brought into fulcrum. Aquinas gave these Aristotelian concepts a radical, existential interpretation as substance and *Esse*. The operative words, substance and *esse* according to Aquinas, participate in a most complex way. The principle of participation (*partem capere*, to grasp a part) involves the cohering in an indeterminate way of matter and form, *esse* and existence, act and potency, body and soul.

In *Contra Gentiles*, Aquinas vividly points out the above fact when he writes: "In things composed of matter and form, neither the matter nor the form nor even being itself can be termed that which is. Yet the form can be called that by which it is, inasmuch as it is the principle of being; the whole substance itself, however, is that which is. And being itself is that by which the substance is called a being."⁶⁴⁹ This implies that potency is not matter alone but matter and form together, act is not act of matter alone but of matter co-joined with form. As matter, the body naturally is subject to corrup-

⁶⁴⁸ SG 4. 84. 7.

⁶⁴⁹ SG 2. 54. 6.

tion but in the case of human nature, after creation, God allows matter or the human body to be something supreme that is above due natural principle, which is immortality of a type. This means, matter “is suitably adapted to its form with the result that, as the life of the soul is perpetual, so the body could live perpetually by the soul.”⁶⁵⁰ Aquinas relates the soul to the body in the same way form is related to matter. There is a determinate participation between matter and form, so too the soul naturally is united to the body and the essential form of the body. It is contrary to the nature of the soul to exist outside of the body, it is impossible for both to survive and exist without the other. Then, resurrection of the soul demands future resurrection of the body.⁶⁵¹ In this way, Aquinas is said to have refuted what he calls perverse ideas of spiritual resurrection propagated by Origen, although the idea of spiritual resurrection was actually not first propagated by Origen. Plato has thought of the subordination of the body and the superiority of the soul. This thought enticed him to talk about the resurrection of an indeterminate entity, at least called the soul. Crito in Plato’s *Phaedo* asked Socrates “how shall we bury you?” This is how Socrates amusingly answers “In any way you like, if you can catch me...”⁶⁵² Here, Plato vehemently vindicates the eternity of the soul by establishing its immortality.

A person for Plato is a composition of soul and body, escaping the body, which is its prison, the soul, ‘resurrects’ into immortality. It allows its tomb to go through material flux and biological decay. This opinion of Plato was rejected by Aristotle who was one of his most outstanding students. Aristotle taught the co-operative unity of existence between the body and the soul, which we may refer in Christian theology as “holistic” dualism. This dualism is termed in Thomism as substance dualism. Aquinas appropriated the Aristotelian theory of hylomorphism in combination with Augustinian an-

⁶⁵⁰ SG 4.81.1.

⁶⁵¹ SG 4.79.10.

⁶⁵² *Phaedo* 115c.

thropology.⁶⁵³ The theory of hylomorphism describes the indispensability of matter and form, body and soul. Thomas adopting this theory describes the soul as already a surviving entity though not without the body. The word hylomorphism is from two Greek words, “hyle” meaning, stuff and “morphe” meaning, form. The words explain the strict interconnectedness between the body and soul.

For Aquinas, a person is a whole entity, a unity. People are substances.⁶⁵⁴ They are souls, they are an indivisible unity, and they are single in the strictest sense of the word. They are simple and never complex or multiple. The soul remains the internal form of the body⁶⁵⁵ and acknowledges the materiality of the body that gives it identity. Even though the body co-operates almost at the same level with the soul, Aquinas still rejects some of Aristotle’s ideas especially the idea that there is nothing in the mind that did not first take place in the senses, he said it this way “... the senses are for the sake of the intelligence, and not the other way about. The senses, moreover, are a certain imperfect participation of the intelligence; wherefore, according to their natural origin, they proceed from the intelligence as the imperfect from the perfect.”⁶⁵⁶ Aquinas also rejects Aristotle’s teaching that “only the soul survives after death.”⁶⁵⁷ At this point, Aquinas’ opinions vary both from Aristotle’s but particularly from Origen, who seems to have followed Plato on spiritual resurrection, like many early and some later Christian teachers.⁶⁵⁸ Thus Aquinas writes: “There are, however, some who are perverse in their understanding of this and they do not believe in the future res-

⁶⁵³ Beth Felker Jones, *Marks of His Wounds: Gender Politics and Bodily Resurrection*, Oxford, (2007), 73.

⁶⁵⁴ *STh I. q.75, a.4.*

⁶⁵⁵ *STh I. q.76, a.1.*

⁶⁵⁶ *STh Ia. q.77, a. 8.*

⁶⁵⁷ Leon McKenzie, *Pagan Resurrection Myths and the Resurrection of Jesus*, Charlottesville, (1997), 148.

⁶⁵⁸ John Calvin during the reformation talks of the inherent danger in the Aristotelian hylomorphism adopted by Aquinas. For him the scholastic theory “binds the soul to the body so that it may not subsist without it.” Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.5.5.

urrection of bodies, but attempt to ascribe what we read about the resurrection in the Scripture to a spiritual resurrection in which some arise from the death by grace.”⁶⁵⁹ Both those who deny the resurrection as a bodily event and those others like Hymenaeus and Pibilebus that assumed it to be spiritual occurrence of a long past,⁶⁶⁰ these people, according to Aquinas, are in great error and their teachings are equally contrary to the truth of faith.

Aquinas concludes, “Man is not a soul only, but something composed of a soul and body.”⁶⁶¹ Adopting Aristotelian thought on matter and form relationship, Aquinas succeeded in illustrating human psychomatic unity. Thus, the Aristotelian hylomorphism, that is, the principle that explains the openness of materials to identity without requesting a comprehensive and active reassembly of bits and stuffs⁶⁶² as in early materialists helped Aquinas achieved two things. In the first place, the adoption of this concept helped him to arrive at a logical conclusion on the resurrection of the body in the same way Augustine and the early physiologists did. However, unlike these physiologists or materialists, Aquinas has helped us to understand more what resurrection means in the sense used by Joseph Ratzinger as “dialogical” in terms of “Christological” logic of participation. Humanity intrinsically lives a participated, related life as *anima forma corporis*. This means that as a created being, that is the human being is fashioned in relationship of participation with God. This participation is defined in terms of indestructibility and indivisibility.⁶⁶³ The above statement summarizes human life as indestructible. The expression is based on the point that Christian life is primarily in terms of Christology. Hence, the resurrection is equally defined within the concept of Christological experience.

⁶⁵⁹ SG 4.79.5.

⁶⁶⁰ SG 4.79.6.

⁶⁶¹ STh 1a. q.75. a.4; Augustine, *De Civ. Dei* xix, 3.

⁶⁶² Beth Felker Jones, *Marks of His Wounds: Gender politics and Bodily Resurrection*, 74.

⁶⁶³ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 154.

Aquinas, as already mentioned, understands man neither as a spiritual soul nor as only a physical body. Whatever soul may mean, for Aquinas it has the attributes of substances, its existence even after a separation from the body entails equally existence of the body.⁶⁶⁴ For resurrection to have taken place, Aquinas requires that separated souls must return to the bodies they once occupied, there is no question of un-bodied souls or abandoned bodies. Actually, the body or matter is the principle of individuation of every form and because every soul yearns for identification, the soul cannot remold itself independently of the body without losing its identity. This has two implications: First, every soul in this sense must unite with its particular body for identity. Second, there is no possibility for the soul to adopt a different body at the resurrection even if the body has been cannibalized. Even if the body was eaten up by a wild beast, scattered and shattered in bits and pieces. At resurrection, the soul will definitely take up bodies proper to it.⁶⁶⁵ After all, the soul is, the soul of his body, both are simultaneously one and whole, indifferent, inseparable, tightly united in indestructible order.⁶⁶⁶ Thomas arrives at this conclusion from philosophical observation of the behavioral relationship between matter and form. This implies, that the soul cannot remold itself independently of the body without losing its identity. Nevertheless, the human body over time passes through physical changes necessitated by chances of growth and perhaps sickness. Like Augustine⁶⁶⁷ Thomas concludes, “materially, the parts come and go, and this does not prevent a human being from being numerically one from the beginning of his life until the end.”⁶⁶⁸ Before his death, Thomas Aquinas declared the

⁶⁶⁴ STh 1a. q.76, a.5, 6.

⁶⁶⁵ Aquinas in this sense tiles with Augustine whose opinion suggests the difficulty envisaged by the resurrection of the cannibalized even though he employs the omnipotence of God to do everything including bringing the pieced and scattered bits into whole again at resurrection. Cf. *De civitate Dei* 22. 20, 21 and 22.

⁶⁶⁶ Cf. Karl Barth, *The Church Dogmatics*, III/2, *The Doctrine of Creation*, Part One, G. W. Bromily, (ed.), Edinburg, (1958), 325.

⁶⁶⁷ *De civitate Dei*, 22. 15.

⁶⁶⁸ SG 4. 81.4157; see 119.1 obj. 5.

doctrine of the resurrection a necessary doctrine of the Christian faith. He urged all to believe that there shall be resurrection of the dead.⁶⁶⁹ This declaration set Thomas apart from Augustine and early Christian apologists about the resurrection.

4.5.2 Martin Luther (1483-1546) and the Reformation

Theologians and historians sometimes narrow the actual event of the reformation between the years of 1500-1700. The word 'reformation' expresses the ecclesiastical reform activities within Western Europe that owe its birth to with Martin Luther (Wittenberg, Germany), Huldry Zwingli (Zurich, Switzerland) and John Calvin (Paris, France). The reformists were motivated by different reasons nevertheless; one common reason amongst them was a concern to reform the Church as a structural institution. Internal reformation means influencing the Church's orthodoxy. However, the Church reformation consciousness eventually led to the complexity of addressing a whole range of social, political, economical even cultural issues. In the case of Luther, his reformation movement started first as an academic based reformation. He was concerned in reforming the academic teaching of theology in Wittenberg University, (Germany).

However, the 31st October nailing of the so-called 95 Theses brought to light his ambition for a reformation. The Theses rejected the practice of indulgence within the Church. This rejection attracted attention to his socio-political and religious reformation ambition. The Diet of Worms later excommunicated Luther in 1521 for teaching "false doctrine." Uncertain of his safety, he took flight to a safe haven in Wartburg castle. In 1522, Luther returns to Wittenberg to engage in a debate with a close associate, Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt over iconoclasm (image and status) within Christian worship. It was this same Bodenstein in 1519 that defended Luther's position of the 95 Theses against Johann Eck, a very strong critic of Luther, in a debate otherwise known as Leipzig Disputation. Whilst Luther was still

⁶⁶⁹ SG 4.79, 4.

in hiding, Bodenstein continued with the reform in Wittenberg. Luther later, however, termed Bodenstein's teaching on iconoclasm as idolatrous teaching that is capable of destabilizing the reformation process.

Consequently, Luther returned to engage Bodenstein in a debate. Luther's reformation actually started in 1519. From this moment on, Luther saw himself not only as a theological religious reformer but also as a social and political liberator. On the liberating role of Luther Heinrich Heine writes, "But this Martin Luther didn't just give us freedom of movement, he also gave us the means for movement; for he gave the Spirit a Body. He gave the Word to Thought. He created the German language. This happened through his translation of the Bible."⁶⁷⁰ Luther and the other reformers of later years indeed charted a part for theology.

The reformation era however did not record much of a significant change in the orthodoxy of the doctrine of the final resurrection. In fact, instead of a new teaching, the orthodox conception of the resurrection was generally accepted by every Christian group. Martin Luther did not seriously question it⁶⁷¹ neither was it refuted by John Calvin (1509-64). This implies the reformers were convinced the physical organism that constitutes the human person, namely the body, will be completely restored on the last day at resurrection.⁶⁷² Moreover, this was to happen to all whether righteous or reprobate. In this way, traditional orthodoxy and the Reformation movement see no ambiguity in the words of Daniel "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dn 12:2).⁶⁷³

⁶⁷⁰ Heinrich Heine, *Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke*, vol. 8, Manfred Windfuhr (ed.), Hoffmann und Campe, (1973), 38-9; Orrin W. Robinson, *Luther's Bible and the Emergence of Standard German*, in: *A New History of German Literature*, David E. Wellberry et al (eds.), London, (2004), 231-6.

⁶⁷¹ Paul Althaus, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers*, Gütersloher, ⁵(1980), 343-9; Lisa Freinkel, *Martin Luther and the Whole Man*, in: *A New History of German Literature*, 225-31.

⁶⁷² Murdoch E. Dahl, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 37.

The implication of the whole theology of Martin Luther especially on the resurrection is based on the holistic nature of the human being. Luther's theology therefore may be called the theology of the "whole man" "totus homo" (Totus homo peccator, totus homo justus: man exist wholly a sinner and wholly a saint). His theology of a total human emphasizes the fact that whether the human being is a saint or sinner, he or she depends on God's Grace alone for salvation. The doctrine of justification remains a central point of his religious teaching. Grace, in Luther's understanding, is the implication of what God can do. Grace in this way is not merited, it is granted, salvation is benefitted, it is gratuitously given. Salvation as the implication of what God can do includes God's ability to save sinners, teaching the stupid, enriching the poor, and raising the dead.⁶⁷⁴ Like early traditional teachers on the resurrection, Luther understands resurrection to take place in the body. He, however, joins death and resurrection together and understands it as a deep dreamless unconscious sleep.⁶⁷⁵ Using the metaphor of sleep, Luther sees the death of a Christian as one who sleeps in the bosom of Christ.⁶⁷⁶ "For just as one who falls asleep and reaches morning unexpectedly when he awakes, without knowing what has happened to him ... we shall suddenly rise on the last day without knowing how we have come into death and through death."⁶⁷⁷ Again, he strongly emphasizes the physicality of bodily resurrection when he writes, "We shall sleep, until He

⁶⁷³ Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion, A New Translation*, by Henry Beveridge, bk., III, chapter 25, no. 7.

⁶⁷⁴ WA 56.427.3-7 (Romans commentary); Graham Tomlin, *The Power of the Cross: Theology and the Death of Christ in Paul, Luther and Paschal*, Caslisle, (1999), 183.

⁶⁷⁵ Paul Althaus, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers*, Gütersloh, ⁵(1980), 346-7.

⁶⁷⁶ WA 43. 361, 2.18; Paul Althaus, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers*, 345.

⁶⁷⁷ „Wenn die Toten am Jüngsten Tag erweckt werden, dann wissen sie, wie ein Erwachender am Morgen, weder wo sie waren noch wie lange sie geruht haben“ „Denn gleichwie der nicht weiß, wie ihm geschieht, wer einschläft und kommt zu Morgen unversehens, wenn er aufwacht, also werden wir plötzlich auferstehen am Jüngsten Tage, da wir nicht wissen, wie wir in den Tod und durch den Tod kommen sind.“ Martin Luther, WA 17 II, 235,17; Paul Althaus, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers*, 347.

comes and knocks on the little grave and says, ‘Doctor Martin, get up!’ Then I shall rise in a moment, and be with him forever.”⁶⁷⁸

Here, one notices that Luther sees death in terms of sleep, and resurrection as waking up in the same physical organism that went to sleep. Luther here confirms the thoughts of early fathers on material continuity of the same selfness. According to Luther:

“we should learn to view our death in the right light so that we need not become alarmed on account of it, as unbelief does; because in Christ it is indeed not death, but a fine, sweet and brief sleep, which brings us release from this vale of tears, from sin and from the fear and extremity of real death and from all the misfortunes of this life, and we shall be secure and without care, rest sweetly and gently for a brief moment, as on a sofa, until the time when he shall call and awaken us together with all his dear children to his eternal glory and joy ... Hence, we shall censure ourselves that we were surprised or alarmed at such a sleep in the hour of death, and suddenly come alive out of the grave and from decomposition, and entirely well, fresh, with a pure, clear glorified life, meet our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the clouds.”⁶⁷⁹

The tradition of the early teaching on the doctrine of resurrection presents a dogma of the immortality of the soul as that which does not exist on its own but essentially as the form of the human body. One may at this point ask how far Luther went upholding the continuity of this orthodoxy.

From the early Hebrew understanding of the person, until the time of the Councils, the human person is viewed as an indivisibly immortal entity. The soul was mentioned to be immortal for the first time in the general Council

⁶⁷⁸ „Wir sollen schlafen, bis er kommt und klopft an das Gräblein und spricht: Doktor Martinus, stehe auf! Da werde ich in einem Augenblick auferstehen und werde ewiglich mit ihm fröhlich sein.“ Cf. Martin Luther, WA 37, 151, 8; Paul Althaus, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers*, 347.

⁶⁷⁹ Martin Luther, *A Compend of Luther’s Theology*, Hugh Thomson Kerr, Jr., (ed.), Philadelphia, (1943), 242.

of Vienne. The decree of that council reads. „We reject as erroneous and contrary to the truth of the catholic faith every doctrine or proposition rashly asserting that the substance of the ration or intellectual soul is not of itself and essentially the form of the human body, or casting doubt on this matter.... We define that anyone who presumes henceforth to assert, defend or hold stubbornly that the rational or intellectual soul is not the form of the human body of itself and essentially, is to be considered a heretic.“⁶⁸⁰ Pope Clement V convoked this Council. The Council however, did not define the doctrine of the resurrection as a dogma until just before the events of the reformation when it was formerly declared a dogma of faith in the fifth Lateran Council (1512-17). Luther’s introduction of the “intermediate state,” the sleep of the soul, calls into question the assumption that the soul is immortal. Either the unconscious sleep de-emphasizes immortality of the soul and emphasizes annihilation that calls for God’s power of miracle to create anew by knocking at “Dr. Martin’s little grave and say get up” or it breeds anew the propagated Platonic dualism of created nature.

One sees the sleep of the soul in Luther explaining a total separation of the body from the soul. At death, the soul separates from the body, exists unconsciously and sleeps without the body in the bosom of Christ until the morning of resurrection when it unites once again with the body. Traditional orthodox teaching however, places emphasis on the day of resurrection at the sound of the trumpet, Jesus the Savior coming and transforming the weak body into a mould of his own glorified body (Phil 3:20-21). This evokes the sense of totality, the human person is not a soul, and resurrection excludes the specification of soul or body. In this way, the mentioning of the soul assumed by some readers in terms of dualism in NT only assesses the autonomy, the all inclusiveness of the body vis-à-vis the soul. This assumption emphasizes once again that both the NT and Paul speak not of the resurrection of neither the body nor the soul per se but of the dead encom-

⁶⁸⁰ See, The Council of Vienne (1311-1312), decree 1. Cf. Norman P. Tanner, Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, Volume 1. Washington D.C., (1990).

passing the body and soul. The NT in this way brings to clarity the meaning of death as something that happens to the whole person and the hope of resurrection entailing a participation of the whole person in union with Christ (2Kor 5:6-8; Phil 1:23).⁶⁸¹ If the soul of the dead is in the hands of God and his Christ, which implies imperishability, uniqueness and immortality, there is a tendency to wonder about the idea of the unconscious sleep of death.

For Luther, the dead in Christ sleeps until the day of the resurrection. Before this time, the soul unconsciously sleeps, in the experience of the unconscious sleep; 'the soul goes out of existence' to be re-created again with the body. The moment of this recreation, is the time that Luther understands as the day of the resurrection. Without equivocation, this argument strongly resumes once again, the dualism of the person propagated in Greek philosophy adopted by some Fathers before Augustine. One more attempt to understand Luther necessitates posing yet another question. Did Luther actually oppose the spiritualism we see in Origen that continued in the medieval era? Martin Luther indeed emphasized the resurrection faith on the immortality of the soul by proposing the distinction of the soul from the body. He projected the superiority of the soul by defining death as the separation of the body from the soul. Finally, Luther maintains that the soul exists without the body until the day of resurrection.⁶⁸² The dead continue to sleep without their bodies until the day of resurrection when Christ will wake them up then they will receive their bodies. This teaching lays the foundation of doubt to orthodoxy, as far as Luther accesses the dead and the soul as a free-standing spirit, his theology will be continually considered impetus to Hegel's absolute spirit. It revolves around dualism and culminates in the annihilation of the soul by the unconscious sleep.

Lisa Freinkel warns against misreading Luther's whole man by modern readers, by insisting that Luther's reading, misrepresents and deepens the NT within the Greek Neoplatonic frame. This means, Luther indirectly

⁶⁸¹ Paul Althaus, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers*, 345.

⁶⁸² Paul Althaus, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers*, 346.

highlighted once again, the strife between flesh and spirit, between mind and body, and between material and immaterial realities.⁶⁸³ Franz-Josef Nocke has added another element of opposition to Luther's protestant theology. Contrary to Luther, Nocke writes that, 'resurrection in death means that the whole human being dies at death and not only a part of them. However, when someone dies, God immediately resurrects the whole human being so that there is no interval of waiting between death and resurrection. This shows, that there is thus neither a disembodied soul existing in the interval between death and general resurrection, nor a moment in which the person ceases to exist until recreated by God as Luther claims.'⁶⁸⁴ The fact that Luther embraced the Neo-platonic reforms of Erasmus, his theology of resurrection and the sleep of the soul was rejected even among his own circle and by the Lutheran church.⁶⁸⁵ This was mainly because it cast doubt on the usefulness of the soul and begins the contradictory interpretation of the soul in our contemporary time,⁶⁸⁶ one that tends to reject not only immortality of the soul but the resurrection of the body. If "sleep is meant to express the temporary suspension of the existence of human being, then that human being in his self identity simply exists no longer."⁶⁸⁷ The fifth Lateran Council and the Council of Trent, respectively condemned the implication of Luther's teaching on the resurrection. The fifth Lateran Council Papa Bull, "Apostolici Regiminis" was issued on 19th December, 1513, by Leo X.

The Bull is generally understood to be formulated against the teaching that the soul is mortal which is contrary to the catholic doctrine of the immortality of the soul. The Bull was mainly directed against Pietro Pomponazzi and certain Aristotelian philosophers, who taught that the mortality of the hu-

⁶⁸³ Lisa Freinkel, *Martin Luther and the Whole Man*, 225-231.

⁶⁸⁴ Cf. Franz-Josef Nocke, *Eschatologie*, in: *Handbuch der Dogmatik 2*. Theodor Schneider (ed.), Düsseldorf, ³(2006), 458.

⁶⁸⁵ Cf. Hans Emil Weber, *Reformation, Orthodoxie und Rationalismus 1,2*, Gütersloh, (1940), 241, in: Paul Althaus, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers*, 348.

⁶⁸⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 247.

⁶⁸⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 251.

man soul and that humanity is animated by one single mortal soul. Condemning this teaching, Leo X referred to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul as formulated by the Council of Vienne (1311) and published by Clement V (1304-14). The Council of Vienne defines the soul as the form of the body and essentially distinct from the others.⁶⁸⁸ The implication of the mortality of the soul is compared to Luther's sleep of the soul.

4.5.3 John Calvin (1509-64)

Taking the traditional position further, John Calvin, in the manner of Luther, argues for the rising of the dead in the fashion of Christ. Giving the analogy of the sown seed, Calvin followed Paul in teaching that, the Lord Jesus "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working of that mighty power whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself," (Phil.3:21). For Calvin there is no need to doubt the possibility of a physical resurrection. After the resurrection, the dead shall reign with Christ.⁶⁸⁹ Calvin continued the physical notion of traditional teaching on resurrection; the dead shall rise in the same body. Applying the metaphor of the seed (1Cor 15:35-38) Calvin cautioned religious charlatans, atheists, the Sadducees and warns that nothing can be incongruous than to look down on the doctrine of bodily resurrection that is an estimable miracle of God.⁶⁹⁰ It suffices to say that Calvin refused all manner of philosophy that was against bodily resurrection, be it Epicureanism or Manichaeism. For the Manicheans, a number of common elements present themselves as deterrents to the resurrection of the body. Manichaeism classifies the body or flesh as materials belonging to the contaminated material world. Just like Origen, they see the body as evil natured. They wonder how resurrection will be possible in such an evil, weak chemico-physical entity. Manichaeism rather proposed a sort of ethereal

⁶⁸⁸ DH 1440-1441.

⁶⁸⁹ See, John Calvin, *Institutes for Christians*, bk, III, chapter 25, section 6; Martin Luther's *Kleinen Katechismus in der Erklärung des Zweiten Artikels „Gleichwie er ist auferstanden vom Tode, lebet und regieret in Ewigkeit. Das ist gewißlich wahr.“*

⁶⁹⁰ See, John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christians Religion*, bk., III, chapter 25, section 4.

spiritual body for resurrection. On this position, Calvin lampooned this idea as monstrous when he says; “Equally monstrous is the error of those who imagines that the soul, instead of resuming the body with which it is now clothed, will obtain a new and different body.”⁶⁹¹

Following Paul, Calvin acknowledges the fact that, there will be a swift change at the sound of the trumpet, at this moment the perishable body assumes imperishability, this mortal nature becomes immortal (1Cor 15:53). Calvin was sure God was not going to form a new and different body apart from our earthly body.⁶⁹² Of course, he believes God’s ability to do all things, resurrection for him will be one of the incredible miracles. God according to him will resurrect wasted and decomposed bodies to a newness of being. However, this coming to existence is a complete new creation. God definitely “does not bring new matter from the former elements, that is, from the primary stuff to compose men, but calls forth the dead from their graves”⁶⁹³ and brings them to perfection. Gisbert Greshake thinks that this way of explaining the resurrection pushes the issue back once again to the problems of resuscitation, which according to him lacks Christian resurrection understanding.

For Greshake, resurrection does not really involve the knocking or opening of the graves.⁶⁹⁴ It may be correct to say that Calvin understood matter (body) outside the periscope of separable composed particles (that is, atoms, cells and molecules) in the manner of Democritus. That is why he was not able to refer to the resurrection as the reassembling of the decomposed molecular particles rather the reassembling of the same body. Calvin argues that in respect of substance, humans will be raised as the selfsame person of

⁶⁹¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, bk., III, chapter 25, section 7 and 8.

⁶⁹² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, bk., III, chapter 25, section 8.

⁶⁹³ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, bk., III, chapter 25, section 7 (italics mine).

⁶⁹⁴ Cf. Gisbert Greshake, *Tod und Auferstehung: Alte Probleme neu überdacht*, *Bibel und Kirche* 32, (1977), 2-11; Bernard P. Prusak, in: *(Theological Studies, 61)*, Milwaukee, (2000), 83.

the present nature.⁶⁹⁵ But in respect of quality, their “quality will be different, just as the body of Christ which was raised up was the same as that which had been offered in sacrifice, and yet excelled in other qualities”⁶⁹⁶ like impassibility (the incapacity of suffering), agility, clarity and subtlety.

Aquinas first discussed the above four qualities as characteristics of the transformed fleshy body. For Aquinas, incorruptibility or impassibility of glorified bodies implies the incapacity of flux. Fluxity allows continuation and becoming. The processes of change and regeneration are characteristics of matter, in the case of glorified bodies; they do not experience change, regeneration, or flux. Glorified bodies do not feel pain. They are freed from suffering and material related limitations including death. Glorified bodies do not experience death (Lk 29:19). While glorified bodies of saints are immune from pains, the bodies of the wicked will endure the sufferings of hell without experiencing substantial change. Secondly, agility: the quality of agility enhances the body. The agile bodies are free from gravitational laws. The body moves instantaneously by appearing and disappearing in a mode greater than the speed of the light (Lk 24:31; Jn 20:19). Thirdly, clarity: the quality of clarity induces the transformed body to receive the illumination and the transparency of the soul. All glorified bodies shall possess clarity in respect to gradation (1Cor 15:41-42). Finally, subtlety: subtlety says much of the subjection of the glorified body to the soul, the body because of this, acquires the power of penetration; it can penetrate or pass through other non-glorified bodies without altering its or their identity. This quality enables the glorified body to pass through walls, break through rocks and every other solid substance. It helps the transformed body to extricate itself from the tomb of its burial. This ability comes mainly through divine intervention. The account of the resurrection of Jesus vividly testified to these characteristics. Though the doors were shut, the subtle glorified body of Jesus penetrated the room where the disciples were gathered (Jn 20: 19, 26).

⁶⁹⁵ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, bk., III, chapter 25, section 8.

⁶⁹⁶ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, bk., III, chapter 25, section 8.

The quality of subtlety allows the glorified body to be touched since it remains a true body (Lk 24:39). In explaining the above qualities, Aquinas however, emphasizes the domination of the soul over the body. For him the body relates to the soul as matter to form, material to immaterial.

4.6 Resurrection in Contemporary Theology

Any attempt to present a history and development of the doctrine of the resurrection would definitely need an examination of the whole history of human experience. This would demand volumes of unexplained mysteries of the world of early God seekers and their myths to such expressions of Christian faith in the form of the Jesus incident. The nature of this project allows only a concise presentation of the essentials; but this will not be complete without a word on the theological opinion of some contemporary thinkers. From every indication, contemporary thinkers and theology has continued to build on the fundamentals of early traditions. Nevertheless, they have placed less importance on the emphasis of hetero-somatism, that is, physical body reassembling, emphasized by early tradition. Dahl has personally cautioned against the over generalization of this early traditional view.⁶⁹⁷ This, for him, may be a misinterpretation of Pauline and the NT teaching on the resurrection of the body. Sharing Paul's high theology on the resurrection, some medieval writers misplaced reanimation of the corpse for the resurrection of the body. As models in this category, one may ask whether Martin Luther and John Calvin read back the corpse leaving their graves at resurrection to the story in Matthew 27:52-3 (the dead raised from their graves walked down the street of Jerusalem). Modern science endows contemporary studies (secular or theological) the opportunity of understanding the body in a wider perspective rather than a network of complex cells and material particles. It talks of the raising of the whole personality with spiritual pneumatic body as gathering and re-netting of molecules and cells

⁶⁹⁷ Murdoch E. Dahl, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 46, (On the thought of early tradition on heterosomatism see, *De res.* 6, 32, 60).

in a material physical body.⁶⁹⁸ It speaks of the power of love over the wickedness of death. However, contemporary theologies⁶⁹⁹ sometimes perceive this differently. John Hick has summarized contemporary protestant eschatological theology in the light of what he calls “recapitulation” theories.⁷⁰⁰ “Which suggest that man’s immortality is the eternal presence of his earthly life within the divine memory.”⁷⁰¹ At death, the entire human history is stored up in the eternal memory or consciousness of God. The theories suggest the conscious presence of man in the eternal consciousness of God who will always remember everything he has created. Some other theologians have maintained that salvation is all-inclusive. For some scholars, salvation and redemption is not exclusively for the human being alone. Created order is rather the destiny for general salvation.⁷⁰² This view on recapitulation of all things, if it says anything, is much of “unconscious” immortality than resurrection, since it is all about the inertia of existence there is no life after death, no conscious activity. Despite the fact that this idea is been seriously sponsored in the thought of some renowned protestant theologians, catholic theology has never accepted it. Protestant theologians who seem to have accommodated this thought include Paul Tillich (1886-1965) and his concept of the “telos,” as end, the end, the final goal, the end or the final goal of history for him is eternal life.

⁶⁹⁸ Bernard P. Prusak, *Bodily Resurrection*, in: (Theological Studies 61), (2000), 64-105, 99.

⁶⁹⁹ The adoption of the plural form of Christian theology is to accommodate one pattern referring to Catholic and traditional orthodoxy and the other one that supported and followed the reformation otherwise known as Protestant theology. The works of protestant theologians like Karl Barth, Helmut Thielicke, Eberhard Jüngel and recently Wolfhart Pannenberg have sometimes influenced some catholic theologians and have equally shaped their theology. Catholic theology is believed to have equally influenced most protestant theologians not excluding Wolfhart Pannenberg.

⁷⁰⁰ John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life*, 215.

⁷⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰² Tillich “leans toward universalism, the teaching that all things will finally be saved.” Cf. Gordon L. Tait, *The Promise of Tillich*, J.B. Lippincott, (1971), 94.

The English word “end” according to him is a word whose appearance in English vocabulary was no accident. As a word, “end” has a double implication of “finish” or “aim.” Human history in his opinion will definitely end someday; it will come to a finish some time. However, the closing of history is its end; its purpose is eternal life.⁷⁰³ Eternal life is the end of every organized human activity, the end of culture, religion; morality is a participation of the human spirit in the divine creative spirit. One comes to eternal life by the resurrection of the body.⁷⁰⁴ The participation in telos or eternal life “depends on a creative synthesis of a person’s essential nature with what he or she has made of it in its finite existence.”⁷⁰⁵ Because of the ambiguity involved in the usage of telos, Hick accuses Tillich of excluding, in his theology the continuation of life beyond the grave especially for those who, through no fault of their own, like children, the disabled, those who have suffered sudden death, were unable to reach their essential telos.⁷⁰⁶

Tillich further expressed his recapitulation in the idea that eternal life is life in the eternal. It is life in God. We may understand “in” here in the sense of “into” or “in from.” In perhaps standing for “into” since for him everything, temporal including the human life comes from the eternal and returns to the eternal.⁷⁰⁷ ‘Time’ he proposes is not cyclic neither does it go backward, it goes forward and forever becoming anew. For him, the NT expresses time as moving towards the future, it speaks of it using various metaphors. However, “... eternal life is not continuation of life after death. Eternal life is beyond past, present, and future: we come from it, we live in its presence, we return to it. It is never absent – it is the divine life in which we are rooted and in which we are destined to participate in freedom – for God alone has

⁷⁰³ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*. vol. III, Chicago, (1963), 394; John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life*, 216.

⁷⁰⁴ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. III., 409-10

⁷⁰⁵ Gordon L. Tait, *The Promise of Tillich*, 94.

⁷⁰⁶ John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life*, 217.

⁷⁰⁷ Gordon L. Tait, *The Promise of Tillich*, 95.

eternity.⁷⁰⁸ The resurrection in this sense is a participation in the eternal existence of God whose past and future submerges in the eternal nowness.

Charles Hartshorne has criticized Tillich for placing eternity within a time circumference, by admitting that time can have a temporary analogical meaning of either ordinary or eminent (divine) time and by concurring that, the past is no longer actual.⁷⁰⁹ For Hartshorne, the way Tillich treated the future of humanity implied disintegration. It expresses a total break between the resurrected life and the past human history. The fact that the past is no longer actual, is for Karl Rahner a paradox. For him, humanity has “a physical, spatio-temporal, bodily existence, even in matters of salvation and that the nature of man and of his one and total fulfillment must also be envisaged in the light of these things.”⁷¹⁰ Which means, since the soul is not a closed window, the deceased remain ‘united’ with reality, fate, and hence the temporal events of the world.⁷¹¹ Precisely put, the soul (which indivisibly belongs to the body follows it and) retains a material relationship with the material world,⁷¹² this type of relationship Rahner calls pancosmic. Acosmic and pancosmic are two very important words adopted by Rahner to express the aversive and co-operative relationship between the material and spiritual elements of human composition. For Rahner, the soul is open to communication, it has windows, and in death, the soul becomes communicable with the material universe. The soul becomes pancosmic and relates to the material world of the body. The soul at death is not acosmic, which is anti-cosmos. It does not cease to relate to the universe. Hence, “the individual person, once rendered pancosmic through death, by this real ontological

⁷⁰⁸ Paul Tillich, *The Eternal Now*, New York, (1963), 114; L. Gordon Tait, *The Promise of Tillich*, 96.

⁷⁰⁹ Charles Hartshorne, *Tillich’s Doctrine of God*, in: *The Theology of Paul Tillich*. Charles W. Kegley et al (ed.), New York, (1952), 172.

⁷¹⁰ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigation*. vol. 4, Kevin Smyth (trans.), Helicon, (1966), 335.

⁷¹¹ Karl Rahner, *Tod*, in: *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. 4, (1969), 922-927, 923.

⁷¹² Karl Rahner, *On the Theology of Death*. C. H. Henkey (trans.), Freiburg, (1972), 18.

and open relation to the whole cosmos, might come to have a direct influence with the world” which he or she will continue to be a part.⁷¹³

Early Christian writers believed, that at the resurrection the human physical bodies would assume immortality; that bodies would be identifiable and would be reassembled. These writers however, did not tell us how this would take place neither did they tell us how it would be done. However, through his pancosmic theory, Rahner thinks he has provided the answer to the question on how the present human physical body is connected to the resurrected body.

Resurrection within the catholic perspective follows two patterns of discussion. One of the models follows the traditional orthodoxy represented by Joseph Ratzinger.⁷¹⁴ After death, the immortal soul exists without the material body until the day of resurrection at which both are united. Resurrection in this sense does not actually take place immediately after death rather there is an intermediate state between death and resurrection. The other model is quite new, it is a model that was introduced into the European continental theological debate in 1969 by Gisbert Greshake⁷¹⁵ and Gerhard Lohfink on the resurrection of the body.⁷¹⁶ In his debate, Gisbert “challenged the prevailing notion of an intermediate state, in which a soul separated

⁷¹³ Karl Rahner, *On the Theology of Death*, 22-3.

⁷¹⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatologie, Tod und ewiges Leben*, Regensburg, (1977), 65-135; *Katechismus der Katholischen Kirche (KKK)*, München, (1993), Art. 1005, 288. Luther seems to have maintained this older traditional orthodoxy of *anima separata*, in which the soul exists without the body. In the present time, protestant/German Lutheran theology has maintained this older theology in the theory of ‘absolute death.’ This theory teaches that at death the human being completely dies and remains dead until God re-creates it anew at the resurrection. Cf. Franz-Josef Nocke, *Eschatologie II*, in: *Handbuch der Dogmatik*, 458.

⁷¹⁵ Gisbert Greshake, *Auferstehung der Toten: Ein Beitrag zur gegenwärtigen theologischen Diskussion über die Zukunft der Geschichte*, (Koninonia 10), Ludgerus, (1969), 360-414; Bernard P. Prusak, Franz-Josef Nocke, *Eschatologie II*, in: *Handbuch der Dogmatik*. Ibid., 458; *Bodily Resurrection*, in: *Theological Studies* 61, (2000), 82.

⁷¹⁶ See, Gisbert Greshake und Gerhard Lohfink, *Naherwartung, Auferstehung, Unsterblichkeit*, Freiburg, ⁵(1982), 82-120; 185-200.

from the body has already received its definitive state (e.g. Beatific Vision) through a particular judgment immediately after death but awaits the general judgment to be reunited with the glorified body. In Greshak's view, this type of position rooted in Benedict XII's dogmatic constitution *Benedictus Deus* (1336), had supported an unacceptable dualism between body and soul, since, contrary to the biblical understanding of resurrection as involving the whole or entire person, it posited the existence of a soul without the body in the interval between death and a general judgment."⁷¹⁷ The joy of heaven according to the constitution, *Benedictus Deus* is about the beatific vision, the beholding of God face to face. In the series of sermons preached in 1331, Pope John XXII as a private theologian did opine a different teaching; instead of the individual resurrection, Pope John emphasized a general resurrection. According to these sermons; after death, the souls of the just will not enter the beatific vision, they could not enjoy the fullness of beholding God's face until the moment of the general resurrection and the Day of Judgment. However, the blessed could only enjoy the glorified humanity of Christ and never the vision of the Triune God. Pope John XXII however, recanted this opinion for the traditional teaching of individual resurrection at the eve of his death. His successor Pope Benedict XII in the constitution, *Benedictus Deus* 1336, reemphasized the traditional orthodoxy, which says that resurrection follows immediately after death. Departed souls enter into the beatific vision prior to general resurrection. In addition, the constitution upholds that the souls of those who die in actual mortal sin go directly to hell. On the other hand, on the day of judgment all men will appear with their bodies "before the judgment seat of Christ" to give an account of their personal deeds, "so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body" (2 Cor. 5.10).⁷¹⁸ This constitution presumes the intermediate state between death and resurrection, it could be said to ad-

⁷¹⁷ See, Gisbert Greshake, *Death and Resurrection*, in, *Theological Digest* 26 (1978) 16-18 especially here 17. This is an abstract of his "Tod and Auferstehung: Alte Probleme neu überdacht" *Bibel und Kirche* 32, (1977), 2-11.

⁷¹⁸ DS 1000.

judicate and emphasized the distinction between soul and body. At death, the human person completely dies not just a part of, the body, but the whole being. There is no question of an intermediate state between death and resurrection because, by its nature, death implies an immediate resurrection for the individual; it means a consummation of time in terms of general judgment and resurrection.⁷¹⁹ Lohfink agrees with Greshake that their new model agrees with and does not contradict the classical model already found and represented by Ratzinger who, on the other hand, accepts a common ground of argument with the models of both theologians. Thus, he stated. “The problem of ‘intermediate state’ between death and resurrection turns out to be a problem only in seeming.”⁷²⁰ Ratzinger agrees with Greshake “the person who dies steps into the presence of the last day and of judgment, the Lord’s resurrection and Parousia...every death is an entering into the new heaven and the new earth, the Parousia and the resurrection.”⁷²¹ Having said this, Lohfink however, says that the two catholic models must never be used to perpetrate the concept of intermediate state.⁷²² Ratzinger refutes this extreme position and calls it a “strange mishmash of ideas.”⁷²³ Such an extreme conclusion can hardly provide a concrete solution to the problem of resurrection neither in the protestant nor in the catholic theological circles. Despite these stresses, “catholic teaching has steadily asserted such human spiritual survival, notwithstanding the paradoxical tension between the expectation of the immortality of the soul and the expectation of

⁷¹⁹ Cf. Franz-Josef Nocke, *Eschatologie*, Düsseldorf, (1982), 115-6.

⁷²⁰ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 107-8; Ulrich Lüke, *Auferstehung – Im Tod? Am Jüngsten Tag?*, in: *Auferstehung der Toten*, Hans Kessler (hg.), Darmstadt, (2004), 235-251, 237-8.

⁷²¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 108; „The resurrection can thus be situated in death and not just on the ‘Last Day.’” See, Gisbert Greshake, *Auferstehung der Toten*, Essen, (1969), 387; Josef Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 108.

⁷²² Gerhard Lohfink, *Das Zeitproblem und die Vollendung der Welt*, in: *Naherwartung Auferstehung Unsterblichkeit*, 154-155.

⁷²³ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 109.

personal bodily resurrection⁷²⁴ that follow individual or collective judgment.

4.7 Conclusion

The confrontation of Christianity with different kinds of philosophical influence, especially, the Gnostic perspective did not only attract apologetic theology by the Apostolic and Church Fathers, it necessitated in addition the formulation of the Symbols of Faith by the different councils.⁷²⁵ From the first Council of Constantinople (381) to the Council of Trent (1545-63) in the middle Ages to the Vatican II council in the present time.⁷²⁶ The symbols otherwise, the creed or “rules of faith and canon of truth” summarizes most often their canons in the profession of resurrection of the flesh.⁷²⁷ All the councils indeed continued the representation of the tradition image of the resurrection, as the assumption of the self-same flesh or body.

It suffices to draw a quick and short contrast as well as relating points concerning the Fathers and the councils. Firstly, almost all our early proponents of the doctrine of the resurrection are “materialists.” They placed the immateriality of the soul as that principle constituent of human nature that survives death. Borrowing from the Platonic Aristotelian Greek concept of the

⁷²⁴ Monika K. Hellwig, *Eschatology*, in: *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, vol. II, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza et al (eds.), Minneapolis, (1991), 367.

⁷²⁵ For a complete text on the Symbols, see DH 150; Josef Neuer and Jacques Dupuis, *The Christian Faith: Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, New York, 7(2001), 1-31.

⁷²⁶ On the Councils, see Norman P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Vol. II. Trent to Vatican II, Sheed and Ward, Washington D.C., (1990), 817; Christopher M. Bellito, *The General Councils: A History of the Twenty-One Church Councils from Nicaea to Vatican II*, Paulist Press, (2002), 127-131; Vatican Council II, “Letter of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on Certain Questions Concerning Eschatology, 17th May, 1979, Austin Flannery (ed.), Costello Publ., (1982), 502; *Katechismus der Katholischen Kirche*, München, (1993), 1000-1025.

⁷²⁷ DH 21; Ambrose on the Belief in the Resurrection, bk. II, 54. This book is also known as, “On the Death of Satyrus.” cf. H. de Romestin, et al (trans.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 10, Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (eds.), New York, (1896); Kevin Knight, www.newadvent.org/fathers/34032.htm.

immortality of the soul, Augustine and Aquinas developed the Greek standard of immortality of the soul for that of the person. There is an undisputable revolution in the thoughts of both Augustine and Aquinas on the corporeal reality of the resurrection. What we know about the immortal soul is also, the same as what is said of the material body at resurrection, the body will no longer be cared for, since together with the soul, it has assumed immortality.⁷²⁸ Origen did divert from the traditional teaching of the resurrection of the material body. He did this by stripping the soul of material qualities at resurrection. His opinion is that the resurrection is a spiritual event. This means it belongs to the nature of the spiritual soul; this is his idea of the spiritual resurrection.⁷²⁹ Converging again, the teachers of faith agreed that the resurrection is a handiwork of a powerful God who will transform the mortal human nature into immortality.

