

RELIGION: INDEED THE 'OPIUM' OF LIFE

Introductory Remarks

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, I thank you for this enviable opportunity to speak to the university community and in deed to the public on what has been my research life/concern since my 20 year career as an academic staff at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

My discipline, Religion, happens to be a very troubled discipline largely because it is nearly everyone's area of expertise; as at least many, including members of this audience today, would claim.

When I set out on the task of preparing this inaugural lecture, I took a close look at the records of inaugural lectures of this university and I discovered, rather disappointedly, that I am the first professor from the discipline of Religion to give an inaugural lecture in this university.

This discovery alone made me realize how herculean the challenge of giving this inaugural lecture would be arising essentially from the unrepentant prejudices of at least three categories of people. The first category comprises of extreme extremists who claim to be atheists and see religion entirely as a non-existent phenomenon. Luckily, the group belongs to an ignorable minority and there are so many theological/philosophical responses to this claim that it ought not to take our time here. The second comprises of those who may be referred to as extremists insisting that religion is only about the world next to the present world and has nothing to do with this world. In this direction, such twin concepts as sacred and profane, religious and secular, heaven and earth, body and spirit, mortal and immortal etc have been unduly used to not only exaggerate

the nearly non-existent divide between 'mortal and immortal' life but also to propagandize the erroneous view that religion is not about this seen world (earth) but only about the unseen world (heaven). For this category of people, religion can do nothing to help anyone in this earthly existence eulogized as life. Karl Marx has shown himself as the most outstanding proponent of this view through his century old assertion that "religion is the opium of the masses". Opium according to The New International WEBSTER'S Comprehensive Dictionary of English language (2004:886) is a milky exudation from the unripe capsules of the opium poppy (seed) containing a mixture of about 20 alkaloids the most important of which is morphine. It is a strong narcotic with a sticky gumlike body, bitter taste and heavy odour. It kills pain, anxiety, worry and generally takes control of one under its influence. My thesis is that religion is that substance, that aspect of life, that seed of culture that has always, like opium, been in control of our lives. It is essentially to the extent that religion is and will always be in control of our lives just as opium does over one under its influence that I have obliged myself the statement that religion is indeed the 'opium' of life. The import of the statement is therefore far beyond the mere 'blindfolding opium' which Marx argued it to be. Religion is life. Some others in this group further insist that religion being only about the spiritual, secular mortals are ill-equipped to speak about it even if that mortal is called a **PROFESSOR**.

Although Religion is presumably everyone's area of expertise it is yet one of the most enigmatic phenomena in life. It has become almost a general view that religion is a very difficult concept to define. Religion has thus been variously defined. According to James (1902:31-32) religion is "the feelings, acts and experiences

of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they consider the divine". In Durkheim's (1915:37) own view, religion is "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say to things set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices which unite into a single moral community all those who adhere to them"

Every religion involves certain ideas or beliefs on the one hand, and certain observances on the other hand (Brown: 1952:154). At all events therefore, the twin elements of beliefs and practices (observances) are central to the understanding of religion. The observances are usually manifestation of the beliefs. They are generally positive but may sometimes also be negative manifestations of the beliefs. This is precisely why religious problems arise from time to time in society.

In reality, the view of one who claims to be an atheist and the extremist who says religion is too spiritual to be practically helpful in the present life are not too far apart. However, serious as these extremists views may be, the third group from where the more worrisome prejudices come are fellow academics, more especially those who appropriate the use of the 'empirical methods' of research only to themselves and to their disciplines to the inexplicable exclusion of all others. This prejudice is so grave that the usefulness of studying religion as a discipline or its contribution to the development of the society is not infrequently doubted even by those one hardly expects such from. Due largely to the misconceived understanding of the word development as physical growth, increase in capital turnover or reserve, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), advancement in Science and Technology etc *simpliciter*, a discipline like religion and those

who belong to the discipline (of course including myself) are not infrequently dismissed by many as having no contribution to make to the development of the society. I recall vividly, how several years ago my teacher, Ogbu Uke Kalu, a renowned Professor of international repute was told by Mr. S. C. Anyanwu (the then Bursar of UNN), to the consternation of many at the Senior Staff Club on that day, that he (Ogbu) was ill-equipped to discuss matters relating to shares because he belonged to the discipline of Religion. Of course, Mr. Anyanwu ended up receiving an enriching lecture from Prof Kalu on the operations of the Capital Market *pro-bono*.