The Fathers have shown that resurrection can only take place in this body. This means that, salvation of the dead is related to this world and its history. Salvation via resurrection remains within the understanding of deliverance. This analysis points to the initial metaphor found in the OT. Resurrection or deliverance simply means a day of retribution when the individual rediscovers a hundred times the realities of this world. The time of resurrection or deliverance is a day when, “God personally goes to seek out the faithful who have died, calling them by name to rouse them from the sleep of death, taking them by the hand to raise them from the couch of their tombs and to lead them into the rejoicing throng.”⁷³⁰ Contrary to Martin Luther and Protestant thought of resurrection as having to do with “waking up” or John Hick’s “integration in the consciousness of God”, contemporary catholic theology in addition to the traditional notion of resurrection equally propagates a resurrection in death characterized in the ability to be with others.

⁷²⁸ De civitate Dei, 13.16-18; 22.30.

⁷²⁹ The Council of Constantinople condemned the teaching of Origen in 543, see DH 403, 404.

⁷³⁰ Monika K. Hellwig, Eschatology, in: Systematic Theology, 354.

5 African/Igbo world-view in General

5.1 Introduction

Now that preliminary insights of this thesis have been gained, it is time to discuss the Christian doctrine of resurrection in its relationship with African/Igbo concept of eschatology. Definitely, the scope of this work will not allow exhaustive treatment of African traditional religious belief in all its diversity. This section rather will to peruse African religious thoughts in its uniqueness. The word “Africa” in this writings will be referring more to the area of Africa inhabited by the black Africans. The fact that Africa will be mentioned now and again does not make this work a study of African religions. The mentioning of other traditional religions in Africa is to support the argument of this study.

For the sake of methodology, a quick and brief study of the African people will be considered after which there will be a leap into the study of the Igbo people. The reason for this is simply for the increasing interest and importance of Africa and its nations in today’s modern world. The second reason for this is the prominence of religion in the life of Africans. It is also necessary to provide a short account of the main religious beliefs and practices of many Africans.

5.2 The Question of Homogeneity

Africans are ontologically identifiable. They have a somehow peculiar modus and unique ways of doing things and living. This peculiarity in modus operandi should not lead to a conclusion of homogeneity of people or religion. As a continent, black Africans share a certain common notion about life, namely its mysterious nature. They hold the universe as unfathomable in the sense that life is a mysterious phenomenon. The African universe is an interaction between the visible and invisible, material and immaterial, the living and the dead. Every existence contributes to universal harmony and cohabitation. This homogeneity is unique and diverse. What is true in one Af-

rican traditional setting is likely to be the case else way in the continent. What is true with the traditional beliefs of the Yoruba may be sensible to the Hausas, the Fulani, the Berbers, the Zulus and Swahili of South Africa. This may also be correct in the culture of the Shona people in Zimbabwe.

Nevertheless, there are also signs of unique differences in these belief systems. Yet, the way of life of the Yoruba people who exist in Benin Republic and in Togo do not significantly differ from the life of the Yoruba that have their homes in Nigeria. Many tribal nationalities of Africa discover themselves in one part of the continent or the other. The Hausa and Fulani exist in almost every northern part of every West African country. The Berbers are in all the nations of North Africa. The Swahili live in Kenya and Tanzania. Mandingo is in Senegal, Gambia and Liberia. The Mandingo still know and recognized each other in unity because they still speak the same language with some minor variants.⁷³¹ The religious belief of one group of these tribes of nations can give us primary insight about the belief of the others as well as the Igbo,⁷³² who are indeed a valid sample of the African peoples.

5.2.1 The Land and People of Africa

There is a need to make a clear definition between land and people. The distinction is not in the understanding of popular concept of sovereignty that expresses empowerment. Rulers and sovereign authorities of a land are empowered to govern and rule their people as a nation state. The notion of land and people here will be sometimes interchangeably used, but not in the sense of nation states. Land and people here both in the present as well as in the past constitute the formation of the idea of unity. The use of brotherhood here is not in a political sense neither is it in the western understanding of nationalism. A nation may be an imagined community in the sense of amalgamation. In the name of conglomeration, it is “imagined as both inherently

⁷³¹ Cf. Ikenna Emewu, “Core and Peripheral Igbo,” in: *The Daily Sun Newspaper*, the Sun Publishers, Lagos, Saturday, (17/1/2009); idem, *The Daily Sun Newspaper*, (26.09.2009).

⁷³² Luke N. Mbefo, *Christianity and African Heritag*, Onitsha, (1996), 124.

limited and sovereign.”⁷³³ Africa did not cross-parts politically from the point of western diplomacy. Western forms of governance introduced different ideologies during the partitioning. At one place it was the British, at another the Dutch and Germans, and it was the Portuguese at another end. Africa was never a unique political community rather a dynamic one. The African brotherhood that will be mentioned here portrays the African ‘communities’ as dynamically connected.

The African brotherhood derives their “character as communities from the way in which distant individuals imagine their connections to each other, rather than from their direct or indirect interaction with each other.”⁷³⁴ Fellowship as discussed here is one that traces its origin from time immemorial as people of a common heritage. Africa is a continent with others. In the sense that it is bounded, separated and again connected with others. It is linked on the East with Asia by the Isthmus or Suez Canal. It is separated from it by the Indian Ocean and the Mozambique Channel. This Channel lies between the African continent and the island of Madagascar. Another feature that separates Africa from Asia is the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea. These two form estuaries and flow into the Indian Ocean. On the north, it is separated from Europe by the Mediterranean Sea. It is bounded on both sides of west and south by the Atlantic Ocean.

Africa may be segmented into four structures, cultural as well as geographical. Alternatively, we may divide it according to the four cardinal points of

⁷³³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London, (1991), 6-7; Bernard Yack, *The Liberal Democratic State*, in: *The Nation-State in Question*. T.V. Paul et al (ed.), Oxford, (2003), 35.

⁷³⁴ Bernard Yack, *The Liberal Democratic State*, 35-6. My use of the terms, nation, land, people and community are quite different from the way both Anderson and Yack used the phrases. Both adopted the phrases in political sense. They identify nationalism, or nationhood with the political self-assertion, the ability to be politically, economically and socially autonomous or sovereign within a common state of nations. Application of people and land here is devoid of homogeneity. Rather it is bounded on brotherhood that connects them to each other independent of material gain.

the earth, north, south, east and west. Inhabitants of the northern part of Africa live in the coastal part of the Mediterranean Sea, with a temperate climate resembling that of Europe. While you may find the mentioning of the continents of Europe and Asia in the Bible, Africa as a concept lacks specifications. The Romans first called the province of Carthage Africa and the nomenclature was later extended to the whole continent. One hardly hears the mentioning of Africa in the Bible, rather what one can notice is the place where they are referred as the sons of Ham (Gn 10: 20). Ham was one of the sons of Noah and the ancestral father of Africans.⁷³⁵ Ham had four sons, Cush, Egypt, Libya (Put) and Canaan (Gn 10:6).⁷³⁶ Countries of modern North Africa include Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and Western Sahara.

North Africa and indeed majority of the people living there today are sojourning Arabs and Berbers Jihadists who conquered the black aboriginals of the land in 646 AD. The coming and the establishment of the Arabs in Egypt and in the region of Maghreb took place in the last 1300 years, about the 7th century AD when Alexandria was conquered. Before this time, the people of Africa were of a homogeneous black skin.⁷³⁷ Other inhabitants of the area are the Semites, and the region includes the ancient city of Carthage. Remarkable about the region is its long history of human civilization that began in ancient Egypt. North Africa has a long historical connection with the Far East. It is arguable whether both do not have a cultural resemblance.

The south of the Sahara is inhabited by the Sudan countries of the West African states. This area covers the coastal island of Cape Verde in the northwest to the Nile in the east, starting again from the southern part of the Sa-

⁷³⁵ Ernest Munachi Ezeogu, *Jesu Onye Afrika*, Ozioma Maka Uwa Niile, Nkuzi Odenigbo, 2009, Owerri, (2009), 24.

⁷³⁶ Different translations of the Bibel have one of the above names for the one of the sons of Ham. "Good News Bible" has 'Libya' while "Die Bibel: Einheitsübersetzung" has 'Put.'

⁷³⁷ Ernest Munachi Ezeogu, *Jesu Onye Afrika*, 25.

hara desert in the north it stretches towards the Atlantic Ocean in the southwest. Countries of this region include Mauretania, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Niger, Chad and Nigeria. The indigenous blacks of Africa find their home in this tropical forest. The forest stretches from palm mangrove-swamp in the coastal regions to Sahel forest in the middle belt then to open grasslands that run through the arid region towards the Sahara in the north. The climate of this region is typically tropical. Countries of Central Africa include Cameroon, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tomé, Gabon, Democratic republic of Congo (former Zaire) and Angola. Central African forests are typical equatorial with heavy rainfall. Central Africa is the ancient home of the indigenous black people whose population includes the Pygmies (of Congo), some Bantus, Zulus and Kaffirs.

Anthropological study in Africa has connected the ancestors of the Bantus and their relatives of the Kwa linguistic family. The Kwa family today inhabit the coastal lands of West Africa, among which are the Akan, Ashanti, Igbo, Yoruba, Idoma, Igala, etc. These people inhabit the countries of Ghana, Togo, Nigeria and Benin. This people actually are linked with the Saharan civilization of the Garammante. The name was derived from the more ancient word Grimaldi. The Garammantes were known throughout ancient history as the people of the horsedrawn chariot. According to Catherine Acholonu⁷³⁸, the Garamnantes or Grimaldi were of Caucasian descent. They and their cousins, the Pelagians are recorded in Greek mythology as 'the first of men' and as being 'earth born.' For her, archaeological investigation has succeeded in making the genetic connection between the Garammante and the West African Niger-Congo peoples. On the other hand, linguists are of the opinion that Bantu culture originated in the Nigeria/Cameroon axis. Just as archaeologists claim that the Garammante or Grimald also called

⁷³⁸ Cf. Catherine Olumba Acholonu, *They Lived Before Adam: Prehistoric Origins of the Igbo the Never-Been-Ruled*, Abuja, (2009).

Khoi-San, Bushmen, or *Homo erectus* were the earliest ancestors of *Homo Sapiens* (modern man). The Khoi-San or Bushmen it is said were the world's earliest inventors of culture. The Garammantes/Grimaldi terracotta figurines have been unearthed in France, Germany, Rumania, Austria, Italy, and many other countries of Europe dating back to 40,000 B.C and well beyond. This is just to say that archaeology, history and linguistics evidences indicate that the Garammnantes and black Greek were contributors to the foundation of European culture civilization.⁷³⁹

The Eastern region of Africa harbors the states of Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Ruanda, Burundi and Ethiopia. That is, the biblical Kush.⁷⁴⁰ Among the four sons of Ham, Kush or Ethiopia is the only tribe that is located outside North Africa and the Far East. While Egypt and Libya are situated towards the north, Canaan is still located within the Far East. Munachi however, argues that Canaan was once located at the Northern part of Egypt. The land of Israel, Palestine, parts of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria were all parts of Canaan centuries ago. Granted Israel's claims of the inheritance of Canaan from Yahweh, Munachi insists that Canaan, Egypt, Libya or Put and Ethiopia were all descendants of Ham, the father of Africans. All these lands initially belong to Africa.⁷⁴¹ The conducive climate coupled with the endorsement of natural physical features like high peaks, mountains, rifts, valleys, and falls make this zone attractive for foreign settlers. Foreign immigrants and settlers especially Europeans continue to visit this part of the continent. Tourism counts much for national budget. Some of the unique physical features for tourism in this part of the continent include Lake Victoria, the Victoria Falls, Kilimanjaro Mountain, and the Rift Valleys. Unlike the other Africans living in the Sudan Savannah and tropical rain forest zones, East Africa experiences a moderate yearly rainfall.

⁷³⁹ Cf. Catherine Olumba Acholonu, *They Lived Before Adam*, 36.

⁷⁴⁰ Ernest Munachi Ezeogu, *Jesu Onye Afrika*, 24.

⁷⁴¹ *Ibid.*

The temperate climate of the southern zone of Africa in addition to its deposit of mineral makes the region also attractive to foreign settlers. Countries of South Africa include Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Swaziland, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa. Others include those states separated by the Indian Ocean. They are the island states of Madagascar and Mauritius. The Comoros and Seychelles are numbered as part of the East African states. These states are demarcated from core African states by the Indian Ocean. Indigenous black people of this area are the Zulus, Kafirs, and the so-called Hottentots, who are the dominant African racial group. Africa occupies a total land mass of 30,300,000 square kilometers. From south to north, the distance is about 8000 kilometers. Following 2007 records, the population stood at about 922 million inhabitants.⁷⁴² The population of Africa at the moment of writing has definitely increased. Africa has for many years suffered from an inaccurate census figure. Many countries in Africa may not give precise account. This problem is blamed on two factors. Instability is one of Africa's greatest problems. This results to incessant internal conflicts invariably to poor governance resulting to inability to give quality training to its census workers. Global politics based on scheming and intrigues is the second reason for inaccurate census figure and projection in Africa. This second factor has also contributed to the escalation of conflicts within the continent.

The short description we have done does not signify a writing of the history of the African continent. It is only a clarification to say that Africa is neither a cultural unit nor a linguistic group. This introduction shows how interconnected and relevant Africa is to ancient history. It would be fair enough, to make a statement on what I mean by tribes and races especially when used in African context. The two words are related. Tribes or races are mixture of people with peculiar and persistent dominant characteristics. They are people that make claim to come from a single ancestral parentage. The mentioning of tribes or races does not carry with it the notion of clan or

⁷⁴² See, Afrika, in: Welt Atlas und Länderlexikon, Königswinter, (2009), 312-3.

street interpretation as in the western model. Some tribes or races in Africa may be nations in Europe. Geographically, they will be larger than some countries in Europe while their population may be that of some European countries merged together. The Igbo race (Nigeria) on which this work is focused is a good example.

Finally, Africa is a continent of variant people, of different lands, tribes, races and languages. Africa is a multicultural continent. Despite all internal diversities and differences, there are things that really give people their identities and make them what they are. We are aware that there are things that differentiate Asians from Europeans, Americans from Australians. Internal diversities notwithstanding, we equally know that there are things that give people identity. There are things that qualify people as a unit. This is also the case with Africa. There are things distinguishable able Africans. One of them John Mbiti identifies as belief and religion. To show how serious this view is, Mbiti opens his book with the very idea that “Africans are notoriously religious.”⁷⁴³ The account that Africans are deeply religious does not say less of the Igbo. The Igbo are “nothing if not profoundly religious, and all accounts of their life reflect the fact.”⁷⁴⁴ Having said this, I now turn to the Igbo culture people of Nigeria in West Africa sub-Sahara.

5.2.2 The Igbo Ethnic Group

African stories are evolving. Not all African peoples have received a fare share of the study of their people. While comprehensive study has been on many African peoples majority of other African nations are yet to be studied. If at all the whole of African national tribes have been researched the

⁷⁴³ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, Ibadan, ²(1989), 1. For more reading on the identity of the Africans, see, Chukwudum B. Okolo, “What is to Be African? Essay on African Identity.” Enugu, (1993), 1-39; Wilbur O’Donovan, *Biblical Christianity in African Perspective*, Ilorin, ²(1996), 3-6.

⁷⁴⁴ Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of the Igbo People*, London, (1976), 24.

research has remained on the periphery.⁷⁴⁵ That said, the evaluation of the unveiling religious belief of the Igbo is most necessary and that is just what this part of the work explains.

A discussion of the Igbo religion cannot be ignored when examining the mentality of the Igbo person, that is, how the Igbo view their world. There is no better way to do this than to begin with the study of the Igbo people from the circumstance of their geographical location. This is important because without adequate and proper analysis of certain essential ingredients, there may be difficulties trying to understand the religion and belief of the Igbo. This obliges one to ask the essential question, who are the Igbo people and their origin? Some scholars have already treated this question.⁷⁴⁶

5.2.3 Preliminary Remarks on Weltanschauung

The external stimulus for asking what Igbo world-view (*Weltanschauung*) is, has a foundational course in the definition of the nature of world-view. Ikenga Metuh defines world-view as “the complex of a people’s beliefs about the origin, structure and organization of the universe, and the laws governing the interaction of the being in it.”⁷⁴⁷ As a universal phenomenon, world-views are uniquely different. The Christian world-view is different from the traditional African and Igbo world-view. World-view is about how a people perceive their environment and existence. One may not use the Christian categories in judging the Igbo experience neither will it be right comparing the application of their concepts in all instances. An Igbo traditionalist was once asked in an interview: Why do people of different nations, think and behave differently. This was his answer:

“People are different because, “Okwa mba n’achi n’olu n’olu, ‘the ostriches of different nations laugh in different voices’ Ihe mba n’eri ka mba n’aso, ‘what is pleasing to one country is what is displeasing to another’ ma, ebe obu n’achowa eriri ejiri l’uwa agawa n’afọ nne, odidi-odidi bu ihu gbara

⁷⁴⁵ See, Geoffrey Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion*, London, ³(1976), 20.

abua, 'but since things must be traced to their root, difference in nature is difference in views.'⁷⁴⁸

These saying provides us with genuine ideas to piercing the meaning of the term, world-view. These sayings emphasize that world-view is the attitude or the way people perceive the world in relation to things that happen to them. It is a person's or group of people's ways of understanding and inter-

⁷⁴⁶ Scholars that have done study on the Igbo include: Equiano Olaudah, *The Interesting Narrative*, Norwich, (1794); William Balfour Baikie, *Narrative of an Exploring Voyage of the Rivers Kwora and Binue in 1854*, London, (1856), 310-11; George T. Basden, *Notes on the Ibo Country*, *The Geographical Journal*, vol.39, (1912), 246-7, idem, *Niger Ibos*, London, (1938) xi; idem, *Among the Ibos of Nigeria*, London, (1966); M.D.W. Jeffreys, *Dual Organisation in Africa*, *African Studies*, vol. 5, no.2, (1942); Austin J. Shelton, *The Igbo-Igbo Borderland: Religion and Social Control in Indigenous African Colonialism*, New York, (1971), 7; Michael Angulu Onwuejeogwu, *Odinani*, *The Journal of Ordinani Museum Nri*, vol. 1 no. 1, March (1972); Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of the Igbo People*, London, (1973), 20; Adiele E. Afigbo, *Ropes of Sand: Study in Igbo History and Culture*, Owerri, (1981), xi; idem, *Igbo: History and Society*, Toyin Falola (ed.), New York, (2005), 125; Peter O. Ako-gu, *Leben und Tod im Glauben und Kult der Igbo*, München, (1984), 17-18, 40; Cosmas Okechukwu Obiego, *African Image of the Ultimate Reality: An Analysis of Igbo Ideas of Life and Death in Relation to Chukwu-God*, Frankfurt am Main, (1984), 161; Uzodinma Nwala, *Igbo Philosophy*, Ikeja-Lagos, (1985), 20; Olauda Equiano, *The Life of Equiano*, Paul Edwards (ed.), New York, (1989), 13-4; Fred A. Anozie, *Oral Traditions and the History of Iron Technology in Umundu near Nsukka*, in: *Oral Tradition and Oral History in Africa and the Diaspora: Theory and Practice*, Ebiegberi Joe Alagoa (ed.), (1990); idem, *Archaeology of Igboland: The Early Prehistory*, in: *A Survey of the Igbo Nation*, G.E.K. Ofo-mata (ed.), Onitsha, (2002), 13; Ogbukagu IK N.T, *The Igbo and the Riddles of their Jewish Origins*. Enugu, (2001), 106-7; J.O. Ijeoma, *Igboland: A Historical Perspective*, in: *A Survey of the Igbo Nation*. G.E.K. Ofo-mata (ed.), Onitsha, (2002), 48; Peter Uzor, *The Traditional African Concept of God and the Christian Concept of God*. Frankfurt am Main, (2004), 170-189; Catherine Olumba Acholonu, *They Lived Before Adam*. Abuja, (2009), 2-234; Ernest Munachi Ezeogu, *Jesu Onye Africa*, Ozioma Maka Uwa Nile, Nkuzi Odenigbo. Owerri, (2009), 32-52.

⁷⁴⁷ Emeffie Ikenga Metuh, *African Religious in Western Conceptual Schemes: The Problem of Interpretation*. Bodija, (1985), 37-8.

⁷⁴⁸ Cf. Emeka George Ekwuru, *Igbo Cosmology: The Ontogeny and Hermeneutics of Igbo Sculpture*. Owerri, (2009), 31.

preting life, and a rational explanation of human experience that are dependent on the environment.

Dissecting the Igbo world-view (*Weltanschauung*) is an enabling factor into comprehending the inner Igbo personality. It is a means of gaining entrance into their mentality and philosophy of life. A better understanding of the Igbo world-view is very important for three major reasons. It will help us to place the Igbo belief in perspective, that is, what they actually believe. It will act as a helpful tool in comparing Igbo belief with some Christian doctrines and values. Lastly, it will help in defining the concept of traditional theology that is fundamental to the creation of a theology that is both Christian and biblical within African/Igbo context.

5.2.4 The Igbo World-View

The Igbo as well as Africa world-view is “super-structural” based. Their world-view has to do with a complex of beliefs, habits, laws, customs and traditions. It is about the overall picture they have of existence and reality, about the universe, life and death, their attitude to life and to existence in general. Traditional Igbo world-view is encapsulated in the idea of religious profundity and every account of their life reflect the fact. For them the world is sacred, it is a religious and mysterious world. Religious praxis permeates every aspect of their day-to-day existence and activities. It is nearly impossible to separate the Igbo person’s normal life activities from his or her religious belief. In a résumé, world-view is a complicated set of belief synthesized in a people’s ethos about the cosmos and its contents. It is about the picture people have of the way things in sheer actuality are. World-view is characterized in the comprehensive ideas of cosmic order, the existences of the deities, the human soul,⁷⁴⁹ spirits and the abode of the living dead.

The Igbo world-view is concentrated on *uwa* (the world), *madu* (the human) and their relationship. The world (*uwa*) is a constituent composition of ani-

⁷⁴⁹ Cf. Geertz Clifford, *Religion as a Cultural System*, M. Berton (ed.), (1977), 1-46; Uzodinma Nwala, *Igbo Philosophy*, 26.

mate, inanimate, and spiritual beings. These beings in traditional Igbo society and religion have consciousness and they have real existence. They contribute to the functioning and organization of the society. Uwa or the physical universe is understood in the sense of a twofold division, *Eluigwe* (sky) and *Elu-uwa* (the earth). Within the universe, there are two realms, the *alammuo* (supernatural realm or spirit world) and *alammadu* (the human world or the visible order).⁷⁵⁰ Ancestors are those who lived well-spent lives, died in socially approved and were given correct burial rites. The ancestors live at the rand of the physical universe, the spiritual world.⁷⁵¹ Ancestors remain members of the human family in the hereafter. Death alone is not sufficient to make a person an ancestor. Much depends on self-personal effort and on destiny.⁷⁵² The Igbo as well as most other African peoples believe that the fruit of good life is a blessed old age and a natural death. There are deaths that are not natural within Igbo philosophy of death. Sudden deaths, deaths by accidents and the deaths of young people are all termed unnatural (*onwu mgbabi*). However, appropriate funeral ceremonies are required to elevate a good person who died a natural death to the rank of ancestor. Witches, sorcerers, notorious criminals and those who died of loathsome diseases like leprosy, dropsy or smallpox and children cannot become ancestors.⁷⁵³ Ancestors maintain some kind of influence within their families. The dead have much potentiality as they have the capability to give their character on their human families. Because of this capability, people with horrifying characters are not welcome as ancestors. Such people are

⁷⁵⁰ Cf. John Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, Ibadan, (1982), 32; Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, Ibadan, (1958), 85 (words in italics mine).

⁷⁵¹ Cf. Hans A. Witte, *Familiengemeinschaft und kosmische Mächte Religiöse Grundideen in westafrikanischen Religion*, in: *Mircea Eliade, Geschichte der Religiösen Ideen*, bd 3/2: vom Zeitalter der Entdeckungen bis Zur Gegenwart, Freiburg, (1991), 208-244, 218.

⁷⁵² Cf. M. D. McLeod, *The Asante*, London, (1981), 37.

⁷⁵³ G. K. Nukunya, *Some Underlying Beliefs in Ancestor Worship and Mortuary Rites among the Ewe*, in: G. Dieterlen (ed.), *La Notion de Personne en Afrique Noire*, Paris, ²(1981), 119-130, 122f.

not given befitting burial this is in order not to elevate them to the sacred position of ancestorship.⁷⁵⁴ The final burial rite helps to transport the dead to the ancestral home in the hereafter,⁷⁵⁵ but it is not the only pre-condition.

The physical world and the supernatural realm are connected. The land of the living is not far removed from the domain and homestead of the ancestors. The world of the dead dovetails into the world of the living. There is a steady movement from one world to the other especially at festivals also when an old person dies. There is the belief that old people are very close to the ancestors. The living, the dead, the unborn and the various spiritual forces that occupy the universe form part of a continuum. The human being “journeys from the spirit land to the land of the living and back in an endless cycle of birth, death and reincarnation.”⁷⁵⁶ Thus, it is a world in one flux of fluid, it is a comingling world, there is a coherent unit between the spirits, men, animals and plants and all these elements engage in a continuous interaction.⁷⁵⁷ The realm of the dead mirrors the realm of the living. There is a symbiotic cooperation between the living in the physical world and the dead in the ancestral home. The living honors the dead by offering sacrifices and libations. The ancestors on the other hand watch over the living. They periodically ‘reincarnate’ as signs of benevolence.⁷⁵⁸ The two realms are related and realistic.

The only seemingly difference to be noticed is in the attitude of perception. One is perceptible and visible to the senses and the other to the intellect. Material existences inhabit the world of the living beings. Material realm, where man, animals, plants etc live is sensorial perceptible. Spirits of all ty-

⁷⁵⁴ Cf. Emefie Ikenga Metuh, *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religions*, Onitsha, (1987), 264.

⁷⁵⁵ Cf. R. C. Bradbury, *Father and Senior Son in Edo Mortuary Ritual*, in: M. Fortes / G. Dieterlen (ed.), *African Systems of Thought*, London, (1965), 100; W. H. Newell, *Good and Bad Ancestors*, in: *Ancestors*, The Hague, (1976), 17-32, 19.

⁷⁵⁶ Chinwe Achebe, *The World of the Ogbanje*, Enugu, (1986), 1.

⁷⁵⁷ Emefie Ikenga Metuh, *African Religions*, 4.

⁷⁵⁸ Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of the Igbo People*, 25.

pes have the invisible universe as their abode. From there they come to visit the relatives in the physical world. Humans are visible to the spirits but the spirits are invisible to humans except the very gifted ones like the Dibias (diviners and medicine men/women) who may encounter the spirits in the wind, forests, hills, anthills, trees, rivers, at cross roads, in the clouds, of course at the shrines and during divinations. Igbo world-view has no thought of the dichotomy of the spiritual and the material, the physical and supernatural, the visible and invisible world. In Igbo cosmology, indeed in most African tradition and world-view evolution theory seems impossible.

There are several Igbo myths, which narrate how Chukwu (God) created the universe. Bartholomew Abanuka and Oliver Onwubiko have contrasting arguments about Igbo creation myths.⁷⁵⁹ The Igbo people generally ascribe the creation of the world, humanity and all things to God alone.⁷⁶⁰ God created all and made the human being a microcosm and the center of the universe.⁷⁶¹ Humanity according to Igbo mythology descended directly from Chukwu (God) himself and that is why he/she is called mmadu (man/woman), that is, the 'beauty of creation.'⁷⁶² This means man and things are not part of the same genus but they are radically different. Humanity is the fundamental category in relation to which things are thinkable.⁷⁶³ The Igbo world-view is a complication of spiritual believes. The Igbo believes in the sensible and suprasensible realities. It believes in the unity and inseparability of creation. Many realities form the axis of the Igbo traditional world-view, the Supreme Being, divinities, forces, powers and principalities. In re-

⁷⁵⁹ Bartholomew Abanuka, *Myth and the African Universe*, Onitsha, (1999), 77-8; Adiele Afigbo, *Ropes of Sand*, 38-48; Oliver Onwubiko, *African Thought, Religion and Culture*, Enugu, (1992), 7-8.

⁷⁶⁰ O.M. Anozoba, *Moral Orientation of the Modern Youths Through Cultural Revival*, in: *Nigerian Studies in Religious Tolerance*, vol. II, Religion and Morality, Chieduzie Ogbalu et al (eds.), Lagos, (1988), 332; John Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 32.

⁷⁶¹ Eneyeribe Onuoha, *The Philosophy of Igbo Religion*, in: *Nigerian Studies*, vol. IV., 386.

⁷⁶² Emeka George Ekwuru, *Igbo Cosmology*, 42.

⁷⁶³ Pauline J. Hountondji, *African Philosophy*, Henri Evans (tran.), Indianapolis, ²(1996), 188.

lation to this discussion, the ala deity (Earth Mother) is the most important of all Igbo pantheons.

5.2.5 The Ala Deity

The ala deity is prominent in traditional Igbo cosmology. Igbo mythology believes that she plays vital role in the beginning of life and at its end. Different Igbo dialects have the accent ala, ali, ana, ani, aja, ale to mean ground, soil, land or earth. Apart from Chukwu, the ala deity is the commonest deity in the whole of Igbo land. There are numerous numbers of gods and spirits under the control of Ala. The Ahiajioku or Njoku (the guardian spirit of yams) is the most important among the cluster. The Ala goddess is a fertility god considered as a female divinity. As a good mother, she is a supporting life factor. She protects her children by helping with the growth of crops. As an important deity, almost every community worships her on a particular day designated as her feast day.⁷⁶⁴ Her importance is not only in terms of her relations with humans. She is connected vertically to Chukwu her creator and horizontally with the ancestors and the Ndi ichée. The chief priest of the Ala shrine is called Onyeisi-ala.

Igbo priestly cult holds the position of the Ala chief priest in a very high esteem. Through his activities, the invisible becomes comprehensible. The chief priest is the mediator between heaven and earth, between humanity and God. Once the land is desecrated it is the onus of the chief priest to make sacrifices to appease the Ala deity. Through these sacrifices, the gods and humans come together in a covenant of communion. The Earth Mother is the mother of plants, animals and some gods. Her popularity and fame depends on her benevolence comparable only to the clemency for which ancient Europeans know the earth mothers Demeter and Cretes. Demeter in Greek mythology was the wife of Zeus and the goddess of agriculture especially of grain. Unfortunately, Homer in all his writings scarcely mentions Demeter. She was also never included in the Olympian gods. Nevertheless, she is known in ancient Greek mythology in connection with her role in the

⁷⁶⁴ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 131.

story of Persephone the daughter of Zeus and Demeter. One day as Persephone was gathering flowers she was kidnapped by her uncle, Hades the younger brother of Zeus. Hades carried Persephone to his abode in the underworld. His name - Hades is synonymous with stern, pitiless and wickedness. Nothing moves Hades not even prayers, sweet incense or sacrifices. Today Hades is called the abode of the dead. Learning of the kidnapping and forced married by Hades, Demeter was so enraged that she allowed barrenness and famine to spread over the earth. Zeus commanded Hades to allow Persephone to return to her mother, but because she, had eaten some pomegranate seeds in the underworld, she had to remain one-third of the year with Hades, spending the other-thirds with Demeter. Demeter lack of attention to harvest during this time caused famine on the face of the earth. As a goddess of agriculture, Demeter was sometimes in Greek mythology worshipped as a divinity of the underworld and as a goddess of health, birth, and marriage.⁷⁶⁵ Ceres in Roman mythology is known for causing the growth of food plant. She is worshipped as the god of agriculture. Normally, the Earth Mother is represented in wooden and clay images as mother with a child on her knees and sometimes with a crescent moon near her. In this form, she is compared to the Egyptians Isis with Horus or even with some Italian Madonnas.⁷⁶⁶ For Talbot the ala deity is “the great Mother Goddess, the spirit of fertility, the nearest and dearest of all the deities.”⁷⁶⁷ There is still another side of the significance of ala expressed powerfully in a symbolic language of authority and ownership ‘ala nwe mmadu Nile or the Nile’ (ala is the owner of all humans or all things) whether alive or dead. Every existence has its foundation on ala, plants grow on it, animals graze and dwell on it humans too depend on ala. At the end of existence, plants and animals fall down on the ground and rot while humans are being buried on it. Her authority extends into governance; she is responsible for the pu-

⁷⁶⁵ The New Encyclopedia Britannica vol. 4, (2005), 2-3.

⁷⁶⁶ Geoffrey Parrinder, African Traditional Religion, 47-49.

⁷⁶⁷ Percy Amaury Talbot, The Peoples of Southern Nigeria, vol. II. London, (1926), 43-44.

blic morality of any community. Breach of the law results to prosecution with legal sanctions from ala.

Several offences are termed abominable to ala, for example murder and homicide. The right of existence is a fundamental human right; it is not only true in politics but also in religion. The sacred scripture explicitly describes the gravity of the abomination of arbitrary deprivation of the right to existence of another in the story of Amnon and Absalom. When Absalom one of the sons of David killed his half brother Amnon, he fled to live among his mothers relatives (2Sm 13:37-38; 3:3). Absalom fled not only because David was enraged with him for killing his half brother equally because the earth would not protect neither would it favor the toils of one who has committed such a crime (Gn 4:11). Spilling of the blood of a clansman was an abomination and it defiles Israel's land (Nu 35:33). It is not only in Israel that murder defiles the land; the Igbo people also abhor such heinous crimes. Chinua Achebe in his book "Things Fall Apart" concisely described the gravity of this abomination as it relates to a member of the same clan when he writes; "when he (Aneto) killed Oduche in the fight over the land, he fled to Aninta to escape the wrath of the earth."⁷⁶⁸ The only course open for Okonkwo after he accidentally shot a boy at the funeral of Ezeudu was to flee the clan to his motherland called Mbanta, beyond the borders of Mbaino. Since it was a crime against the earth goddess to kill a clansman, and a man who committed it must flee from the land. The crime of murder was of two kinds, male and female. Okonkwo was luckier this time to have committed the female which is second in gravity because the crime was inadvertent. He could return after seven years.⁷⁶⁹ This narrative shows the importance of human life and the sacredness of the land. No one is to defile the land by spilling human blood in violence. For the Igbo, this is a covenant.⁷⁷⁰

⁷⁶⁸ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 125.

⁷⁶⁹ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 87.

Other abominable acts against ala include kidnapping, poisoning, stealing especially yam seedlings, cultivated or those still kept in the barn. The destruction of planted crops, adultery especially with a mourning woman or between persons for whom marriage is prohibited, incest⁷⁷¹ delivering children with grown incisors, giving birth to twins and to cripples is a sin against ala. Of course, suicide is also another grave sin against ala. It is definitely “an abomination for a man to take his own life. It is an offence against the earth, and a man who commits it will not be buried by his clansmen. His body is evil, and only strangers may touch it.”⁷⁷² Animals too can also commit abominations against ala. They could commit offences. If a goat climbs, the roof of a house, if a cockcrows at the middle of the night or a hen lays eggs at night and in the open, such animal offenders are killed. Moreover, were they to be humans, the offenders must pacify the land through a ritual rite of purification.⁷⁷³ Another serious offence against the ala deity is the sale of land. Ideologically, the land is regarded as the owner of men and women, alive or dead, conversely, no one individual owns the land in a strict sense. Just as the land is not commercial according to ancient regulations of Judaism, selling of the land is an offence against the ala deity.

The Igbo religion is closely related to Yahweh religion with regards to the precepts of land ownership and allotment. Land in ancient Israel was principally sacred. It belongs to Yahweh (Jos 18:3-4) and allotment was a cultic act.⁷⁷⁴ The apportionment of land according to tribes and their population points to the principle of parity which Yahweh demanded. Before the allotment in Shiloh (Jos 18:1-10) the land was first measured and apportioned

⁷⁷⁰ Nwaokoye Odenigbo, interviewed by M. Onwuejeogwu, transcribed in Elizabeth Isichei (ed.), *Igbo Worlds*, London, (1977), 24-3 and 27; Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Nigeria*, Longman, Lagos, (1983), 163.

⁷⁷¹ Victor Alumona, *Ala as Collective Conscience in Igbo Morality*, in: *Nigerian Studies in Religious Tolerance*, Vol. II, 316-7.

⁷⁷² Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 147.

⁷⁷³ Charles Kingsley Meek, *Law and Authority in Nigeria Tribe: A Study in Indirect Rule*, London, (1937), 25, 30-1.

according to tribes in relation to population and size (Nu 26: 52-56). If God commanded the apportioning of land invariably it belongs to him and allotment would always take place under his supervision, for example in Shiloh. The procedure of supervision is to ensure the principle of parity which implies that an individual could not owe the land. It belongs to the community and to Yahweh. The inheritance in terms of real estate eventually will be returned to the community at a particular time, during the year of Jubilee which is the seventh sabbatical year. The Jubilee year is a time of peace and personal freedom, it is a time or a year when everyone will account for the real estate he/she has inherited from Yahweh. This property will in turn be redistributed and reallocation. During this Jubilee year “everything that had happened in the past seven-year period is crossed out. Israel is given a new starting point, the covenant is renewed, she receives anew the land out of the hand of Yahweh, and the social order is re-established.”⁷⁷⁵ Israel though understood the land as their inheritance from their fathers 1Kg 21:3 they at the same time know it as sacred of Yahweh. Naboth refused to allow Ahab his vineyard because it was his personal indirect inheritance from Yahweh. He refused to sell the garden for money as it is forbidden by Yahweh 1Kg 21:1-4.

In Igbo content, the land (ala) is a sacred inheritance. In order to avoid affront to the ala deity, who is both the owner of the community and its land, the Igbo strictly oppose the sale of land. For them, it is a shameful act and a thing of guilt. It is a shameful act because it endangers the essential part of their existence which religion is an integral part. Secondly, they feel guilty to sell the land because the land gives them protection. In cases where lands have been sold or exchanged, a ritual of purification was normally followed. This is done in order to consummate the transaction⁷⁷⁶ and to pacify ala who

⁷⁷⁴ H. Eberhard von Waldow, *Social Responsibility and Social Structure in Early Israel*, in: *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32, Catholic Biblical Association of America, Washington D.C., (1970), 182-204, 191.

⁷⁷⁵ H. Eberhard von Waldow, *Early Israel*, 195.

⁷⁷⁶ Victor C. Uchendu, *The Igbo of South East Nigeria*, 25.

is the unseen authority and invisible leader of the community. As an indisputable authority, the chief priest of ala deity is responsible for making laws that are binding. No community exists in the real sense of the word without the leadership of Ala and her chief priest. The common possession of a shrine of Ala is, indeed, one of the strongest integrating forces in Igbo society.⁷⁷⁷ Prior to any activity on the ground sacrifices must first be made.

Ala is regarded as the owner of all things including human beings. The community seeks its consent virtually before anything is done, “no one ever builds a house without ritual ceremony of what is often called *ido ala*, *ana*, (ritual activation of the land) or *igbuchi ala* (purifying the land). By that ritual process, the land becomes sanctified.”⁷⁷⁸ Before each planting season, public sacrifice is made to her. Those who hold to the Nri hegemony and origin of the Igbo often support their argument by stating that the primary function of Eze Nri (the king of Nri) includes ritual purification of the land before hoeing and planting. The Nri priests travelled far afield the whole Igbo land, purifying the sacred Earth from abominations. No community is allowed to plant unless its land has been purified. However, certain situations could make the Nri priests to refuse performing the usual rites of land purification before farming. In such circumstances, the said community is burdened with its accumulated guilt and impurity.⁷⁷⁹ Poor harvest is said to result in cases where unpurified communities have ventured to plant.

In cases that involve digging of graves, the first thing that follows is the pouring of libation. According to traditional practice, it is the onus of the senior member of the family to point the particular spot of burial. The eldest of the family first addresses the earth, informing her of the departure of one of her grandchildren and begging her to receive him/her back. After this, he begs for permission to allow the diggers make a hole for the burial. Robert

⁷⁷⁷ Charles Kingsley Meek, *Law and Authority*, 25.

⁷⁷⁸ Anthony Ekwunife, *Consecration in Igbo Traditional Religion*, Enugu, (2003), 19.

⁷⁷⁹ Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Nigeria*, 163.

Sutherland writes on the familiarity of this ritual prayer among the Ashanti tribe of Ghana. Before digging the soul, the diviner addresses the earth in the ancestral tone of his music. He presumes the permission of the Mother Earth to dig the ground to bury one of his children in the stanza “and you will understand.” Thus the flutist continued this way, Mother Earth “while I am yet alive, it is upon you that I put my trust, Earth who receives my body..., we are addressing you, and you will understand”⁷⁸⁰ receive the body of your grandchild that has died. It is very important to mark the significance of this ritual. It shows that the dead are not dead, they are never gone, they are around, and they are in the breast of Ala, in her bosom and under her patronage.

The ritual of sending the dead body back to ala begins the important aspect of the visible passage of the dead to the ancestral home. This passage gives hope for a continued existence. The ever presence of ala as a symbol of religious belief and worship or as the gateway to real existence makes death and survival more understandable. The presence of graves inform relatives of the relationship that has taken place between their dead and ala. It also informs them of their close relationship with the dead. The threat of death is never an issue in the Igbo society but the survival of it. Therefore, against security in the hereafter, the Igbo are threatened to come to terms not only with the Supreme Being but with other divinities (Ala), forces and the cosmos.

5.3 The Idea of the Soul in Igbo Traditional Thought

The major point of disagreement between existences in traditional Igbo thought is on the manifestation of the soul. The concept of the manifestation of the soul is differently understood. Igbo traditional society agrees that every existence possesses a kind of soul or chi in common parlance. The soul

⁷⁸⁰ Rattray Robert Sutherland, *Ashanti*, Oxford, (1923), 278; Edmund C.O. Ilogu, *Christian Ethics in an African Background: A Study of the Interaction of Christianity and Igbo Culture*, Leiden, (1974), 48.

connects existence to itself, environment and the world. The problem is whether this manifestation of the soul in things also implies their survival at death. In the subsequent paragraphs one will notice that the Igbo metaphysical world is but a replication of their physical universe. The two realms are the same in vegetation and habitation. In this case, it may be necessary to ask whether the souls of vegetation, animals and things equally survive death. Be it as it may, traditional Igbo theology makes more emphasis on the death of the humans. It emphasizes that all who die natural death and received befitting burial continue a life similar to their earthly life in the hereafter.

At this point, one may ask, what happens to those who died “metaphysical” deaths, that is, dead people without honorable and proper burial. What is their fate and destiny, what of the ‘souls’ of vegetations and animals? Are they going also to survive in the hereafter? In any way, we may not clearly understand the existence, which arises out of death in the hereafter without first considering the image of the soul.

5.3.1 The Image of the Soul

What have been said by way of explaining the belief in the Supreme Being and the deities may not be necessary if we are not going to formulate explanations for the soul and the definite journey it makes. When mentioning the journey of the soul it means to explain the religious passage of the individual from the world of the unborn, to birth then to physical death and the journey in the hereafter. The question naturally arises, do Igbo traditional thought really talk about the soul. What is its nature?

There are complexities inherent in the articulation of the soul in the traditional religions. In the first place, Igbo traditional theology like every other has the notion of the soul. Unlike many other theologies, early Igbo thought have no clear notion of the soul. All that is known of the concept is in the various ambiguous senses it is used, in both general and individual (particular) senses. In a general sense, the concept describes a cosmic reality of con-

sciousness, which pervade in every kind of existence. In this way, the soul is latent in all aspects of nature, from the colossal macrocosm to the submicroscopic atom, from the unicellular amoeba to the gigantic complexity that we call man.⁷⁸¹ The soul in this usage is synonymous with energy, power, the spirit or what Placide Tempels calls “vital force.” God in Bantu comprehension according to Tempels is a “force-vitale.” God as a spirit creator affects spirits, soul or forces to other things. In this way, God is a force that moves and generates other souls or forces.⁷⁸² It is in this sense, that the soul is an empowering entity of existence. Used in the sense of the individual, the word soul became synonymous with the person that is, a totality of the individual, that comprises matter, the substantial form (the soul), the accidental forms, and the act of being (*actus essendi*) and rationality.⁷⁸³ This second classification appropriates to the human being a larger and higher quality of existence than animals and plants. It deals with the question of the amount of God in the human being. This form and idea of the soul connects to salvation invariably to the idea of heaven and hell.

Considering the traditional interpretation of concept, avoidance of the interpretation that relates to western teaching of the soul in heaven and hell connection is important. This is exactly the sense the concept of *mkpuruobi* (the ‘soul’) in later Igbo theology articulates, which is rooted in the theology of Christian salvation. *Nkpuruobi* so understood has a relationship to the doctrine of hell and heaven. This interpretation is consequent of 19th century missionary activities in Igbo land. In fact, it is the relic of the old Roman Catholic missionary teaching.⁷⁸⁴ While it is true that traditional theology emphasizes belief in the hereafter, the doctrine of ‘heaven and hell’ in traditional thought had a different interpretation. From the foregoing, one under-

⁷⁸¹ Jude Uzoma Ohaeri, *The Supreme Being in Spiritual Groups*, in: *Nigerian Studies in Religious Tolerance*, vol 1, 78. In this article, Ohaeri explained the meaning of the soul in its general development and usage among various schools of thought, its usage in this work serves the circumstance of the Igbo instance.

⁷⁸² Cf. Tempels Placide, *Bantu Philosophy*, Paris, (1969), 46-9.

⁷⁸³ Battista Mondin, *Philosophical Anthropology*, Bangalore, (1985), 248.

stands the ambiguity of the usage. Though the idea is clear, the description and the name remain ambiguous. It remains difficult because the Igbo do not understand the soul in the terms of biological faculty. If the soul were to be a function, organ, intellect or will, then children, sleeping persons and mentally disabled persons have no authentic existence. The soul is more than a biological faculty, it is more than a vital force, and it gives the body more than biological vigor. The soul unlike the *mkpurobi* (the seed of the heart) is not an organ.

The soul in Igbo thought is a metaphysical totality of the person. It is a person in its metaphysical and transcendental form. In its physicality, it is the form of the person. This is the sense of the spiritual and material composition. However, it is not enough to say the soul is metaphysical; it should have identity and a name. The Igbo know *Chi* as an emanation of *Chukwu* (God). *Chi* however is a generic name for god. Apart from this, *chi* is used in conjunction with (a) *ukwu* ‘*chi-ukwu*,’ the Great God and (b) ‘*chi-neke* or *chi-okike*’ God the creator. There are other several meanings of this word. *Chi* is used in the sense of distinguishing the day from the night, *chi di* (there is still day) *chi abola* (the day has dawn), *chi ejila* (the night has fallen). The Igbo know that there is an absolute distinction between *chi* as Supreme Being, form *chi* as destiny and *chi* as day. There are other such expressions as *chi juru oyi* (the day is cold).⁷⁸⁵ The nuances point to the difficulty inher-

⁷⁸⁴ Percy Amaury Talbot, *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, 265-8. Some Igbo scholars like Uzodinma Nwala like the early missionaries author associate the concept of the soul with the *nkpuruobi*, which for them is located in the heart. The adoption of the word *nkpuruobi* for the soul gives the soul a biological meaning and one of the members of the body. The *nkpuruobi*, *obi* or heart in Igbo is associated with the concept of energy. It is a life giving force and a representative of courage, symbol of power, endurance and virtue. Comparing the *nkpuruobi* with the spiritual soul down plays the theological import of the soul. The concept of *nkpuruobi* is a foreign concept introduced within Igbo theology by either catholic missionary theology translation or the early missionaries. *Obi* or the ‘seed’ of the heart, *nkpuruobi* is but one of the material principles of the self under which one can operate, it lacks the qualities of being associated as the soul (*muo*).

⁷⁸⁵ See, George T. Basden, *Niger Ibos*, London, (1966), 46-7.

ent in the communication of the idea of chi.⁷⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the major religious dynamics of this concept is not yet exhausted.

Several other interpretation of our expression includes the notion of human destiny, luck, personal god, individual spiritual or spiritual-double. The aspect of the chi as spiritual-double is an important aspect of our investigation. As spiritual-double, Chukwu infuses the soul or chi immediately after conception. The chi accompanies the person throughout life journey. As destiny, human personality in Igbo thought has been ear marked from the beginning, so that one is either destiny to be one thing or the other in the dualism of things at a given time. It is natural one may begin to associate destiny in this sense with the doctrine of the predestination. Unfortunately, the contrast is the case, experience shows that sacrifices are made to ones chi in order to thwart ones destiny, however, if a person despite sacrifices is constantly unfortunate, he or she may give up sacrificing to his or her chi on the grounds that it is not worthy of sacrifice. It is the chi who brings a man or woman all his/her good and sometimes bad, fortune, such as poverty and sickness. God puts one's fate into parcels, and one's lot depends upon that parcels a chi picks up. However, God always picks up good parcels. In cases where someone has gotten a stubborn chi, the chi may be responsible for adding the bad parcels. Bad things due to one's chi's mistakes or intention have one prominent chance of correction, which is through sacrifices. The chi concept draws also the meaning of god, soul, spirit, guardian spirit, essential being and portion of the divine being. Occasionally it refers to the original name for the Supreme Being.⁷⁸⁷ These interpretations perhaps may

⁷⁸⁶ Francis Arinze, *Sacrifice in Ibo Religion*, J.S. Boston (ed.), Ibadan, (1970), 15.

⁷⁸⁷ Cf. Charles Kingsley Meek, *Law and Authority*, 20, 58; Percy Amatury Talbot, *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, vol. II, 288; Bartholomew Abanuka, *Two Enquiries in African Philosophy*. Nsukka, (2003), 25; J. F. Schön and Samuel A. Crowther, *Journals of the Rev. James Frederick Schön and Mr. Samuel Crowther who ... Accompanied the Expedition up the Niger in 1841*. London, ²(1970), 50; Victor C. Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southern Nigeria*. Ibid., 95; Edmund C. Ilogu, *Christianity and Igbo Culture*, New York, (1974), 34; Percy Amatury Talbot, *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, vol. II, 40; Leonard Arthurs, *Lower Niger and its Tribes*, London, (1906) 1968, 435.

not have acknowledged the primary importance of the concept as a substance.

In the absence of authentic interpretation, the concept of chi remains open to new understanding. This is so because if the suffix chi means ‘God,’ ‘universe’ or ‘day,’⁷⁸⁸ if the concept is associated with the spirit, personality genius, or spirit-double (shadow). In which case the chi or spiritual as double becomes something assigned to a person from the moment of concept by Chukwu.⁷⁸⁹ If all these interpretations are correct including the aspect of a spark and emanation of God in a person⁷⁹⁰ then the concept has a far more reaching and deeper meaning than it has come to acquire.

5.3.2 The Soul as a Transcendental-Self (Chi)

Chi has a dynamic interpretation in Igbo world-view. There is a concept that deals with it as a transcendental substance. As a sum totality of the personality or the ego, the Igbo believe that the chi is a transcendental self. Talbot has compared the concept with Emerson’s doctrine of ‘Over-soul.’ Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) in one of his poetical essays makes the conclusion that there is a spark of the divine within human. He calls this spark the ‘Over-soul.’ For him, language cannot explain the meaning of the over soul neither can language describe it. The ‘Over-Soul’ is not an intellectual will neither is it a human faculty. It is rather the presence of God in the human being. That is, the participation of humanity in the divine essence.⁷⁹¹ Emerson claimed that God is within us, but he faced the problems of explaining how we come to recognize his presence. However, he suggests that the only way to know this is by acknowledging revelation, which he says is an influx of the Divine mind into our mind.⁷⁹² The essential idea for this con-

⁷⁸⁸ Emeka George Ekwuru, *Igbo Cosmology*, 61.

⁷⁸⁹ Francis Arinze, *Sacrifice in Ibo Religion*, 15.

⁷⁹⁰ Emezie Ikenga-Metuh, *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religions*, Onitsha, (1987), 189, 264.

⁷⁹¹ <http://www.cliffsnotes.com/wileyCDA/LitNote/id-95.html> (accessed 28.12.09).

⁷⁹² *Ibid.*

ception is that the chi is a spark of Divinity. It exists in a very high spiritual state with God.⁷⁹³ But it still dwells in the human, giving it life, sense and meaning. There is a certain amount of difficulty in Igbo psychology in making distinctions not only between the spirit (mmuo) and the ‘Over-Soul’ but also equally between the ‘Over-Soul’ and God.⁷⁹⁴ The ‘Over-Soul’ is a spark of God and man’s guardian spirit through which God ontologically link himself to the world. Concisely speaking, the chi is the spark or emanation of God in each person.⁷⁹⁵ When a person dies, this spark, the ‘Over-Soul,’ the chi goes back to God to give account of his/her work on earth.⁷⁹⁶ The chi is immortal, it has the power to return to God because it is connected to God who is the source of all life. Since God and He alone has true and quality life, a life of no end and no death, a life of indivisibility and infinity. It is said and it is true that the essence of a man or woman is its Chi which is driven directly from God.⁷⁹⁷ The Chi of a person therefore participates in the life of God. In other words the Chi possesses the ability to transcend temporality and survive the material body. In fact, the Chi is not only the spark of the divine in the human being, it is not only its guardian spirit, and it is the basis for pledging for immortality.⁷⁹⁸ We may relate this argument with what we see in the first book of the bible.

The author of Genesis describes how God created man in his image (Gn 1:26f). The narrator writes that, ‘the Lord God formed man of dust from ground’ (Gn 2:7), the body which is made from the materials of the earth is subject to decay and demise but then ‘the Lord God breathed something, equipped humanity with something, He breathed life and humanity became a living being. This something is a part of God, His extension. So that the

⁷⁹³ Amaury P. Talbot, *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, 279.

⁷⁹⁴ Amaury P. Talbot, *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, 260.

⁷⁹⁵ Emefie Ikenga-Metuh, *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religions*, 189.

⁷⁹⁶ Emefie Ikenga Metuh, *African Religions in Western Conceptual Schemes*, 97.

⁷⁹⁷ Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religions: A Definition*, London, (1976), 55.

⁷⁹⁸ Nwachukwuike S.S. Iwe, *Igbo Deities*, in: *West African Religious Traditions*, Daniel Ilega (ed.), Ekiti State, (2000), 36.

spirit of God called the soul or chi of man should not only be interpreted as destiny or the personalized providence. It is man's true self because it comes from Chukwu, and it reverts to Him at a death.⁷⁹⁹ Chi or the human soul is the totality of the person it is the unity of the material body and the spiritual soul. This unity is not a temporal marriage, it is a permanent identity in the here and in the hereafter. Even when out of the material body, human being in Igbo theology is always described as a spiritual body. And a dead person is never imagined as a formless spirit, he is always visualized in a bodily form, as a sort of unquantified body.⁸⁰⁰ Because of the presence of chi in beings, whether alive or dead, the 'human being' is always addressed in a concrete form of a person.

The Igbo language addresses both the living and dead with the word 'onye' (essence, who). A living person is 'onye mmadu,' (the human person) the same way that a dead body, person, spirit or soul is 'onye mmuo' (the spirit person). It is important to note that it is the whole person that is being addressed and not the spirit, nor the soul, neither is it the body that is being addressed. In fact, one may claim that Igbo theology has little or no difficulty accepting the survival after death. It has less difficulty philosophizing on the differences of the soul as being spiritual and intrinsically independent of matter.

This is to say that what survives death in the Igbo theology is the whole person and not the soul, nor the spirit.⁸⁰¹ As a part and spark of Chukwu, the person, the soul or Chi goes back to Chukwu to be with him, not to be absorbed in God; it exists as a distinct personality living with God and different from him. Importantly, the Chi or soul is an avenue of communion with the sacred universe anthropomorphized as the Chi-Ukwu or the Supreme Being, the living, the dead, the ancestor and posterity. The aspect of com-

⁷⁹⁹ Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of the Igbo People*, 25; Austin J. Shelton, *The Igbo-Igala Borderland*, New York, (1971), 83-4.

⁸⁰⁰ Emefie Ikenga Metuh, *African Religions in Western Conceptual Schemes*, 96.

⁸⁰¹ Emefie Ikenga Metuh, *African Religions in Western Conceptual Schemes*, 96.

munication relates the whole idea of Igbo theology of Chi (the soul) to the theology of the person.

The word anthropomorphized requires attention. African traditional religion practices a spirituality that is relational than contemplative. Its spirituality relates horizontally with different kinds and types of existence. It extends its relationship to beings in various realms of the universe. It relates vertically with God as the ultimate reality and the foundation of all that is in the universe. God is the reality of the universe. Nature is not only a part of the human being, it is also a part of the reality of God and that is why it is sacred. Note should be taken to distinguish the idea of the sacredness of the universe, the phenomenal world from the idea of pantheism as much as from deism. Pantheism is a view of reality that tends to identify the world with God or God with the world. It is of the view that God is not transcendent rather immanent. Pantheism makes the statement that God created. It teaches that God pervades in every bit of nature. Pantheism is not really a doctrine it is a view. It is a view expressed in terms of the world, God, the Absolute, or infinity. Scholastics tend to identify pantheism with atheism on the ground that identification of God with the world implies the denial of God as transcendent and distinct from the world. Contrary to pantheism is theism, the view that God is transcendent and distinct from the world though he intervenes in its affairs. The philosophy of pantheism is very close to Buddhist temperament. For Buddhism, the world is uncreated, it will experience no end, nor destruction, and annihilation will only succeed one another in recurrence circle of change. Deism emphasizes the transcendence of God and differs from theism. Its main proposition remains that God does not need to intervene with the affairs of the world and of creation. Hinduism is very much closer to the mystical temperament of deism. For deists, after creating the world, God established the natural laws, that is, the law of karma. The karma law is for a continuing self-sufficient nature, and the moral laws are for sufficient human life. Human being according to the principle of deism can discover the true meaning in life, by discovering the two laws.

That is, the laws of nature and morals. These laws could again be discovered through human rational power. And these discoveries could be made easier during meditation. Deism is a doctrine that human beings can use their reason to arrive at a religion that is more certain than religions based on revelations. It emphasizes human reason more than revelation. Thus, human reason for deists is more trustworthy than revelation. The concept of Chukwu in relation to the soul and the universe according to Igbo religion is devoid of pantheism and deism it is rather theistic. The relationship of Chukwu and the chi or soul is in terms of community co-existence, it is like saying “in Chukwu the chi or soul live, more and have its being.”⁸⁰²

5.3.3 The Person as a Being-With

A physical examination of the human person emits immediately the truth that humans are real and existential. It simply confirms to us that they are ontologically component entities. Classical western philosophy articulates the man project in a variation of terminology. It is a consistence of act and potency, matter and form, a unity of mind and body. Ordinarily, traditional Igbo society perceives issues from double and composite perspectives. These perspectives are unique. Every existence is composite, human beings, plants and animals. Things are composed; they have matter and ‘substantial form’ (the soul). There are powers that dwell in things that hold their composites. Everything, inanimate and animate are said to possess souls (chi). The force, spirit, or soul that inhabits the human being is extremely different from the spirits that dwell in other things like animals and plants. There is a hierarchy of souls.⁸⁰³ The spirit produces the whole energy that empowers

⁸⁰² For detailed treatment of pantheism, see, *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 10, ²(2003), 825-7. On Deism see, *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* vol. 3. 965-6. Both the OT and NT have no evidence of Pantheism. The Church has ever rejected pantheism as a religious view. Cf. DH 31, 432, 1782, 1803. The Vatican Council I condemned the doctrine of deism, cf. DH 1781-1800, 1807, 1810-1813.

⁸⁰³ Geoffrey Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion*, London, (1976), 140.

matter. It is the 'life and spirit' that energies the whole phenomenon of the body.

To define a human being as unity and totality, western philosophy uses the word person; meaning individual, man/woman, mortal being and immortal soul. These concepts are attached to the idea of the sacred and the holy. They are exclusively used for human species without reference to either plants or animals. Western usage of the concept is an inroad and influence of Christian ideology. It is induced by the reflection of the Heilsgeschichte (salvation-history).⁸⁰⁴ The definition is connected to the history of human salvation understood in Christianity in the sense of unity in Christ and the Godhead of the Father. It defines the human being in the sense of a project of salvation. This definition of the person as an individual is extraneous to African/Igbo ideology.

African/Igbo define the concept of the person in two major ways. It is define in a socio-religious sense as well as in a biological sense. Socio-religiously, the concept of the person is a concept of being with.⁸⁰⁵ The person is a being with the living. He/she is a being with the dead, inanimate and animate. The human is not an individual. The idea of the person is the idea of community, a self embodied being that is in search of full transcendence.⁸⁰⁶ The person is a community of individuals in a transcendence social dependence. The notion of a person carries with it the sense of interdependency, I am because we are or because we are, therefore I am.⁸⁰⁷ By this definition the Igbo, understanding of the human person differs from the individualistic views of some western theorists (Boethius, Thomas Aquinas) whose views emphasize rationality, substantiality, separability and incommunicability. These theorists make a distinction between person and nature. For them just as there is a difference between the part and the whole, so also is nature a part of the human person even if it is the fundamental, substantial part.⁸⁰⁸

⁸⁰⁴ Battista Mondin, *Philosophical Anthropology*, Rome, (1985), 245.

Boethius (ca.470/5-524) started the ontological independence definition of the person. Thomas Aquinas followed the thought of Boethius in the definition of a person in fact; he perfected the idea that the human being is a rational subsistent being. This definition of a person as rational subsistent being has the undertone of individualism. The person is individualistic; has a total wholeness of its individual self. The person is a composition of matter, the substantial form (the soul), the accidental forms, and the act of being (*actus essendi*). The *actus essendi* makes the person a monad and a property of incommunicability.⁸⁰⁹ As a close project and property of incommunicability,

⁸⁰⁵ The African concept of being with is quite different from the Aristotelian or the platonic concept of the human as a social or political animal. The human in Aristotle, for instance, is essentially rational, political, economical and social. The reason given by Aristotle and many other philosophers for human social nature is largely selfish, egoistic, and ambitiously utilitarian. Utilitarianism champions the philosophy of survival of the fittest. Realizing that they are infinite and limited, the principle of Platonism encourages avoidance of utilitarianism for social togetherness. This is just to satisfy and make up human incapacities and limitedness. The Platonic person is social because he/she is finite, limited in his/her capacities to satisfy all his/her needs and desires. He/she consequently needs a community and lives in it mainly for this end. The individual finds fulfillment in the community, not outside it, the community is established for the sake of supply of every one's everyday wants. "He who is unable to live in society or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself must be either a beast or a god." Being with in African or Igbo context is beyond egoistic and utilitarian motives and needs of self belongs. It is not a union of those who cannot exist without each other. The relationship in its function is objective, pure and simple. The objective is transcendental and not this worldly or that community egoism. It is a being with the self, the community, the dead, and the unborn. It is a relationship of a relationship that includes the invisible realities. It says more than others than the self. It is a relationship that says 'I am because others are.' Cf. Chukwudum B. Okolo, *What is to be African: Essay on African Identity*, Enugu, 1993, 10; see also Aristotle: *Politics* 1252a 1-30, in: *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, Richard McKeon (ed.), New York, (1941) 2001.

⁸⁰⁶ Pantaleon Iroegbu, *Kpim of Personality: Treatise on the Human Person*, Owerri, (2000), 107.

⁸⁰⁷ John Mbiti S., *African Religions and Philosophy*, 108.

⁸⁰⁸ Cf. Battista Mondin, *Philosophical Anthropology*, 240-60

⁸⁰⁹ Cf. STh I. 30. 4. obj. 2.

the person cannot interact neither at the universal or individualistic level.⁸¹⁰ For Romano Guardini (1885-1968) the person is a single individual entity. A “person means that I, in my being, definitively cannot be inhabited by any other, but that in relation to me, I am only with myself; I cannot be represented by any other, but I am guaranteed to myself; I cannot be substituted by any other, but I am unique, this remains closed even if my sphere of reserve is strongly damaged by intrusions and exteriorization.”⁸¹¹ African/Igbo definition of a person differs from this ontological explanation of the ‘I’ egoism especially its aspect of incommunicability. According to African belief, the human being remains itself even when damaged by intrusions, exteriorization or death. There is another perspective of the person.

Biological division of the person draws a line between the person and the self. While the person is one, the self is multiple. The indicator of the human being as several self is offered to us by psychology. Human beings are categorized into several self, body, soul, mind and spirit. But in the context of our study, the dualism of the material body and spirit is not in the sense of a prison and the inmate. In this synthesis, Igbo thought is aversive to the dichotomy of the body and soul but adhesive to a relationship of invisible indivisible unity. In fact, it “readily accepted that all things, however different, opposite or contradictory, all things both mind and matter, living and non-living, positive and negative were eventually reducible to one principle. Opposites are reducible to each other and ultimately to the one basic substance. Thus, the aboriginal Igbo reject Dualism.”⁸¹² This is just to say that even in the biological definition there is an autonomous consistency, which is also sociological. The composed person is in the sense of spirit and non-

⁸¹⁰ For further explanations, see, Battista Mondin, *Philosophical Anthropology*, 246-8; Pantaleon Iroegbu, *Spirituality and Metaphysics: Their Relation in African Worldview*, Owerri, 2003, 17-8.

⁸¹¹ Romano Guardini, *Welt and Person*, Würzburg, (1939), 122-3; Battista Mondin, *Philosophical Anthropology*, 250.

⁸¹² Eneyibe Onuoha, *The Philosophy of Igbo Religion*, in: *Nigerian Studies in Religious*, Vol. IV., 372.

spirit. As a spirit, the human being is muo, as a non-spirit, the human being is ahu (body). The person is the cohesion of the body and the spirit. Mmadu is the definition of the person in Igbo anthropology. The notion of mmadu designates the idea of a psychosomatic unity of the composite parts (ahu and mmuo, body and spirit). The idea of madu goes back again to the idea of cohesion peculiar with communality. The talk of cohesion is about being with oneself an idea that designates interior autonomous unity with other parts of oneself (spirit and body).

The spiritual part of the human being is mmuo it has complex divisions. It has over time acquired perplexing and enigmatic definitions. Biologically, it could be referred to as the seat of other human faculties, feelings and emotions; it could be referred as the heart as well as of the human being. Metaphysically, it incorporates the elements of intelligence and conscience, which includes the spiritual soul.⁸¹³ The mmuo is invisible and could be contrasted for the breath or air. In its visible form it is associated with the shade or shadow (Eyiya).

The next composition of the human personality is the ahu⁸¹⁴ or body. In traditional Igbo society, the body is understood as the visible representation in material form and the spiritual aspect of the person. Even when we consider the spirit as self-transcendence and prolong aspect of the invisible soul it is the ahu, the body that makes its existence real in the world. When dead people appear in dreams, they appear as spirits but with their bodies. The dead are believed to participate in almost every human activities including rising early and going to the stream to fetch water. They engage in buying and selling activities of marketing. They do all these in their bodies. And when relatives and friends meet their dead ones they are able to recognize them be-

⁸¹³ Uzodinma Nwala, *Igbo Philosophy*, 42.

⁸¹⁴ Charles Kingsley Meek, *Law and Authority*, 53.

cause their spirits possess bodies. In a situation whereby they were not properly buried, when he or she appears he or she is seen in the body.⁸¹⁵

All these show that the body in traditional Igbo society is simply regarded as a principle of individuation and identity. It is a necessary ingredient of existence both as a member of a living or dead community. The indivisible *ahu* is from the *mmuo* when the two compositions narrowed down. They are contracted to a minimal decimal of indivisibility that refers a person as a unity. That means, the adherence of the spirit to the body make the two parts atomically indivisible. This renders the division and definition of a person in Igbo psychology as parts very difficult. The person is rather *mma-du*, which means, wholeness of essence and existence. So at death, what dies is the self, the multiple changeable egos, and the human parts. The person, the spirit, the *mmuo*, the *chi* does not die not only because of its historical cosmological community connectivity but also for its trans-historic relationship with *Chukwu*.

The person, *mmadu* is a part of time that belongs to eternity. At death, the person (*mmadu*) or the “soul goes in the presence of the Creator, and after it has been consulted or interviewed by Him, it is permitted according to the wishes it expresses, either to remain forever in the land of the spirits or to return once more to the world.”⁸¹⁶ When someone has died and goes for this interview, nothing therefore, could be more obvious as to say that the person, *mmadu* went with its whole personality. Its whole principle of identity, body, spirit and soul, the person goes with all it has, with all its being. The term being with is both a sociological and religious concept. As related to a mystical union, being with is related to the adherence of the soul, the person, *chi*, or *mmuo*. Consequently, if one were to talk about resurrection in the African/Igbo sense, it would be suggesting the immortality or the survival of the person as a being-with. Being-with in the sense of a communally

⁸¹⁵ John Mbiti S., *African Religions and Philosophy*, 158.

⁸¹⁶ Leonard Arthur, *Lower Niger and its Tribes*, 150.

and self-embodied being that is in search of full transcendence.⁸¹⁷ Being with is essentially being towards others. It is self relation to others, the community and nature. It is a being with the living, the dead, posterity and the unborn. It is a being with the self in the here and in the hereafter. So in Igbo society like other African societies, existence has all to do with communication with others and things, and such relations is possible only through the body. All these suggest that the notion of disembodied existence in Igbo theology is unthinkable.

Finally, 'being with' isolates the idea of shrouded human individualism, it powerfully fosters an ontological relationship that is exclusively absolute, the relationship that makes the person eternally present. Thus, the strong belief in existence as being with, in immortality and reincarnation provides the necessary personal and social motivation and encouragement to subordinate one's moral life to the requirements of the ethical discipline, public morality and community service.⁸¹⁸ The punishment is in the form of a deprivation of communality, which is a lonely existence. The Igbo believe a person becomes real in life and survives death only when he/she is connected to others, to self and to the environment. This network of connections and interaction of the person in life and in death is the reason d'êtré for the whole question of the death survival. For effective connection with the living and the dead, the person however, must have lived a responsible life, because this is what secures entering the community of the ancestors and enhances *ilo uwa* or that which is called reincarnation. The *mmuo* or spirit sustains human life or spirit. *Chi*, the soul or person called the spark of God. This spark survives after death in the spirit world.⁸¹⁹ Death is the only agent through which the soul is brought to the hereafter.

⁸¹⁷ Pantaleon Iroegbu, *Kpim of Personality: Treatise on the Human Person*, 107.

⁸¹⁸ Cf. Edmund C. Ilogu, *Christianity and Igbo Culture*, 34-43; cf. Nwachukwu Iwe S.S., *Igbo Deities*, in: *West African Religious Traditions*, 23.

⁸¹⁹ Uzodinma Nwala, *Igbo Philosophy*, 40.

5.4 Death

Human beings know that they will eventually leave this world. Our tradition of study is well aware that death concludes a phase of human existence. Death is an inevitability that must definitely take place. Death in Igbo understanding is that which separates members but does not break bonds of union. It separates the dying member of the community from the rest. This separation is not a permanent one there is a belief in continuity of life and communion. Traditional thought belief there is continuity in relationship between the dead and the rest of the living. Of course, it understands physical existence as transitory and understands the world in the metaphor of a market place (*uwa bu ahia*). Human beings are on a market trip. Whether one fills ones basket or not, once the time is up, one goes home to meet those left behind.⁸²⁰

Just like the popular saying that there is no smoke without fire, the Igbo generally think that nothing happens by chance. There is always a reason for the occurrence of death. Once death strikes in every Igbo community, people begin to give reasons why it happened, they automatically begin asking questions and very often point fingers. Every human death is a consequence of something.

5.4.1 The Causes of Death

Life in Igbo conception is the highest of human possession; it is the greatest and most prized. Life or *ndu* is more than a treasure, it needs to be protected, the Igbo say, “*ndu ka aku*” (life is better than wealth). The Igbo people love life, they love to enjoy it and live it abundantly and in fully. For them life is like food, it is desirable. It is an essential commodity for all. Every human being has an innate desire to live just as he or she instinctively longs to eat.⁸²¹ The implication of this attitude is the abhorrence of death. Death is not desirable and never is it mentioned neither in public nor in private dis-

⁸²⁰ Emefie Metuh Ikenga, *God and Man in African Religion*, London, (1981), 139.

⁸²¹ Peter Uzor, *The Traditional African Concept of God*, 256.

cussions. Though the reality of death is consciously present in their everyday dealings, the discussion of it is like a taboo. There are several causes of death. Sometimes causes of death are attributed to unnatural agents; sometimes-external causes are believed to be responsible. The Igbo people are attached to their pantheon and to their ancestors rather called the living dead. Given this relationship, it is strange how these agents can turn to harm them or cause their death. The divine are cosmically related to humans in so many ways. They are also related to humans as members of the same world. This means, the divine can use their enhanced powers for the benefit of their human family, village and clan.⁸²² Unfortunately, some of these pantheons do not do that. Many among them do decide to be agents of misfortune and death. Instead of protecting their human families and the large cosmos, which they are parts such agents decide to bring punishment, sorrow and chaos to humans, to their immediate families, villages and clans. Bringing calamity to the family and society they suppose to protect is a contradiction in itself.

However, people sometimes think the divine beings or the living dead have good reasons for being malevolent. Such thinking is supported by the argument of human unfaithfulness. There is a common thought that once human beings break common pact with the ancestors or the deities, the spirits are bound to be violent. One of the ways to break this friendship with the divine beings is through neglect. The dead may cause deaths of their family members if they are not accorded appropriate burial rites. In cases where they have turned to wandering spirits, they can be agents of accidents and catastrophes. In this way, the living dead have turned to become evil spirits. The gods too may be agents of deaths if they are neglected.

Once human duties to the gods are not fulfilled, the divine beings can turn violent. And when such negligence evokes their anger, the result is death for the humans. Death is a communal catastrophe in Igbo land. Once death

⁸²² Emefie Ikenga Metuh, *Comparative Studies*, 262

strikes, it becomes a burden and a thing of sorry for the entire community. Mourning for the dead and sympathizing with the living is a communal obligation. But if it is satisfied that a particular god is responsible for a particular death, the chief priest of such a god must not sympathize with mourners, the defiance in sympathy would be an affront to the deity.⁸²³ Apart from the gods, the living dead and the ancestors, there is another agent of death. God according to our tradition can also be an agent of death. He is blamed to be responsible for certain deaths. Sin in African/Igbo culture has to do with contravening customs and traditions. People who are believed to have gone contrary to the important dictates of the tradition, prohibitions and customs as directed by the gods are not mourned when they die.⁸²⁴ The other class of death attributed to God is those deaths for which no other satisfactory explanation can be given, e.g. those who died through natural causes. The death of old people are normally referred as *onwu chi* (natural death), and God is believed to be the active agent of such deaths.

Apart from death inflicted by the 'divines' (*onwu chi*) the common means to effect death is through magic and sorcery. Majority of the members of the tradition I am discussing have always believed death is wrought through some other means. They think death occurs through other people's diabolical power and their ability to manipulate magic. The event of death no matter what kind remains for the Igbo a suspicious occurrence.

5.4.2 The Rites of Purification and Final Commendation

The dead rites of passage begin the series of funeral rites that introduce one into the realm of the ancestors in the hereafter and back again by way of 'reincarnation.' Among the avalanche of these rites is the 'rite of purification of the corpse.' The rite of purification is done on corpse before the burial. It is like the song of farewell and final commendation. This rite is in belief of the unity of the body and soul. It is done in order to clean the corpse of minor spiritual or physical infirmities. It is like forgiving the dead of ve-

⁸²³ Charles Kingsley Meek, *Law and Authority*, 60.

⁸²⁴ John S. Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy*, 151.

nial 'sins.' This ritual helps in launching the body back to its former state of perfection making the person acceptable to the community of the ancestors. During the rite, those who lived well and died well, that is, those who died natural death or the death of nature are asked to 'reincarnate' again in their former status. The Egwugwu masquerade that performed the rites of purification for Ezeudu described it symbolically. Thus Achebe writes,

"The masquerade in his guttural voice called; Ezeudu! if you had been poor in your last life I would have asked you to be rich when you come again. But you were rich. If you had been a coward, I would have asked you to bring courage. But you were a fearless warrior. If you had died young, I would have asked you to get life. But you lived long. So I shall ask you to come again the way you came before."⁸²⁵

There is also another type of purification, the 'inishi arishi.'⁸²⁶ The performing of the rite is only in cases of miserable deaths, in cases where the dead never knew joy, peace or prosperity. The rite cleanses a dead person from the effects of evil influences.

There is another type of purification rite of extrication. Normally if one lived a very useless and hopeless life, his relatives would give him a burial that would make it impossible for him to reincarnate among them. The purification is carried out by flogging and tormenting the corpse. This is done with the hope of frightening the corpse. At other times, they are buried with their faces facing the ground so that they may not 'see' the way to return back to their former life or to their former families.⁸²⁷ This kind of treatment is not limited alone to adults who lived worthless life. It equally has implications for those children called *ogbanje*, that is, wicked children who when they died, they re-enter their mothers' wombs to be born again.

⁸²⁵ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 86.

⁸²⁶ Oliver Onwubiko, *African Thought, Religion and Culture*, 92.

⁸²⁷ Oliver Onwubiko, *African Thought, Religion and Culture*, 92

The corpse of an ogbanje is not normally given a proper burial. Instead of mourning the corpse, a medicine man is always invited to perform rituals of extrication. Most often medicine men have used sharp razors to mutilate the dead body. When they go to bury it, they normally do that during the night so that the dead will be unable to find its way back. The bodies are thrown into the Evil Forest. Definitely, no special arrangement of burial is made, no coffins are used. The medicine men simply hold the dead body by the ankle and drag it on the ground behind them. Such horrible treatment is believed to act as deterrent for the dead ogbanje child who will think twice before coming back again.⁸²⁸ The rites of purification commence the series of rites of passage that increases the dynamism of the soul and introduces the dead into the hereafter.

5.4.3 Funeral Rites and Second Burial

The discussion this far tells us that death like in every culture is equally seen in Igbo circumstance as an existential phenomenon. However, it is not an annihilation of existence though it is a separation. This means, death does not sieve relationship between the living and the dead. Because even at death, the corporate group keep a continued contact and communicate with the dead. There are several methods of keeping contact with the departed. The methods begin by enhancing the spirits of the dead. The enhancement starts immediately after death. Enhancing the spirits of the dead involves elaborate ceremonies and extensive rites. There are many meanings to be driven from the elaborate preparations. The importance attached to performing the rituals transcends social communal notion that are most often given as reason for celebrating. In fact, they are enabling factors in catching a better glimpse of the belief in the existence and continuity of the person in the hereafter. This is the idea Christianity affirms by a future resurrection of life in heaven and hell, heaven through purgatory.

The kind of burial rites performed for the deceased is believed to determine the position and place the defunct would assume in the spirit world. They

⁸²⁸ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 55.

also condition reincarnation.⁸²⁹ This means, entering the community of the ancestors or the dead taken their right places in the spirit world determines whether they will be ‘reborn’ or not. Entering this realm as already said depends on whether appropriate burial rites were performed by the living relatives for their dead members. Unless these prerequisites are met, the dead are said to be hanging, wandering or sleeping around homesteads or in the woods. The experience of the wandering spirit in Igbo thought is vividly described in the *Arrow of God*. The author of this book described the ill luck that hunted Ogbuefi Amalu who was a man of substance.

In normal circumstances, the second burial rites and funeral feast of Ogbuefi Amalu would have followed two or three days after his death. But it was a bad death which killed a man in the time of famine. Amalu himself knew it and was prepared. Before he died, he had called his first son, Aneto, and given him directions for the burial feast in these words, “I would have said: Do it a day or two after I have been put into the earth. However, this is *uga-ni* (a time of famine). I cannot ask you to arrange my burial feast with your saliva. I must wait until there are yams again. ...but you must not delay it beyond four moons from my death.”⁸³⁰ It all means before the completion of this four moons time circle, Amalu was going to be standing outside the hereafter being beaten by the rain and sun.⁸³¹ He will be wandering and hanging around the homestead.

⁸²⁹ Oliver Onwubiko, *African Thought, Religion and Culture*, 90-1.

⁸³⁰ Chinua Achebe, *Arrow of God*, Ibadan, (1965), 1982, 216-7.

⁸³¹ Chinua Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 217. Oliver Onwubiko has shown that there is no second burial in Igbo traditional society. Patterning to the disease two ceremonies exist, *ili madu* and *ikwa madu*, that is interment and final funeral ceremonies and festivals. The actual burial and the memorial of death has been rise in Christen circles to the concept of “Second Burial” which is as misleading as its concept is a misnomer. Cf. Oliver Onwubiko, *Okwukwu – Second Burial in the Light of Inculturation*. A Paper Presented on the Occasion of a Seminar/Workshop on Inculturation Organised by the Ahiara Diocesan Laity Council, on 18th of January, 1992. 2.

The hope of entering the ancestral domain will only be illusive until he receives a proper burial, which is after the ritual of the second burial. Second burial has never meant a reburial of a corpse. Unfortunately, it has received a mistaken interpretation to be so. The distorted interpretation of this ritual ceremony by early missionaries prompted earlier missionary to convoke a meeting at Onitsha in May 1914 under the chairmanship of Archdeacon T.J. Dennis. The agenda of the meeting was to question of the “Church and Native Customs.” One prominent discussion in the agenda was the issue of ‘second burial.’ After so many deliberations, it was decided and members in attendance adopted that “the Government be asked to make it law that Christian heirs inherit the property, pay the debts of the deceased, (father or brother) and leave out the burial.” The meeting concluded that their decisions is influenced by their conviction that “it is not right for a Christian to have anything to do with a second burial”⁸³² The Igbo practice was to bury their dead as soon as death occurs, not without preliminary ceremonies. They celebrate life with its good fortunes. As a community, they equally celebrate death and its many difficulties. Normally death is not consideration in the scheme of things. People do not plan their deaths; families do not plan the death of their members. Long preparations and arrangements could be made for marriage, social and other religious ceremonies but not for burial ceremonies. No one budgets for death. That is why when it occurs it brings sorrows and takes all by surprise.

Every ceremony in Igbo land takes a lot of time to plan and to organize; it takes a lot of energy and wealth. Be it religious or social, burial ceremonies are not excluded. The family needs time to prepare for every ceremony and since death occurred suddenly, they need time to plan for appropriate burial. That is why; the so-called ‘second burial’ is always celebrated one year after the death of the person. This is to allow family members of the deceased

⁸³² See, Minutes of “the Church and Native Customs Conference,” May 12, 1914, C.M.S. Ozoala, Onitsha, Nigeria, typed script in the C.M.S. archives at Onitsha unpublished manuscript, 16.

time to prepare. Families who are not able to do the ceremony for lack of fund within one year may postpone it until they are buoyant enough to send their dead into the ancestral home. The ritual is comparable to memorial services and a continuation of prayers for the dead generally found in many culture and religion. The place of burial is an important element in determining the arrival into the realm of the ancestors.

5.4.4 Places of Burial

Death brings the deceased first to the state of the living dead. This state is a conscious state of existence. As soon as one dies, one becomes a living dead. This suggests the Igbo thought have no definition for oblivion. It also shows that death is not the end of existence it is rather a transfer to another realm altogether. Death to life is not a new beginning it is rather a birth to continue in existence. Through death and becoming a living dead the dead finally goes into the hereafter, which is a place of 'rebirth.' Our tradition of study believes that properly buried bodies can communicate and can consciously relate. One best way of granting the living dead this opportunity to communicate is by giving, them deserved burial. Among the so many benefits of a proper burial, denying witches and ones enemy's access to the body of the deceased is very important. This include access to personal material, properties especially articles of clothing.

Witches or enemies can prevent the dead from reaching the hereafter. Ones enemies could harm or hunt the dead. The easiest way to do this is by acquiring the remains of the dead or their articles of clothing. The acquisition of any of these is used in preparing concoctions and medicines. Such potion can blindfold the dead thereby hindering the dead from either taking revenge in cases where they are believed to have been bewitched. It can also prevent the dead from reaching their final destination. There is also the popular concept that dead bodies are sacred and they give potent to the medicines of the witch. This is why witches are believed always to be hunting for dead bodies. To prevent such heinous crimes, some Igbo communities or families prefer burying their dead inside the house where the person had lived. This

is done to prevent the witches or enemies access to the body which may amount to conquering the spirit of the dead person with medicine. The spirit in the tradition of our study is believed not to be independent of the body. Molesting the body will be overcoming the spirit. In cases where the deceiver must avenge itself, it is expected to do that in the body. The Igbo people believe that bodiless spirits are powerless spirits. If the body is weakened through medicine then the spirit is incapacitated.

There is another reason why bodies are buried inside the house. Depending on the circumstance of death, bodies are buried inside uncompleted buildings. This is done not only to pacify the toil and hard work of the deceased it means also to say that “in spite of the interruption of the biological phenomenon of death, the present life, and the after-life are in fact one continuous stretch of life and the material and the spiritual are interconnected.”⁸³³ The opportunity to dwell in a house denied by death has been compensated in death. This is a clear demonstration of the belief that life does not end at death.

Apart from these circumstances, the remains of the deceased adults are normally interred in their compounds. This has been an age long practice. The Igbo people have never had burial grounds in the sense of western organized places of burial. Aja Ohia (evil forest) has never assumed the status or acted as a burial ground, it was never a place of burial in the real sense. It was rather a dumping place for people that committed some kind of abomination. The death of children and young people are bad death. Their death does not call for religious ceremonies. Since such deaths are not wanted, the bodies of such ages are buried behind the compound or away from the homestead.

When either her husband or his family mistreats a woman, the body of such a woman at death has always been demanded by the family of her birth to be carried home. For the family of such a woman, allowing their daughter to

⁸³³ Emefie Ikenga Metuh, *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religions*, 263.

be buried among the dead of her husband's family amounts to a prolongation of her agony. Since no parent would wish their child to pass through such crucibles in the hereafter, they demand for the return of the remains. In the history of the Israel, Joseph did demand that his body be carried back to Canaan where Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants were buried (Gn 49:29-32; 50:1-22). This affords the dead the opportunity to continue their existence among its kiths and kins. The presence of the grave is an absolute sign of the journey to the great beyond. They are considered the abode of the dead, through which the world of the ancestors is linked to the present human world.⁸³⁴ The dead without a grave is like one without a home or a man without a wife and children.

Next to 'ndu' (life) is the family, it is the most important for every Igbo person. Children provide a vital link between the living and the dead members of the family, a link which guarantees a continuation in the hereafter. The inability to have children blocks this stream of life. To die without a child, for the Igbo as well as most other African peoples is to descend into oblivion, forgotten by both the living and the dead. To die without a wife and children is to die an unfortunate death. It is like extinguishing a touch. According to Igbo culture, live without wife, children and close relatives to pour libations after death is a useless life. Igbo culture is one in which a man without wife and children is a waste.⁸³⁵ The grave is necessary; it is an evidence of a proper burial. It signals the appropriate home coming of the deceased.

⁸³⁴ Ebeh John Igbogo, *Death, Grave and Burial Ceremonies among the Igala People of Kogi State*, in: *The Kpim of Death: Essays in Memory of Pantaleon Iroegbu*, Canada, (2007), 91-100.

⁸³⁵ Emmanuel Obuna, *African Priests and Celibacy*. Rome, (1986), 29-30; John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, London, (1975), 105; idem *African Religions and Philosophy*, London, (1999), 136-42.

5.4.5 The Grave

The special treatment of the dead body draws attention to the symbolic indication of the belief in the continued existence of the departed. Dead bodies are normally buried, they are never allowed to rot upon the earth surface. Dead human bodies in Igbo society are not eaten up like the bodies of other animals. Animals are not allowed to eat up human bodies as prey. There may be occasions when bodies may be refused burial. In such cases, the bodies are exposed to the mercy of nature. However, these are only in rare cases or in matters where somebody has committed abominations. The bodies of people said to have committed abominations against the deities especially Earth Mother are not buried properly. Offenders of ala do not receive graves. There are some diseases classified equally as abominable. Such diseases include smallpox, epilepsy, leprosy etc. Once these diseases are recognized as the cause of death, such bodies were never buried they were thrown into the evil forest as the bodies are considered unclean.