Following this line of thought, even those who are modest enough to accept that one has made contributions would still, being under the hypnosis of this prejudice prefer that one belonged to another discipline. They would therefore find for one a discipline they deem more appropriate and adopt one. For instance, in July 2011, as Chairman of Nigerian Bar Association, Nsukka Branch, I delivered a tribute at the grave side of one of our professional colleagues, late Barrister Tony Ezeude. After delivering the tribute, it was obvious that the dramatic picture of Ezeude which I clearly painted in the tribute thrilled many including my members. Then one of them worked up to me, shook my hands and as a way of paying me compliments told me that I should have been better off as a Professor of drama/theatre. While still holding his hands, I quickly reminded him that the real origin of drama/theatre is ritual which in turn has its origin in religion/religious worship. Again, while congratulating me on my election to the office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration) on February 29, 2012, a colleague and friend from the Faculty of Physical Sciences,

reminded me that I was going to serve as a DVC (Admin) not only to the Department of Political Science but to all Departments in this University. It was clear that he had unconsciously got the Department of Political Science to appropriate and adopt me as one whose parentage is unacceptable and/or questionable. This attitude, as unconsciously imbibed as it may be is fast catching up with many. In the same month of February 2012, a memorandum by the Senate Ceremonials Committee listing the order of presentation of Inaugural lectures for 2012, listed me as being of the Department of Political Science.

UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA
SENATE CEREMONIALS COMMITTEE

Memorandum


To: See Distribution Below	From: Secretary Senate Ceremonials Committee
Our Ref.: UN/RC.243/Vol.25	Date: 21 st February 2012
Subject	

Schedule of Inaugural Lectures for 2012

Please find attached for your information and necessary action the schedule of inaugural lecture/lecturers for 2012 as approved by the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive.

The Senate Ceremonials Committee Secretariat has also accepted, as requested by the inaugural lecturers of July and August, to adjust the July Lecture to come up in August while that of August comes up in July 2012

With Due regards


G.O. NADI
Sec. Senate Ceremonials Committee

Prof. O.F.C. Nwodo	Department of Biochemistry
Prof. Fab Onah	Dept of Public Admin. & Local Government
Prof. E.O. Ezeani	Dept of Political Science
✓ Prof. Okwueze, M.I.	Dept of Political Science
Prof. Onwubere, B.J.C	Faculty of Medical Sciences
Prof. (Mrs.) P.O. Osadebe	Dept of Medicinal Chemistry
Prof. Ibezim, E.C.	Dept of Medicinal Chemistry
Prof. (Mrs.) Elizabeth C. Okeke	Home Sc., Nut. & Dietetics
Prof. (Mrs.) Ezeonu, I.E	Dept of Microbiology
Prof. (Mrs.) Ogonu, C.N	Dept of Public Admin. & Local Government

UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Vice Chancellor	FROM: Chairman, Senate Ceremonials Committee
Our Ref: UN/RC.243/Vol. 25	DATE: 7 th February, 2012
SUBJECT:	

Re: SCHEDULE OF INAUGURAL LECTURES 2012

Our memorandum UN/RC.243/Vol. 25 of 10th March 2011 on the above subject refers. (See attached)

Please find Sir, a list of other Professors who have indicated their willingness to present their Inaugural Lectures from February to November, 2012 for your approval.

S/NO.	NAME	FACULTY/DEPARTMENT	DATE SCHEDULED
1.	January 2012	41 st Convocation	No Inaugural Lecture
2.	Prof. O.F.C. Nwodo	Faculty of Biological Sciences Department of Biochemistry	February 2012
3.	Prof. Fab Onah	Faculty of Social Sciences, Dept of Public Administration & Local Government	March 2012
4.	Prof. E. O. Ezeani	Faculty of Social Sciences, Dept of Political Science	April 2012
5.	Prof. Okwueze, M.I.	Faculty of Social Sciences, Dept of Political Science	May 2012
6.	Prof. Onwubere, B.J.C	Faculty of Medical Sciences	June 2012
7.	Prof. (Mrs.) P. O. Osadebe	Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences Dept. of Medicinal Chemistry	July 2012
8.	Prof. Ibezim, E.C.	Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences Dept. of Medicinal Chemistry	August 2012
9.	Prof. (Mrs.) Elizabeth C. Okeke	Faculty of Agriculture, Dept. of Home Sc., Nut. & Dietetics	September 2012
10.	Prof. (Mrs.) Ezeonu, I.E	Faculty of Biological Sciences Dept. of Microbiology	October 2012
11.	Prof. (Mrs.) Ogonu, C.N	Faculty of Social Sciences, Dept of Public Administration & Local Government	November 2012

I am in no one way complaining about how my name appeared on this list. The intention is not to exaggerate a simple error perhaps made by a typist or a secretary as mistakes are made by all of us including some you may find in this lecture. The point being made here is that it is not necessarily an ordinary mistake brought about by a typing error but a mistake informed by a thinking that I, and perhaps my other colleagues, ought to belong elsewhere other than the Department of Religion (now Department of Religion and Cultural Studies) to be able to make valuable contributions to the development of the society.