There are shifts in opinion in Igbo culture of today on the burial of people said to have committed nso ala (abominations). Some Igbo communities today no longer consider 'minor abominations' seriously. Such people in the present setting may receive proper burial. This consideration may not be extraneous to missionary evangelization and modernity. True as this statement may be, modernity however, is not mitigating much on the issue of suicide. The opinions of the Igbo on it have not changed much. Human life (ndu) is sacred it is hidden in the body. The Igbo revere human life with unimaginable awesomeness. So that suicide remains an abomination against ala. The ala deity is believed to be the owner of life once one deprives one of its own life, once one says or behaves in a manner that portrays this life as undesirable then it is the mandate of ala to the community to deprive such a person a grave.

The Igbo people originally have no systematic or organized places of burial. The presence of the grave (ground) within the family fortifies the faith in the 'existence' of the dead as far as the family circle is concerned. The pre-

sence of the grave strengthens the belief that death does not diminish family bond. Every family considers the dead as integral parts of their whole. Both the living members and the dead play appropriate roles towards the good of the other. One very important ways of caring for the dead is allowing them to participate in family meals. During meals, pieces of food are thrown out on the ground. By so doing, the human family keeps the relationship between them and their living dead.

The grave on ala remains important point of this contact. Divination of course enables family members to contact and consult with their dead who are living in the homesteads. Though the dead are physically gone, they are thought as being present within the family circle and homestead. The homestead has two meanings for the Igbo. It is an expression of the old or present family house (*ulo ochie*). It is also used in the sense of an imaginary abode of the ancestors. In this case, it is called *ala mmuo*, the hereafter.

5.4.6 The Hereafter

The Igbo spirituality we have stressed so far points to the mystery of human life in its relationship to the undying nature of the person. At death, one enters another realm, the sphere of the hereafter. Paradoxically, the *ala mmuo* (the hereafter or the land of the dead) structurally resembles the present physical world. Actually, it is an extension of this physical world. Life in the hereafter is organized according to lineage; there are families, kindred and village communities. There are markets, streets and farmlands. There are also forests, hills, and valleys, with rivers and streams flowing, and roads leading from one town to another as well as to houses. There are gender and status classification. Women are to be women, men and children the same. The rich and the chiefs will retain their status while the poor are to face the poverty of their earthly life.⁸³⁶ The Igbo people are not alone in this conception of the hereafter.

⁸³⁶ Leonard Arthurs, *Lower Niger and its Tribes*, 186-7.

Earlier discussions traced the special treatment of the body to earlier Egyptian tradition of burial. The departed in that society is accompanied to the underworld with material gifts such as, foodstuffs, weapons, Jewelleries and ornaments. Early Hebrew equally treated the body as sacred. For the Igbo it is a great sign of disrespect to families and clans if their dead are treated with ignominy. Since the dead are not dead but living, and aware of their existence, it is a grave injustice to deny the dead their 'identity.' Igbo society most often identified people by their professions. There are occasions when the dead are buried with their important belongings like implements of its profession. This practice is just to assist the corpse continue its profession in the great beyond. Dead wine-tappers, musicians, flutists, warriors, wrestlers, town criers, farmers etc are believed to continue their occupation in the hereafter. Once again, Achebe talks of this practice in his phenomenal novel. In the case of Anoka who had evil fortune, knowing that he would not be given a decent burial due to the circumstance of his death decided to provide for himself. Moreover, since his misfortune were going to follow him to the grave, or rather to his death, for he had no grave, Achebe poetically added, "when they carried him away, he took with him his flute."⁸³⁷ The flute was the only valuable personal belonging that was the only thing that kept him happy. The effort trying to recover his flute shows the realistic nature of the hereafter and the depth of fear entering it without some kind of material belongings.

Normally, burial is according to status. Everyone receives the burial rite commensurate to ones earthly life. Priests, Chiefs, Kings and peasants are buried according to the position they achieved in life. The excavation sites in Igbo-Ukwu draw this idea to clarity. The excavated grave show one of the sites as the "burial chamber of a man, apparently a ruler or religious dignitary, buried in a seated position in a wood-lined chamber, richly dressed, surrounded by treasures, and with several others, probably slaves, at his feet. One foot rested on an elephant tusk. The second site was a storehouse,

⁸³⁷ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 13.

containing beads, bronze bowls and many ceremonial bronze objects. The third was a pit containing pottery and further bronzes, as well as bones and rubbish.⁸³⁸ For Isichei the grave perhaps belong to one of the ancient kings of Nri. The Nri town is only nine miles away from Igbo-Ukwu, which is the place of discovery.⁸³⁹ The excavation however, reveals the unsuspected brilliant belief in the resurrection or at least in the continuity of existence.

It also reveals the belief on the interrelatedness of earthly life and life in the hereafter. Once a person has completed the earthly journey, he/she at death does not return to the community of the ancestors empty handed. The return to the home of the ancestor with materials simply defines existence at the hereafter as conscious. One next question that remains pertinent is whether there is a sense of judgment in the hereafter. That is, whether the living dead in Igbo tradition are in the state of punishment or bliss.

5.4.7 This-Worldliness and Other-Worldliness

The Igbo religion belongs to the general African religions characterized as this worldly.⁸⁴⁰ This means that the Igbo are more interested in the things of this world more than the things of the future existence in the afterlife. For those who hold this opinion, the feeling of reward and punishment, paradise or hell seen in Western Christianity and even in Islam is missing in Traditional religion. Proponents of this ideology insist traditional thought has no notion of a higher or lower state such as one finds in Plato as well as in some Asian religions. Asian religions especially the Indian believe the world is an illusion, a void. As a result, the only way to achieve happiness or a state of bliss is by the way of “nirvana.” The Nirvana comes from the Sanskrit word (Pali nibbana-the end). The concept is one of many terms in Indian religions, especially in Buddhism expressing the last stage of suffering and a realization of a new stage of happiness. Nirvana is a supreme

⁸³⁸ Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of the Igbo People*, 12; Emezie Ikenga Metuh, *African Religions in Western Conceptual Schemes*, 103.

⁸³⁹ Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of the Igbo People*, 12.

⁸⁴⁰ Victor Alumona, *Ala as Collective Conscience in Igbo Morality*, 318-9.

state free from suffering and human pains. It is a state of individual existence. Traditional Buddhists call this state a state of “God realization or self realization.” The attainment of Nirvana stops the endless cycle of transmigration.⁸⁴¹ Once this stops, one achieves a blessed life or nirvana (a state of bliss).

The physical universe according to Buddhism is a place of suffering. Having seen reason against accepting a materialistic world, Buddhism sees the world as aversive thus; it focuses rather on a spiritual plane. Igbo religion on the other hand does not understand the world as disgusting. As a result and contrary to the spiritual expectation of the Asian religions, the Igbo religion has been termed this worldly. Not that Igbo religion in particular is this worldly; proponents of this argument extend it to the general traditional religion of Africa. It is their opinion that African traditional religion believed in this world. While the religions of Indian origin especially Buddhism have focused upon the negative character of human egoist and have identified man’s true liberation from it as the best solution to happiness.⁸⁴² Islam almost moved close to operating on this opinion. Flight from the world implicated in engaging in Holy war merits the faithful a place in paradise.⁸⁴³ The Igbo religion thinks this world is light, warm and lovingly livable. This understanding on the other hand came very close to the injunction of Jesus on

⁸⁴¹ Oliver Freiberger, Nirvana, in: Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, bd. 6, Tübingen, ⁴(2003), 344-345, 344.

⁸⁴² John Hick, Death and Eternal life, 450.

⁸⁴³ “Siehe, Allah hat von den Gläubigen ihr Leben und ihr Gut für das Paradies erkaufte. Sie sollen kämpfen in Allahs Weg und töten und getötet werden. Eine Verheißung hierfür ist gewährleistet in der Tora, im Evangelium und im Koran; und wer hält seine Verheißung getreuer als Allah? Freut euch daher des Geschäfts, das ihr abgeschlossen habt; und das ist die große Glückseligkeit“ (S 9, 112).

„O ihr, die ihr glaubt, soll ich euch zu einer Ware leiten, die euch von einer schmerzlichen Strafe errettet? Glaubet an Allah und an seinen Gesandten und eifert in Allahs Weg mit Gut und Blut. Solches ist gut für euch, so ihr es wisset. Er wird euch eure Sünden verzeihen und euch in Gärten führen, durchheilt von Bächen, und in gute Wohnungen in Edens Gärten. Das ist die große Glückseligkeit. Und andere Dinge (wird er euch geben), die euch lieb sind – Hilfe von Allah und nahen Sieg! Und verkünde Freude den Gläubigen“ (S 61, 10-13).

his Sermon on the Mount on inheriting the earth and receiving reward from heaven (Mt 5:5). In Sermon on the Mount, heaven and earth received a very close interpretation.

This explains the physical universe as so warm that it does not make much difference if in the Igbo sense of its comprehensibility the dead want to return to it. For the dead, the present universe is the best of all possible worlds, hence, the African's attitude is world affirming not world renouncing. On the contrary, some African scholars think the under-world is too cold for the dead that they want to return to the physical earth.⁸⁴⁴ This conclusion suggests John Mbiti's position on the this-worldliness of the African religions and the other-worldliness of Judeo-Christian religions. Implicitly, a talk of a higher state of existence in resurrection outside this world is bizarre and unconceivable to the African.⁸⁴⁵ Mbiti and some other proponents of this position have based their arguments on certain reasons. We will be able to discuss just one of the reasons that are relevant to our topic, which is the question of time.

5.5 Resurrection and the African Perspective of Time

The issue of time has appealed to several metaphoric usages. Two prominent and ancient images is its usage in the sense of a clock and arrow. The Greek New Testament has the idea of time as *chronos* (chronology), the idea of the ticking of the clock and the events of subsequent occurrences. The idea of chronology or the ticking of clock is contained in the thought of Jesus when he said; "A day has twelve hours, has it not? Therefore, whoever walks in broad daylight does not stumble, for they see the light of this world. But if they walk during the night they stumble, because they have no light" (Jn 11:9). The OT also knew the idea of Chronological time. The psalmist prays in a linear sense when he says, "teach us how short our life

⁸⁴⁴ Geoffrey Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion*, 138.

⁸⁴⁵ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 156-7.

is, so that we may become wise.” Another metaphor of time that is linear and chronological is contained in the symbolism of the arrow. Once the arrow is shot, it continues to travel until it hits its target. The metaphor of the arrow expresses the remorseless nature of time onward movement. Juxtaposing human life with a shot arrow, human life like the arrow once loosed from the bowstring at birth it flies point forward until it hits the target of death.⁸⁴⁶ “The metaphor thus depicts what seems to be the irreversible and unidirectional quality of time. On the scale of history, the Judeo-Christian tradition has insisted on this linear view of time, with the arrow flying from creation to the Last Judgment.”⁸⁴⁷ These metaphors indicating linear chronological conception of time have greater effects on Judeo-Christian spirituality and its appreciation of the eschatology. The linear concept of time adopted from Judeo-Christianity spirituality and integrated in western psychology eventually became part of western culture. The linear time in the thought of some scholars contradicts African concept of cyclic time and spirituality.

The assumption that the Igbo tradition has no concept of a future time informs Arthur Leonard Glyn argument that the Igbo religion has no sense of hell and heaven.⁸⁴⁸ The argument has prompted similar arguments by majority of scholars among who are Africans. Mbiti points out that most African traditional religion lay less emphasis on eschatology. They do not expect any form of judgment, reward or punishment in the hereafter.⁸⁴⁹ However, he made some exceptions of a few cultures that believed in reward and punishment. Mbiti argues for none messianic hope in the traditional religion. For him, there is no apocalyptic vision with God stepping in at some future moment to bring about a radical reversal of man’s normal life. Human soul does not seek redemption neither does it long for a closer contact with God. In his opinion to live here and now is the most important thing for the Afri-

⁸⁴⁶ Paul S. Fiddes, *The Promised End: Eschatology in the Theology and Literature*, Massachusetts, (2000), 181.

⁸⁴⁷ Paul S. Fiddes, *The Promised End*, 181.

⁸⁴⁸ Arthur Leonard, *Lower Niger and its Tribes*, 184.

⁸⁴⁹ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 156-7.

can. There is no concern and hope for a better future, no paradise to hope and there is no hell to fear. In as much Mbiti admitted the reality of a belief in a hereafter, he concludes that a materialistic and physical understanding pollutes the hereafter. He chides African arts of worship and turning to God as pragmatic and utilitarian rather than spiritual or mystical.⁸⁵⁰ The arguments by both Glyn and Mbiti are rooted in the purported notion that African/Igbo idea of time is cyclic and materialistically connected.

5.5.1 The African Time as Non-Time

The whole theology of John Mbiti on the 'eschaton' centers on the concept of time. Space, place and time are concepts that Mbiti expresses as closely linked. Mbiti used two Swahili words 'Zamani' and 'Sasa' to express the notion of time. Zamani describes time in the sense of a 'distance past' while 'Sasa, is time in the dynamic present.' The Zamani period is time ad infinitum, a period beyond which nothing can go. It is time in the 'hollow' sense of the end of time. Here everything finds its stopping point. It is the termination of time. The 'Sasa period covers the 'now period.' It has the sense of immediacy, nearness, and nowness. What matters to the African is just what is in the Sasa, what is geographically near, what is here and now.⁸⁵¹ On eschatological level, he argues that Africans have not been able to grasp eschatological teaching because they have no idea of a distance future and cannot imagine it.⁸⁵²

The question of time in the opinion of our scholar has no concern to African peoples. Time for the Africans is simply:

"A composition of events which have occurred, those which are taking place now and those which are inevitably or immediately to occur. What has not taken place or what has no likelihood of an immediate occurrence

⁸⁵⁰ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 4-5, 157.

⁸⁵¹ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 26.

⁸⁵² John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 23; Byang H. Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, Nairobi, (1987), 77.

falls in the category of ‘no-time,’ what is certain to occur, or what falls within the rhythm of natural phenomena, is in the category of inevitable or potential time. The most significant consequence of this is that, according to traditional concepts, time is a two-dimensional phenomenon, with a long past, a present and virtually no future. The linear concept of time in western thought, with an indefinite past, present and infinite future is practically foreign to African thinking.”⁸⁵³

Our eminent scholar further writes, for the Africans; “The future is virtually absent because events which lie in it have not taken place; they have not been realized and cannot, therefore, constitute time. If however future events are certain to occur, or if they fall with the inevitable rhythm of nature, they constitute only potential time, not actual time.”⁸⁵⁴ All the same “if we think of possibility as mere potential, we are really simply subordinating it to actuality . . . , for the potential is the ‘not yet’ made actual. We look forward not to what is merely ‘not yet’ actual, but to what God makes possible.”⁸⁵⁵ Analyzing African perspective of time puts it in terms of contrast between actuality and possibility. Instead of linear time, that explains events in the mode of past, present and infinite future, the African is not only conversant with a cyclic time that explains events in a process of birth, death and rebirth it also explains events in chronological forms. Actual time is a realized future time. The problem is whether there is the idea of the African/Igbo have the sense of time that is *futurum*. If there is a future dimension of time, Mbiti says it is just on discovery. Africans are just discovering the future dimensions of time “partly because of Christian missionary teaching, partly because of Western-type education, together with the invasion of modern technology.”⁸⁵⁶ Time measured in Western education and

⁸⁵³ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 16-17; idem, *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background*, Oxford, (1971), 185; Joseph G. Healey, *A Fifth But with all their Gospel: The Experience of Black Christian Values*, New York, (1981), 160.

⁸⁵⁴ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 17.

⁸⁵⁵ Paul Fides S., *The Promised End*, 168.

⁸⁵⁶ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 27.

in technological conception is time that is durational, resulting from the ticking of the clock and this is academic time.

Eschatological time is not about academic or clock time.⁸⁵⁷ Even in a situation where academic time or clock is to be the issue, Adiele E. Afigbo has argued that the Igbo have a time that depicts linear conception. “In Igbo thought we have *mgbe ochie* (‘old’ time) meaning the past, *ugbua* meaning now or the present, and *mgbe di n’ihu* (time that is in front) meaning the future. regard and respect and awe for the past, (*mgbe ochie*), the Igbo regard *mgbe di n’ihu*, (the future), to be greater and more portentous than both the past and now. Thus they say *echi di ime* (tomorrow is pregnant).”⁸⁵⁸ The Igbo language and some other African languages have concrete idea of linear chronometric sense of time. The Igbo have specific market days, specified and particular times for trading, time for farming and harvesting. There are times for meal, palm wine tapping time etc.

The Igbo have the idea of numbers expressing relationship to the infinite and indefinite future. The number ‘*asaa*’ (seven) in Igbo mythological has a mythical sense of infinity. Many Igbo folklore and nighttime stories have the idea of ‘*Mba asaa, ikpa asaa, osimiri asaa, uwa asaa*’ (seven villages, seven forests, seven oceans, the infinite world) most often used in designating an infinite progressive movement. The Igbo can count so many years into the future by the numerals they recite. From these instances, one is sure that “from the African point of view, a belief in the future is an attested fact. The denial of a linear concept of time is a very questionable proposition. African strong belief in creation is itself indicative of their belief in linear time.”⁸⁵⁹ The belief in creation is simply a belief in a beginning, the past implying an anticipation of an end in the future. In Africa/Igbo, there is time for every-

⁸⁵⁷ Karl Rahner et al., *Zeit*, in: *Kleines Theologisches Wörterbuch*, Freiburg, (1964).

⁸⁵⁸ Adiele E. Afigbo, *Ancestral Igbo Religion and Cosmos and the Idea of World Religion*, in: *Religion in a Word of Change, Islam and Christianity*, Theophilus Okere, (ed.), Owerri, (2003), 178.

⁸⁵⁹ Byang Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, 63.

thing. There is time for giving birth even for dying. If this were so, it would not be right to say the people have no belief in progress. Neither would the argument that the people do not plan for the distant future⁸⁶⁰ be sustainable. These sentences show sense of time measured in linear and infinite chronometric. Igbo also have a conception of time that is cyclic in the sense of socializing. In a socializing sense, time is polychromous, it is eschatological.

5.5.2 African Time as Eschatological Time

Time in Igbo land as well as many other places in Africa is in both senses of infinite chronometric and cyclic socializing. In a socializing sense, time is polychromous. That is, a person can do two, three, four or more things within a given period but simultaneously.⁸⁶¹ This idea of polychromatic runs concurrent with biblical perspective of *kairos*, the eschatological time. Contrary to the idea of *chronos*, which is quantitative time massive measurement, *kairos* fundamentally, refers to specially selected period of divine determination. It operates within profane human right time, opportune time, temporary and durational time but it focuses on fulfilling God's ultimate purpose. The understanding of time in its temporality form, that is, time space continuum, duration, stages and periods in comparison with the horizontal biblical understanding is qualified in the sense of *Heilgeschichte* that is waiting and being in time. The story of God and man is the tale in time of salvation for humanity. The plan to redemption into a promise of a new heaven and a new earth (2 Pt 3:13-14) is a plan in time to redeem humanity. Biblical time is eschatological time of God's revelation of himself at the *Parousia*, the (NT) second coming of Christ. OT prophets emphasized time in terms of nearness when God will do a new thing, (Is 42:9; 48:6; 61:1f), it is God's time of mercy and kindness (Is 49:8; Ps 69:14; Ps 102:14).

The NT defines time in the concept of Jesus announcement of the arrival of the Kingdom. Time is associated with both Kingdom and the *kairos* "the right time has come," he said, "and the Kingdom of God is near" (Mk 1:15).

⁸⁶⁰ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 23.

⁸⁶¹ Oliver Onwubiko, *African Thought, Religion and Culture*, 25.

The time of God is eschatological time. It is a time of mercy, which is now. Now is the time, now is the hour. Now is the time to proclaim liberty to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, it is a time to set free the oppressed. Kairos conveys the notion of expectation and excitement of the announcement that God has come to save his people (Lk 4:18-19). As much as there is a relationship between kairos to liberty and freedom of creation, it calls for discipleship. Announcing the arrival of the Kingdom of God, Jesus calls for repentance, faith and discipleship (Mk 1:15, 16-20). Paul in Gal 4:4 analogically connects the coming of the Son of Man as the “fulfillment of time.”⁸⁶² In the letter to the Romans 13:11 Paul writes. “You must do this, because you know that the time has come for you to wake up from your sleep. For the moment when we will be saved is closer now than it was when we first believed.” Here Paul applied the Greek word kairos over chronos. He feels that this is the moment, the particular time and a special time of grace. For him, this is the only moment we have. The present time and hour is the eschatological time.⁸⁶³ It is the day to be saved (2 Cor 6:2-3). As a time of decision, the author of Hebrews repeating the psalmist writes. “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts” (Heb 3:7-8). In 2 Timothy 4:8 Paul again uses kairos instead of chronological time. “And now there is waiting for me in the victory prize of being put right with God, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that Day – and not only me, but to all those who wait with love for him to appear.” Waiting for the Lord is holding on in the present, because no one knows the day or the hour when the Lord will appear (Mt 24:36-44; Acts 1:7), therefore, “watch and pray” (Lk 12:35-40, 21:36; Mt 24:42-43, 26:41). Watching and praying is waiting in the present time an activity that involves doing two things at the same time. This is also polychromous and socializing time.

⁸⁶² Klaus Scholtissek, Kairos, *Biblische-theologisch* 1, in: *Lexikon Für Theologie und Kirche*, bd. 5, ³(1996), 1129-1130, 1129.

⁸⁶³ Klaus Scholtissek, Kairos, *Biblische-theologisch* 1, 1130.

Socializing time is eschatological time. It is a time of the presence that connects with the time of the promise. It makes the present connects the long past to the infinite future. Socializing time expresses the passion for the present and sustains the hope that opens up the future rather than an epiphany of eternal waiting. Christian eschatology therefore is not the talk of the future in the sense of a vacuum. Christian eschatology is about Christ and his future fulfilled in the resurrection and in the mode of God's being in real existence.⁸⁶⁴ The resurrection is about the transformation of creation rather than merely interrupting it. "All of creation waits with eager longing for God to reveal his children... That creation itself would one day be set free from its slavery to decay and would share the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Rom 8:20-21). Christ coming is the realization of eschatology, which in Christian understanding is time in the present, time in the now. In Christ, future is not *futurum*, but *adventus Dei* (*Parousia*). "Whereas *futurum* can never be completely new, *adventus* is full of the infinite possibilities only to God and thereby pointing always toward him. It thus creates an ever-advancing 'front-line' between the past that is 'obsolete and passing' (the Old) and that which has never before been (the New)"⁸⁶⁵

5.5.3 Cyclic Time as Structural Expression

Cyclic time is a structural expression. In Igbo traditional conception, cyclic time is remarkably repetitive. The belief in a cyclic time is a belief in a time that is structurally dynamic, repetitively reoccurring. I want to believe that the balance between dynamism and repetition fundamentally belong to a situation that is progressive since reoccurrence indicates a repetition that is not in the structure of a recollection backward. It is not "an involution of events that and moments that may be better qualified as *regressus in infinitum*. But a 'recollection forward,' that portrays a kind of 'mythical historically' where events of the beginning embodied as the ideal of sacred traditi-

⁸⁶⁴ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theologie der Hoffnung*, Gutersloh, (1997), 12-3.

⁸⁶⁵ M. R. Tripole, *Theology of Hope*, in: *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 13, (2003), 925-927, 926; Jürgen Moltman, *Theologie der Hoffnung*, 12-3; idem, *Theology as Eschatology: The Future of Hope*, F. Herzog (ed.). New York, (1970), 10-15.

on are projected forward as the prototype for definition of the present and the future.”⁸⁶⁶ This said the argument that African peoples do not expect any form of individual or collective resurrection after death⁸⁶⁷ does not hold water any more. When the Igbo say, “*echi di ime onye ma ihe oga amu*” (tomorrow is pregnant no one can predicate what it will deliver) and “*echi ete-ka aka*” (tomorrow is too far), parallel the ‘Day of the Lord’ or ‘that Day’⁸⁶⁸ notion of the Bible. Like the Hebrews, the Igbo had in mind the decisive turn of events in history. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to admit that death, the grave is the seal of everything since the African, and Igbo have no sense of history and time.⁸⁶⁹ If the end of history in Igbo sense is the decisive turn of events, then there should be reconsideration of the claim by Mbiti that Africans have no sense of retribution since there is nothing to hope for in forms of reward for the righteous and punishment for the wicked⁸⁷⁰ in the hereafter.

Enyeribe Onuoha refutes the argument that traditional religion has no sense of retribution. For him in as much as traditional religion does not offer its members the promise of a beatific vision in a glorious paradise in an everlasting life to come, as the messianic religions do.⁸⁷¹ One thing is clear, the principle of Igbo morality based on “*Egbe bere, ugo bere, nke si ibe ya ebla nku kwapu ya n’ike*” (let the hawk peach as well as the eagle, if one refuses the other to peach, let its wings break) depicts the principle of law and retribution. Igbo religious morality is rooted on rigid justice. Every act of immorality disrupts the balance of the ontological order and God has ordained that the Law of Reciprocal Effect, (the law of ‘*Ofor n’Ogu*’) should re-

⁸⁶⁶ Emeka George Ekwuru, *Igbo Cosmology*, 52.

⁸⁶⁷ John S. Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa*, London, (1970), 265; idem, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 160.

⁸⁶⁸ Cf. Amos 5:18-20, 8:8-9; Is 2:12-21, 13:9-11; Jr 4:23-6; Jl 1:15, 2:28-32.

⁸⁶⁹ John S. Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy*, 23.

⁸⁷⁰ John S. Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy*, 156-60.

⁸⁷¹ Enyeribe Onuoha, *The Philosophy of Igbo Religion*, 379.

store this order automatically, inexorably, and incorruptibly,⁸⁷² irrespective of the status of the person whether dead or alive. Eneyeribe opines that traditional Igbo religion does offer its members the promise of ‘beatific vision’ even though not in the same manner Christianity and other prophetic religions have emphasized it. The Law of retribution, which is an implication of reward and punishment, is one way to assure the person of a state of achievement or punishment.

In support for a state of reward and punishment in Igbo theology of the hereafter, Ikenga Metuh has shown that the state of retribution in the hereafter in Igbo traditional religious teaching is realistic. He came to this conclusion by way of logical syllogism. For him, since life does not simply end at death, there must be a way of balancing the equation. There must be a kind of reward and punishment and this is retribution. According to him, “the most loathsome expectation in the after-life is to end up a wandering spirit, cut-off from the community and communion with one’s family and kinship groups.”⁸⁷³ The wandering spirits in Igbo religion are bad spirits. They are spirits believed to be in a state of unrest and suffering. Because they are sad, weary and hungry, they wander and roam about menacing, harassing and haunting the living.⁸⁷⁴ The spirits or those who have not made it to the ancestral home do not experience the joy of fulfillment. They are like the outcasts, cut off from all meaningful relationship with the ancestors and the living members of their families. They are restless and disgruntled. They are embittered because of their exclusion from the ancestral home.⁸⁷⁵ For

⁸⁷² Eneyeribe Onuoha, *The Philosophy of Igbo Religion*, 384-5.

⁸⁷³ Emefie Ikenga Metuh, *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religions*, 263; Edmund Ilogu *Christianity and Ibo Culture*, 43.

⁸⁷⁴ Oliver Onwubiko, *African Thought, Religion and Culture*, 91; Samuel U. Eriwwo, *Traditional Religion and Christianity among the Urhobo*, in: *Nigerian Studies in Religious*, Vol. 1, 298.

⁸⁷⁵ Cf. H. M. Cole / C. C. Aniakor, *Igbo arts, Community and Cosmos*. Los Angeles, (1984), 16; Emefie Ikenga Metuh, *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religion*, 266.

Metuh, Hans Witte and most other African scholars the loitering and restlessness of these spirits is already a kind of retribution.⁸⁷⁶

It is evident “our African traditional religion resembles on points the religions of those peoples of the ancient Near East. It also bears semblances of the Hebrew religion as revealed to them by Yahweh. Our native worshippers did not make any covenant with the ‘greatest One.’ Nevertheless, they concluded covenants between themselves in his presence. In Hebrew religion as well as in traditional belief, his will is law. The recalcitrant offenders will receive punishment in the life to come.”⁸⁷⁷ In African/Igbo religion, each one receives, his/her rewarded according to deed, not excluding recalcitrant evil doers. Those who committed abominations do not receive appropriate funeral rites. Though they may have entered the spirit land, they do not belong to the ‘community of the dead,’ though they are in the hereafter, they have not entered the village of the spirit land, and they do not belong to the ‘living dead,’ they are not ancestors. Their death is a metaphysical death.

They are outcasts, cut off from all relationship with God and relationship with their family members. This lost of contact with God; kith and kin is a kind of retribution. It is a kind of punishment,⁸⁷⁸ which according to Metuh and Mbiti has denied, in African traditional spiritual experience. On the other hand, for the dead to experience the joy of a blissful state in the hereafter, he or she must have lived a morally upright life. The Igbo society lays much emphasis on high moral order and retribution. The Igbo believe that all human activities must come under divine sanctions. The Igbo in danger of moral prevarication or embarking on a wrong course of action are advised to remember life after death and the laws of retribution under which

⁸⁷⁶ Hans A. Witte, *Familiengemeinschaft und kosmische Mächte-Religiöse Grundideen*, in *westafrikanischen Religionen*, in: Mircea Eliade, *Geschichte der Religiösen Ideen*, 3/2. Freiburg, (1991), 208-244, 223.

⁸⁷⁷ Anthony E. Ikonu, *God and Evangelization : A Lenten Pastoral*, Okigwe, (1991), no.34.

⁸⁷⁸ Emefie Ikenga Metuh, *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religion*, 266

the wicked are severely deprived and punished.⁸⁷⁹ As a society that lays emphasis on moral order, if the dead did not live a moral transparent life and was involved in immoral transgression not even a lavish funeral ceremony would ensure him or her a passport to the ancestral land.⁸⁸⁰ Given to the moral qualities that are necessary for one to enter into the ancestral land, canonization into the ancestral status in the ancestral home or a rejection into it could stand for the understanding of the resurrection in Igbo theology. It is a resurrection to life among the ancestors and a condemnation to punishment among the wandering spirits.

Finally, Igbo traditional theology may not emphasize punishment or reward, bliss or frustration, hell or heaven in the same way and manner that Christianity does. Nevertheless, there is a certain state of achievement and happiness and a state of unhappiness and frustration in the hereafter. Kalibala has dogmatically challenged the talk that Africans do not believe in the future eschatology and in the resurrection. For him Africans “absolutely believe in the future. We even believe in a future resurrection. This is demonstrated by burial ceremonies and the contact we maintain with the spirits of the dead”⁸⁸¹ and with the ancestors.

5.5.4 Igbo Christianity and Resurrection

For Christians in Igbo land and in Africa today, the Supreme Being their forefathers worshipped has been recalled by Christian missionaries in the mode of St. Paul (Acts 17:22-30). For today’s Christian missionaries, the Supreme God has been preached as the father of our Lord Jesus Christ. History has been made present in Jesus of Nazareth. In the same way, the African past flows into the African present and chats out a pattern for African future. The supernatural revelation of Jesus prompts his being addressed as

⁸⁷⁹ Cf. Edmund C. Ilogu, *Christianity and Igbo Culture*, 34-43; Nwachukwuike S.S. Iwe, *Igbo Deities*, in: *West African Religious Traditions*, 23.

⁸⁸⁰ Victor Chikezie Uchendu, *Religion in Igbo World View: The Social and Moral Dimension* in: *Nigerian Studies in Religious Tolerance*, Vol. 1, 322.

⁸⁸¹ Bygang Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, 61.

the African Ancestor. Charles Nyamiti started this in his 'Christ-As-Ancestor' model of Christology, followed by John S. Pobee in his concept of Christ as the Great Ancestor, Efoé Julien Penoukou (Christ as Jete-Ancestor) and Benezet Bujo with the visions of Christ as the Proto-Ancestor.⁸⁸² These models relate Christ as the Ancestor to Africans and to humanity in general.

As incarnate ancestor,⁸⁸³ Christ descended into hell, (Ala Mmuo). As a good shepherd (Mt 10:11), he went to seek and proclaim salvation to the ancestors who are human first parents.⁸⁸⁴ He visited those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. He went to set free the prisoner Adam and his fellow-prisoner Eve from their pains. Grasping his hand, Christ raises him up, saying: 'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.'⁸⁸⁵ In his capacity as God made son and one who descended into the hereafter, into the village of the ancestors, and the land of the living dead, Christ awakens the work of his hands fashioned in his image.⁸⁸⁶ As

⁸⁸² For further reading on these Christological models, see, Pantaleon Iroegbu, *Appropriate Ecclesiology: Through Narrative Theology to An African Church*, Owerri, (1996), 168-172.

⁸⁸³ On Christ as African ancestor, see, Charles Nyamiti, *Christ as Our Ancestor*, Harare, (1984). Christ would be a titled man in Igbo traditional setting giving the character of his status. In anticipation of his death and bury Mary Magdalene anointed him (Mt 26:7-13). The Gospel gives a detail account of the women going to complete the formal ritual of washing and anointing the corpse (Lk 24:1-4). In another instance, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus accorded him an appropriate Jewish burial rite. Both men anointed the body after which they placed it in a new empty tomb (Jn 19:38-42). Appropriate burial in Igbo land include having a grave. The presence of a grave shows residence in the hereafter. In some cases, it marks the beginning of the journey to the home of the ancestors.

⁸⁸⁴ See, Leonhard Goppelt, *Der Erste Petrusbrief* (KEK XII/1), Göttingen, 8(1978), 252; A. Grillmeier, *Der Gottessohn im Totenreich. Soteriologische und christologische Motivierung der Descensuslehre in der älteren christlichen Überlieferung*, in: Ders.: *Mit ihm und in ihm. (Christologische Forschungen und Perspektiven)*, Freiburg, ²(1978), 76-174, 77

⁸⁸⁵ See, *The Divine Office*, Vol. II, Lent and Easter, Holy Saturday, *The Office of Readings*, "The Second Reading: A reading from an ancient homily for Holy Saturday."

⁸⁸⁶ *Divine Office*, Vol. II, Lent and Easter, Holy Saturday, *The Office of Readings*, "The Second Reading: A reading from an Ancient Homily for Holy Saturday."

God-man, Christ is potentially at least the Brother-Ancestor of all human beings. The Brother-Ancestor accomplished and perfected after his death and resurrection⁸⁸⁷ makes the Christian concept of resurrection more attractive to the Igbo experience. The ancestors as part of the human community maintain their being-with. Christ promises to remain with humanity until the end of time (Matt 28:20). The Igbo traditional religion like its genre communicates with Christ the Ancestor. It remembers his holy death, proclaims his glorious resurrection, and awaits the coming in glory.

5.6 Conclusion

Belief in spirits and deities is an integral part of the spirituality and worldview of the people of Africa. In Africa, spirits and deities possess enormous supernatural and influential powers. In Igbo cosmology, Chukwu is at the top of the hierarchy, he is the Supreme Being, the head of the pantheon of pure spirits. The Igbo religion recognizes God as Supreme among the other gods but he is not a “*primus inter pares*” – first among equals. He is transcendent, the principle of ontological unity in the universe. Principalities are those titans of Igbo spirituality and gods and they are classified according to their functions. The gods are the servants of Chukwu’s (God) and *igwe* is his commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. The *ala* deity is the Minister for Justice and symbol of Motherhood. The *Anyanwu* is God’s Prime Minister and the symbol of masculinity; *Imo-mmiri* (goddess of the river) is the Angel of beauty, purity and innocence; *Ahijoku* is the Commissioner of Agriculture, *Ekwuru-ochie*, for Trade and Industry, while *Agwu-nsi* is God’s Intelligence, Information, and Public Relations Officer and Commissioner for Health. These gods do not contend as Supreme Beings, they act as servants and pages of Chukwu the Supreme Being.⁸⁸⁸

The word accident or fate has no religious definition in Igbo psychology. Nothing happens by the stroke of chance. Every major and mysterious hap-

⁸⁸⁷ Charles Nyamiti, *Christ as Our Ancestor*, 28.

⁸⁸⁸ Enyeribe Onuoha, *The Philosophy of Igbo Religion*, 382-3

pening, misfortunes, famine, disasters, deaths, sickness, drought, floods, etc are cause effects. They are the actions of one deity or the other. Divinities are the proximate or remote causes of every event.⁸⁸⁹ On the other hand, prosperity in traditional Igbo society is the handiwork of their relationship with the good spirits. Like evil spirits, the good spirits have power to influence the course of life for the living. There are two categories of spirits, the evil and good spirits. Some water lake goddesses are epitome of goodness, kindness and benevolence,⁸⁹⁰ but some are not. Benevolent spirits and deities are capable and responsible for good fortune of any member of the Igbo community. Malevolent spirits or gods like the Ogbanje (spirit of death and rebirth), Akalaogoli, (evil spirits), Ekwensu (the devil) etc are responsible for the evil in the society. There are doubts whether the Ekwensu is an evil spirit. Igbo spiritual cosmology generally associates the Ekwensu with the devil and as an archenemy of God. He opposes God eternally in everything. His chief function is to frustrate the goodness of God and to disseminate evil on earth. In fact, he is the author and finisher of everything that is bad. As much as this is a common opinion among the Igbo, some people in certain cultural areas of Igbo land think otherwise. For instance, in Asaba mythology, Ekwensu is not the devil but the spirit that causes violence. In this culture, he is recognized as the spirit of war and the patron, godfather and leader in battle for warriors. Achebe brings the personality of Ekwensu to light in his description of the events of the funeral rites of Ezeudu. As the ancient drums continue to beat, induced by the firing of guns and cannons the dancing men went into frenzy. Because the spirit of Ekwensu entered them, they jumped over walls, dancing on the roofs and cutting down every tree and animal they saw. However, to join in the funeral of this warrior (Ezeudu), some of the ancestral spirits or egwugwu appeared from the underworld. They spoke in a tremulous, unearthly voice. Achebe went further to narrate how violent some of these spirits were. He concludes that one of

⁸⁸⁹ Uzodimma Nwala, *Igbo Philosophy*, 118

⁸⁹⁰ Flora Nwapa, *Efuru*. Ibadan, (1966), 153-4

them that sang in a terrifying voice actually testify that Ekwensu or Evil spirit, had entered his eye and overwhelmed him by his powers making him to cause violence. Enyeribe Onuoha refutes the idea that Ekwensu is Satan or anti-God. For him, Igbo religion has no translated word for “evil incarnate” and there are no such spirits called the “Devil” who does nothing but evil. Rather for him, Ekwensu is one of the minor spirits of Igbo spiritology. According to him, the term is a borrowed one transported directly from Christian theology and knowledge of the Satan.⁸⁹¹ The eventual adoption of the idea of a Satan who lives within human inner heart (obi) makes reincarnational motives inevitable. The Igbo reject the activities of the evil spirit since they are capable of bringing misfortunes, causing harm, sickness, accidents, and death. But they accept the activities of the good spirits especially those ones through which they arrive at their final destiny at death.

These spirits are subordinate, servants, agents and messengers of Chukwu and they “are at God’s service at all times, they function in other to fulfill His commands. One of the agents so employed is Death.”⁸⁹² It all implies that death is at the ultimate command of God. Of course, it is one of the servants of God.⁸⁹³ The deepest reality at every level of Igbo thought whether ontological or metaphysical is that God created the human and gave them their chi. He equally has the capability to grant humanity a general life after death and this involves totality of retribution that sums up in judgment, resurrection of the body and everlasting life.

⁸⁹¹ Cf. Basden, *Niger Ibo*, 36; Elisabeth Isichei, “Ibo and Christian Belief: Some Aspects of a Theological Encounter,” *African Affairs*, vol. 68, (1969), 124, referenced Emezie Ikenga Metuh, *African Religions in Western Conceptual Schemes*, 43; Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 85; Enyeribe Onuoha, *The Philosophy of Igbo Religion*, 382.

⁸⁹² George T. Basden, *Niger Ibo*, 36-7.

⁸⁹³ George T. Basden, *Among the Ibos of Nigeria*, 215.

6 Reincarnation and *Ilo-uwa* in General

6.1 Introduction

Fixing the contention of this thesis hangs solely on the ability to find the contrasting points between the Christian doctrines of resurrection with the notion of Asian reincarnation in relationship with the Igbo phenomenon of *ilo-uwa* (reincarnation?). The conclusion after the comparison will eventually define the Igbo belief about the fate of the dead.

6.2 What is Reincarnation

Reincarnation is the belief in the ‘transmigration of souls’ the movement of soul through one body to another.⁸⁹⁴ The soul movement in reincarnation is indeterminate; it may be from humans to animals, birds, plants or even insects. As a doctrine of coming back to life after death, reincarnation has its root in Latin, re-incarne, which means, ‘again,’ to incarnate into another body, to enflesh, to enter into a new body. “Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary” defines it as ‘to be borne again in another body.’ To take up another flesh is the very sense in which Eastern religions represent and understand reincarnation. Reincarnation is a generic term for the entire concept of the soul migration. There are various other terminologies designating soul migration such as, metempsychosis, transmigration, metempsychosis, and palingenesis. This last term, mostly refers to the stoic doctrine of the cyclic recurrence of the world.⁸⁹⁵

Reincarnation belief goes back to some ancient Middle East religions. There are equally beliefs in reincarnation by some modern day religions. The religious movement of theosophy is a good example. Theosophy comes from two Greek words, Theos (God) and Sophia (wisdom). It is a system of

⁸⁹⁴ Jan Badewien, Reinkarnation, in: Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, bd. 7, ⁴(2004), 253-4, 254.

⁸⁹⁵ Cf. John Hick, Death and Eternal Life, Kentucky, (1994), 392 notes 1.

thought stressing clairvoyance and telepathy. Neoplatonists literarily define the concept as meaning divine knowledge. Theosophy teaches that all religions are attempts by the “Spiritual Hierarchy” to help humanity. Madame Blavatsky founded theosophical society in 1876.⁸⁹⁶ As much as reincarnation belief is a native belief of the Asian religions, 20 to 25% of the Christian West, hold it as a fundamental doctrine of life after death. And while these Asian religions see it as karma the percentage of western Christianity talk of the retribution justice or the karma in sense of justice and one harvesting what one has sown.⁸⁹⁷ Nevertheless, the belief is one of human oldest religious doctrine. The doctrine expresses the immortality of the person.

6.2.1 The Origin of the Doctrine of Reincarnation

Reincarnation has its origin in the worldview, life, history and religious philosophical culture of prehistory ancient peoples. The idea of the universe by early members of the human society was one in a round shape form. The shape of the world as spherical directed a lot of the thought pattern of prehistory humans. It equally determined a lot of their conclusion. The ancient people’s experience of activities within the ‘round shape’ universe guided their notion to the conclusion of the cyclic nature of history. They realize that plants fall on the soil, die and rejuvenate. They noticed the cycles and seasons of the year. The dry season introduces the rainy season the winter welcomes the spring. The earth rotates on its orbit. The day begets the night, the night the day, the old gives way to the new, the new becomes old and

⁸⁹⁶ William L. Reese, *Theosophy*, in: *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, New Jersey, (1980), 575.

⁸⁹⁷ Gisbert Greshake, *Tod und Dann? Ende – Reinkarnation – Auferstehung: Der Streit der Hoffnungen*, Freiburg, (1988), 51; Michael Zulehner, *Wandlungen im Auferstehungsglauben und ihre Folgen*, in: Hermann Kochanek, (Hrsg.), *Reinkarnation und Auferstehung*, Freiburg, (1992), 196-212, 201; Franz-Josef Nocke, *Der Glaube an die Auferstehung und die Idee Reinkarnation*, in: *Auferstehung der Toten*. Hans Kessler (Hrsg.), Darmstadt, (2004), 278-295, 288-9. The West is giving reincarnation a new interpretation. For a bird view of this interpretation, see, Helmut Zander, *Geschichte der Seelenwanderung in Europe*. Darmstadt, (1999), 139-145.

passes on, one season after the other and the movement continues. This continuous process and movement in nature aided in forming all they believed about life and death, time and history.⁸⁹⁸ All this is about repetition. They are about regeneration and movement. For the ancient thinker, they are about history. Since they happen with nature and things, they definitely are history of humanity. It became evident that nature is inexplicably in a constant cyclic flux.

Heraclitus (c.535-475) alludes to the fluidity in nature in his philosophy of *Ta Panta rehei* (everything is in flux). He analogically represents fluidity in nature in three stages comparable with the flowing of a stream. For Heraclitus, no one steps into the same river twice. This is in the sense that, ever-fresh waters flow on those who step into a running stream (Fragment 12). Second, all things move and nothing is permanent. One who steps into a flowing stream remains in the stream but not in the same water because one cannot step into the same water twice (Fragment 49a). Third, everything is in the constant state of change and nothing remains steady thus, you cannot step twice into the same stream (Fragment 91).⁸⁹⁹ From this, it becomes clear that nothing is permanent except change. Movement and repetition remain the only constant of existence. Having observed this the ancient naturally began associating events and history in the mode of the change and potency. History and events became anticipatory and acquired a cyclic notion. In this shape of mind, ancient cultures saw history in a different way. They interpreted it as a cyclic movement and repetition of what happened before. Once an event happens, it may repeat itself. This way of appreciating history was also included in the understanding of human life after death. Thus, the doctrine of reincarnation was formulated in order to accommodate human history as repetitive.

⁸⁹⁸ Gisbert Greshake, *Tod und Dann?* 61-5.

⁸⁹⁹ Cf. Wilhelm Capelle (trans.), *Die Vorsokratiker: Die Fragmente und Quellenberichte* Bd. 119. Stuttgart, (1938), 132.

6.2.2 Reincarnation in Some World Religion

It is not easy to make comprehensive index of religions that teach reincarnation. Nevertheless, we find the traces of the doctrine in the religious belief within ancient Middle East religions. It is contained in the Manicheans and Gnostics teaching. We find it in the Greek philosophy of Orphism, Pythagoras, and Plato. It is also there in the ancient classical Egyptian religion. We have it in the many philosophical writings. We see it in the thought of Goethe, Lessing, Schopenhauer, Hegel, and Voltaire. Theosophists of our day have not stopped teaching it neither has it abate appearing in the religious sentiments of some traditional religions especially that of Asia. As diverse as this belief may be, the limitation of this work will not allow a detail treatment. We are going to mention just a few religions that strongly practice the doctrine.

6.2.3 Reincarnation and the Asian Religions

Shortly before now, “resurrection” and “reincarnation” at least within the circle of Christian mainline Churches remained one keyword to describe the different expectation of survival after death found within different religions and cultures. The expressions represent different elements of belief within religions of the world. Christianity differs from the Indian religions in many things including the question of eschatology. However, this idea is gradually changing; many Christians today are in one way or the other becoming more and more sympathetic to many orient beliefs especially the doctrine of reincarnation that is badge in their religious creed.⁹⁰⁰ In fact, investigation reveals that about 25% of the Europeans are no more denying the phenomenon.⁹⁰¹ Reincarnation in its classical form is prominently associated with Hinduism. Other Asian religions that share this belief include Buddhism and Jainism. These religions are offshoots of Hinduism that emanated from

⁹⁰⁰ Franz-Josef Nocke, *Der Glaube an die Auferstehung und die Idee Reinkarnation*, 278.

⁹⁰¹ Cf. Michael Zulehner, *Wandlungen im Auferstehungsglauben und ihre Folgen*, in: *Reincarnation und Auferstehung*, Hermann Kochanek (Hrsg.), Freiburg, (1992), 196-212, 201f.

India from where they spread to other parts of the Asian continent. In as much as these 'Asian religions' uphold reincarnation as a fundamental doctrine, there are subtle differences in the ways they understand it. These religions share a common principle based on the law of retribution called karma. The law of karma is one of 'cause' and 'effect.' The principle of cause and effect emphasizes on reward and punishment. According to this principle, every deed or act (karma) in this present world has its effect in the next world. The above Indian religions in holding reincarnation allude to cyclic nature of history. That human 'history is a continuous' one in a movement of soul form. The soul survives death by migration.⁹⁰² Naturally, this understanding has so many implications. It represents majorly the old conviction of Greek philosophy that the soul is the compendium of the person. After death, the person summarized in the entity of the soul continues to live without reservation as in the former earthly life. Alternatively, at death, the soul carrying the fate of its former existence is reborn into another body to continue life.⁹⁰³ The state of rebirth is influenced by the quality, and deeds of previous existence.

Granted that some in the West are coming to terms with reincarnation there are nevertheless differences in the understanding of the way the fate of previous life hunts the reincarnated person. This means, there is a difference between the Asian versions of reincarnation from the Western notion of the phenomenon. The Asian version of the reincarnation is engraved in the circumstances of suffering. Those whose previous earthly lives were marked by immoral style of life are punished. They may reincarnate to degenerate into brutes or into lower beings. In the Western form, the doctrine emphasizes room for soul improvement. It gives the possibility of improving ones former earthly life. That means it gives one who has lived a morally sound life in former earthly life the opportunity to advance to a higher stage in the

⁹⁰² Gisbert Greshake, *Tod und Dann?* 60.

⁹⁰³ Franz-Josef Nocke, *Der Glaube an die Auferstehung und die Idee der Reinkarnation*, 279.

next cycle of life.⁹⁰⁴ The teaching that reincarnation is primarily a means of correcting or punishing evil acts of previous life makes the difference between Western concept of reincarnation and the Asian type.⁹⁰⁵

6.2.4 Hinduism

As a religious conception, the term “Hinduism” is misleading. The term is ambiguous in the sense that it is not a representative term for the religion of the south Asian countries, like India and Pakistan. That means, “Hinduism” is not a single religion in the sense of an ‘Indian’ religion.⁹⁰⁶ In the past and within academic circle, the concept represented the Indian religion in singularity. The term in the present has acquired another meaning (Indian religions). The conception no longer represents a unity of religions in the singular rather in the plural. However, this new understanding has equally its own inherent ambiguity since Jains, Sikhs, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity are equally religions of India.⁹⁰⁷ “About 80 per cent of India’s approximate one billion people regard themselves as Hindu, and there are about 30 million Hindus elsewhere in the world.”⁹⁰⁸

The Aryans were nomadic tribal people that migrated into India around 1750-1200 BCE (second millennium B.C). They were polytheistic, worshipping deities comparable to those of other Indo-European language. Their sacrifices consisted mainly of animals. This practice had the primary religious purpose of atonement for sin. The culture of the migrating Aryans cross breed with the religious philosophy of the aboriginal Indians. The mingling of these religions began the birth of classical Hinduism.⁹⁰⁹ In the

⁹⁰⁴ Franz-Josef Nocke, *Der Glaube an die Auferstehung und die Idee der Reincarnation*, 280.

⁹⁰⁵ Gisbert Greshake, *Tod und Dann?* 57.

⁹⁰⁶ Heinrich von Stietencron, *Der Begriff Hinduismus: ein Missverständnis 1*, in: *Theologische Realzyklopädie* 15, (1986), 346-355, 346.

⁹⁰⁷ John Bowker (ed.), *Hinduism*, in: *Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*. Oxford, (1997), 430.

⁹⁰⁸ John Bowker (ed.), *Hinduism*, 430.

⁹⁰⁹ Marilyn Grace Graham, *On Reincarnation: The Gospel according to Paul*, Miami, (1998), 28-9.

Hindu religion of India, existence is a cycle of reincarnation that involves birth, death, and rebirth. It is an endless process of transmigration of soul. Karma, which regulates the process transmigration, received elaborate understanding in Buddhism.

6.2.5 Buddhism

Buddhism was founded about the 6th and 5th centuries B.C in the region west of what we know today as Bengal, India. Buddha (560-477 B.C) founded Buddhism. His original name was Siddhartha Gautama. Buddha is a title and never a proper name. It means the 'Awakened One' or 'Enlightened One.' Buddhism started as a very small reformatory movement of Hinduism. From its humble beginning in India, it spread across many other parts of the Asian countries, China, Korea, Japan, and Burma (the present Myanmar). Other areas include Nepal, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Tibet, Mongolia, and the northern slopes of the Himalaya in India etc. Buddhism has spread beyond the borders of the Asian continent; there is a certain diffusion of it in the West.⁹¹⁰ The estimated population of Buddhist as at 2000 was about 354 million⁹¹¹ the estimation today must have gone higher.

The status of Buddhism as a religion is arguable. While there are views, it is an experience. It is arguable whether it is not a philosophy since it teaches the love of wisdom and the development of individual intellectual capacity. Developed intellectual capacity according to Buddhism enables the individual to understand clearly, it teaches the individual how to love and be kind to self, to the others and to the environment. The transformation of consciousness is similar to a mystical experience in which one vividly feels a transformation and a change. One feels been released from the confines of one's individual personality. In this way, whereas some religions would claim that in mystical experience, man discovers his or her basic identity with God or even with the cosmos, it is doubtful whether Buddha did define

⁹¹⁰ John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, New York, (1994), 85.

⁹¹¹ Francis Cardinal Arinze, *A Message to Buddhists for Feast of Vesakh*, in: *Origins*, vol. 30, no.1, Rome, May 18, (2000), 16.

what he discovers. Every religion true to the concept has an idea of a Supreme Being. In the case of Buddhism, in its strictest form, it has no concept of the divine in the way theology and religion thinks of divinity. As a science, theology deals with the question of God. In Buddhism there seem to be no discussion about God.

Buddha himself is not God but the enlightened one. The universe in Buddhism is at the subjectivity of the human mind. The human mind is the ultimate reality. It has the ability to find answers to puzzling life questions. As the ultimate reality, the human mind according to Buddhism has the ability to realize the inherent evil in nature. It equally has the capability to liberate itself not only from the evil in nature but also from the aptitude to avoid sources of evil and suffering. The human mind according to Buddha can liberate itself from the sufferings and pains in the world. While other religions hold God, Allah, Brahman, or Chineke as the centre of the universe Buddha argues that the answer to the question of the universe is found within one's own mind hence it is left for one to realize this. Thus, the answer to human and universal questions is within one's own self-realization.⁹¹² In the attempt to situate the existence of a Supreme Being in every religion, particularly in Buddhism, John Hick conceptualizes a none existence as the God with whom Buddha spent long hours in meditation. "Thus Jesus, the Christ, having realized a perfect human relationship to God as son to father, could spend whole nights communing with his Heavenly Father whilst spending his days in active teaching and healing. Thus Gautama, the Buddha, having realized a perfect human relationship to another aspect of Ultimate Reality, spent long hours in meditation and long days in tireless teaching." It is worth remarking that Hick only mentioned an unqualified 'Ultimate Reality' as the one with whom Buddha prayed.⁹¹³

⁹¹² Ezennia Eneh, *Reincarnation: Fact or Fancy*, Enugu, (1987), 36.

⁹¹³ Cf. John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life*, 455.

Buddhism holds that the universe is a result of karma. Both gods and human beings inhabit the universe. As members of the same cosmos, the gods like human beings are subject to reincarnation. According to the teachings of Buddha, there are five possible ways reincarnation or rebirth can take place in the universe. One could be reborn in hell, as an animal, ghost, human, or as a god.⁹¹⁴ Buddha came to the idea of reincarnation from a personal perception of the world as a place of misery. Buddhas' early teaching depended on what he called the 'Four Noble Truths.' He summarized this teaching in this way. (1) Life is fundamentally disappointment and is about suffering. (2) Suffering is a result of one's greed, quest for pleasure, power, and passionate desire for life. (3) In order to stop suffering one must stop greed and the desire for pleasure. (4) The way to stop desiring and thus suffering is through the Noble Eightfold Path. The noble eightfold paths are, right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right awareness, and right concentration.⁹¹⁵ Reincarnation is because of greed, craving for pleasure, passionate quest for life. The above attitudes eventually result to suffering and accumulation of karma.

Reincarnation in the understanding of all the eastern religions is a very painful experience. It is a bitter experience to keep on reincarnating. To stop the dreadful experience, Buddhism proposes flight from the self and from Maya that is, the world. The Maya or world is ultimately unreal and ultimately evil and unimportant.⁹¹⁶ Flight from it suggests an orderly and careful destruction of all negative attitudes of pleasure, cravings and desires. These negative attitudes are destroyed through meditation. Their destruction leads to enlightenment. Enlightenment is a state of pleasurelessness and passionlessness. Once one achieves this state, regeneration of karma stops. Once

⁹¹⁴ Donald S. Lopez, *The Life of the Buddha*, in: *New Encyclopedia Britannica* 15, (2005), 263-305, 264; Ezennia S. Eneh, *Reincarnation*, 35.

⁹¹⁵ Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Buddha*, in: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, Bd. 2, ³(2006), 757-8, 756.

⁹¹⁶ John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life*, 451.

karma stops, reincarnation subsequently stops. At this point, one enters into nirvana, a state of eternal happiness.

6.2.6 The Tenets of Eastern Religions about the Material Universe

The religions of Indian focus upon the material universe. It considers the universe as evil, negative and unreal. Indian religions interpret the concept of the person in twofold contrasting entities, the material substance (the body) and the spiritual substance (the soul). This distinction relapse the Indian religions to the problem of dualism championed by Platonic philosophy that the essence precedes existence. The atman or the soul suffers imprisonment in the body. For it, the ego, the self, atman or soul is the real person. It only acknowledges the body as a mere medium through which the soul distinguishes itself. The body is a spare property of the soul. It could be replaced as many times as the soul is burdened with karma and needs re-birth. With this dual concept of the human person in mind, Hinduism indeed all Eastern religions believe the physical body will be destroyed at death while, the spiritual part of man the soul or the self survives death.⁹¹⁷

The soul survives death to face two things; either it reincarnates or it enters into nirvana. The liberated soul faces a possibility of reincarnation as long as it is burden with karma. And it faces the possibility of entering nirvana as long as it has perfected itself through series of reincarnation. Nirvana is reached through a stage of enlightenment achieved through obvious meditation. The achievement of salvation is the ability to reach nirvana.

The path of eastern religion to salvation has inherent problems. Its major criticism is its emphasis on individual self-negation and self-denial. That is, it emphasizes “the transformation of the individual, the purifying of the solitary self in its ‘flight of the alone to the Alone.’ This is expressed in the age-old Indian tradition of a man at some stage leaving his family and his pos-

⁹¹⁷ Sylvester Odi, *Death in Indian Culture*, in: *The Kpim of Death*, George Uzoma Ukagba (ed.), Victorori, (2007), 240-249; 242.

sessions and living in solitary poverty in order to turn from the illusions of the material world to the realities of the spirit”⁹¹⁸ through enlightenment.

The “‘Enlightenment’ experienced by Buddha comes down to the conviction that the world is bad, that it is the source of evil and of suffering for man. To liberate oneself from this evil, one must free oneself from this world, necessitating a break with the ties that join us to external psyche, in our bodies. The more we are liberated from these ties, the more we become indifferent to what is in the world, and the more we are freed from suffering, from the evil that has its sources in the world.”⁹¹⁹ This spirituality shuns the world and everything. It accommodates those practices of certain Buddhist monastic traditions where the quest for holiness means flight. Flight from the world is in the manner of escaping the world to withdraw in the remote mountains of the Himalayas. But does one become perfect by alienating oneself from the medium that shapes one’s perfection? Alternatively, should not one through positive science and technology build the world back to its fundamental nature? The fundamental nature is the goodness at creation (Gn 1:31).

6.3 The Bible and the Doctrine of Reincarnation

The doctrine of reincarnation is traceable in the scriptures and traditions of most ‘world religions.’ (In the Bible, there are passages that seem to be aware of this metaphor of rebirth for example Jn 3:3-5; Tit 3:5. In the passage of John 3 a prominent figure name Nicodemus became to Jesus in the night. Nicodemus was not an ordinary Jew; he was a consultant, a biblical scholar, a party member of the Pharisees and a parliamentarian. The visit to Jesus at night probably was not because of his own personal problems he was coming to ask Jesus one universal question that was also perturbing the Jews, the problem of human salvation. The formulation “how can a grown man be born again” (V. 4) suggests that Nicodemus had knowledge of the

⁹¹⁸ John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life*, 541.

⁹¹⁹ John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 85-6.

metaphor of rebirth probably circulating among the Jews. As it is, authors have argued that the Bible in its Semitic connection has no knowledge of the doctrine reincarnation.⁹²⁰ The response of Jesus brings this to clarity. The “Kingdom of God” is the central point of the preaching of Jesus, its arrival concludes an end of era and introduces a time of salvation. Admission into salvation is through a rebirth in water and Spirit (V.5). So the biblical metaphor of rebirth does not mean reincarnation in the physical-biological sense, it simply means a spiritual rebirth through the sacramental rebirth of Baptism.⁹²¹ Using some seeming biblical passages (Mal Mal 3:23; Mt 11:13-15; 16:13f; 17:10-13; 27:47-49) Gnosticism attempts locating the doctrine within biblical tradition. Most Jewish people expected the second coming of Elijah. In the chapter Matthew 17:10-13, Jesus is thought to be John the Baptist. The “disciples asked him, ‘then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?’ He replied, ‘Elijah does come, and he is to restore all things, but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of man will suffer at their hands.’ Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.”⁹²² It is very easy for a casual reader of the Bible to agree with these passages that John the Baptist was Elijah reincarnated.

There are strong similarities in the *modus operandi* of both Elijah of the OT and John Baptist of the NT. Both of these prophets were actively involved in condemning the bad political atmosphere of their era. Politically, Elijah fought and defended the poor and oppressed of Israel of his days. He brought the tyrannical regime of Ahab and Jezebel to a standstill (1Kg

⁹²⁰ Cf. Jan Badewien, *Reinkarnation*, in: *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Bd. 7, ⁴(2004), 253-4.

⁹²¹ Josef Blank, *Geistliche Schriftlesung, das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 4/1a. Düsseldorf, (1981), 225-8; Franz-Josef Nocke, *Der Glaube an die Auferstehung und die Idee der Reincarnation*, 284.

⁹²² See also Mk 9:11-13; Mt 11:11-15.

21:20-21). Religiously, he gave strong footing to the established Yahwism in Israel. He did this by defeating the prophets of Baal (1 Kg 18 and 19). The prophets of Baal supported by Ahab and Jezebel almost succeeded in establishing the worship of Baal in Israel. These daring activities compelled comparison with the harbinger of the Messiah. Israel's religious tradition makes emphasis on the Day of Judgment, the Day of the Lord or the Yom Kippur. Various OT passages recorded the expectation of the people on the Day of Yahweh. Prophet Joel recalls the tragedy that will follow the Yom Kippur. He says of it as the day of great catastrophe (Jl 3:4-5).

Ancient Israel believed the coming of an intrepid prophet who will prepare the way of the Lord (Lk 1:76) would precede the Day of the Lord. The book of Kings (2 Kg 2:1) holds it that Elijah in front of his disciples was taken up into heaven in a chariot of fire drawn by horses of fire. From this point, the Jews believed Elijah was still to come since he did not die but transferred.⁹²³ The Jews believe that the appearance of Elijah will herald the coming of the Lord. Elijah would come to prepare the way for the Messiah. When Elijah eventually returns, he will bring peace along with him. He will bring justice and unity once again. These were all expectation about the things that will take place before the Day of the Lord. For the Jews, Elijah will appear to bring fathers and children together, lest the Lord comes and strike the land with curse (Mal 4:5). This idea of Elijah as a peacemaker and one who would come at the later day developed into the NT.

John's birth in the NT announced God's deliverance. Like Isaiah, John would prepare the way (Is 40:3; Mal 3:1), turning the hearts of parents to their children, turning the disobedience to the wisdom of the just, and making a people prepared (Lk 1:17). John would also 'give knowledge of salvation' to the people, calling them to repentance and pointing them to Jesus. Through the knowledge of salvation, the new covenant, foreseen by Jeremiah (31:34), would be fulfilled and inaugurated. He would be a prophet (Lk 1:76; 7:26-27) who would go before the Lord. This statement fulfils Isaiah's

⁹²³ Franz-Josef Nocke, *Der Glaube an die Auferstehung und die Idee der Reincarnation*, 284.

prophecy (40:3; Mal 3:1; 4:5). This notion of the nature of Elijah in the NT became a yardstick to measure the qualities of the harbinger of the Messiah. That is, the Kyrios in Greek or the anointed one.

When John the Baptist came he was doing almost everything did in the OT. He had close contact with the desert from where he began his public ministry. His confrontation of the bad political system and the world order immediately allied him with Elijah. Like Elijah, John was a fearless prophet. He dared Herod (Mt 14:1-20) like Elijah did with Ahab. He too equally brought estranged families together (that of Herodias quickly comes to mind). For these activities, John was taken to be Elijah whose coming was predicted (Mt 11:14). However, instead of these passages predicating reincarnation, they are speaking the language of resurrection, which is a reign of justice. Another often-quoted passage in the assumption of a presence of reincarnation in the Bible John 9:2-3. Jesus in this passage confronts the question of human predicament. As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man born blind from birth. "His disciples asked him, 'teacher, whose sin caused him to be born blind? Was it his own or his parents' sins?'" Jesus answered. "He is blind so that God's power might be seen at work in him." The answer of Jesus here was brief he did not go to any length to make apologetic excuses or explanations. Thus, the way he approached the questions and its answer clearly shows that the question of reincarnation was never known in the NT.⁹²⁴ If at all it was a circulating issue, Jesus himself did not believe in it.

The biblical doctrine on life after death gives importance to the resurrection and renders the belief in reincarnation incommunicado. The resurrection for Christianity is a gratuitous gift of God. It is God's benevolent act on humanity. It will take place irrespective of one's effort. On the other side, reincarnation is about the individual self-efforts in search of migration and liberation. It is ones' self-effort for liberation achieved through the moment of a

⁹²⁴ Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, Göttingen, 17(1962), 251; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium. II. Teil*, Freiburg, (1971), 305.

cycle of continuous unbroken rebirth. Reincarnation supports the immortality of the soul while resurrection credits the salvation and immortality of the entire human personality and history.

6.3.1 The World as Evil

As religious cultures, Hinduism and Buddhism articulate the world as illusive and transient. They deny the tendency of improving it or making it a better place because they see human social interconnectivity in the world as frustrating. As religions and cultures that identify the world with evil, early Eastern religions were never motivated by its spirituality to address human social concern. Eastern religions know the world as evil and the domain of imperfection, “little wonder there was much poverty and human degradation in India”⁹²⁵ at the hay days of its religion. But as the Hindu and Buddhist culture go through analogous transitions and upheavals as indeed they are doing now, they too have started to discover a religious basis and a motive for social concern for their people. The social concern in present Eastern religions is similar to that of the Christian West.

Motivated by love and charity, Christianity has always exhibited and advanced social concern for the world. John Hick indeed thinks in the contrary. For him, the growth of a Christian social consciousness was started and perfected in the western culture in later centuries. It started during the Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It continued during the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century and was able to carry on during the

⁹²⁵ Ezennia Eneh, *Reincarnation*, 127. There have been definite intercultural contacts and none can deny the fact that the Hindu and Buddhist cultures are going through analogous transitions and upheavals through contact with the West and its science and technology. Unlike before, situations at hand show that Eastern cultures have started to discover religious basis and motives for social concern for its people. This is evident in the fact that India today is a growing economy and a world market. In addition, as much as Buddhist spirituality is stirring up interest in the West especially through the activities of the Dalai Lama (the spiritual leader of the Tibetans), Hindu and Buddhist cultures are likely to be influenced and influenced by Western development. Christianity and its material concern for humanity did influence Gandhi one of the leaders of the Asian spirituality.

secular revolutionary movements of the nineteenth century.⁹²⁶ For Hick, Christian social consciousness had a spontaneous beginning. Other than coming from inherent logic, the social concern and conscience discovered in Christianity according to Hick was influenced by some atrocities and evils experienced in the centuries mentioned above. The evil experiences of the slave trade in particular. The perpetrated ills of the first and second world wars that culminated in a systematic move of racial extermination noticed in various concentration camps in Europe. And the many shapes and types of genocides since then.

Hick mentions economic exploitation and other forms of social injustices perpetrated against the wretched of the earth during and after the centuries in question. For him these evil necessitated the emergence of different kinds of theology, black theology, liberation theology, political theology, and the theology of revolution. According to him if Christianity has been otherwise why did it not concern itself with social justice from the beginning.⁹²⁷ Why a sudden emergence of critical theology. It is the opinion of Hick that the pressure of the modern time or near modern times was the only thing that informed and formed Christian concern for the world. The life of the human person in the society in the later centuries made it possible for the introduction of critical reforms and the acceptance of critical theology. Rather than insisting on this Christianity and its concern for the welfare of the cosmos and humanity has always had its foundation in the beginning. This is substantiated in the evidence found not only in the early Christian gathering but also in the activities and miracles of Jesus.⁹²⁸ The ability of the apostles and the gathered community to care for one another is a tremendous evidence for a concern for the society (Acts 4:32-37). So Christianity was never moti-

⁹²⁶ John Hick, *Death and Eternal life*, 452.

⁹²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹²⁸ For example the miracles of the feeding of the crowd, Mt 14:17-21:15:36-38; Mk 6:38-44: 8:6-10; Lk 5:6-9: 9:13-16; Jn 6:11-14. The miracles of healing, Lk 17:14-16 and the injunction to his disciples to heal the sick, and to relief the sufferers of their pains Mt 10:8.

vated by circumstances of a given time rather by cardinal act of charity inherent in the teaching of Christ. The implication of the message of Francis Cardinal Arinze on the Buddhist feast of Vesakh expresses the point that Christianity has never shared the part of Eastern religions.

So “while Buddhists do not share the same belief in Jesus, is it not possible for us to appreciate together the example that Jesus gives? He taught love of neighbor and showed compassion, particularly for the poor.”⁹²⁹ The message and life of Christ is a permanent message for humanity. His message remains that of compassion, forgiveness, charity, justice and peace. It is evident:

“In every age up to our own, including the mysticism of marvelous men of action like Vincent de Paul, John Bosco, and Maximilian Kolbe - has built up and continues to build up Christianity in its most essential element. It also builds up the Church as community of faith, hope, and charity. It builds up civilization, particularly ‘Western civilization,’ which is marked by a positive approach to the world, and which developed thanks to the achievements of science and technology.... The truth about God the Creator of the world and about Christ the Redeemer is a powerful force which inspires a positive attitude toward creation and provides a constant impetus to strive for its transformation and perfection.”⁹³⁰

Precisely, human solidarity with the cosmos remains one of the great constants of biblical anthropology. This suggests that the path of Christian spirituality had always remained unique and never been charted by Eastern religious spirituality. Hick disagrees on this point. He argues that the celebration of religious life in monasteries in medieval Europe remain a good example of the Eastern spirituality adopted by Christianity. This type of spirituality according to him equals a flight from the world, which as such is an indication of the rejection of the world. He goes on to suggest that, inmates

⁹²⁹ Francis Cardinal Arinze, *Message to the World’s Buddhists*, 6.

⁹³⁰ John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 88.

of Christian medieval monasteries and nunneries thought life in enclosures was closer to God than life amid the disordered, tension packed and violent secular world. The cloistered life of the monastery and nunnery was termed as the simplest way to the gate of paradise. And those who dwelt there were regarded as vicariously holding open the door of salvation for the worldly majority. Such ideas in the mind of Hick involve a rejection of the body. It means that the secular life is hindrance to the spiritual life. This is for him comparable with the traditional Indian attitude to the world as an evil place⁹³¹ worth rejecting.

On his own part, Pope John Paul II has shown evidence that Christian spirituality from the beginning has a different path from that of Eastern spirituality. For him, right from the era of the early Church in Jerusalem, to the times of the Fathers of the Eastern and Western Church, down to the great theologians of the scholasticism and through the time of Christian mysticism and in the present. Christianity has ever differed from the Eastern religions on its view about the world. It all means that, when it comes to examining Christianity and the religions of the Far East, Buddhism in particular, there is an essentially different way of perceiving the world.

“For Christians, the world is God’s creation, redeemed by Christ. It is in the world that man meets God. Therefore, he does not need to attain such an absolute detachment in order to find himself in the mystery of his deepest self. For Christianity, it does not make sense to speak of the world as a ‘radical’ evil, since at the beginning of the world we find God the Creator who loves His creation, a God who ‘gave his only Son, so that everyone who believe in him might not perish but might have eternal life’ (Jn 3:16).”⁹³²

Thus, it would not be necessary to accept that Christianity from the beginning shared the path of Eastern religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism etc. Since the doctrine of salvation in Buddhism and other Eastern, re-

⁹³¹ John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life*, 451.

⁹³² John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 89.

ligions with Christianity are opposed.⁹³³ Christianity at least from the spirituality of Christ had not rejected the world as evil as Eastern religions have done.

From the ongoing, it is clear that the Eastern religions belief of reincarnation stem from the notion of the evil nature of the world and the rejection of it. Now it will be relevant to ask the question whether the Igbo people and their religion equally speak of the world as a radical evil. In that case, has reincarnation been the orthodox belief of the African Igbo religion? This leads us to the meaning of reincarnation in the Igbo context.

6.3.2 The Identification of Reincarnation in Religions

The religious tradition of the East understands reincarnation as a process of attending salvation or nirvana. The soul gradually comes to salvation by a continuous survival. It survives one dead body after another. The Asian model of reincarnation is opposed to many other religions. It is opposed to life after death in Judaism, resurrection in Christianity⁹³⁴ and in Islam. It has a unique meaning in reference to most African/Igbo traditional religion model. African traditional beliefs have received various different interpretations. Missionary Christianity interpreted certain African religious concepts from the standpoint of their understanding of certain foreign concepts. This prompted the rejection of most African religious practices.⁹³⁵ A vivid example is the rejection of the concept of *ilo-uwa* that was directly translated by missionary Christianity as ‘reincarnation.’ In an article, Akande Tunde suggested that the doctrine of reincarnation is a universal human religious belief. He identified it as a fundamental belief in every religion including Christianity without exception to African traditional religions.⁹³⁶ Does rein-

⁹³³ John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 85.

⁹³⁴ Anthony N. Ekwunife, *Meaning and Function of Ino Uwa (Reincarnation) in Igbo Traditional Religious Culture*, Onitsha, ²(2000), 19.

⁹³⁵ Innocent Onyewuenyi, *African Belief in Reincarnation: A Philosophical Reappraisal*, Enugu, (1996), 42.

⁹³⁶ Akande J. Tunde, *Towards a Rational Justification of the Belief in Reincarnation*, in: *The Kpim of Death*, George Uzoma Ukagba (ed.), Victoria BC, (2007), 139-145.

carnation per se actually corresponds to objective reality of existence. Is it logically real and consistently present in all religions?

6.3.3 Partial Reincarnation in African Religions

The conclusion that reincarnation is a fundamental universal religious doctrine is a problematic one. This is so because there are religions whose practice and belief is far from admitting the doctrine as a content of their faith. In Christianity for instance, the doctrine has never been its orthodox belief or teaching.⁹³⁷ On the other hand, evidence shows that belief in the transmigration of soul is not a fundamental teaching of all African traditional religions. In as much as the doctrine is not foreign to all its societies. That means there are a number of African societies that hold it as a belief but not all.⁹³⁸ Even in the societies that have it as a belief, there is still a difference. In reference to the way it is understood in the African society Bolaji Idowu writes “in African belief, there is no reincarnation in the classical sense. One can only speak of partial or, more precisely, apparent reincarnation, if the word must be used at all.”⁹³⁹ It all means that African religions have the idea of reincarnation but they know it from a different perspective devoid of its classical form and meaning.

John Mbiti explains this temporal or partial African reincarnation as a movement of the living dead from the temporary stage to a more permanent stage calculated in time. It happens the moment the living dead moved from the contemporary time to the time that is distant. Explaining how reincarnation ends Mbiti writes, once, “the living-dead has moved on into the distant

⁹³⁷ John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life*, 365. Hick faults the argument of Leslie Weatherhead which says that reincarnation ‘was accepted by the early Church for the first five hundred years of its inception.’ To disprove this, Hick made an extensive historical trace. This is just to show the wrongness of Weatherhead’s assertion. Thus, Hick rejects the idea of reincarnation by early Christian writers of the second and fifth centuries even though this rejection was not exclusive. For more details, see note 2 of the above quotation in pages 392-4.

⁹³⁸ John S. Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa*, London, (1970), 265.

⁹³⁹ Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*, London, (1976), 187.

past and into the state of ordinary spirits reincarnation for him also ceases. This means, therefore, that if and when partial reincarnation does take place, it is a temporary phenomenon during the intermediate period when the living-dead is still in the state of personal immortality.⁹⁴⁰ To explain his concept of time Mbiti adopted two Swahili words. These words are ‘Zamani’ and ‘Sasa.’ The erudite scholar used these words to describe time in the sense of a ‘distant past’ and a ‘dynamic present.’ The Zamani period is time ad infinitum, a period beyond which nothing can go. It is time in the sense of ‘hollowness.’ This is time in the sense of its end, the endness of time. The endness of time is the moment when everything finds its stopping point. Zamani period is the termination of time. The Sasa period on the other hand covers the ‘now period.’ It has the sense of immediacy, nearness, ‘nowness’ and ‘presentness.’ Reincarnation according to Mbiti can only take place during the Sasa period that is during the state of personal immortality or dynamic present. The period of the Sasa is the time when family members remember the departed. The deceased at this time is still present in the memory of friends and the generation in which it lived. Partial reincarnation stops as soon as the deceased is ‘forgotten’ at the expiration of its dynamic presence when it enters into a long distance past, the Zamani period. Which is a state when all who knew the deceased have ceased to refer to him/her or have themselves died. Reincarnation in this form is remembrance.

Signs that partial reincarnation has taken place include, biological, physiological and psychological traits of the dead discovered in some newborn babies within the lineage. It is important to note that while the living-dead has reincarnated, he or she continues a separate personal life in the hereafter.⁹⁴¹ And his or her reincarnation does not prevent a continuous conscious existence in the other world. That one does not reincarnate except in one’s lineage is a strong indication that African concept of ‘rebirth’ is nothing but

⁹⁴⁰ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, Ibadan, ²(1989), 160, (Italics mine).

⁹⁴¹ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 159.

an ‘interpretation.’⁹⁴² It is an attempt to grasp hereditary traits transferred by genes. With the help of the laws of genetics, it is possible to appreciate how the traits of one’s ancestors, which are not expressed in either of one’s parents, could continue to surface after two to five generations. The traits could appear in boys they could appear in girls. Reincarnation in this sense is synonymous with reproduction, which is reproducing again one’s species, one’s traits.⁹⁴³ There are overwhelming cases of genetic traits in the whole of Igbo land.

Emefie Ikenga Metuh⁹⁴⁴ unequivocally maintains that African societies in which the Igbo society is included belief in reincarnation differ substantially from its Asian connotation. John Obilor has shown that the concept of *ilo-uwa*, Igbo phenomenon of rebirth does not in any way express the content of reincarnation.⁹⁴⁵ The conclusion of Anthony Ekwunife is clear enough: “The failure to find equivalents in English language for Igbo words which stand strictly for reincarnation in English has led scholars to call the phenomenon rebirth, repeater, reborn, metempsychosis, transmigration and so on.”⁹⁴⁶ Innocent Onyewuenyi completely rejects the concept of reincarnation as existent in African societies. For him the word ‘reincarnation’ must not be used at all in fathoming African or Igbo rebirth belief perspective. Knowing that it is a “language of accommodation employed by Western anthropologists and churchmen to make ‘concrete and real what is abstract and immaterial’ namely, the cultural concept of Africans in connection with the ‘return’ or ‘rebirth’ of ancestors in their living descendants.”⁹⁴⁷ Partial reincarnation suggests that certain African/Igbo beliefs are just attempts to

⁹⁴² John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 119.

⁹⁴³ Ezennia Eneh, *Reincarnation*, 105.

⁹⁴⁴ Emefie Ikenga Metuh, *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religions*, Onitsha, (1987), 267.

⁹⁴⁵ John Obilor, *Studies in the Humanities: A Handbok*. Owerri, (2003), 63.

⁹⁴⁶ Anthony Ekwunife, *Meaning and Function of Ino-Uwa*, 27.

⁹⁴⁷ Innocent Onyewuenyi, *African Belief in Reincarnation*, 29 and 42.

provide an explanation of imperfectly understood natural phenomena⁹⁴⁸ like the laws of genetics. In this understanding, the concept suggests a misconception for classical reincarnation.

6.4 The Meaning of *Ilo-uwa*

Igbo concept of rebirth is imbedded in the idea of *ilo-uwa*. The concept of ilo or ino uwa as the case may be, stems from two Igbo words ilo or ino (welcome) and uwa (the world). A definition after this compound word will be something like ‘welcome to the world,’ ‘return to the world.’ The Igbo people share in no small way the African sense of hospitality. Africans value the human person so much so that they easily incorporate them, be they relatives, strangers or visitors. Africans have amazing ways of expressing welcome. Various communities have different symbolic ways of expression of welcome. There could be in forms of presentation of kola nuts, traditional gin, palm wine, coconuts, smoke chalk, palm branch, pot of water, salt⁹⁴⁹ etc. The commonest way to show welcome is by way of greetings. Passing a person on the street without saying a word of greeting is a sign of disrespect and bad manners. In Igbo land, exchanging pleasantries and greetings with a guest is the first art of hospitality. It must be done before the visitor is presented with kola nuts. In cases of assembly discussions kola nuts must be presented before any meaningful interaction could be started.

The Igbo words, ilo, ilola, ino, nno, are one and various dialectical ways of exchanging greetings and saying welcome. When a visitor comes into the house, the first reaction of the householders is to greet the visitor. Newborn babies are seen as visitors. Once a child is born into a family, everyone receives it as a visitor. Whoever that is present at the announcement of a new birth will normally say; ‘nwa loro m uwa birikwe’ or ‘nwa m ilo’ (ino, ilola - my child you are welcome). The child in the meaning of this greeting is acknowledged as a visitor and a new member of the family from the great

⁹⁴⁸ Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of the Igbo People*, 26.

⁹⁴⁹ Oliver Onwubiko, *African Thought, Religion and Culture*, vol.1, 23.

beyond. The family welcomes and incorporates the child among their members. Fundamentally, the Igbo know that this new visitor in the house is from Chineke or Chukwu (God). Some Igbo theophoric names parents give their children confirm this opinion. The names show that the new child, the visitor came from God and is a new creation. We have such names like Osinachi (God sent), Chinwenwa (God's child), Onyinyechi (God's gift). The Igbo people believe children are gifts from God. They know the foundation of the baby. They know it comes from Chineke (God). Despite this knowledge, traditional consultation after the birth of a child is a necessary aspect of the spirituality of the people. It is part of their culture. The consultation is to determine who has returned.

6.4.1 The Philosophy of Omenala

People's characters are determined to a greater percentage by their *Weltanschauung* (world-view). In the case of the Igbo people, their philosophy of life depends so much on their world-view. Their world-view is a complex of beliefs. This involves social, cultural, traditional and religious beliefs. Igbo philosophy is summarized in the concept of omenala. Some dialects have this word as omenani, odinala, odinani (tradition, custom). Omenala is literally translated as: the way of life of a people or community. It is about the customs and traditions of the people. It is people's peculiarity and accord, a practice that has lasted over time. It is what obtains within a community. Tradition and custom in this way become the attitude and approach of the people to events and situations. In Igbo land "when the Igbo are performing some rituals or celebrating some festivals, and one asks them why such and such are being done, they will say: 'Anyi neme omenala' – we are acting according to tradition (doing that which obtains in the land)."⁹⁵⁰ That is, following the footsteps of the ancestors and walking according to detects of the founders of the community.

⁹⁵⁰ Uzodinma Nwala, *Igbo Philosophy*, 26; Anthony Ekwunife, *Meaning and Function of Ino-uwa*, 26.

As omenala, Igbo beliefs hang on complex embodiment of the attitudes of the community. Their philosophy refers to the basic belief of the ancestors. These include belief about the origin of things, the universe, spirits, deities, the organization of society and communities, regulations, prescriptions and prohibitions. Contradictory morals or actions are interpreted as omenaelu (abominations). The concept of omenaelu has no place in Igbo morality; it is rather called aru (taboo). In order to fulfill omenala, that is, to do according to what obtains in the land. Family members into which a baby was born does according to tradition (omenala). Anyone not doing according to tradition and custom is eventually committing a taboo (aru). The tradition is to consult a dibia (the diviner). The purpose of this tradition of consultation is to determine who has returned, that is, onye loro uwa, who has visited. It is pertinent to recall here again, that the African/Igbo world is a mystic world. Nothing happens by chance. What we call 'chance' is simply an effect or event whose cause is still hidden from our perspective.⁹⁵¹ Death does not happen by chance or birth by accident. The ancestors could occasion both death and birth. The Igbo strongly believe in the principle of continuity of life. They are convinced that death does not break relationship nor tampers with. It is not the Igbo or the Africans alone who believe in the ever presence of the dead. The Europeans too share this attitude. The amount of efforts put in decorating and burning candles at the graves of their loved ones, the amount of money they spent in buying decorative gravestones and flowers are all expressions of their inner belief in the ever presence of the dead among them.⁹⁵² Like the Europeans, the Africans/Igbo belief about the dead is the reason for the consultation with the divine after the birth of a new baby.

⁹⁵¹ Celestine Obi A., et al., *A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria (1885-1985)*, African-Fep Publ., Onitsha, (1985), 20.

⁹⁵² John S. Mbiti, *Im Kreis der Lebend-Toten-Religiöse Ideen im östlichen Zentralafrika*, Geister 378, in: Mircea Eliade, *Geschichte der Religiösen Ideen* bd. 3/2. Freiburg, (1991), 252.

Diviners are believed to cast divination through the power of the agwu spirit to whom they are devoted.⁹⁵³ With the help of the spirit of agwu, the diviner will be able to say who has come back from the dead. During the divination, the diviner manipulates his oracle so that it reveals to him which of the dead ancestors has been ‘reincarnated’ in the newborn child. The identification of the ancestor that has return determines the name the baby will bear.⁹⁵⁴ For instance, in the Yoruba society, the first male child that is born into a family immediately after the death of his grandfather is called Babatunde (father has returned) and the girl born immediately after the death of her grandmother Yetunde (mother has returned). (The sacralization of the rite of passage led invariably to the sacralization of agent of socialization. The Igbo naming ceremony for instance takes the form of welcoming the dead ancestor. For the Igbo people, the name Nne-Nna means the return of the mother of her father, Nne-Nne, the return of the mother of his/her mother. Nna-Nna means the return of the father of his father. Nna, expresses the joy that the father has returned, the way the Nne, expresses that the mother has returned. Nne-Ji, my brother/sister has returned, Nna-ji, my half brother/sister has returned. Thus naming ceremony becomes a means of preserving the memory of progenitors.⁹⁵⁵ These names specify the return of a particular ancestor. The names could also be repeated within the circle of their larger family. Remaining in a state of dynamic presence is one major reason that enables a returning of an ancestor. Tradition or omenala identifies itself with practices that are sometimes unreflective. In the case of the belief in rebirth, Igbo tradition make claims to what the forefathers, their predecessors and successors have practiced and believed. It is a following and fulfilling of tradition and customs. Here Igbo tradition assumes uncritical position through engaging and

⁹⁵³ Emefie Ikenga Metuh, *African Religions in Western Conceptual Schemes*, 160.

⁹⁵⁴ Edmund Ilogu, *Christianity and Igbo Culture: A Study of the Interaction of Christianity and Igbo Culture*, New York, (1974), 45.

⁹⁵⁵ Ogbu U. Kalu, *Gods as Policemen: Religion and Social Control in Igboland*, in: *Religious Plurality in Africa, Essays in Honour of John S. Mbiti, Jacob K. Olupona et al (eds.)*, Berlin, (1993), 109-130, 117; Innocent Onyewuenyi, *African Belief in Reincarnation*, 22.

perpetrating a probable inheritance. This is true because there have been events of ambiguities which have never been addressed. There are occasions where people who have reincarnated were still alive during the pregnancies of the women who gave their birth.⁹⁵⁶ In such cases, they are to be born as X and Y who saw the pregnancies of the reincarnated X and Y. There have equally been cases where pregnant mothers have consulted and known the reincarnating ancestors before the actual birth of the baby ancestor.⁹⁵⁷ The fact remains that the rebirth phenomenon in Igbo land has lasted due to unreflected logic inherent in some aspects of their tradition.