This attitude suggests that development as a concept must necessarily be connected/related to concrete material things. Although many have discovered how erroneous and misleading this view is, some are still holding unto it. The matter is not helped by the unchecked use of the words; underdeveloped, undeveloped, developing and developed especially in their contextual applications. For instance, references are often made to underdeveloped, undeveloped, developing and developed nations. This is because by some dangerous design or coincidence the nations usually daubed developed usually have better infrastructure, better GDPs, better per capita income index, huger capital reserve etc than those daubed developing and underdeveloped.

The overall effect is that development tends to be limited to the material well being of a people. As earlier mentioned, even those who are supposed to be in a position to decipher the difference between material and immaterial aspects of the concept take positions that help in aggravating rather than ameliorating its misunderstanding. For instance, some academics in the natural

sciences often wonder why the various disciplines in the faculties of Arts and the Social Sciences exist at all. They argue that they (the natural scientists) are the only ones who make valuable contributions to the development of the society. If they are in medicine, they quickly remind you of achievements such as heart surgeries and kidney transplants. If they are in pharmacy they remind you of the discovery or the manufacture of vaccines for various, hitherto intractable, illnesses. If they be Engineers, Physicists, Architects and the like, they remind you of sky scrapers (in the nature of the World Trade Centre) or the science of Aircraft or discovery of life in the outer space to mention but a few.

If the social scientist or the specialist in humanities before whom these achievements of science are rehashed is lucky, the natural scientist may pause to ask what the general discipline of the social sciences/humanities has offered the society. I say lucky because if the specialist in humanities is worth his name he will certainly give an enriching lecture to the natural scientist on the value and contribution of the humanities. Otherwise the normal attitude of such natural scientists is to take their leave immediately after rehashing their achievements in the ignorant/erroneous belief that his colleague from the humanities will of course have nothing worth the while to say in response to the presumably intimidating achievements of the natural scientist.

The truth of the matter, however, is that society can hardly exist not to say develop without the corresponding indispensable role and contribution of the social sciences and the arts. Is a society with all material comfort but where terror is the order of the day developed? Is a society characterized by detention without trial

of legally presumed innocent citizens developed? Can a society where under-aged female children are held in bondage as sex workers be adjudged developed? Can a society where the results of both primary and secondary elections are predetermined before the elections be said to be developed? Is a society where the doors of the political process through which leaders are elected are open only to a particular class developed? Is a society where there is no freedom of worship developed? Is a society with the best roads that can ever be built but where women are fighting the battle of their lives against legislation prohibiting them from driving a vehicle on the basis of gender developed? Is a society which cannot guarantee the safety of life and property of its citizens developed? Is the existence of slave labour and refusal to pay workers a meager sum called minimum wage in a society such as ours indices of development?

These rhetorical questions are meant to call the mind of the natural scientist to the fact that no matter the level of material development, a society will still be adjudged undeveloped if the religious, social, economic, political and cultural systems are such that citizens cannot take full advantage of the so-called material development. In reality, while the scientists 'sleeps' in his laboratory working on his next scientific break-through, his colleagues in the arts and the social sciences are awake working on how best to ensure not only that there are human beings alive to take advantage of the possibility of such new researches but on how best to manage the scientists' present and anticipated inventions in such a way that such inventions build rather than destroy the society.

Permit me to tell a story in illustration of the raging mutual suspicion between the natural scientist and his colleague on the

other side of the 'divide'. As a young undergraduate student in this university in the early 1980s, we were enthralled (and many of us have indeed not ceased to be) about what appeared to be largely a legendary but fascinatingly irresistible story involving two academic giants in this university then. It may or may not have been coincidental that these two were/are not only proximate in their respective legendary intellectual prowess but also in size. I have never investigated the truth of the facts of the said story and, frankly, I prefer not to because I savour the story so much that I do not want to run the risk of discovering that it is not true and thereby lose not necessarily its anecdotal import but particularly its anecdotal flavour. I fervently hope that the two dramatis personae in the story will forgive me for telling this story without investigating its kernel. The essential details of the story, which I believe many here may be familiar with, are as follows:

There was a senate meeting of the university held on the hills of certain worrisome developments touching on loss of societal values and growing indiscipline among students. Professor Animalu (now a Professor Emeritus of this university) stood up to make a contribution to the debate and in the process mentioned society. As soon as the word society proceeded from Prof. Animalu's mouth, Prof. Ikenna Nzimiro of Sociology/Anthropology department (who later transferred his services to University of Port Harcourt) could not hold his anger at Animalu's use of the word society. He stood up immediately and interrupted Prof. Animalu thus: 'what do you know about society, you stay inside your laboratory studying the mating habits of mosquitoes and you come here (the senate) to talk about society. What do you know about society'?