Igbo beliefs are sacrosanct, their traditions and customs are the ordinances of the ancestors and obedience is inevitable. After the birth of a child, consultations and divinations are inevitable. This is in accordance to custom. Belief in reincarnation in Africa and in Igbo land particularly is borne out by the widespread practice of consultation of a diviner. Family members of a pregnant mother soon after or before birth have always gone to the Dibia to identify the ancestor who has been reborn or to be born in the new baby.⁹⁵⁸ From the foregoing, determining who has come implies consulting the diviner. Divination is against Christian spirituality, against its worship and practice. Christianity has never seen anything positive about divination and consultation. The involvement of many Igbo converts in the art of consultation after the birth of a child prompted a swift rejection of the idea of rebirth by missionary Christianity.

6.4.2 The Reason for the Survival of the 'Reincarnation in *Ilo-uwa*

The analogical assumption that belief in reincarnation is a twin sister of *ilo-uwa* among the Igbo people⁹⁵⁹ is borne out of three circumstances. First, the fertile grounds provided by uncritical respect for customs and traditions. Igbo traditions and customs are believed to be sacrosanct. Too much questi-

⁹⁵⁶ Innocent Onyewuanyi, *African Belief in Reincarnation*, 21-2.

⁹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵⁸ Emefie Ikenga Meth, *Comparative Studies*, 267.

⁹⁵⁹ John Obilor, *Studies in the Humanities*, 54.

ons are not admitted and traditions are not to be broken. To perpetrate customs and traditions, teachers of Igbo tradition and culture infused the sentence of ‘omenala ga adi’ (our custom must exist) in the mind and thinking of every traditional person. This sentence has dogmatic influence that has aided the survival of the belief in *ilo-uwa*. The second contributing factor to the similitude of reincarnation and *ilo-uwa* includes the appearances of physical marks of dead members of the family on the body of infants born within the kindred. This accounts for the likeness between parents and children and for the phenomenon of atavism.⁹⁶⁰

Third, the phenomenon of child prodigies (ebibi uwa) is another factor. Here the child carries from birth unique intuition and charisma. These possessions are attributed as knowledge acquired from a previous life. A child prodigy reincarnates to exhibit the ‘audacity’ of the deceased. That is, the qualities of the deceased in terms of strength, boldness, courage, bravely, confidence, intelligence, wisdom, success⁹⁶¹ etc. All these factors constitute in upholding the concept of *ilo uwa*, the construed reincarnation in Igbo thought. Nevertheless, is *ilo-uwa* reincarnation?

6.4.3 Reincarnation and *Ilo-uwa* Compared

The principle of ‘coming back to life’ in Igbo tradition called *ilo-uwa* is a phenomenon that expresses the belief in the continuation of life the way reincarnation defines the Eastern doctrine of immortality. The crucial question at this point is whether these two concepts are related. Do the two ideas share the same path or are they different. I would want to come to their relationship by defining their differences.

Reincarnation in the classical sense is a general way of making amendment for mistakes of previous life. It is an act of grace whereby the reincarnated

⁹⁶⁰ Cf. Transmigration, in: Funk and Wagnalls Standard Reference Encyclopedia, vol.23, (1967), 8620.

⁹⁶¹ See, Patrick Iroegbu, The Audacity of Ibi Ebibi Rite of Passage and Cremation Burial Rite on River Niger, in: Enwisdomization Journal, Owerri, vol. 4, no.1and 2, (2009), 18.

is given the opportunity to make reparations and to make spiritual advancement. In the opinion of classical reincarnation, life is full of huddles and mistakes. As such, reparation for human weakness cannot be achieved in a single existence because life itself is too short. A single process of birth cannot do the reparation. Invariably everyone is expected to reincarnate several times before this atonement could be made. The souls of adults and children alike are subjected to a rigorous process of automatic migration. In Igbo understanding, the concept of rebirth patterns to adults alone. Children are not known to come back after death in the form of rebirth except in the cases of the *ogbanje*.⁹⁶² This phenomenon will be treated subsequently. Reincarnation in classical understanding is a sort of punishment but in the Igbo concept, rebirth is the reward for life well live. Eastern religions avoid reincarnation. Igbo religion welcomes rebirth. Classical reincarnation informs the independence of the soul. In the classical definition, the nature of the soul is distinct from the nature of the body. The body is material and remains a substance of decay. On the other hand, the soul is indeterminate. It has the capability to leave for one body after another. It can reincarnate into a higher stage or into a lower state. It can become human or brute. As an independent consciousness, the soul or spirit is sustained self-reflection capable of rediscovering itself in every intact essence. On the other hand, *ilo-uwa* or coming back after death in Igbo society is not determined by the autonomy of the person. The society and the families of the deceased mainly determine it. Not everyone is wanted back. Thieves, lawbreakers, wicked people, lazy individuals, the weakling and sickly people, people who died of abominable and virulent diseases and those who committed taboos including suicide are never wanted back. The society and families prevent bad characters and unfortunate people from coming back. Prevention is through medicine and making of concoction. The rite of *inishi arishi* is one such rite performed to prevent social misfits and miscreant from reincarnating. The only people that are wanted back are the peacemakers, honorable men and wo-

⁹⁶² Chinwe Achebe, *The World of the Ogbanje*, Enugu, (1986), 57.

men, wealthy and prosperous people. Rebirth in this form is invoked by way of elaborate sacrifices and rites of passage at one's death. Decent and expensive burial ceremonies are majorly in anticipation for the coming back of the dead. Unlike in reincarnation, coming back to life after death in terms of *ilo-uwa* is not a punishment. Everyone desires to be born again but not everyone is allowed to be born again.

The ancient religions of Asia in its doctrinal practices of reincarnation see marriage and the giving of birth as one means of increasing karma. They invariably abhor peopling the world, by giving birth. Marriage and family life is never encouraged. But in Igbo land there is a strong attachment placed on getting married and choosing in-laws. Getting married is not a thing for the woman and man alone (bride and bridegroom). It involves parents and families of the concerned parties. The strong influence of customs and traditions has on marriage owed much to the concern for 'reincarnation.' Igbo culture encourages having wives and giving birth to children. In fact, the contrary is a taboo. Parents are concerned in the choice of wives or husbands for the young people. Some African societies regard marriage as the counter-measure against the loss of immortality. Parents believe their continuous existence is ensured in the continuity of their family lineage. Therefore choice of partner is very important. This is in the sense that through marriage the departed are in effect 'reborn.' In Indian tradition of reincarnation, the person reincarnates in its totality except in a different body. It is important to note that the persons in Igbo concept are never reborn in their totality. There may be the rebirth of their physical features and characteristics of their personality traits found in children born in the family.⁹⁶³ Again, there are regulations concerning those that one may not marry. These regulations partly explain the desire to reduce the risks of bad eggs, bad people with bad character from 'reincarnating' into the other family.⁹⁶⁴ The genes of people with abnormal characters and people believed to have died through abominable

⁹⁶³ John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 105.

⁹⁶⁴ Emefie Ikenga Metuh, *Comparative Studies*, 268.

disease are simply prevented from being ‘reproduced’ and from ‘reincarnating.’ While classical reincarnation is self determining embodied in the capability of the transcendent self ego, the spirit or soul, Igbo *ilo-uwa* (rebirth) is determine by choice. The classifications that have already been made differentiate the two concepts and put them worlds apart.

6.4.4 The Paradox of Reincarnation Belief

The belief in life after death in Igbo culture is sustained by their conception of the existence of the spiritual realm, the hereafter. Their dead continue to live in the abode of the dead called *ala mmuo*, the hereafter or the land of the living-dead. The dead are called the living dead because they can influence the activities and lives of their human families in a very unique fashion. Another strong belief regarding the dead exercised by the Igbo is the belief in the ancestral cult. The ancestral cult is a gateway. It is an entrance from where the living dead make their visit to the family and back to the hereafter. However, the issue of multiple existence of the ancestor insinuates paradoxes. It brings confusion about the authentic belief in the existence of the hereafter as a real world. It also places doubt on the validity of the ancestral cults. We have already said that the Igbo spirituality rejects the concept of a disembodied self and the transcendental subject called Pure Ego alternatively, what Talbot refers as a multiple self that can manifest itself in several individuals at the same time.⁹⁶⁵ Talbot’s position with regard to the issue of the Pure Ego remains one earliest arguments holding brief for the Igbo belief in reincarnation in classical sense. Talbot finds the spirit or soul or the Ego as a double self. It can reincarnate in several persons not even once but even at different times. That means the Ego, the soul of the person can be present among the members of a human family as a reincarnated member as well as assuming existence in the land of the living-dead. If this is so, this position certainly evokes paradoxes about the belief in the ancestral cult. The belief in the ancestral cult within Igbo society is not superficial; it is real just as their sacrifices are real. Ancestors are venerated at the

⁹⁶⁵ Percy Amaury Talbot, *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, Vol. 2, London, (1926), 280.

shrines where sacrifices and libation are poured. As gateways into the human world and the ancestral homes, ancestors are believed to visit the shrines to get in contact with their human families. They also visit the shrines to receive sacrifices. From the shrines they go back to their abode. The ancestors are not spirits in the form of invisible moving objects or ethereal bodies. The ancestors are real spiritual identifiable bodies sometimes qualified with corporality. The concepts of the ancestors are vivified in the image of very old looking men. Since the ancestors are said to have identifiable spiritual forms stemming from their composed unity it smacks intelligence to think about their disintegrated nature.

The Igbo sacrifices are real; much ardor is involved in making them. The efforts involved in making them sway observers to their reality. In this situation, it is difficult to believe the reincarnation of the ancestor. It is difficult to think and believe that the ancestor who has been sent home with elaborate sacrifices has returned to be present as a reincarnated son or daughter. Moreover, this ancestor has been receiving libations and fulfilling the intentions of petitioners in reciprocates. Following the thought of Talbot, proponents of multiple Egos may argue that the ancestor is no more a human being. As spirits, they are open to possibilities. They can change forms and bi-locate as much as possible. It is possible for spirit being with many Egos to maintain several identities. Indeed the dispensers of the above argument insist that it is possible for the spirit being to reincarnate into its human family while still maintaining its identity in the spirit world. The structure of this argument equally maintains the spirit being can equally retain its presence in the ancestral cults where it receives sacrifices and fulfills its obligations.

The plausibility of the argument notwithstanding, the Igbo see the person in life and in death as a complete person. The Ego is not a pure spirit it is a human spirit. As a human spirit, the Ego is localized even at death. It is located at the land of the living dead. The argument of the multiplicity of the Ego and the localization of the spirits in various places at the same time de-

finer the principle of contradiction. The logic of contradiction informs us that a thing cannot be and not be at the same time in the same way and in the same degree. Either something is or it is not.

The whole idea of 'reincarnation' in Igbo philosophy and religion is determined by their world-view. The nature of Igbo cosmology is essentially mythological. The earth is the centre of the universum. It is the meeting point between ethereal world (heaven) and the underworld. The invisible world above the skies and the underworld below the earth are not too well known to humans. The Igbo get their interpretation from the logic of inference, from the logic of the known to the unknown. They set the priority of their knowledge from the visible to the invisible. An insight acquired most importantly through myths. Myths present the unworldly, the divine, as this worldly, human, and the otherworldly as this worldly.⁹⁶⁶ By so doing, divine transcendence is expressed in terms of time and space. Myths actually tend to speak of a transcendent power, which controls the world and humanity. But traditional myths will be impeded if its beliefs are interpreted in obscure manner or if their fundamental imports are being overlooked.

6.5 The *Ogbanje* Phenomenon and its Relationship with the Doctrine of Reincarnation

It is right at this point, to say that with the notion of *ogbanje* in Igbo cosmology an element of ambivalence and confusion begins to creep in the way the Igbo understand life after death. The phenomenon has been mentioned as another instance to support a classical reincarnation belief among the Igbo people. Stories of *ogbanje* (repeater) children are common tales among the Southern states of Nigeria. Night stories and moon light tales are often garnished by the mysterious life of the *ogbanje* children. The *ogbanje* is believed to possess extra ordinary mystical power. The phenomenon is known among the Yoruba as the *Abuki*. The myth of the origin according to Igbo

⁹⁶⁶ Rudolf Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, Hans Werner Bartsch (ed.), New York, (1961), 10 notes 2.

mythology has it that in the long distant past, some group of children were born into this world. When they realized the competitiveness of the world and their inability to survive the struggle, they decided to die and to go back to Chineke (God). On arrival at the gateway, the spirit on guard confronted them and questioned their early return. On further enquiry, the spirit guard discovered that these children made early return simply because they were too lazy. They would not want to work hard on earth. However, to prevent indolence and further reoccurring the spirit gatekeeper did not allow these children spirit being entrance. They were sent back into the world.

The children spirit beings knew they would be laughed at when reach the human world. However, since they would not want to be taunted as non-achievers in life, the children spirit beings decided to form a society in the spirit world. They selected the forest as their abode. The forest in Igbo culture is a representation of fear and angst. Dissident spirits include those of the *ogbanje* roam the forests. The gathering place of the *ogbanje* in the forests is usually on top of big trees. They gather on top of such trees as the mahogany, iroko, and baobab. As spirits, they are never visible to the naked eyes. In this forest, their activities are majorly playing on top of the trees. Nevertheless, they decide occasionally to be born into the physical world, into human families. They allow themselves this just for the fun of it. After some time they will return to their spirit kins. They usually make oaths to one another deciding when to return to the spirit world. This pact they always try to keep.⁹⁶⁷ Agonizing parents sometimes give suspected *ogbanje* children names that they feel may appeal to their conscience. So that these children may come to understand how much pains they have inflicted to their families by their constant deaths and rebirth. They are given such na-

⁹⁶⁷ Alex E. Asakitikpi, Born to Die: The *Ogbanje* Phenomenon and its Implication on Childhood Mortality in Southern Nigerian, see, <http://www.krepublishers.com/02-Journals/T-Anth/Anth-10-0-000-08-Web/Anth-10-1-000-08-Abst-PDF/Anth-10-1-059-08-383-Asakitikpi-A-E/Anth-10-1-059-08-383-Asakitikpi-A-E-Tt.pdf> (accessed 16/08/10).

mes like Onwugharam, (death allow me), Onwubiko (death I plead with you), Onwu m mere gini (death what have I done wrong).

Some *ogbanje* children could be benevolent. Instead of dying, they may decide to stay alive to reciprocate the love they have received from their families. Situations such as this means the *ogbanje* child is breaking the pact made with the other members of the group. And for the others who have kept the terms of the pact and have returned to the spirit world, this is a serious act of betrayal of the entire group. In revenge they rest of the group would visit their living counterpart and threaten him or her with either illness or misfortunes for not respecting the terms of their covenant. The more obdurate a member is the more severe and frequent the harassment from members.⁹⁶⁸ Though children are most associated with the spirit of *ogbanje*, young adults in some other cases equally have been identified as members of this group. The frequency in which death occur in a given family could make members attribute the occurrence to the phenomenon of the *ogbanje*. Shortness of life span is one of the major characteristic of the *ogbanje* syndrome. To know whether the *ogbanje* spirit causes the frequency of death, family members especially parents whose children always die at infancy have always engaged the services of a medicine man.

Sudden sickness and sudden recovery is equally a characteristic of *ogbanje*. The *ogbanje* child always suffers from sudden attack of fever and convulsion. In the early days of Igbo Heilpraxis (medical practice) causes of these constant attacks were very difficult to decipher. Once a child is suspected of being an *ogbanje*, the parents invite the medicine man. A more complex and profound attempt to heal the *ogbanje* lays on the ability of the medicine to solve the problem of convincing the child to reveal the hidden place of her paraphernalia. To do this the medicine man starts by series of persuasion, mocking or cajoling. The mocking may induce the child to show him where he/she has buried his or her *iyi uwa*. That is a kind of spiritual paraphernalia. These may include cowries, shells, threads, beads, fingernails, hairs, ar-

⁹⁶⁸ Chinwe Achebe, *The World of the Ogbanje*, Enugu, (1986), 29.

ticles of clothing. At the discovery and the digging up of the items or item the medicine man prepares concoctions against the sudden death of the child. Amulets, charms, talisman and beads are some of the preparations that the medicine man hangs around the neck of the child.

In a situation of the death of the *ogbanje* child, the medicine man is contracted. He performs some rituals and at the end, he uses sharp razor or similar objects to mutilate the body of the child. This is done for three purposes. First, it is done to frighten the child from reincarnating or coming back to the family. Second, it is carried out in order to warn members of the child's *ogbanje* group of similar consequence. Finally, the body is disfigured so that the other members of the group will be unable to recognize the dead child when it goes to join them. Their inability to recognize it as their member will warrant them to reject it. And this will stop the process. There is yet another fascinating perspective to the *ogbanje* phenomenon. It is believed that some *ogbanje* children have dare and defiled the power of the medicine men. Despite the harrowing treatments given them by the medicine men, some *ogbanje* children have returned to their parents. When they return it is believed they have bore the scares of their mutilation.

The apparent manifestation of such physical phenomena have posited as grounds to argue for reincarnation in Igbo culture. The preponderance of this phenomenon notwithstanding it is established from biogenetics that gene traits of parents have been found in later generations of the members of their families. Psychologists believe that the mind can be active and exact as a photocopying apparatus. It can copy objects from the phenomenon and transfer them to the noumenon and vice versa. The argument refuting genetic process to reincarnation holds that what reappear in the newly born in the physical is the personality traits of the reincarnator. Acts of 'maltreatment' performed on the body of the dead child impress itself in the psyche of the agonizing mother who makes a mental capture of them. The mind of the mother photocopies and transfers these images into the subconsciousness. They are probably to resurface during the next pregnancy. What ap-

appears on the physical body of the newborn is the dominant physiological peculiarity of experience. *Ogbanje* child did not resurface. What could have appeared are the lineage characteristics and not the *ogbanje* or the ancestors.⁹⁶⁹

Elizabeth Isichei gives another perspective to the *ogbanje* phenomenon. She tells us that the *ogbanje* seem to be one of those infant sicknesses that early traditional medicine was unable to administer effective treatment. As a result, the syndrome was couched in myth. With the improvement in medicine and healthcare technology, the *ogbanje* syndromes are getting precise explanations. They are receiving the “explanation of sickle-cell anaemia, which is very common in Igbo land.”⁹⁷⁰ Through the efforts of health workers, people in charge of families and expertise of marriage councilors remarkable progress have been made in the reduction of sickle-cell anaemia birth cases in Igbo land. The reduction of the sickle-cell anaemia cases in Igbo land is gradually putting the *ogbanje* story to rest.

6.5.1 Conclusion

The question of religion is not an issue of reasoned facts. It deals more with faith. Faith however does not exclude reasoning and understanding. We may have to agree that there are certain ideas, things and phenomena that are real although they do not exist in our customary sense of knowing.⁹⁷¹ The phenomena (*ilo-uwa*) I have so far discussed are realities in their own order. They are ways of expressing the belief in the indestructibility of the human personality. They express the belief in the relationship between the living and the dead and the world to come. In the case of *ilo-uwa*, the belief may be an effort to give meaning and reward to a good life.⁹⁷² The more we observe the belief of the Igbo people on the topic of *ilo-uwa*, the more the reality human mystery and existence communicate itself to us.

⁹⁶⁹ Emefie Ikenga Metuh, *Comparative Studies*, 269.

⁹⁷⁰ Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of the Igbo People*, 26-7.

⁹⁷¹ John Hick, *The New Frontier of Religion and Science*, New York, (2006), 197.

⁹⁷² John Obilor, *Studies in the Humanities*, 63.

Closer observation of the belief in *ilo-uwa* shows that the principle does not presuppose personal identity. That is, the child said to have come back is never in Igbo contemplation identified with the dead ancestor. Neither does the personality of the ancestor in the hereafter ever influence the personality of the child. Yet the Igbo continue to identify the new born with the ancestor in a real, concrete and personal ways. They pay respect to the new born baby as he/she were an elder. They pour libation to the ancestor with the full hope that he/she exist in the hereafter. Igbo religious acts are simply realistic and holistic.

Ilo-uwa should is a matter that should be given deeper concentration. Obviously there should be particular attention to the mystery it tends to emphasize. That is, the strong belief in human relationship and the value of human life. The beliefs places premium on dead ancestor and its relationship with the ‘reincarnated.’ The dead ancestor incorporates his/her personality whether traits or otherwise to the new born. Though the new born remains a unique personality yet the personality of the ancestor subsists in him or her. The subsisting personality of the ancestor does not in any way reduce or diminish the character of the new born. In this way, there are two different unrelated personalities. The reincarnated person still retains his or her whole identity in the land of the dead⁹⁷³ while influencing affairs in the family and in the new born. The phenomenon of rebirth as it is known in Igbo religion plausibly serves the purpose of retribution. The retention of the belief could be seen as serving the purpose of giving meaning to life. Good life is rewarded and for the evil doer punishment is inescapable. Definitely evil men and women are never known to have been ‘reborn.’ The belief serves as retributive justice. Following the fact that good ancestors believed to have come born in the form of a newborn are showered with love and tender kindness. In doing so harmony, peace, love and justice are built within members of a given community or family. Evil are equally reduced within the perimeter

⁹⁷³ Anthony Ekwunife, *Meaning and Function of Ino-uwa*, 32-3.

of such communities. Igbo communities are most often a congregation of members of the homogenous families no one is anonymous. As such, everyone knows who has been reborn. The newborn was perhaps a former father; mother, brother, sister, relative or friend to some of the living. The newborn is not new person in the real sense of it, he or she was an old member the community or family and he or she is treated accordingly.

This brings to clarity the concept that life is continuous. The consciousness of the continuity of life warns every member of the community to look before one leaps. It calls on all to consider and to reconsider every action. The belief in rebirth is guided by the principle of justice. The Igbo have a saying, which actually shows the elasticity of justice that comes after events of life. They say “mgbaraka mgba afor gbuo mmadu gbaba ohia, mgbela mgbe ona awula anoro n’uzo chere ya (if one-year escapee kills a human being and runs inside the bush whenever stays on the road to wait for it).”⁹⁷⁴ William Shakespeare (1564-1616) expresses this same idea when he writes, the “evil that men do live after them”⁹⁷⁵ the good they do invariably live after them. The belief in the circle of birth and rebirth encourages progress in the community and reduces wickedness and hatred. Members of the community know they are created for the community and should therefore take care of it by building it in every ramification. The thought of coming back urges all to strive for the improvement and development of quality existence within the community. Knowing that whatever injustice perpetrated against the community or its members survives to wait for the evil doer. The fact of this statement sustains the point that our concept cannot be transliterated in the same way that reincarnation has been expressed in its classical sense. A casual glance at what has been said tends to hook *ilo-uwa* with pragmatism. Rather than that, it emphasizes vitality in its fullest.

⁹⁷⁴ Oliver Onwubiko, African thought, religion and culture, 26. I have used this Igbo saying in a different sense from the way Onwubiko used it in defining indefinite future time among the Igbo.

⁹⁷⁵ See, Julius Caesar Act 3, Scene II.

The belief in this new state holds two prominent arguments. First the new state or the belief in *ilo-uwa* reinforces strongly the belief the Igbo have in immortality. Second, the belief provides the necessary personal and social motivation and encouragement for a better ethical and moral behavior among the Igbo. The fear of retribution in the next coming is a premonition against wrongdoing. Anyone embarking on a wrong course knows the implication of the principle of coming back.⁹⁷⁶ The coming back is not to improve on what wrong one has done, but it is a principle that urges one to enter into justice with what was unable to be done.

With the thought of reward and punishment constantly crossing the mind, the belief in coming back allows the person to enter into an absolute covenant with the earth. Entering into a new covenant enables the person to pay absolute commitment to the dignity of the society. Base on these interpretations, the paradigm of *ilo-uwa* sincerely calls for a new translation, a new language, a new imagination, a new understanding and a new pedagogy. These new implications will definitely improve the present state of things in Nigeria and in Igbo land. It will make an absolute contribution in structural rebuilding of the decaying fabrics of the Nigerian/Igbo societies. Secondly, it will be a fantastic tool in facilitating inculturation and the new evangelization theology. Scholars of Igbo religion and culture agree that the lack of courage to accept the fundamentals of certain Igbo belief contributes to the conflicts and tension between Igbo culture and the new faith, Christianity.⁹⁷⁷ Before we say a few words on inculturation and the new evangelization theology, it is important we make a few statements on how the belief in *ilo-uwa* can help the social, political, economic and educational sectors of Nigeria/Igbo society.

⁹⁷⁶ Nwachukwu S. S. Iwe, Igbo Deities, in: West African Religions. Daniel Ilega (ed.), Ekiti State, (2000), 23.

⁹⁷⁷ John I. Obilor, The Practice of Inculturation, in: Religion in a World of Change: African Ancestral Religion, Islam and Christianity, Theophilus Okere (ed.), Owerri, (2003), 215.

7 Colonialism, Culture Contact and its Implications on Igbo Belief

7.1 Introduction

Correct interpretation of religious ideologies is a necessary step towards a harvest of religious cum social/political gains. The decadence in present Nigerian society, the poverty and sometimes lack of value and sense of the sacred that is gradually creeping in the Nigeria/Igbo society is historical. It is attributable to colonialism and the insensitivity of earlier Europeans about some core cultural values and principles of the African people. However, the opportunity provided by the second Vatican Councils leaves the African/Nigeria and the Igbo church another opportunity to experience a new evangelization. One thing the new evangelization encourages is the interpretation and the re-interpretation of the African values for the purpose of enculturation. The ilo-uwa here considered as an Igbo/African value shows the religious faith of the Igbo in life after death and invariably the imagination of resurrection.

7.2 Colonialism and Nigeria Evolutionary History

There are hardly books written on contemporary African politics or religion without connections to the events of the slave trade or colonization. Most of these writings are not without bitterness. The conclusions of many of the texts are lamentations of how the West underdeveloped Africa. Whatever may be the case, the fact remains that colonialism and Western imperialism with its positive and negative impacts have become part of the history of the African nations. There is no doubt European activities in Africa were characterized by the intensive scrambling and partitioning for the hearts and flesh of Africa. It would not just be dismissed by the wave of the hand that imposition of alien rule, whether it was in the form of British Indirect Rule or French and Portuguese system of Assimilation contributed to present African political quagmire. The plantation of western forms of institutions,

Western forms of Christianity, acculturation, racialism and economic measures and exploitation and rudimentary political socialization have already created their inroads.⁹⁷⁸ They have become part of Africa's evolution history.

Godfrey Igwebuike Onah in one of the "Odenigbo Lectures" recounts the many ordeals of the Igbo people. He attributed the Igbo travails to two factors, first on the slavery then, on colonization. British diplomatic contact with Nigeria that led to its colonization began in 1849. Lagos became a crown colony in 1861. In 1900, the British government created the North and South Protectorate. The colonization of the people of Nigeria culminated in the amalgamation of the different ethnic nationalities and groups. That is, the amalgamation of the North and South Protectorates by Governor Frederick Lord Lugard on 1 January 1914. Few years after the amalgamation precisely in 1954, Nigeria became a federation. In 1960, the Union Jack bowed down to the Green White Green Flag that was the Independence celebration from colonial Britain. Nigeria became a Republic in 1963 and six years after the inauguration of Independence, the pogrom against the Igbo in the North initiated the 1966 crisis. In this year, the so-called Nigeria/Biafra war began.⁹⁷⁹ The structure of the amalgamation and all that emerged from it has been criticized as inappropriate, for instance, the name Nigeria.

The name was a foreign formulation that goes back in 1898 and to Miss Flora Shaw (later, Mrs. Flora Lugard). In these years, Miss Shaw grouped all British West African Protectorate along the Niger River and Benue as Nigeria Protectorates.⁹⁸⁰ The nomenclature is not a representative of any foundational interest except that of the colonial regime who used it for effective colonial administration. The colonial power introduced political ide-

⁹⁷⁸ Nwachukwu S. S. Iwe, *Christianity, Culture and Colonialism in Africa*, Calabar, (2002), 193-4.

⁹⁷⁹ Kenneth Enang, *Nigeria*, in: *Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon*, Bd. 3, (1992), 759-763, 759.

⁹⁸⁰ Frieder Ludwig, *Nigeria*, in: *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* 6, ⁴(2003), 315-8, here 315-6.

ologies and cultural structures foreign to the situation of the people.⁹⁸¹ Despite human miscarriages of justices, tyrannical and authoritarianism, “significant positive results did emerge from our colonial experience. Among them must be mentioned; rudimentary economic infrastructures, incipient fight against mass illiteracy and disease, humanitarian and educational establishments and activities of the missionaries and other generous agencies and general reign of colonial order and tranquility, even if it was by force it was appreciated by the natives.”⁹⁸²

Without sentiments for colonialism, colonial threat is a small disadvantage comparable to the extreme vulnerability, famine, hunger, death, disease, poverty, insecurity, and unimaginable sufferings faced by a little less than 150, 000.000 Nigerians in the land they call their own fifty years (1960-2010) after colonial independence. Many of the social, political, economic, sociological and moral problems that are currently hunting the Igbo people indeed Nigerians are to a reasonable extent related to a certain salient feature of a lost value. The loss of these fundamentals are the cause of the overwhelming presence of evil in the Nigerian society of today. The complacency towards evil directly links to the sufferings that millions of Nigerians are experiencing. It is pertinent to ask at this point the question the content of evil portrays.

7.3 The Definition of Evil

From its objective dimension, evil is not a personal fact. If it were the innocent and just would not suffer, the unborn will not cry neither would the child perish. The problem of evil in the world rejuvenates the question of creation and the existence of God. Whether God is evil, analytic philosophy questions whether the present world with much evil is the best possible

⁹⁸¹ Godfrey Igwebuikwe Onah, *Odoziobodo: Ochichi Maka Ezi Oganihu, Odenigbo Lectures* (2003), Owerri, 47-56.

⁹⁸² Nwachukwuikwe S. S Iwe, *Christianity, Culture and Colonialism*, 195-6.

world God could create.⁹⁸³ The issue of evil has taken various forms starting from the first time Epicurus (342-270 B.C.E) raised it as a problem down to the time Augustine defined it as a *privatio boni*, a privation of good, a lack in nature, an omission, corruption, deprivation.⁹⁸⁴ The sense of evil in Augustine is that of non-entity and non-existence.⁹⁸⁵ Taking the instance of ‘darkness’ evil is a philosophical concept that has no existence in reality. Darkness is the absence of light. Apart from the definition light gives, darkness has no existential reality. So too is evil, a lack without particular ontological existence (Moses Maimonides). Something is evil, when something is lacking in some kind of good. Exaggerated possession of quality due to nature in terms of too small or too little equally qualifies the concept evil.⁹⁸⁶ Evil is a deprivation. It is not the opposite of good but an absence of good. Evil is not a thing because it cannot exist as a substantive. Suffering and evil from classical division are supplementary concepts they are not complementary. Every suffering is evil but not every evil is suffering.

Not every lack is evil in the real sense of it. It is evil when a good that supposed to be present is lacking. The lack of wings in birds, the lack of hands in humans are good examples of evil in beings. Birds need wings to fly and once the wings are not there, they experience suffering. The human person needs the hands to perform and once they are not present, one suffers. The absence of these necessary parts to these beings is a clear sign that evil has taken place. Evil happens when there is a lack in a whole. It equally occurs

⁹⁸³ Christine Axt-Piscalar, *Das Böse. Religionsphilosophisch IV*, in: *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* 1, ⁴(1998), 1707.

⁹⁸⁴ Cf. *The Nature of God* by St. Augustine xxv (henceforth NG) see also, John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, London, ²(1977), 47.

⁹⁸⁵ John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 41. Hick here defines the various formulations of Augustine that show evil as a philosophical concept that has no existence in reality. For Augustine, ‘either that is evil which we fear, or the act of fearing is in itself evil.’ Cf. *Confession*, 7.5.

⁹⁸⁶ Joseph Dan, *Das Böse. Judentum VII.*, in: *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* 1, ⁴(1998), 1710-1.

when any member of the whole renounces the reason for its existence. Evil can also imply a situation of inappropriate proportion, possessing more than is necessary. There are various kinds of evil.

7.3.1 Kinds of Evil

Generally, evil is divided into metaphysical or ontological, physical and moral evil. Metaphysical/ontological evil is no evil in the real sense of the word. It is imperfection, privation or finitude in creation, nature is contingent and imperfect. Imperfection in nature cannot be eradicated. God alone is perfect. On the other hand, physical evil is pain itself. It is defined as a specific corporal sensation that a conscious being suffered on the body.⁹⁸⁷ If one is smacked with a rod on the head or on any part of one's body, one feels some kind of sensation. The impact of the sensation is pain. Pain is subdivided into corporal and mental pain. Corporal/physical evil includes hunger, thirst, sickness and diseases that embrace abnormality, deformity, handicap etc. These affect the function and wellbeing of the body and make it suffer on the physical level. Physical pains give rise to suffering but it is not suffering itself. One may have pain but not necessarily suffering. Pains could be endured they could be enjoyed for certain greater and worthy reasons. The pangs of birth are painful but they are not suffering they have not prevented the female sex from giving birth. Pains suffered on the physical body do not qualify as suffering. Suffering however is the highest form of pain. Every suffering is pain but not every pain is suffering. Suffering is summarized in moral evil which is all the instances of pain and suffering, physical and mental. Moral evil deals with all states of affairs significantly disadvantages to the organism which are caused by actions for which human agents can be held morally blameworthy. Moral evil is the most embarrassing of all evils. This is because it is the most prevalent, the most heinously aggravating and penchantly disorganizing of all evils.⁹⁸⁸ Moral evil is the suffering of the soul.

⁹⁸⁷ John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 292.

⁹⁸⁸ Pantaleon Osondu Iroegbu, *Kpim of Predicaments*, Ibadan, (2004), 35.

It incorporates all conditions arising from bad governance, poverty, oppression, injustice, nostalgia for the homeland, evil political system, bad social conditions, uneven distribution of common resources and wealth, persecution and hostility to the environment and ecology. Hostility to natural environment is hostility to human nature. The natural environment is not to be conquered but to be protected. Human destiny depends on the future of the world as much as the environment dependent on us. When the Christian Bible talks of the new world and new creation it means something more than the present physical scope of our existence. But it does not exclude this existence in its transformed altitude. Creation itself is anxiously waiting for a transformation into glory (Rom 8:19). The talk of a new earth and a new heaven is a faith formulation, which is nothing but the truth and reality of the hope in the resurrection.⁹⁸⁹ Humanity and creation are not drifting into empty vacuum, they are incarnating into salvation, coming into a new state of existence. Regardless of its type, evil is the destructive force that attracts suffering.

7.3.2 What is suffering

Even though there is, a systematic problem of definition suffering however, is a mental state of agony otherwise called passion. It is not simply a reaction to physical pain. It is also a reaction to other events and circumstances. Physical pain is only one and generally not the most dreadful of suffering. Suffering is situation of preference. It is a mental state of regret when one radically wishes a different situation to one's present state.⁹⁹⁰ Mental agony grips the centre of the personality. Whether presently or anticipated, physical, emotional, or economic, suffering is evidence that one is afflicted.⁹⁹¹ What makes people experience suffering is not necessarily physical pain but

⁹⁸⁹ Martin Onyemma Egbuogu, *Human Suffering and the Resurrection Faith*. Enugu, (2006), 164.

⁹⁹⁰ John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 292-318.

⁹⁹¹ Michael B. Hundley, *Keeping Heaven on Earth*, Bernd Janowski (ed.), *Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2. Reihe*, Tübingen, (2011), 125.

such element as 'fear.' In present Igbo society, for instance, fear has the functional result as evil. It affixes itself and afflicts the person. One is afraid of being permanently disabled. The fear of death or anxiety about one's family financial future permanently affects one. Humiliation, helplessness and dependence upon others and the future in patterns of finance afflict one with fear. Fear destroys the person and makes it suffer the most. It acts as a malevolent evil force. To remove it entails for many a state of impunity for others.

7.3.3 Fear and Human Suffering

Industrialization and urbanization has increased the phenomenon of fear. Influenced by secularism the human assumes the only way to kill fear or to remove fear from bothering the soul is by acquiring and accumulating, the concomitant large-scale urbanization. Fear is the driving force in human excessiveness. Those who enjoy opulence think one may not step twice into the same river. With such greed, one does not realize that one never reaches contentment neither does one reach true felicity. Fear causes its victims to be desperately egoistic and unhappy as they continue to heap and stockpile possessions. The egoist continues to starch out the common wealth without qualms, to the real pressures of the severest poverty of their neighbors and the massive injustice lynched on to fellow compatriots. They introduce artificial material lack. They bring about evil. Fear in this context is both psychological as well as a moral evil. It is a moral evil because it pushes its victims to the extreme of inflicting injustice. It blindfolds the oppressor so that he or she does not realize the perpetrating injustice. This extreme situation of blindness pushes the victim to another extreme condition of suffering and bitterness. Moral evil as already reiterated is the worst of evils and fear propels victims to be slaves of moral evil.

The few types of evil discussed operate philosophically and portray the principle of lack. These evils in the context of this discussion are not privation in the sense of material lack. They are privation in the sense of spiritual belief. The rapid social changes, industrialization, urbanization accompa-

nied with growing secularism are the consequent effect of fear underneath which is the loss of hope for eschatology. The lack of faith drives the human to an extreme state of fear. The result of this situation is the perpetration of evil and once this is the case, the result is the suffering of humanity. Human beings who perpetrate evil lack the belief in the future. In Igbo culture, *ilo-uwa* is a phenomenon that refers to retribution and a panacea for justice in the future. Lack of confidence in the future existence and justice is like a taboo, they are sinful acts. They lead to evil which consequence is the present political, social, economic and spiritual suffering.

7.4 Ilo-uwa as Retribution

Different religions express the notion of retribution differently. The Christian Bible is a great book about retribution. There are great stories of retribution in the intertestamental texts especially within the context of the Maccabean or Hasmonaean war history. The fought wars were on two fronts, for political reason and for religious reasons. Politically the Maccabees saw themselves as leaders of Israel. They realized themselves as chosen to save the Jews from foreign operation and invasion. As leaders of the society, they went to war to defend their land, territory and people. They equally went to war for religious reasons. In those days in Israel, political leadership was closely bound with the cult. Early Israelite kings were figures of religious leadership. As leaders of the people, the Maccabees went to war understating they were fighting to save the religion of Yahweh.

The faith of the Maccabees concentrated on the theology of retribution imbedded in their religion energized them to lay down their lives in defense of Yahwism. Their belief in Yahweh and his justice assured them of reward for the innocent and the faithful. This same expectation of reward in the next world moved Eleazar to accept suffering and death (2 Mac 6:30-31). The expectation of the resurrection at the last day encouraged the mother of the seven sons to suffer the pain of the death of her children. It was also this expectation for a better reward that endeared the seven sons to suffer perse-

cution and death. (2Mac 7:1-42). The Jewish theology of the eschatology was developed from the notion of the Yom Kippur, the Day of the Lord. The day of expectation is a day of reward or punishment. The Yom Kippur (Mal 2:17-3ff) in Jewish eschatology is when the Lord will return to render justice to the Hasidim. That is, the faithful of Yahweh. The earlier chapters of this work explicated how this process gradual developed into faith theology that led to the establishment of the doctrine resurrection.

The concept of the Day of the Lord finding its way in Jewish theology made it possible for the idea of suffering to take an eschatological dimension (2 Mac 7:9; Dn 12:2, 13). The belief in life after death came not only to shed light on the mystery of human life terminated by misery and death but it also offers coherent response to the equally puzzling question of human suffering especially that of the innocent.⁹⁹² From here, we find out that resurrection is about the vindication of the innocent the granting of justice on the Yom Kippur. In other words, resurrection encapsulates the idea of retribution, which is the notion of justice. By this stand I think that it was the resurrection faith that gave meaning to the misery of suffering in the Maccabean experience (2 Mac 7:25-29). On the other hand, the concept of ilo-uwa in Igbo tradition has a different response. But on a certain sense, its response is inseparable from the response of suffering and man's inhumanity.

The history of the Igbo people is quite different from that of the Hebrews. Jewish theology was developed according to their world-view. Their life experiences helped their religious and theological conclusions. The history of the Igbo by implication has a different bend from that of the Jews. For instance, the question of suffering and persecution in the experience of the Jews was never the issue for the Igbo their history bears a different content. The Israelites suffered wars, persecutions and exiles. Tribal wars in early days in Igbo land were for different reasons and on different spheres. Unlike the Jews, the Igbo never left their land. They did not go into exile. Even when they experienced the event of slavery like the Israelites, slavery in the

⁹⁹² Martin Onyemba Egbuogu, *Human Suffering*, 214.

near modern times played a different kind of role. It was more of trade and politics. Putting all these circumstances in context, as the Jewish theology with particular reference to eschatology gradually developed within the context of retribution then to resurrection. In the case of the Igbo, justice is represented in several senses. One of the major senses is in the concept of *ilo-owa*. The concept is the fundamental context of their religious belief. In this concept, we find their developed doctrine of reward and punishment. This development was prior to the coming of the missionaries and the introduction of the Christian Bible with its background in Jewish tradition.

7.4.1 The Igbo and the Sense of Justice

There are occasions when one is confronted with skepticism. When one is confronted with questions like, what is religion, what is morality, who formulates moral code, what yardstick differentiates one morality from the rest. Who places judgment? These questions show the magnitude of the conflict freedom struggles against natural law. The place of natural law in things confronts the human society every day. Debates about nature and freedom have always marked the history of moral reflection. They have been there; they were more heated and aggressive in the time of the Renaissance and the Reformation periods.⁹⁹³ The simplicity of these questions, the issue of freedom and morality depends on who asked and who answers. Nevertheless, like truth, morality addresses the consciousness and judges the conscience of every moral society. It uses the tools of natural laws and religious dictates. Natural law of course is God's law in nature. It is not a biological law that calls my body as part of nature to obedience and compliance. It is not circumstantial to human subjectivity and freedom as physicalism and naturalism try to subject it.⁹⁹⁴ Any law against God's law lacks the rectitude of a law. Justice is the basis of God's law. The cultural evolution of the Igbo shows that justice is one of their fundamental ethical values. It is also the ethical culture of other religions even when its emphasis is dimin-

⁹⁹³ John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 46; DH 1521.

⁹⁹⁴ John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 47.

ished, or emphasized in the sense of the principle of an ‘eye for eye’ kind of penal justice.

Most of all the world religions have as fundamental to their praxis the sense of justice. In Hinduism justice is portrayed in the emphasis, ‘men gifted with intelligence... should always treat others as they themselves wish to be treated.’ For the Buddhist ‘in five ways should a clansman minister to his friends and families: by generosity, courtesy, and benevolence, by treating them as he treats himself, and by being as good as his word.’ The same sense is found in Taoism when it says: ‘regard your neighbor’s gain as your own gain, and regard your neighbor’s loss as your own loss.’ Confucianism puts it more precisely, ‘what you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.’ Judaism powerfully summarized it this way: ‘thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself.’ Christianity understands justice as love and charity hence: ‘all things whatsoever you would that man should do to you, do you even so unto them.’ And for Islam ‘no one of you is a believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.’⁹⁹⁵ This whole strand of religious philosophy is imbedded in the universal message of unity proclaimed by Godianism in its philosophy of ‘biri ka’m biri’ (live and let live).⁹⁹⁶ Bringing the question of justice into civil law, Emperor Justin summarized it into three basic precepts, that is: *honeste vivere* (to live honestly), *alterum non laedere* (not to injure others), and *sum cuique tribuere* (to render to everyone his/her due).⁹⁹⁷ Justice in all ramifications has to do with the sense of

⁹⁹⁵ J. U. Ohaeri, *The Supreme Being in Spiritual Groups*, in: *Nigerian Studies*, vol. 1. C.S. Moham (ed.), Ibadan, (1989), 67.

⁹⁹⁶ Chiism is another word for Godianism. Chiism as a religious movement was established in Nigeria in 1962. Kalu Onu Kama Onyioha (1923-2003) principally was its founder and Supreme Spiritual Teacher. Godianism has a philosophy of universal unity of religions. It teaches that religions are fundamentally the same. They are all seeking the light and the spiritual truth. The difference lays mainly in variant unique liturgies. Godianism believes that all religions lead to God therefore no one religion is better than the other. John Hick in the present time is a representative of this thought.

⁹⁹⁷ Nwachukwu S. S. Iwe, *Socioethical Issues in Nigeria*, New York, (1987), 86.

sanity, giving others their due implies having a sense of honesty and integrity.

For the Igbo, justice is founded on the philosophy of live and let live is based on the principle of what is good for the goose is good for the ganders. This principle is the basis of their morality. Moral goodness is valued as the king of all other virtues. George Ekwuru has contrasted this view. For him Igbo sense of justice and morality is not understood in a universal sense. It is contextualized or even localized and selective. Thus, he writes. "Outside the clan or tribal boundaries, certain immoral acts were justified as praiseworthy. No wonder then, although the Igbo generally condemned robbery and stealing, those who stole outside their clan were praised and rewarded with prestigious titles."⁹⁹⁸ Ekwuru's opinion contradicts what is known about Igbo morality. Many Igbo scholars present different opinions knowing that justice by convenience is selective and is no justice. Selective justice is not by any means an authentic justice. It is rather a distortion of justice.

On the perversion of justice, N.S.S Iwe argues that in the Igbo tradition, theft and the thief are regarded with the greatest contempt and horror. The Igbo believe that the human being is a sacred creature but it is only thing that can desecrate the person. Therefore, among the Igbo "wealth acquired unjustly is held in very low esteem and viewed with spite. Because of the fundamental importance of justice in the ethical conceptions of the Igbos, a thief is regarded as the visible embodiment of injustice, iniquity incarnate, a social reprobate, for whom no punishment could be too bitter."⁹⁹⁹ This sense of morality proceeds from a culture permeated with religion. In traditional Igbo society, moral order is intertwined with religious structure.¹⁰⁰⁰ What is known about culture is equally, what is said of tradition. Tradition, culture

⁹⁹⁸ Emeka George Ekwuru, *The Pangs of an African Culture in Travail*, Owerri, (1999), 77.

⁹⁹⁹ Nwachukwuike S. S. Iwe, *Socioethical Issues*, 145.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Emeka George Ekwuru, *The Pangs of an African Culture*, 75.

and religion are inseparable. What the Igbo believe about these ‘three institutions’ is what they believe about God. From this point, it is difficult to separate Igbo traditional and culture from the Igbo religion and morality. Of course, these are not independent institutions. Religion is not independent of culture. Igbo culture flows from the stipulations of Igbo tradition. The answer to all these is that retribution is the portion of every dead person.

7.4.2 Why the Igbo became Christians

The universal assumption is that human beings are political, social and religious beings. Africans share in this universal axiom. Prior to the coming of the Europeans, the Igbo knew God. This statement implies all said so far. They worshipped and revered God as Chukwu. They experienced him in various situations of their lives. They approached him through different means and best of ways they deemed right. One fundamental question this thesis asked was the reason why the Igbo accepted Christianity. In an earlier attempt to solve this puzzle, Emmanuel A. Ayandele gave some reasons. Prominent among the reasons is coercion. For him the Igbo were coerced to Christianity on two fronts, firstly by the colonial regime, then, by the missionaries. To avoid trouble from the invading powers, the Igbo threw away their “idols and professed Christianity in the hope that by so doing the British invaders would not inflict physical punishment upon them. Others began to be favorably disposed towards Christianity because it was believed that this was the best way to court and enjoy the favor of the new British rulers, who were known to favor this religion. Yet others became Christians because it was believed that they would thereby be rescued from the tyranny of the notorious Warrant Chiefs....The most important point to emphasize about the collapse of pagandom in Igbo land.... Was not so much the handiwork of missionaries as it was of the masses themselves and the barrel of the gun.”¹⁰⁰¹

This conclusion was influenced perhaps by the accounts of ‘memorandum’ of understanding between some earlier European merchants with some Igbo

¹⁰⁰¹Emmanuel Ayankanmi Ayandele, *Nigerian Historical Studies*, England, (1979), 172-3

chiefs. For instance, during the Niger expedition of 1841 the Igbo signed a treaty. The treaty was “between the representatives of Queen Victoria and an Ibo chief, Obi Ossai of Aboh.”¹⁰⁰² After the signing of this pact of understanding, hostility on the part of the colonial merchants and government on the Igbo stopped. And it was then that the sown seed of Christianity started germinating, it began to make rapid progress and growth. This opinion notwithstanding it is important to know that earlier familiarization of the Igbo with Christianity was not always on agreement of political undertone. There were other pact of relationship between the Igbo chiefs and Europeans that were devoid of politics, the agreement that established missionary activities on 27 July 1857 is an example. In this year, an agreement was finally executed between a missionary group led by Samuel Crowther and Obi Akazua of Onitsha and his councilors to establish a Christian mission station at Onitsha, an Ibo town on the eastern bank of the river Niger.¹⁰⁰³

Eduardo Mondlane has also expressed the thought of coercion in relation to the conversion of East Africans to Christianity. For him earlier military expedition to East Africa was both political as well as religious. He argues that the coming of the White man in East Africa was defined by reasons, which include a deliberate search for economic empire, territorial expansion and obsessive zeal for mission conversion. This is the way he describes the expedition that brought Christianity to East Africa.

“Aside from its two outstanding captains, the expedition was accompanied by a Father, who later became Bishop Henrique, six Franciscan friars, ten captains, and military forces. Although the expedition’s main purpose was to conquer East Africa the King’s orders for its procedure included inter

¹⁰⁰²S. N. Nwabara, *Iboland, A Century of Contact with Britain, 1860-1960*, London, (1977), 47; See, also Chibueze Udeani, *Inculturation as Dialogue: Igbo Culture and the Message of Christ*, Amsterdam, (2007), 98.

¹⁰⁰³Edmund Ilogu, *Christianity and Igbo Culture: A Study of the Interaction of Christianity and Igbo Culture*, New York, (1974), 56; John Baur, *Christus kommt nach Afrika*, Stuttgart, (2006), 141.

alia, the following specification: That the Regiment of Pedro Alvares Cabral had to convert the idolatrous Moors to Catholicism, and if spiritual arms should not succeed, to utilize the material power of the sword.¹⁰⁰⁴

This expression and some others laid the foundation of the opinion of a forced African Christianity.

Ayandele appears to be making two points. First, he means to emphasize the limitation of the Igbo symbol of religious worship, the Chi in particular. For him when the Igbo realized the emptiness of some of their symbols of worship including the Chi symbols, they threw them away and embraced Christianity. The second implication of the statement points towards the assumption of coercion. He assumed the Igbo came to follow Christianity not because they loved Christianity or because they wanted to change their religion. He rather insisted that the Igbo converted to Christianity under the threat of the barrel of the gun. Looking at the activities of the early missionaries one may be tempted to conclude that Christianity was cultivated by coercion. Missionaries influenced the crackdown on the Unbiniukpabi, the Arochukwu Oracle or the Long Juju by the colonial forces. Missionaries in Igbo land in those early days were disgusted with most of their converts who were relapsing back to traditional religions through the influence of the Long Juju Oracle. To stop this situation, the missionaries complained to the British colonial government. This complaint brought the destruction of the cult by the government forces. After this destruction, most worshippers were conscripted to join the Christian communities.

The fact of this story makes inconclusive statement about conversion to Christianity in Igbo land. There is abundance of evidence pointing out that Igbo conversion to Christianity was never by duress neither was it by coercion. In Igbo land and elsewhere in Africa religion is something practical. Pragmatism orchestrated first, the keeping of symbols of worship. Second,

¹⁰⁰⁴Eduardo C. Mondlane, *Race, Relations and Portuguese Colonial Policy*, Published, in: Markovitz's *African Politics and Society*, 47; See also Nwachukwu S. S. Iwe, *Christianity and Colonialism in Africa*, 196.

it quickens changeover at the slightest sign of a compatible value. The Igbo accepted Christianity on the grounds of ‘pragmatism.’ Their sense of pragmatism is epitomized in their amenability, adaptability and flexibility. Sense of pragmatism has the advantage or disadvantage of making one to change positions easily. In addition to this, the spirit to fluctuate from one position to another is because of their sense of hospitality.

The Igbo people like the rest of African people easily accommodate strangers. One who accommodates strangers easily accepts and accommodates change. They receive their guests by making them warm welcome, they give them land to cultivate, settle, build, hoping that one day the stranger will leave, and the land would revert to the original owner. For the African/Igbo one cannot opt out of one’s original community or homestead completely. For them it is unimaginable, as a result, they did not think that others could do it.¹⁰⁰⁵ When the missionaries first arrived, they were accepted and accommodated from the point of hospitality. The friendship they showed the stranger was one favorable condition that made it easier for the dissemination and reception of the Gospel. This is true when Francis Njoku writes, “the missionary comes as a stranger, albeit a particular kind of stranger with a message to deliver. And the community, being naturally disposed to hospitality, warmly receives him and is prepared to listen to him. Thus there is a mutual embrace as the missionary sets about making his home among the people.”¹⁰⁰⁶ The missionaries came as good visitors; the Igbo received them as good guests.

The Igbo were influenced by the magnanimous generosity and the positive attitude of the new visitors. The missionaries generously donated materni-

¹⁰⁰⁵Oliver Onwubiko, *African Thought, Religion and Culture*, 23.

¹⁰⁰⁶Francis O. C. Njoku, *Some Indigenous Models in African Theology and An Ethic of Inculturation*, in: *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*. Vol. 8:2. Elochukwu Uzukwu (ed.), Enugu, (1996), 17; See, Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, *Missiology Today*, in: *Religion and African Culture, Inculturation – A Nigerian Perspective*. Elochukwu E. Uzukwu (ed.), Enugu, (1988), 158.

ties, health care centers, clinics, orphanages and schools. The Igbo were attracted by the humanitarian services of the missionaries. The missionaries effectively campaigned against the killing of twins and the abomination attached to children growing the upper teeth before the lower one. The Igbo loved the new comer and their magnanimity in sharing their cultural heritage and their religion. These factors attracted the Igbo to Christianity and to the White man's culture. Knowing too well these factors are dependent on the principle of generosity and hospitality characteristics also of the Igbo culture, the Igbo willingly joined the missionaries, received their 'culture' and accepted the religion they brought. In addition to these, the most likely scenario to converting to Christianity was that the people 'identified' their basic religious faith in the new religion.

The Igbo discovered that the new religion preached the three cardinal attributes of Chukwu, as omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. They discovered that the belief in the hereafter is a defined doctrine in Christianity. Christianity is not a native of modern Europe in the strict sense of the word. It developed within Jewish culture and by process of osmosis and evangelization, it infiltrated into Greek-Latin cultures and to the whole of Europe when it developed into proselyting.¹⁰⁰⁷ Through this way, missionary Christianity came to Africa. The Christianity that came to Africa via the instrumentality of European missionaries in the last two hundred years, beginning from the 18th century remains only on the second phase of African evangelization. Christianity is indigenous to Africa since it is deeply rooted in the history of the continent.¹⁰⁰⁸ The culture of its origin in Palestine is closer to African culture than any other culture. No wonder it flourished in the golden age of Patristic Theology in North Africa, the age of Clement and Origen, of Tertullian and Augustine. Having discovered that Christianity developed from a culture similar to their own, the Igbo opened their hearts

¹⁰⁰⁷Joseph Kardinal Ratzinger, *Zur Lage des Glaubens*, München, 1(1985), 205.

¹⁰⁰⁸Innocent Enweh, *African Christian Spirituality: A Prophetic Spirituality*, in: *Bigard Theological Studies*, vol. 17, no.1, Enugu, (1997), 10.

to it. Hence, this discovery “was the religiously fertile ground that witnessed and welcomed Christianity later in the 19th century”¹⁰⁰⁹ in Igbo land.

Another factor that attracted the people to Christianity is the spirit of charity and friendship. The missionaries responded positively to the ‘Gastfreundschaft’ of their host communities. Father Lutz himself promptly reported this hospitality to the motherhouse in the letter he wrote on January 30, 1886. Thus, he writes, “We have decided to stay in Onitsha, a pagan city with about 10,000 inhabitants, and still entirely free from all Mohammedan penetration and occupation. On the sides of the two rivers there are many villages who would most willingly give us their children. The king too is very favorably disposed towards our mission and has promised to be the first to send us two of his children.... During the journey which we made up the river, many of the chiefs came to our boat to invite us to come and settle in their towns and villages”¹⁰¹⁰ (B. C. XIV. No.13, February 1888, 161ff). The spirit of reciprocity of the missionaries was evident in many ways.

This spirit attracted everyone, men, women and children. The spirit enticed even traditional chief priests. Though Ezeulu was the high priest of Ulu, Achebe reports that he was open to the new religion. The chief priest was not coerced to the new religion. There are no doubts he could have been enticed but he was definitely not forced. Like the rest of the Igbo Ezeulu (the chief priest of Ulu) was pragmatic. He sent one of his sons (Oduche) to follow the new religion. He wanted his son to learn the new ritual and to be his eyes within the circumference of the new religion. He wanted the son to learn the White man’s wisdom especially his culture and ways of doing things.¹⁰¹¹ If one were to argue that material enticement is a tool of coercion that will be a different thing. But Ezeulu was not only materially enticed, he was also spiritually captivated.

¹⁰⁰⁹Nwachukwu S. S Iwe, *Socioethical Issues*, 146.

¹⁰¹⁰Celestine Obi A., et al., *A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church*, 23-4.

¹⁰¹¹Chinua Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 42-5.

7.5 The Missionary Enterprise in Igbo Land

The Christianization of the Igbo in the late 19th and early 20th centuries remains a decisive social-religious factor in their existence. Whilst their demographic rivals, the Hausa and the Yoruba for centuries were exposed to external influences the Igbo speaking people remained in 1899 a self-reliant, self-contained, incorrigibly insular, independent and blissfully tradition-encrusted people.¹⁰¹² As trade, religious and missionary activities were going on in the northern and southern parts of Nigeria effort to penetrate the Igbo land remained neutralized by all kinds of forces including natural inhibitions. The attempt was made impossible partly by imperviousness of the Igbo' cultural milieu to untried aberrating alien influences and partly by geography,¹⁰¹³ the swampy terrain of the mangrove forest zone of Igbo land made early penetration impossible.

Northern Nigeria was penetrated as earlier as the 13th century by Islamic movement under the Almoravids known also as the Berbers. The Berbers were desert dwellers and rich owners of camels. As merchants and religious people, the Berbers were conquering the whole of the Sahel region (Western Sudan). They were doing this through a combination of trade and religion. Sahel or shore is a Swahili word for the edge of the Sahara.¹⁰¹⁴ Countries of the Sahel zone include present day West African States. While the Berbers were busy conquering and Islamizing the Sahel states, the swampy grooves of the Igbo states were undiscovered.

There are several historical records accounting not only the activities of missionaries in Igbo land. There were also numerous records that kept track of the many European expeditions east of the Niger. The Portuguese were probably the most interesting. Perhaps they were around the Niger delta soon after 1470. The impact of this discovery was not imminent. The Portuguese were merchants of a small scale business. Due to the size of their

¹⁰¹²Emmanuel A. Ayandele, *Nigerian Historical Studies*, 167.

¹⁰¹³Emmanuel A. Ayandele, *Nigerian Historical Studies*, 167.

¹⁰¹⁴Elizabeth Isichei, *The Religious Traditions of Africa: A History*, London, (2004), 40-52.

business, they could only buy a limited number of slaves and other wares. When they arrived first in the middle of that century there was no immediate need to explore the interior states in want of more slaves. The provision and quantity of slaves they wanted were affordable at the coasts of the Niger River. This was to change later with the discovery of the New World. When the situation changed both the Delta region and the Igbo interior states felt the impact.

Christopher Columbus discovered the New World or America in 1492. The discovery affected the Trans Sahara trade. It affected the trade on goods and commodities. However, it opened a new different kind of trade, the triangular trade,¹⁰¹⁵ rather called the slave trade. The discovery of America means increased demand on humans to work the plantations. Thus in 1530 the slave trade was developed. The development of the obnoxious trade occasioned heavy demand for supply. Many West African states became victims of the inglorious trade. The demand for slave quickened the discovery of some Igbo states, a discovery that seriously affected them. A discovery that sent innumerable number of her able bodied men, women and children into the New World. The slave merchants stationed themselves along the water-sides while the intermediaries 'transported' the slaves from the interior to the coasts. The Europeans never exclusively and entirely discovered the course of the interior of the Lower Niger not until 1830. It was after the discovery that they were able to set their eyes for the first time on the states of the Igbo interior. The Igbo interior was discovered in the sense that the European administrators geographically knew it. But it was not until the end of that century that the administration penetrated beyond the coastal regions of both Delta and Niger. Nevertheless, not every part of the interior states was known to the imperial administration.¹⁰¹⁶

¹⁰¹⁵Elizabeth Isichei, *The Ibo People and the Europeans*, London, (1973), 44-5.

¹⁰¹⁶Elizabeth Isichei, *The Ibo People and the Europeans*, 18.

It is the opinion of Isichei that Christianity entered Igbo land in 1841 through the evangelizing activities of some freed Christian slaves.¹⁰¹⁷ Again this is contrary to Ayandele who mentioned it was through military expedition.¹⁰¹⁸ Achebe on his own part believes missionaries made it into the interior of Igbo land following the paths by European traders and colonial imperialists.¹⁰¹⁹ Nevertheless, the year, 1787 saw the landing of the first batch of freed slaves. The slaves first landed in Freetown, Sierra Leon. Already some of the slaves have become Christians while under the service of their captors. When they landed in Freetown, they continued with the Christian religion. Reaching out to other parts of the West African coasts the slaves spread the new religion they had acquired. Through this spreading Christianity reached the Lower Niger. This is but one version of the beginning of missionary activities in the coast of West Africa.

The second version has it that in addition to the freed slaves, there were many European missionary societies who were present at the time. The Church Missionary Society for example reached the Delta area of Igbo land before 1857. Both the activities of the freed African slaves and those of the Missionary Societies in evangelizing the Niger Delta area proved unsuccessful until the arrival of the Roman Catholic missionaries in 1885 under the leadership of a French priest, Joseph Lutz. Father Lutz had been a missionary for many years in Africa before his appointment to southern Nigeria. He must have gathered enough experience that helped the success of his

¹⁰¹⁷Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of the Igbo People*, London, (1976), 160. The period opined by Isichei could have only represented the era when intensive missionary activities started in southern part of Nigeria and not the first arrival of the missionaries in this part of the country. The Roman Catholic Portuguese missionaries were the first actually to arrive at southern Nigeria in 1487. When they arrived, they Benin and Warri but their mission in these areas was insignificant and not until the 19th century when their activities record huge success. Cf. Kenneth Enang, Nigeria, in: *Evangelische Kirchenlexikon*, Bd. 3, 761.

¹⁰¹⁸Emmanuel Ayandele, *Nigerian Historical Studies*, 172-3.

¹⁰¹⁹Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 123; See also, Emmamuel A. Ayandele, *Nigerian Historical Studies*, 157.

mission in Igbo land.¹⁰²⁰ The contributions of missionaries notwithstanding evangelization of the Igbo was the prerogative of African missionaries who knew the language, habit and custom of the people and the capacity to get the message across using the tools appreciable by fellow countrymen and women.¹⁰²¹

7.6 Mission and the Influence of Colonialism in Igbo Land

A lot of literatures written in relation to missionary activities in Africa have tales of success and failure as hand in glove. A number of factors were responsible in places where missionary activities failed. On the other hand, the success stories are mostly attributed to some missionary icons. The evangelization of the Igbo and its success stories started with the penetration of the interior states. The arrival of Father Joseph Lutz began the actual adherence to Catholicism. The activities of the missionaries changed the face of Igbo land. Historical records eloquently bear testimonies of the achievements of the missionaries. They fought against such diabolic practices as killing of twins. They frowned at ordeal trials preponderant at the time such as witchcraft, the caste systems (Osu caste systems in Igbo land) and those people who suffered from religious and social prejudices and injustices.

Missionaries did go to any possible length to perform trilling progressive tasks.¹⁰²² Through the system of school, building the Roman Catholic mission was able to succeed in challenging ignorance and healthcare in the society. In addition to education, the building of hospitals like the Iyi Enu hospital near Onitsha in 1905 constituted the biggest achievement of missions to the social history of the Igbo speaking people.¹⁰²³ The Church Missionary

¹⁰²⁰For details of the early missionary activities in the Lower Niger, see Celestine Obi et al (eds.), *A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria*, 1-21.

¹⁰²¹Emmanuel A. Ayandele, *Nigerian Historical Studies*, 176.

¹⁰²²Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Tanzania, (1972), 278.

¹⁰²³Emmanuel A. Ayandele, *Nigerian Historical Studies*, 187.

Society (CMS) did not waste time in discovering an evangelization method prominent among them is the training of indigenous African missionaries.¹⁰²⁴ With the encouragement and co-operation of the white missionaries, particularly of Archdeacon T. J. Dennis, and some others, no time was lost in working on the translation of the Bible into vernacular, the one language through which the Christian religion and doctrine could be intelligibly and successfully imparted to the Igbo people.¹⁰²⁵ Through the introduction of vernacular and the reading of the Bible in the Igbo language, the Christian Missionary Society (CMS) were able to open the soul of the Igbo to the reading and appreciation of the Gospel message. The honest intention and zeal to save and lead a greater portion of the people to the knowledge and truth of God notwithstanding missionaries in their bid to solve basic human wants and necessities became entrapped to the antics of colonialism. They depended much on the provisions made available by the colonial rulers. Without knowing it, missionaries became potent instruments for the effective realization of the colonial strategy of cultural slavery.¹⁰²⁶ Because of this defect, pre-colonial Africa saw the missionaries as agents of political imperialism. It was told of the, “glowing tributes paid by Sir H.H. Johnston and Commandant Mattei, British and French imperial agents respectively, of the era of the scramble, to missionaries whom they saw as co-workers in their task of empire-building; of the way in which Robert Moffat, a pioneer missionary of the London Missionary Society, prepared the way for Rhodes’ coup in the land of the Ndebele (present Zimbabwe); of how the Church Missionary Society and their agents collaborated with Colonel Lugard in the British occupation of Uganda; of how Thomas Birch Freeman, a Wesleyan missionary, was hand in glove with the British administration on the Gold Coast in order to endear the Fanti to British suzerainty; of how the French priest of the Society of African Church Missions in Dahomey

¹⁰²⁴John Baur, *Christus kommt nach Afrika*, 140-144.

¹⁰²⁵Emmanuel A. Ayande, *Nigerian Historical Studies*, 177, (*italic mine*).

¹⁰²⁶Emeka George Ekwuru, *The Pangs of an African Culture in Travail*, 43.

worked for the ultimate occupation of that West African country by France.”¹⁰²⁷

These and more are some of the occasions missionaries showed weakness to paternalism. By so doing, missionaries allowed their congregations to compare Mission with Government, Company and Gain. Because the missionaries generally depended on the colonial government for financial aid, protection, transportation, funding of their projects, like schools, hospitals and other sundry supplies. They were seen as merchants and agents of colonial authority. The heavy attachment on colonial administration remains an indefensible mistake on the part of the missionaries, which they have ever been blamed for.

However, there were times when the missionaries were said to have disagreed with the policy of the colonial government, moments when variance in interests clashed. The open government policies in accommodating other religions particularly Islam did not go down well with the missionaries. Missionaries vehemently opposed government agents or their wards buying or keeping slaves. Missionaries also opposed the government in some other aspects. It objected to the government aim of adopting traditional culture and institutes as administrative strategy. Missionaries would not bear with such strategies since they were of the view that Christian culture, which included Western, was superior to that of the Igbo aspect. For them, every aspect of Igbo culture, tradition and institution was of pagan extraction and therefore anti-Christian they therefore needed to be abolished. There are occasions when the missionaries entered into conflicts with the Royal Niger Company (R.N.C.). The R.N.C. was not only a commercial company it was also an agent of imperial defense and expansion.¹⁰²⁸ “During the R.N.C’s conflict with Asaba in 1887-1888, with Obosi in 1890 and with Aguleri in 1892, the Holy Ghost missionaries sided with their flocks. The Company re-

¹⁰²⁷Emmanuel A. Ayandele, *Nigerian Historical Studies*, 105.

¹⁰²⁸J. E. Flint, *Sir George Goldie and The Making of Nigeria*, London, (1960), 159.

taliated with punitive measures: seizure of portions of mission land, charging Father Lutz to a magistrate court at Asaba where he faced unfair and false accusations and was asked to pay a fine...¹⁰²⁹ These occasional hiccups with colonial powers notwithstanding a greater percentage think Christian missionaries and the missions were pathfinders of imperialism and veritable instruments for successful colonialism.

According to Walter Rodney the missionaries “were as much part of the colonizing forces as were the explorers, traders and soldiers... there is no doubting the fact that missionaries were agents of colonialism in the practical sense, whether or not they saw themselves in that light.”¹⁰³⁰ Most pre and postcolonial Africans seem to believe Rodney. The Book *Things Fall Apart* points at the inept activities of some missionaries as the cause of the disintegration of Igbo culture, society and religion. Since religion is at the core of Igbo culture scholars endorsing the book seem willing “to subscribe to the view that what the missionaries did was in some way a bad thing for Igbo society or at least not a very good thing at all.”¹⁰³¹ Indeed, in its effort to spread the Gospel, Western Christianity without consideration replaced the entire fabric of Igbo ancestral religion. And this affected culture development,¹⁰³² their life and worldview. Missionaries took up the role of arbiter of what was culturally correct and religiously wrong. The African ancestral beliefs were equated with the devil (who was black anyway), it was a religion of the witches and wizards. Where witcraft prevails and magic reigns supreme. It took a long time before European churchmen and women accepted prevailing African beliefs as constitution religion.¹⁰³³ Luke Mbefo

¹⁰²⁹Celestine A. Obi, et al, *A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria 1885-1985*, 37.

¹⁰³⁰Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 277.

¹⁰³¹Michael J. C. Echeruo, *Religion, Imperialism, and the Question of World Order*, in: *Religion in a World of Change: African Ancestral Religion, Islam and Christianity*, Theophilus Okere, (ed.), Owerri, (2003), 16.

¹⁰³²U. D. Anyanwu, *Re-Thinking Christianity and African Cultural Development: The Experience of the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria*, in: *Religion in a World of Change*, 51.

¹⁰³³Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 278.

has cautions against the danger of lumping into amorphous unity all the Europeans that influenced the Igbo history.¹⁰³⁴

With the effective conquest and rejection of the Igbo culture, tradition, customs and religion missionaries and colonial powers effectively occupied the length and breadth of Igbo land. The so-called “European Christianity” indeed became structurally planted. The consequences of all these is the lost of cultural identity and religious personality. The quest for a re-establishment of the African self in the African world coupled with the bias against European rule prompted the phenomenon of separatist or the foundation of the African Independent Churches.¹⁰³⁵ This has given rise to pluralist and complex elusive spirituality¹⁰³⁶ that is gradually developing in the African continent today.

7.6.1 Independent Churches

The breaking up and founding of new churches and movement did not begin in Africa or in Igbo land. The formation of the conventional (AICs)¹⁰³⁷ was never the beginning of church schism. The second millennium of Christianity saw the great divisions of Christendom. First was the division between East and West, 1054 AD, and later the protestant reformation of the 16th century, which saw the western Christendom divide into Catholic and Protestant. The negative impact of this division did affect the life of the

¹⁰³⁴Luke Mbefo, *Theology and the African Heritage*, in: *Bigard Theological Studies*, vol, 11, no.1, Enugu, (1991), 5-6.

¹⁰³⁵John Baur, *Christus kommt nach Afrika*, 147-8; Innocent Enweh, *African Christian Spirituality*, in: *Bigard Theological Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1, (1997), 11.

¹⁰³⁶Innocent Enweh, *African Christian Spirituality*, in: *Bigard Theological Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1, 11.

¹⁰³⁷The expansion and indigenization of African Churches saw the emergence of the nomenclature, AIC. The word has taken different interpretations. For some, the abbreviation stands for ‘African Independent Churches’ for others it is ‘African Initiated Churches’ ‘African Instituted Churches’ African Indigenous Churches.’ The term AIC will be interchangeably used here. It simply stands for ‘Churches founded by Africans for Africans to serve African spirituality.

Church and her mission. The lack of unity between the various Christian confessions introduced disharmony. Many of the missionaries carried their cultural and denominational differences to the mission land. Their African converts quickly noticed the animosity between the missionaries. The consequence was internal breakup within the Churches and their African converts.

The emergence of the independent African Churches¹⁰³⁸ was influenced by the negative attitudes of the missionaries especially their superiority complex. Some independent churches constitution points out some of this arrogance. Some missionary churches would place white unqualified persons at the head of religious affairs instead of a better-qualified African. In pictures, they paint the devil black and the holy angels white.¹⁰³⁹ The trend in the growth of independent Churches in colonial Africa today is a trend in which thousands of African Christians take part by breaking away from the mainline Christian Churches, and setting up their own places of worship under Christian African leadership. The setting of up Independent African Churches, the continuous emergence of Protestant and Pentecostal movements was motivated by socio-political factors, arising from oppression and struggle against colonialism.¹⁰⁴⁰ In addition to these factors, some others have developed in response to religious 'discrimination' practiced against them by the white missionaries or their African cronies. Many wanting to be priests, pastors and religious leaders in the mainline Churches unable to realize their ambitions resorted to founding their own Independent African Churches or movement. Others have developed because of national strug-

¹⁰³⁸Oliver A. Onwubiko, *Building Unity Together in the Mission of the Church*, Nsukka, (1999), 1-10.

¹⁰³⁹The Ethiopian Nation Church, a necessity, Oke, (1928), 7-18 cited in, Hans-Jürgen Greschat, *African independent churches and theological scholarship in Germany*, in: *Religion and Society 32. Essays in Honour of John S. Mbiti*. Jacob K. Olupona et al (eds.), Berlin, (1993), 197-209, 206.

¹⁰⁴⁰Nathaniel Ndiokwere, *The African Church Today and Tomorrow*, vol.1. Onitsha, (1994), 36.

gle. John Chilembwe in 1917 was able to establish the Independent Providence Industrial Mission in Nyasaland (Malawi) through armed nationalist uprising.¹⁰⁴¹ A lot more break-ups were culturally motivated. There are equally cases where some Africans who sort more openness on issues of the cultural sentiments and other issues important to them, quest for social status, inability to obey church doctrines, dogma or even the detects of the scriptures on polygamy¹⁰⁴² turned out to be a popular matter in dispute.¹⁰⁴³ Other factors said to have necessitated the breakaway and the proliferation of the AICs include religious enthusiasm about ancestor veneration, marriage rites and rituals, liturgy and burial rites.

From Johannesburg in South Africa to Lagos in Nigeria, and Accra in Ghana, a number of independent Churches have sprung up since the inception of Christianity in late 19th and early 20th centuries. In addition to the above reasons, fundamental to the reasons for the formation of Independent Churches is the desire to have an African Christianity representative of African spirituality and experience. This fact is decorated in the mind of Vita Kimpa (1684-1706) the informal initiator of African inculturation theology¹⁰⁴⁴ and the earliest founder of an African Independent Church. However, the division and formation of new Christian denominations in Africa formally started with the formation of the Ethiopian Churches.

7.6.2 The Ethiopian/African Church

The 'Ethiopian Independent Churches' strike a different meaning from the Ethiopian Catholic Orthodox Church whose membership are mainly Orthodox Ethiopian and Eritrean Catholics of East Africa. The Ethiopian Orthodox, the Greek Church of the Patriarchate of Alexandria and the Coptic Church of Egypt belong to the Churches, which share common origin and doctrinal and spiritual heritage of the great Fathers and Saints. Though the

¹⁰⁴¹Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 279.

¹⁰⁴²Elizabeth Isichei, *The Religious Tradition of Africa*, 168.

¹⁰⁴³Hans-Jürgen Greschat, *African Independent Churches and theological scholarship in Germany*, 199-200.

above Churches have a common heritage with the Catholic Church unfortunately, they are not in full communion.¹⁰⁴⁵ The ‘Ethiopian’ Church or Ethiopianism here refers to a bunch of Independent Churches that were founded around South Africa during the early 20th century.

The founders of the church adopted the word ‘Ethiopia’ in symbolism to African connection to ancient tradition of Christianity showing aboriginal Independent of the African Churches. It also indirectly connects the African independence in relation to the independent Christian kingdom of Ethiopia. It is believed that the kingdom of Ethiopia that defeated Italian warlords at the battle of Adowa in 1896 was through the help of God. Hence, the word Ethiopia symbolically refers to the dignity of the Africans as chosen of the Lord. Members of the Church claim its formation was in anticipation to reclaiming the promise of the Psalmist “Ethiopians will stretch their hands in prayer to God” (Ps 68:31). Ethiopianism interprets this passage prophetically to mean the independence of the African Church. Other passages that are evoked by founders of Ethiopianism to show the early contact of the

¹⁰⁴⁴The beginning of African theology in the actual sense of the word goes back to the patristic era with Tertullian, Origin, Augustine of Hippo and other North African Fathers. The second phase of Christianization of the African continent saw another emergence of African Christian theology. This phase began with the events of 1700 and principally with Vita Kimpa who at her baptism took the name Donna Beatrice. Donna Beatrice lived in the then Portuguese kingdom of the Kongo that is today’s Angola. Her basic thought could be seen from the point of view of ‘Black Theology.’ She preached poverty. In her opinion, Jesus is an African. She taught that Jesus was born in Kongo and baptized in the River of Congo. Though she did not mention who baptized him. Donna Beatrice was believed to have died at the age of 20 and was resurrected by Saint Anthony. However, when she began making propositions contrary to the belief of the missionaries and the Portuguese colonial government the Portuguese had her burnt at the stake in 1706. She could be said to be the precursor of not only the 20th century African Independent Churches but also African theology. See Elizabeth Isichei, *The Religious Traditions of Africa: A History*. London, (2004), 136-7; M.L. Daneel, *Quest for Belonging: Introduction to a Study of African Independent Churches*. Harare, (1987), 47.

¹⁰⁴⁵Pope John Paul II, *The Church in Africa, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation*, no.31.

African Church with the ancient Palestinian Christianity include Acts 8:1ff (the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch).

As the formation of Ethiopianism was going on in South Africa at the time, there were parallel developments taking place in other parts of the continent. In Lagos, Nigeria, instead of 'Ethiopian' the new Churches were called 'African.' African Christianity in the past was described with a number of registers such as confessional orthodoxy, ecclesial obedience, cultural and African, sometimes it is said to be politically initiated. These nuances have their weaknesses which details we will not dare to treat here. Nevertheless, the various registers are still current since they are still in use in modern theological parlance. The first two registers; confessional orthodoxy and obedience, refer to African/Ethiopian Churches that are non-prophetic. The third register, cultural and African, refers to prophetic or spiritual independent Churches. This group is dynamic in the sense that it takes various forms and names as it enter into different African society. In South Africa, they are called, the Zionist. In Ghana they are called Spiritist or Spirit and they are the Aladura members in Nigeria. The fourth register, that is, politically initiated. It is Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostals. A continues on going metamorphosis within the groups make them amorphous and imprecise to categorize. The register confessional orthodoxy and ecclesial obedience betray overt prejudice over leadership and funds. This led to the formation of the independent Churches in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Members of the groups classified as cultural and African, political initiated are often imprecise to define.¹⁰⁴⁶ They are indefinite, were motivated by complex situations. Ranging from hydra headed reasons of religion, politics to economics that is, commerce and quest for quick money, firm to socials and cultural reasons.

¹⁰⁴⁶Paul Kollman, *Classifying African Christianities: Past, Present, and Future*, in: *Journal of Religion in Africa* 40. Boston, (2010), 5.

7.6.3 The Foundation of African Independent Churches

Ethiopianism began the setting of independent Churches within sub-Sahara Africa. The formal establishment of an Ethiopian Church was around 1872 after which others followed. In 1892, Mokone Mangena founded an Ethiopian Church ambitiously desiring a more African and relevant Christianity, for the restoration of tribal life, and for political and cultural autonomy.¹⁰⁴⁷ The expression Christianity for Africans motivated many more Africans to leave the mainline Churches. In 1898, Pambani Mzimba established the African version of the Presbyterian Church established.¹⁰⁴⁸ Motivated by the search for self-identity, nationalism and Pan-Africanism, the Ethiopian Churches grew in strength and seize. In West Africa the secession continued. A number of new Independent Churches were founded. Their members moved away from the mainline Churches.¹⁰⁴⁹ In its character, the ‘African’ Churches were similar to the ‘Ethiopian,’ they were none prophetic. They maintained close tradition with the mainstream Churches they left.

By 1920, the African Churches within Lagos have started to decline. Like their counterparts in South Africa the decline of the African Church within the Lagos zone gave opportunity to the birth of the prophetic or the so called white garment Churches, the emergence of the Aladuras (the word means prayerful in Yoruba). The prophetic churches are always changing and transforming. In some areas, the Aladuras have transformed to the

¹⁰⁴⁷Hans-Jürgen Greschat, African Independent churches and theological scholarship in Germany, 205; George J. Andreopoulos, Ethiopianism, in: *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* 4, (2005), 581; Kalu Ogbu, *The History of Christianity in West Africa*. Hong Kong, (1980), 346; idem, *A Trail of Ferment in African Christianity: Ethiopianism, Prophetism, Pentecostalism*, in: *African Identities and World Christianities in the Twentieth Century*. Klaus Koschorke (ed.), Wiesbaden, (2005), 19-22. See also, Paul Kollman, *Classifying African Christianities*, in: *Journal of Religion in Africa* 40. 1, (2010), 13.

¹⁰⁴⁸One of his supporters “wrote the great hymn ‘God Bless Africa’ (‘Nkosi Sikeli Afrika’), first sung in 1899, which is now the South African national anthem” cf. Elizabeth Isichei, *The Religious Traditions of Africa*, 167.

¹⁰⁴⁹Elizabeth Isichei, *The Religious Traditions of Africa*, 168.

Cherubim and Seraphim while they are called the Christ Apostolic Church in some other areas¹⁰⁵⁰ and the Sabbath and the Celestial Churches in some areas. These Churches are becoming miracle and solution centers for the society. The adherents make so much use of Holy Water spirits.¹⁰⁵¹ They do this in the hope to free themselves from the bondage of material poverty and spiritual attacks. M.L. Daneel believes that because of their emphasis on healing one could refer to them as “therapeutic Churches.”¹⁰⁵² From the 1980 on Christianity in Africa, Nigeria/Igbo land saw a different kind of change. The secession from the mainstream Churches to the foundation of African and Prophetic Churches transcended to the formation of various Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal Churches (the so called born again Christians). Their most significant feature is the special emphasis on the Holy Spirit. Baptism by the Spirit enables the work of the Holy Spirit. This is made manifest in the ability to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the act of speaking in tongues (glossolalia), healing, miracles and working wonders. Seeking and receiving messages and the ability to interpret visions are all understood as signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of members.

The Pentecostalism and neo-Pentecostalism place much importance on exorcism, protection, prosperity, signs and wonders, healing and miracles. Less emphasis is made on eschatology.¹⁰⁵³ As Charismatic movement that

¹⁰⁵⁰The Christ Apostolic Church group preferred to be looked upon as Pentecostals and not as prophetic Churches. They believe themselves to be different from the Aladuras. Unlike the Aladuras, they place less emphasis on the activities of witches and wizards. They pay less attention to ritual practices common among prophetic Churches. They also differ from the mainline Churches by their insistence on faith healing some of them reject traditional and Western medicine and practice adult baptism.

¹⁰⁵¹Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the present*, London, (1995), 279-283.

¹⁰⁵²M.L. Daneel, *Quest for Belonging: Introduction to a Study of African Independent Churches*, 40.

¹⁰⁵³Elizabeth Isichei, *The Religious Traditions of Africa*, 218.

grew out of the older mission Churches, Pentecostalism with its concomitant implications has diffused into Catholicism, Anglicanism, Lutheran, Methodists. It has infiltrated into other mainline Churches. Neo-Pentecostalism in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa has without doubt served some commendable needs. They give hope and community to members particularly in an age where independence has brought little but suffering and disappointment to most common people of the African continent.¹⁰⁵⁴ Their laudable contributions notwithstanding neo-Pentecostalism has received severe criticism. For some “neo-Pentecostalism is a form of false consciousness...”¹⁰⁵⁵ For others various African Independent Churches remained means and sources in which misguided followers have come to combined Christianity with traditional religion and it has successfully given some Christian denomination a kind of syncretistic character.

7.6.4 African Independent Churches and Syncretism

There are forms of syncretism that have been identified within African religious movements. The feeling is mostly within the ambiance of religious movements established by the educated and elite Africans in the name of cultural patriotism. This Christian religious cultural movement was a kind of concept developed by the nineteenth century Pan-Africanists. There are challenges to tread with caution when identifying these movements as syncretistic, that is, as anti-Christianity. Scholars who endorse the idea that religious movements started by African elites are syncretistic argue from the point that the movements were essentially cultural. That means they were expression of cultural patriotism in detriment to Western influence and hostility to the ethnocentricity of foreign missionaries. This opinion seriously insists that the movements arose in order to destroy the Church. Considering that, the movements criticized the Churches’ structure and make nonsense of its spirituality. As syncretistic, opinions have it that the movements are putting the African gods back in the African’s firmament.

¹⁰⁵⁴Elizabeth Isichei, *The Religious Traditions of Africa*, 223.

¹⁰⁵⁵*Ibid.*

For others who argue on the contrary the movements had no negative impulse which means they are not syncretistic. They were rather founded by the elites first to satisfy the spirituality of Nigerians as they prepare for political independence. The movements were established according to agitators of this opinion to reawaken the consciousness of the African personality. This is Pan-Africanism.¹⁰⁵⁶ Two of such movements are the National Church of Nigeria and Godianism.

The National Church of Nigeria and Godianism actually had their roots in Zikism which was the current political ideology that started out of the nationalist struggle of the 1940s in Nigeria. Mbonu Orjike, Kalu Onu Kalu Onyioha and Jamike Iwunna were parts of the Zikist movement. They were also members of the National Congress of Nigeria and Cameroons (N.C.N.C). Nnamdi Azikwe at the time was the political leader of the party. Towards the close of 1948, Jamike Iwunna, Mbonu Orjike and others founded the National Church of Nigeria in Aba. Different answers have been given for the formation of the Church branch of the political party. Some hold it that the formation of the Church is to consolidate faith in God who gives victory including political victory at the polls. But a few others think the establishment was in order to resist the defeat of the Igbo gods by Christianity.¹⁰⁵⁷ Be it as it may, the National Church of Nigeria was a part of the religious wing of N.C.N.C.¹⁰⁵⁸ The establishment of the independent Church; the National Church of Nigeria did not end in Aba. Later events paved way for the inauguration of the brand in Enugu in 1949. Another one was founded in Lagos in 1950. The then federal secretary of N.C.N.C Chief

¹⁰⁵⁶Kalu Ogbu, *The Shattered Cross: The Church Union Movement in Nigeria 1905-66*, in: *The History of Christianity in West Africa*, Kalu Ogbu, (ed.), Hong Kong, (1980), 345-6.

¹⁰⁵⁷Emmanuel A. Ayandele, *Nigeria Historical Studies*, 169.

¹⁰⁵⁸The National Church was identical with its political wing and the political ideology of Zikism. The Church acted the script of Zikism. It took order and directives from NCNC. Leaders of the Church were totally Zikists and only those recognized by the movement were given Church titles. Hymns and songs were selected from Zikists manifesto and many of them were composed after it.

K.O.K Onyioha who eventually became the Chief priest of Godianism established the Lagos wing of the Church.

The foregoing clearly expresses the point that Godianism was originally a part of a political party in its form as the National Church of Nigeria. As a Christian wing of the party it was called National Church of Nigeria. Later, it was to take the name Godianism. The road to the establishment of this 'church' in Enugu started in 1949 with the shooting of coal workers. As part of nationalist struggle for independence, colliery workers in Enugu went on strike. The colonial police killed Twenty-two of the miners. The shooting raised uproar but the colonial authority did not budge. Then there was a general plea for public memorial service for the victims. Again, missionaries in charge of the mainline Churches did not yield. The refusal of the mainline Churches to hold memorial services for the mine victims prompted the labor movement to seek for solutions.

On January 3, 1950, labor organized an open-air service in Enugu. During this service, they chanted war songs and danced patriotic music. Evoking African religious sentiments, the group addressed their prayers to God. They were convinced the colonial powers were also in control of the missions as a result, they rejected the colonial Churches that were unable to sympathize with them. As such they began to look at the Gospel of love the missionaries proclaimed as 'impotent, superficial and impoverish.' Missionaries "were accused of being agents of political imperialists and the Church were seen as an effective tool of imperialism."¹⁰⁵⁹ At this event, the National Church that was founded in 1948 was consolidated. Its primary objective became how to snatch the power of spiritual control from the white-led missionary Churches.¹⁰⁶⁰ After Nigeria gained its independence in 1960, the National Church of Nigeria changed its name and ideology. In 1962, it took another name, Godianism and stopped being a movement for political liber-

¹⁰⁵⁹Kalu Ogbu, *The Shattered Cross*, 345.

¹⁰⁶⁰Matthew Hassan Kukah, *Religious Tolerance and Peaceful Co-Existence*, in: *Nigerian Studies in Religious Tolerance*, vol. IV, Lagos, (1988), 28.

ation and nationalism to promoting African religion and Culture.¹⁰⁶¹ It became a movement attempting to revive the traditional religion through a combination of tradition, training people for the priesthood, building of sanctuaries and temples.¹⁰⁶² Another objective of Godianism is to serve as a modern inter-ethnic religion based on the traditional African Supreme God.¹⁰⁶³ The movement stretches its hands to Christian religion even incorporates certain elements of its theology and liturgy. It has a systematized creed beginning almost like the Christian Nicene and Apostolic creed. Each sentence begins with ‘I believe’ in God. It has an official hymnal, order of liturgy and official catechism book.

Godianism makes use of other Igbo ritual elements and traditional symbols like Nzu, Oji, Ofo na Ogu.¹⁰⁶⁴ Certain other elements of Christian liturgical and adoration formulae have been incorporated into Godianism. Communion in the Eucharistic formula is celebrated within Godianism with kola nuts (Oji) and palm wine (nkwu elu) representative of bread and wine. The compilations of oral tradition into Scriptures reflect the influence of the Bible and “Sunday is the principle day of worship.”¹⁰⁶⁵ The Igbo religion of ‘Godianism’ practices trans-cultural borrowing. It compromises African traditional way of worshipping with Christianity and vice-versa. Such osmosis is largely termed syncretistic. They are syncretistic because such practices destroy religions of their monolithic nature. This is the case with most AIC

¹⁰⁶¹Christopher I. Ejizu, *Down but Not Out*, in: *Religion in a World of Change*, 194.

¹⁰⁶²M.L. Daneel, *Quest for Belonging*, 35.

¹⁰⁶³Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa*, 293.

¹⁰⁶⁴Nzu, (lime chalk?) is a necessary ingredient in every Igbo medicine. It is important for its ritual symbolism. Oji, (kola nut) is grown mainly in Yoruba land, eaten mostly by the Hausas and held sacred by the Igbo. Its presentation and acceptance in any social or religious gathering ‘validates’ such assembly. The Oji nut is a must in every Igbo covenant ratification because of its ritual symbolism and it is eaten by both the living and the ancestors. Ofo, (staff of office) held by the head of family. Ogu, (symbol of justice and righteousness). Ikenga, (little statue), cult symbol for progress and good luck.

¹⁰⁶⁵Christopher I. Ejizu, *Down but Not Out*, in: *Religion in a World of Change*, 194.

Churches, whether they are the Spirit Prophetic types in form of the Aladuras, the Brotherhood of the Cross and Star, the Reformed Ogboni Fraternity, Celestial Church of Christ, the Cherubim and Seraphim.¹⁰⁶⁶ Syncretistic practices within African Christianity are now bridges over which many African Independent Churches and their followers have been brought back to the earlier status quo.

7.7 A Church on Transition

This part of our work did not see theological insights in terms of understanding the resurrection within African/Igbo context. The reason for this is simple. Years of missionary Christianity and shortly after did not participate in theological debates concerning the destiny of the person. Definitely, it was not the issue of the time. The assumption was that the African/Igbo had no religion in the least theology of its own. The introduction of missionary Christianity and the later establishment of African Independent Churches brought with it a ‘theological encounter’ of a different type. The issue of the concern of this work did not surface within the domain of this encounter. However, it seriously connected it to traditional religion and the very cosmos of the Igbo person. To discuss the cosmos that sustains the Igbo, this part of the writing deemed it fit to make the connection between two centuries of Christianity. The story of two centuries of Christianity in Africa puts this subject in historical context. At the beginning of the 19th century, Christianity in Africa was a new experience, a novel religious practice. Its organization was under the provision of missionaries. Scarcely was the century over when in the beginning of the twentieth century it was followed by the appearance of charismata and leadership by Africans. During this period individuals and groups pass step by step from the Mission Church to non prophetic Ethiopian Church. They again passed from the Ethiopian to the Zionists when they became prophetic and ‘holiness.’ Then they passed to Pentecostals/charismatic and progressives when they turned into ‘spreading

¹⁰⁶⁶Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa*, 292-8.

fire' and becoming syncretistic. Most Christian religious movements are becoming bridges via revivalist, nativistic and to vitalistic Zionism.¹⁰⁶⁷ This is a returning to the ancient old way, from where they once started.

The way members and leadership of several African Independent Churches, Pentecostal and Charismatic ministries operate bear eloquent testimony to this concern. The leadership of the movements generally condemn in principle traditional religious practices, symbols and cult elements. They prevent their members from participating in cultural events and ceremonies. They refuse compromise with the traditional veneration of deceased ancestors; including according the dead appropriate burial rites. They abhor anything that will bring them visualizing the traditional African spirit world or accommodating its spirits. Generally, the AICs call for a break with traditional charms, traditional medicine and traditional healing by exorcism. The movements have dislodged traditional chief priests of their vocation as they have taken over. They prohibit traditional practices but hunt for its rapprochement.¹⁰⁶⁸ In this way, they share much in common with traditional religion by indirect covenant. This terminology (covenanting) implied an integra-

¹⁰⁶⁷The three anthropological terminologies, revivalist, nativistic and vitalistic represent in a large scale the reverting to traditional religion. It is resistant to such terms as assimilation. The terms wish to achieve existence by reverting and renewing ancient cults, rituals and symbols. Revivalists try to revive traditional religion by making it attractive, open and superior. They try to encourage ancient ways of worship by formulating a standard means of worship, opening avenues to answer calls to the priesthood which may be a kind of proselyting. They also establish shrines and temples. Godianism in Nigeria (Africa) is a good example of this movement. Nativistic movement means to bring aboriginal to the consciousness of their essence. It tries to reintegrate people back to their native culture by resisting foreign influence. Finally, vitalistic as lively and dynamic as it tries to be makes a combination of traditional with exotic elements. The National Church of Nigeria was example of vitalistic movement.

¹⁰⁶⁸Christopher I. Ejizu, *Down but Not Out*, in: *Religion in a World of Change*, 195-6; M.F.C. Bourdillon, et al (eds.), *Traditional Religion and an Independent Church*, in: *Christianity South of the Zambezi*, vol.2. Gweru, (1977), 193.

tion of African cosmology of sacrifice into Christianity often seen within the circle of the AICs.

7.7.1 Ecclesia in Africa and the New Evangelization

The call for a new evangelization by Pope John II was splendid indeed. No part of the Christendom benefitted implicitly or explicitly from this call more than Africa. The call for a new evangelization was to mark the celebration of the 2000 years of the birth of Christ and a beginning of a new Millennium. By this call, the Pope in a very dramatic way responded to the past evangelization methodology and its inherent significance in mission Churches especially in the Churches of Africa. The call for a new method of spreading the Gospel in the world reached its crescendo in Africa by the convocation of the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops held in Rome from April 10 to May 8, 1994. The Pope announced this Assembly during the solemnity of the Epiphany, February 6, 1989. The significance of this Synod for the entire Church and Africa particularly will be appreciated by the period of time it took for its preparation.

The length of time it took to prepare for the Synod was even longer than was needed for the preparation of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. The importance of the time of the preparation was acknowledged by the Pontiff himself who compares the success of his pontificate with the success of the Jubilee and preceding events to the celebration, which the African Synod was a part. The Pontiff considered the preparation for the Jubilee year 2000 as one of the key ways of interpreting his pontificate.¹⁰⁶⁹ The Pope called the new millennium an era of new and intensive Evangelization. For the intensive evangelization to bear fruit, it requires new fervor, new dedication, new spirit, new methods and new expressions for the announcing and witnessing of the Good news.¹⁰⁷⁰ The convocation of the African Synod, the very first of its kind in Africa among other things is in fulfillment of the

¹⁰⁶⁹John Paul II, *The Church in Africa*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, no.18; See Apostolic Letter, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, Nov., 10, (1994), 23; AAS 87, (1995), 19.

¹⁰⁷⁰John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no.18.

desire of majority of African people, Bishops, priests, religious men and women, theologians and the laity. The Synod equally fulfills the immortal dreams of Pope Paul VI who at the inauguration of the Symposium of Episcopal Conference of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) 1969, in Kampala expressed a desire to see Africa becoming missionaries unto themselves.¹⁰⁷¹ This desire definitely needs a Synod to define it. The dream of delineating authority was fulfilled by the convocation of the African Synod. And the main theme was the re-evangelization of the African people.

New evangelization or re-evangelization alludes to a new beginning. A new start for countries, places and regions with ancient Christian roots, or younger Churches where entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the Gospel, or where they consider themselves as none members of the Church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel.¹⁰⁷² The new methodology implies the sense of evaluation and graphing a better course for the future. Unlike the earlier system, the new evangelization involves engaging experienced people. It demands engaging evangelizers who have a combination of expertise, competence, mature desire and spirituality. This is a change from the experience of the earlier evangelization strategy. Earlier African missionaries were mostly artisans. Their goodwill notwithstanding, many of them lacked experience.¹⁰⁷³ Majority of the missionaries were products of the Pietistic revival in Europe or of the Puritan background selected only for their spiritual qualities, and not for their theological expertise. Pietism is the religious movement within the German Lutheran Protestant Church during the years of the 17th and mid 18th centuries. Pietism really influenced Christianity of the time. It emphasized individual piety over orthodoxy. It upholds and encourages vigorous Christian spirituality and life.

¹⁰⁷¹Pope John Paul II, *The Church in Africa*, Post-Synodal Exhortation, no.56; Address to SE-CAM, Kampala, 1; cf. *Propositio* 18.

¹⁰⁷²John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no.33.

¹⁰⁷³Celestine Obi, et al., *A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church*, 23.

At this time, the preaching of the Word and teaching of the faith were often extremely impoverished and superficial. Lack of adequate theological background gave the catechism books much advantage over the Bible. The ability of an adherent to recite the pages of the catechism and the Tanqueray's pamphlets shows the depth of his or her comprehensibility of Christianity. The Tanqueray manuals contained unquestioned doctrines. These unquestioned teachings formed the theological education of Church leaders. Tanqueray did not promote theological exploration and church leaders that espoused him suffered from theological undernourishment.¹⁰⁷⁴ For those who passed through the catechism and Tanqueray booklets classes, salvation was defined by saving souls. The list of forbidden things contained in the catechism books was very long, summarized in the condemnation of cultural practices and traditional beliefs. On the other hand, the list of permitted things was particularly short. The catalogue of permitted things is summarized mainly on church going, the recitation of the catechism, praying and fasting, abstinence from food, meat and singing hymns. In an interview granted by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) in 1985 on the situation of the Church in the past and the present admitted the inadequacies of the earlier missionaries to Africa. However, he cautioned against unprecedented reactions giving the fact that earlier missionaries to Africa were themselves theologically handicapped. They only made use of what was able at the time (handouts and catechism manuals).¹⁰⁷⁵ Nevertheless, there were minimum attempts to emphasize integral salvation at the time. The idea of *laborare est orare*, one's daily work is equally a form of prayer received small emphasis. Missionaries kept silent about the importance of human material need. They were saliently quiet about daily struggle for existence, over economic well being and other human necessary requirements. Evangelization was only about the proclamation of the Gospel of the soul salvati-

¹⁰⁷⁴Luke Mbefo, *Christian Theology and African Heritage*, 22.

¹⁰⁷⁵Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Zur Lage des Glaubens*, 206.

on. The salvation of the entire person received inadequate attention.¹⁰⁷⁶ In the spirit of the Second Vatican Council,¹⁰⁷⁷ the African Synod stressed the importance of a new and holistic evangelization.

The new evangelization is proposed to be integral, promoting efforts towards the development and ennoblement of individuals in their spiritual and material existence.¹⁰⁷⁸ The Synod summarized the new evangelization in modern Africa in the sense of ‘proclamation.’ The Church proclaims the good news of Christ not only by the Word which she received from the Lord¹⁰⁷⁹ but by various other ways of life. Proclamation entails bearing witness to Christ. The witnessing is expected to be expressed in evangelization, inculturation, dialogue, justice and peace, pastoral care in social areas and the means of social communication.¹⁰⁸⁰ For the firm rooting of the Gospel in Africa, the Synod considered inculturation, the process by which “catechesis ‘takes flesh’ in the various culture”¹⁰⁸¹ as an urgent priority.

7.7.2 Evangelization via Inculturation

When compared with many other mission terminologies the term inculturation is the newest neologism of Evangelization method. The precise time of the origin or source of this terminology is still obscure. Some associate the term and its origin to the speech of Cardinal Sin of Manila during the Synod

¹⁰⁷⁶M.L. Daneel, *Quest for Belonging: Introduction to a Study of African Independent Churches*, 78.

¹⁰⁷⁷Missionary documents that influenced the African Synod include, the Second Vatican Document on mission, (*Ad Gentes*), Pope Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World (Evangelium Nuntiandi)*, Pope John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter on the Mission of the Church (Redemptoris Missio)*.

¹⁰⁷⁸Pope John Paul II, *The Church in Africa, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation*, no. 70.

¹⁰⁷⁹Pope John Paul II, *The Church in Africa, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation*, no. 55.

¹⁰⁸⁰Pope John Paul II, *The Church in Africa, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation*, no. 57; *Propositio 3*.

¹⁰⁸¹John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation catechesi Tradendae*, Oct, 16, (1979), 53; AAS 71(1979), 1319; *idem*, *The Church in Africa, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation*, no. 59.

on Catechesis held in Rome in 1977.¹⁰⁸² Ary Roest Crolius attributes the origin of the word to several probable sources and personalities. For him the term originated with J. Masson in 1962 when he used the ‘equivalent’ term ‘enculturation’ in sense inserting an individual into his culture. Roest equally refers to Y. Corgar who cited the idea as alternative to ‘acculturation.’¹⁰⁸³ This term is used in sociology or in anthropological science. It deals with the phenomenon of culture contact when group of individuals with different cultural backgrounds come to first hand interactive contact. Acculturation is a result of interaction between two different cultures. This interaction is most often superficial.¹⁰⁸⁴ It may take the form of bringing a pre-existent body of message to another culture. In the case of Christianity, this involves the translation of songs from Latin, Greek, English, French, German, or whatever to the native vernacular; it may as well involve the introduction of musical instruments to accompany songs translated into the vernacular but retaining the rhythm of the foreign language and culture.¹⁰⁸⁵ The church adopts the language of acculturation and other “expressive forms of a particular culture in order to communicate the Gospel message. The contact between Gospel and culture in acculturation is horizontal not vertical as in inculturation.”¹⁰⁸⁶ Apart from the opinions already seen on the origin of the inculturation term, Fergus King has another opinion. For him, the term originated in Africa. “The Pan African Congress of Third World Theologians held in Accra in 1977 coined a term which all seemed prepared to use: Inculturation.”¹⁰⁸⁷

¹⁰⁸²Peter Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation*, New York, (1990), 21-2.

¹⁰⁸³Ary Roest Crolius, *Inculturation, newness and Ongoing Process*, in: *Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency*, Nairobi, (1986), 32 see footnote 3.

¹⁰⁸⁴A. B. T. Byaruhanga-Akiiki, *African and Christianity: Domestication of Christian Values in the African church*, in: *Religious Plurality in Africa*, Jacob K. Olupona et al (eds.), New York, (1993), 131-195, 183; Ary Roest Crolius, *Inculturation*, 35.

¹⁰⁸⁵A. B. T. Byaruhanga-Akiiki, *Africa and Christianity*, 183;

¹⁰⁸⁶George M. Okorie, *The Integral Salvation of the Human Person in Ecclesia in Africa*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, (2007), note 693, page 187.

The concept was included for the first time in an official church document by Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Exhortation issued at the close of the Synod of Bishops on Catechesis in October 1977. “The Christian message must find its roots in human cultures and must also transform these cultures. In this sense we can say that catechesis is an instrument of ‘inculturation’”¹⁰⁸⁸ and also in 1979 when the Pope used the term in addressing the Pontifical Biblical Commission (26 April 1979)¹⁰⁸⁹ The term frequently appeared in the writings of the Pope, in his speeches and visits, especially his various visits to Africa.¹⁰⁹⁰ Before the emergence of this concept as a mission terminology, there were already other missiological terms in usage. Some of the concepts overlap to a greater degree with the new concept while others to a lesser degree.

7.7.3 The Meaning of the Term Inculturation

The concept of inculturation describes the aspect of evangelization inseparable from the notion of establishing God’s kingdom on earth. It is a dynamic process of relationship between the church and the variety of cultures. The term has the meaning of inserting, sinking, penetrating or dipping the Gospel message into a particular culture or cultures.¹⁰⁹¹ It is:

“The integration of the Christian experience of a local church into the culture of its people, in such a way that this experience not only expresses 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

¹⁰⁸⁷FergusKing, <http://www.angelfire.com/journal2/boustrophedon/Inculturation.pdf> (accessed 01.11.10).

¹⁰⁸⁸John Paul II, Message of the Synod of Bishops on the People of God, in: L’Osservatore Romano, English Edition, no. 5, (03.11.77).

¹⁰⁸⁹Pope John II, Address to the Pontifical Biblical Commission (26 April 1979); AAS 71 (1979) 606-609, see 607.

¹⁰⁹⁰Peter Schineller, A Handbook, 21-2.

¹⁰⁹¹John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation Catechesi Tradendae (16 October 1979), 53; AAS 71 (1979), 1319.

only within the culture in question but also as an enrichment of the Church universal.¹⁰⁹²

The notion involves two dimensions; on the one hand, it involves the ‘ultimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity; on the other, it involves the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures.’¹⁰⁹³ Before this understanding, there were other earlier terms. The change to the new neologism is because of certain inadequacies of some of these earlier terms. However, not all the terms were less adequate some of them overlap with this newest term.

Peter Schineller has classified the earlier terms into inadequate and less adequate terms. Thus, he places imposition, translation and adaptation into the scale he classifies as insufficient words earlier used in missionary evangelization. He has placed at the same time indigenization, contextualization and incarnation as more adequate words. Imposition as the name indicates portrays the idea of importation and coercion. The process involves borrowing and inserting. It is a method whereby doctrines, religious customs, morals, and ways of praying and acting are brought from outside, from alien tradition and from a culture. Imposition methodology displays characteristics of superiority versus inferiority. The new culture imposes itself on the older or indigenous culture replacing the models of the new with the old without regard or respect to its values or customs because it brands it as false. This methodology was rejected because it saw Christianity as a finished export product. Translation is another inadequate missionary language that compliments imposition. Christianity in both instances is seen as a finished package. The exporter only needs to change or translate the label on the package to make it appreciable to the culture of destination. The old culture receives a finished theology, catechesis, and liturgy. There may be need for rudimentary translation of the Bible or composition of hymns in the lo-

¹⁰⁹²Ary Roest Crollius, *Inculturation*, 43.

¹⁰⁹³John Paul II, *The Church in Africa*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, 59; *idem*, *Encyclical Letter Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), 52; AAS 83 (1991), 229; *Propositio* 28.

cal language nevertheless, the principle of doing theology and the consideration of major innovation in liturgy remain the onus of the importer. The analogy of budding a tree whose root is distance away best describes what happens with these two methodologies. The negative aspect of this method is that it believes that Christ is a visitor to the old culture. He comes in whatever form of presentation by missionary or evangelizer. Because of these negative effects, adapting a translated Christianity renders this methodology inadequate.¹⁰⁹⁴ Adaptation is another earlier missionary strategy disapproved as inappropriate.

In its extended sense adaptation embraces the notion of accommodation. Both concepts have remained basic principles of evangelization from the early times of doing mission in the church. They involve dynamic process of purifying or sieving. Positive elements found in the cultures are sieved; adapted, accommodated and inserted into Christianity. Adaptation as well as accommodation deals with the basic principle of compatibility. They concepts advocate understanding the philosophy and *Weltanschauung* of a new culture. Because these concepts express extrinsic contact between the Christian message and a given culture they are disapproved as inadequate. In fact, they are subtle forms of imposition because they do not truly take the local culture seriously.¹⁰⁹⁵ Other concepts that overlap with the inculturation nomenclature include indigenization, contextualization, and incarnation. Among these concepts, inculturation/incarnation is a preferable nomenclature. Inculturation outlive the rest due to its dynamic characteristics and because of this, it is the latest mission terminology.

7.7.4 Theological foundation of Inculturation

The concept of doing mission in the model expressed via inculturation is new simply because it is associated with the dynamism of a process. As a process, it envisages new and different ways of evangelization. It follows

¹⁰⁹⁴Peter Schineller, *A Handbook*, 15-7.

¹⁰⁹⁵Peter Schineller, *A Handbook*, 17.

culture in its status of dynamism, always evolving and unfolding. This characteristic has made the concept look risky, difficult and delicate.¹⁰⁹⁶ In the absence of this newly discovered dynamic character, the concept has always been present. The concept is a theological content of the Christian Church especially as it patterns to meaning and practice.¹⁰⁹⁷ What is actually new about the concept is its capacity to expose the Christian faith to the various cultures of the world in a more intimate and friendly way that goes beyond superficial or external adaptation.¹⁰⁹⁸ In this way, it remains only but a new approach to an old problem implying a new interpretation.¹⁰⁹⁹ Apart from these, the concept has been an old understanding in Christian tradition. Events of revelations in the Bible loudly attest to this fact.

The concept is remotely but ultimately present in the tradition of the Bible. We find it in a special connected in the Johannian prologue where it appeared in a theological form. The Logos (Word) became flesh and dwelt among us (Jn 1:14). Just like the Word became flesh so too the Good News, the Word of Jesus Christ proclaimed to the peoples of the world, must take root in the life-situation of the hearers of the Word.¹¹⁰⁰ The inculturation is embedded in the meaning of incarnation.

“Christ himself chose to become man in order to save humanity, Christianity has not alternative but to do the same in every culture and time in order to continue the salvation brought about by Christ.... Inculturation came to express that same reality while underlining the importance of cultures as the instrument and the means for realizing the incarnation process of the Christian religion.”¹¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁹⁶John Paul II, *The Church in Africa, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation*, no. 62.

¹⁰⁹⁷Oliver Onwubiko, *Theory and Practice of Inculturation*, Enugu, (1992), 1.

¹⁰⁹⁸Cf. *The Nigerian Church: Evangelization through Inculturation*, Pastoral Letter by, The Catholic Bishop' Conference of Nigeria, (1991), 8.

¹⁰⁹⁹Oliver Onwubiko, *Theory and Practice of Inculturation*, 1.

¹¹⁰⁰John Paul II, *The Church in Africa, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation*, 60.

¹¹⁰¹John Mary Waliggo, *Making a Church that is Truly African*, in: *Inculturation*, 11-2.

In this sense, the concept has remained unique. Briefly, inculturation is about taking form and becoming present. It is about the Word of God, the Spirit of God taking form and participating in human experience in order to perfect human situation. Inculturation does not abolish but perfects. The incarnate Word of God (Jesus) insisted he did not come to abolish the Jewish laws and traditions rather he has come to perfect them (Mt 5:17).

Perfection of culture is what makes inculturation a distinctive aspect evangelization historically connected to incarnation. Thus, it historically became a unique example of the incarnation of God not only among the chosen people of Israel, but among all of humanity.¹¹⁰² This “historical essence is of a reoccurring nature, making it possible for the Logos to continually assume the body of any subsequent human history and culture. This is why incarnation is used synonymously with inculturation.”¹¹⁰³ The Gospel is not identical with culture¹¹⁰⁴ at the same time; its dissemination cannot be effective by isolating culture. Taking cognizance that “a faith that does not become culture is a faith that is not fully accepted completely thought out, and truly lived.”¹¹⁰⁵ The fact remains. “The Kingdom which the Gospel proclaims is lived by men who are profoundly linked to a culture, and the building up of the kingdom cannot avoid borrowing the elements of human culture or cultures.”¹¹⁰⁶ Inculturation describes the aspect of evangelization inseparable from the notion of establishing God’s kingdom on earth.

7.7.5 The Purpose of Inculturation

Holistic and effective evangelization is at the center of inculturation. It seeks to dispose people to receive Jesus Christ in an integral manner. Inculturation touches humanity on the personal, cultural, economic and political

¹¹⁰²Chibueze Udeani, *Inculturation as Dialogue: Igbo Culture and the Message of Christ*, 117.

¹¹⁰³The Nigerian Church: *Evangelization Through Inculturation*, (1991), 14.

¹¹⁰⁴EN 20.

¹¹⁰⁵John Paul II, *Letter of Foundation of the Pontifical Council for Culture*, May 20, 1982; AAS (1983) 683-88.

¹¹⁰⁶EN 20.

levels so that humanity in every culture could live a holy life in total union with the Father, through the action of the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁰⁷ It functions as a process by which the sown Gospel seed incarnates itself in several cultures of the world so that the Gospel becomes the kern of those cultures. It has the single purpose of evangelizing human culture and cultures not in a purely decorative or synthetic way as it were by applying a thin veneer but in a vital and real way, in depth and right to their roots.¹¹⁰⁸ Incarnation or inculturation of the good news takes on all authentic human values, purifying them from sin and restoring to them their full meaning.¹¹⁰⁹ The phenomenon serves the purposes of introducing the Gospel in new cultures, re-introducing the Good-News in areas where it has been preached long ago, consolidating and engaging cultures with evolving dynamic challenges of incumbent cultures. The concept predominantly serves the purpose of the Gospel and the church according to ‘capacities posed’ by every culture.

From the foregoing discussion, the purpose of inculturation is not only an effort to adapt the Christian message to the way, thinking and acting of non-occidental (western) peoples.¹¹¹⁰ It is not solely for the so-called ‘young churches’ it is rather the concern of every local church without exception.¹¹¹¹ Nevertheless, because of the scale of this discussion the function of the phenomenon here is to serve the interest of the Gospel in the Igbo local church. To that effect, the Church faced the necessary and urgent task of proclaiming the Good News in a new way in Igbo land (Nigeria). The Church has this enormous task not because millions of the Igbo have not been baptized and confirmed. It is not because they are not active participants in the sacraments, liturgical and extra-liturgical activities. The urgency of the Igbo (Nigerian) mission indeed Africa is not because there are

¹¹⁰⁷Pope John II, *The Church in Africa*, Post-Synodal Exhortation, no. 62; *Propositio*, 32.

¹¹⁰⁸EN 20.

¹¹⁰⁹Pope John Paul II, *The Church in Africa*, Post-Synodal Exhortation, no. 61.

¹¹¹⁰Théoneste Nkéramihigo, *Inculturation and the Specificity of Christian Faith*, in: *Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency*. Nairobi, (1986), 67.

¹¹¹¹Ary Roest Crollius, *Inculturation, newness and Ongoing Process*, in: *Inculturation*, 38.

no network of dioceses, parishes, seminaries, catechetical institutions, Christian (catholic) schools, mission hospitals and other Christian institutions. Igbo land (Nigeria) needs urgent attention not because these corporate bodies are not present. It needs proper attention because given the events of earlier history these achievements did not grantee Christianity a permanent security in Africa. History has it that:

“In the very first centuries of Christianity, the church flourished in the Roman North Africa with Carthage as the centre. It produced great men and women, among who were St. Cyprian, Tertullian, Augustine and the women martyrs, Perpetua and Felicity. But this church was mainly an urban church and a Latin church, with the exception of some Berber areas. Islam came in the seventh century and this magnificent and leading church was gradually eaten up and disappeared. Where it succeeded to survive or to fight on for several centuries was in parts of Coptic speaking Egypt, Ethiopia and the kingdoms of Nubia where it had been translated into local languages, adapted to some local cultures, and propagated by local evangelizers.”¹¹¹²

Making Christianity feel at home in Igbo land and the rest of Africa via inculturation is the only way to deny history the ugly fate of repetition. Inculturation theology will help the Igbo search for salvation that affords them the impressive definition of themselves within their culture through Christianity. But this will take place only when the whole spectrum of their positive activities, social, cultural and religious existence are integrated into Christianity so that they live, eat, dance, laugh, pray, sing and eventually die Christians in order to resurrect as Christians.

7.7.6 African Theology Advancing African Christianity

Theology addresses every aspects of human circumstance since God is known to be present in all the situations of human circumstance. It is curious that human everyday experience shows the presence of God, whether in the experience of political oppression, slavery, racism, apartheid, hunger,

¹¹¹²John Mary Waliggo, Making a Church that is Truly African, in: Inculturation, 12.

poverty or colonization. Theology advances the course of the God of peace and progress. As dynamic as it is, there is constant emergence of all kinds of Christian theology conceive to authentically transmit the Gospel in accordance to the situation of the society. The different theologies give us basic principles for dealing with the entire question between the relationship between God and human circumstances. We have Black theology, Liberation theology and African theology. These theologies address the circumstance of the human in the society they developed in relationship with God, politics and poverty. Black theology in the United States of America and in South Africa was influence by the current politics, race, color, oppression and apartheid. The Liberation theology model in Latin America was influence by hunger and poverty. It is not unusual to hear the argument whether Africa has theologians or whether there are theological activities going on in Africa.¹¹¹³ On the other hand, the current of theology addressing the African religious concern, explained their world and cosmos, helping them to understand their problems, how to cope with the challenges posed by the world is brand African theology.

African theology or African Christian theology is a theology developed within African environment. It articulates the African world-view through theological reflection. Like every other Christian theology, African theology reflects on the Bible, it also depends on Christian tradition. It reflects on the positive aspects of traditional religion in anticipation of advancing the Christian faith using African rich expressions of interpretative exegesis in its expository form. African theology promotes by way of interpretation all aspects of African culture and traditions worth advancing. There are certain elements of Christian identity in cultural breaks and shifts,¹¹¹⁴ based on this African theology strenuously moves towards identifying these similarities thereby promoting the work of inculturation to the benefit of the Church.¹¹¹⁵

¹¹¹³See, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Zur Lage des Glaubens*, 208-11.

¹¹¹⁴Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Church the Human Story of God*, New York, (1990), 44.

¹¹¹⁵Pope John Paul II, *The Church in Africa*, Post-Synodal Exhortation, no. 103.

That is, it seeks those appropriate and adequate African heritage that are totally for Christ and his Church. Those elements are what African theology goes out to exploit and integrate them by way of inculturation in order to formulate a Christianity that is African in its expression.¹¹¹⁶ So the growth of African theology will depend on the rate at which inculturation is accepted as a model of didactic and a means of penetrating the Gospel in the genius and culture of the people.

Just like Black theology and Liberation theology that insist on the advancement of the human concern in the areas they have come to be established, Inculturation theology is advancing new metaphors that are addressing African concern namely, reconciliation, justice, peace and liberation from the forces of death.¹¹¹⁷ These metaphors are similar to those used in inculturation evangelization theology of the first Special Assembly for African Synod of Bishops.¹¹¹⁸ These metaphors show the extent theology remains both universal and interpretatively particular. Particular theology could sustain other theologies since they all share in the thermodynamic order and obviousness of truth that is universal and single. In this sense, African theology with its rich sense of hermeneutics can aid orientation to Western theology, which has become more and more analytic and historic.¹¹¹⁹ On the scientific level, African theology applies epistemological principles to tell the positive tale of its social, traditional and religious cultures that are compatible and consistent with Christianity as well as jettisoning the inconsistencies that rose consequent of inappropriate understanding of some Igbo cultic concepts.

7.8 Evaluation

To situate the concept of ilo-uwa properly into Igbo interpretation of faith theology of resurrection there was need to x-ray the activities of missionary

¹¹¹⁶Luke Mbefo, *Theology and the African Heritage*, in: *Bigard Theological Studies*, vol, 11, no.1, 10.

Christianity in Africa. If it were not done, it would seem like providing solutions in the absence of problems or explaining the present without the past. During the excuses, it was discovered that there was a lack of communication between the missionaries and the Igbo culture. Misunderstanding became the crucial point in the life of missionary activities that became a generic problem. The lack of dialogue steps from inadequate and profound knowledge of African culture. Missionary Christianity failed to demonstrate

¹¹⁷The dynamism of theology results in its constant presence in human situation as already been mentioned. African daily situation reflects this dynamism. African theology has advanced from the current of liberation opportune by colonialism and the apartheid in South Africa to a theology of full living, love and reconciliation. The situation in Africa especially the events of wars, ethnic hate, nepotism and tribalism is helping to shape the thought of theology in the continent of Africa. The abhorring and fratricidal violence that erupted in Rwanda in 1994 between the Hutu and the Tutsi is still green in human memory. The circumstance at this eastern central African religion at the time has been ascribed as attempted ethnic cleansing against the Tutsi. The virulent conflict in Somalia that has lasted almost for two decades is still raging. The lingering plights of millions of people of the Great Lakes have continued. The suffering of neighboring cities of Northern Uganda, the killings and maiming going on in South Sudan, Dafur, Guinea Conakry and the various uprising in revolution forms in various parts of the Continent. Because peace is being confused with a sort of unanimity or tranquility imposed by force and keeping power in the hands of a single group to the detriment of the people. People are beginning to say no to tyrannical regimes. The case of Tunisia is in hand. Rocked by unemployment, dictatorship and corruption the Tunisians took to the streets. Marked by successive tactical retreats the protesters on the 14 January 2011 forced the 21years government of Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali to collapse. Shortly after, precisely two weeks later (25 January) the Egyptians began a revolution against the 30 years tyrannical leadership of Hosni Mubarak. On the 11 February the peaceful revolution successfully forced President Mubarak to resign. Both revolutions were especially popular among teenagers and young adults. The freedom fighters want Africa to advance to the next stage. They want to see a social, economic and religious progressive Africa. These and other events in other places in Africa give particular poignancy to increase focus on the new reality of today's Africa. These new realities reflect the call of the Council Fathers of the Second Synod of African Bishops for the establishment of a new world-order and fervent legally constituted state in African countries for the protection of the rights and duties of the African citizens. In addition to the establishment of a true democracy, the task of the theology of reconciliation definitely will help to ensure security for persons and property. Fortunately, these are the most needed ingredients for the development of the African continent. See

a good knowledge of the belief of their host communities. The *raison d'être* for holding certain practices sacrosanct was indeed unfathomable for the missionaries. Some cultural values and practices dear to the Igbo seem confusing to the missionaries. These values unfortunately never captured the interest of the missionaries. No one tried to understand them or gave them a chance. At the times, they did seem to try, missionary Christianity failed to distinguish the good traditional elements from the bad. The hang over is still evident in the present Igbo Christianity. Most traditional religious symbols of faith, belief and practice are termed occultic and devilish by some Pentecostals and charismatic Christians. Missionary evangelization strategy did not advance more than catechism form of doctrinal recitation. These and some other factors contributed to the complex issues that necessitated the emergence of African independence churches with its concomitant syncretistic practices within certain quarters. The consequences of all these is the steady drifting into religionlessness that is gradually engulfing the Igbo society.

7.9 General Conclusion

Love and justice are the matrix of every religion. The breach of it has consequences here or in the hereafter. Reincarnation, immortality and resurrection are metaphors that express the pacification of justice. The word, immortality, captures the sense of two related but different meanings. There is

The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace, *Instrumentum Laboris*, Vatican City, (2009), 9-19. For details on the 2011 “North African Regional Revolution” see Juliane von Mittelstaedt (et al), *Der Sieg des Volkes*, in: *Der Spiel Magazin*, no. 7, (14.2.11), 80-86.

¹¹¹⁸Cf. Pope John Paul II, *The Church in Africa, Post-Synodal Exhortation*, no. 57. The first Synod of African Bishops underlined five principal themes most important in the evangelization of Africans. The themes are; Proclamation, Inculturation, Dialogue, Justice and Peace, Means of Social Communication.

¹¹¹⁹Tharcisse Tshibangu, *The Special Synod for Africa and the Tasks of African Theology*, in: *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology: The African Synod: Initial Results and Reflections*, vol. 6/2, Ecumenical Association of Nigeria Theologians. Enugu, (1994), 16.

the immortality of the soul and the immortality of the person. The doctrine of immortality emphasizes the survival of a small part of the human being, the soul. The soul survives to reincarnate until it eventually diffuses into the eternal nothingness. The thought of soul survival, either in the form of reincarnation or metempsychosis, has ever been in the history of philosophy and religion.¹¹²⁰ The resurrection, on the other hand, advances a different kind of immortality. It proclaims the survival of death in an identifiable self.

Another significant difference between the two is that the doctrine of the resurrection belongs to the order of the last things, whereas the immortality of the soul portrays the encapsulation into emptiness. Nothing shows more clear difference between the two than the “contrast between the death of Socrates and that of Jesus that the biblical view of death from the first is focused in salvation history and so departs completely from the Greek conception”¹¹²¹ of immortality of the soul into nothingness. Resurrection emphasizes hope in the future. It states that in the future the dead will rise from their graves to live a new life in the recreated heaven and earth. Despite external influence, many arguments supported that the idea is a fundamental impulse of Judaism. The anticipation of the resurrection doctrine in early Judaism was in a form of metaphor. It was used in rhetoric form as the justification for the crime committed against the righteous and that it restored the fair balance of benefit to Israel. From the language of rhetoric metaphor of restoration and reconstruction, the thought developed into eschatological belief in the second century.

The massacre of the Jews in second century B.C.E prompted intensive reflection on the theology of bodily resurrection. At this time, it asserted the inescapability of death as only an event in human experience but not the fi-

¹¹²⁰Gisbert Greshake, *Tod und Dann?* 68.

¹¹²¹Oscar Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead: The Witness of the New Testament*, in: *Immortality and Resurrection*, Krister Stendahl (ed.), New York, (1965), 12, idem, *Unterblichkeit der Seele oder Auferstehung der Toten? Die Antwort des Neuen Testaments*, in: *Auferstehung des Leibes Unsterblichkeit der Seele*, Godehard Brüntrup et al (hrsg.), Stuttgart, (2010), 13-24, 22.

nal event. During this period, the Jews came to believe that human life on earth is a passing history. They came to believe that at the end of this history the dead would be resurrected to give an account of their life before God. Instead of the “Day of Reconstruction” Intertestamental Judaism saw the “Yom Kippur” as the day of account. It became associated with the Day of Judgment. On that Day, the righteous will receive their reward and the wicked will be punished. The last day is the Day of the Lord, the day of the resurrection and a time of salvation as accounted by (Dn 12.2-3, 2 Mac 7:11). The intertestamental period connects Mosaic Judaism to the NT times. The resurrection of Jesus in the NT is the climax of the doctrine of the hope of the life after death foreshadowed in the OT. Though this event had no direct human witness, yet the conviction of the apostles and the transformation experience calls for a re-examination of the definition of historicity. The transformed disciples carried the message of the resurrection leaving Palestine for the surrounding Greek countries and to Europe. Eventually European missionaries proselytized Africans in the second phase through “popular Christianity,” which is that “form of Christianity that grew up and has been nourished by oral catechism.”¹¹²² According to Mbefo popular Christianity lacks substantial theological foundation and has no direct and unmediated contact with the sources of Christian faith. Popular Christianity concentrates on massive conversion graded in the number of physical structures established. The success of mission is viewed from the number of baptized candidates, first Holy Communion, confirmation, the number of wedded couples.¹¹²³ To achieve a rapid mission incomprehensive cultural practice were abolished and many religious traditional values were jettison or misinterpreted.¹¹²⁴ Unfortunately, some of these elements are phenomenal. Among the phenomenal values is the belief in coming back to life, ilo-uwa.

¹¹²²Luke N. Mbefo, *Christian Theology and African Heritage*, 117.

¹¹²³Ibid.

¹¹²⁴Ndiokwere I. Nathaniel, *The African Church Today and Tomorrow, Inculturation in Practice*, vol. II, Enugu, (1999), 35.

The ilo-uwa belief is a concept the Igbo use metaphorically, depicting goodwill and wishing someone luck. Unfortunately, this concept has faced misinterpretation right from the early days of missionary Christianity.

This thesis suggests an urgent theological reappraisal since the notion in addition to its loose meanings equally carries with it the idea of retributive justice. It speaks the language of survival invariably that of salvation. The doctrine of resurrection was a spontaneous idea within Judaism despite the fact that its inner impulse or inclination was not totally without premeditation or external stimulus. In the same way, the Igbo traditional religion has an idea of a place where the dead go. The dead enter into this realm in a form that is yet to be schematized the way Christian theology has done. Nevertheless, the realm is a place of retribution designed only for the ancestors, the Igbo saints. Since the ilo-uwa terminology is a cultic expression about life after death this thesis proposes its adoption as the choicest expression for the resurrection terminology within Igbo theology. It is appropriate to do so bearing in mind that resurrection is devoid of the idea of coming back to physical life. Ilo-uwa too does not include the idea of physical coming to this life but it supports the notion of the realization in death of the same-self person. In this way it could be said that, though resurrection is not an Igbo terminology, but its principles in terms of retribution after death stand in the center of Igbo theology.

Resurrection is a participation in the general judgment that makes statement about the person as futurology. Christian anthropology is its futurology and eschatology.¹¹²⁵ It is an individual participation in the collective history of the world and in the community. The Igbo understand ilo-uwa in the sense of integral participate of the self and a communal participation in future history. Igbo arts most often depict this hope of futurology. Many of the Mbari¹¹²⁶ artistic models are in so many ways reminiscent of the resurrection figurative. The Igbo connect life after death with the joy of community

¹¹²⁵Karl Rahner, *Foundation of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* Faith. William Dych (trans.), New York, (2006), 431.

experience. Some western Artists in another way have articulated this experience in their various drawings. Stanley Spencer in one of his millennium paintings connected communal relationship with the joy of resurrection. The painting is about the image of Jesus and the resurrection of the dead on the last day. The painting shows the communal sense of the resurrection-taking place in his small village of Cookham on the Thames. The painting shows people waking and stretching. There is joy in their faces as they recognize their families and friends, and the fact that they are alive again. They then walk down the Thames River and get into the boats that take them to the promised land of heaven.¹¹²⁷ Christians believe that one day the dead will all hear the call of the Lord and rise from their graves to enter into the boat of eternity. Like the Christian understanding of the experience of death, the Igbo as well as the Africans believe that one-day „the deceased ancestors would, on a particular day all rise from the dead”¹¹²⁸ to enter into a new history in union with their loved ones in the land of the living dead. But the wicked, like the robbers, witches and wizards will rise into condemnation to dwell in a scum religion as phantoms.¹¹²⁹ Resurrected life for the Igbo means a harmonious, joyful, peaceful life lived in the community of the living and the living-dead. In any case, the difficulty created by the imprecise language of the concept that encapsulates Igbo idea of eschatology has contributed to the existing tensions between Christianity and Igbo traditional culture and religion.

¹¹²⁶Mbari is a sacrifice in thanksgiving to an answered prayer. In terms of structure, it is a house complex and a religious response, expressed through sophisticated artistic modes that embody transcendental and obvious functional aesthetic telos. See, Emeka George Ekwuru, *Igbo Cosmology*, Owerri, (2009), 222.

¹¹²⁷Kieran Conry, Pastoral Letter, First Sunday of Advent, 2010 @ www.dabnet.org (accessed 05.12.10).

¹¹²⁸M.L. Daneel, *Quest for Belonging*, 47.

¹¹²⁹Adiele E. Afigbo, *Ancestral Igbo Religion and Cosmos and the Idea of World Religion*, in: *Religion in a World of Change: African Ancestral Religion, Islam and Christianity*, Theophilus Okere (ed.). Owerri, (2003), 177.

Abbreviations

All abbreviations contained here are according to, Schwertner Siegfried M., (IATG2), Berlin-New York, 2(1992).

All the Council Documents quoted here are contained in, Acta apostolicae sedis (AAS), see also, Denzinger-Hünemann (DH), Kompendium der Glaubensbekenntnisse und kirchlichen Lehrentscheidungen, Freiburg, (2005).

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