The import of this anecdote shows clearly the extent to which academics in the arts and the social sciences are obsessed to so very well represent the fact that, contrary to the belief of the natural scientists, without them (arts/social scientists) society will not be in a position to use 'scientific' discoveries as they (arts/social scientists) are the ones who not only push but actually assist the natural scientists until they fine tune their inventions to suit human use.

Beginning a Career as an Academic

During the 1983/1984 session when I signed the Matricula as a student of the Department of Religion, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, making a career out of academics was not within my contemplation. Having not dropped my desire to study Law in spite of all setbacks, including especially my mother's vehement objections, my mind was all set on how to finish a degree in religion and move on to Law. My studying Religion was partly because that was my best subject having made an A1 in my 1980 WASC result and it became a good stop gap between me and the frightening falsehood which my mother thought was, and indeed which many of you here erroneously still think is essentially the job of a lawyer.

Many here may already be familiar with the story of how a lawyer once jokingly responded to the accusation that lawyers turn white into black. He responded by reminding his accusers that his consolation is that lawyers are not the only people who turn white to black as it is also the wont of painters to do so. We have to move on to the main issues but suffice it to say that the only crime lawyers commit is that when you non-lawyers come to lawyers' offices and tell lawyers that this happened this or that

way, lawyers believe you not imagining that some of you are liars. Any lawyer who presents as facts anything other than what a client states before him in chambers is not worth the name and the public will hardly believe that lawyers who are not worth the name are not infrequently debarred (i.e. banned from legal practice). So what happens typically is that after listening to your story in chambers unless where it is personally known to the lawyer that the facts are other than stated by you, the lawyer carries the brief given to him by you to the court/arbitration. When he/she states them as facts on behalf of his/her client, he/she is vilified as a liar by the opposing party who knows that most of those things one or two of you told the unfortunate lawyer in chambers are lies. I ask you now to tell me the truth: who is the liar; you clients or the lawyers?

However, so much for this aside and we return to my admission into the department of Religion, UNN as a first year student during the 1983/1984 session where gradually and hardly realizing what was happening I became so engrossed with the discipline of religion that other than have any regrets I began to enjoy everything I was doing. It dawned on me that the only times one does well in his/her study, in his/her work, in his/her life is when one enjoys what one is doing. Surprisingly too when one does something well it becomes not just a challenge but an obligation owed, not necessarily to others but more importantly, to oneself to endeavour, as much as possible, to do nearly all things well nearly all the time.

When I earned a First Class honours and by the grace of God came out as the best graduating student of the 1986/1987 graduating class of this university, it became obvious to me that a call to an academic career was imminent and inevitable.

Although this call could have come from any part of the globe, many, including myself, expected the call to come first from the university where I trained as an undergraduate. The issue of first to call never arose as the call never even came. Many had expected the university to offer her best graduating student at least a training position i.e. Graduate Assistantship especially when that person returned to that same department for a masters programme immediately after the mandatory NYSC one year service to the nation. It did not even come in 1989 when I completed my M. A. degree in Religion. In 1992 five years after my first class result and three years after the completion of an M. A. degree, an academic staff of the department in my specific Field (Old Testament) had left the services of the university at a time and in circumstances the department did not expect and needed an immediate replacement. It was only in these circumstances (under the headship of Rev. Fr. Prof. E. I. Ifesieh of blessed memory) that I was offered appointment as an Assistant Lecturer by the university that produced me as her best graduating student five years earlier. It is therefore unfortunately very clear this university never invited me to take up appointment on the ground that I was her best graduating student in the academic harvest year of 1987 when I had the rare honour and privilege of delivering the valedictory speech at the 18th December 1987 convocation ceremonies. Only the university is a position to count how many of her best graduating students were allowed to drift away from their call to academics in the manner I nearly did. I say nearly did because I was already getting set for the Nigerian Law School Lagos as I had already completed my Law degree examinations from University of Nigeria Enugu campus (UNEC) and was only waiting for senate approval of the result when I was interrupted with an appointment as an Assistant lecturer. However, the above is

specifically just for the records and not any tale of complaint whatsoever.

On this note, Mr. Vice Chancellor, I must purse to thank your administration for its commitment to enthrone academic excellence evident in the number of our First Class products (not to say best graduating students of the entire university) you have called back to training positions as Graduate Assistants. Many of them are now undergoing training outside this country with a view to empowering them to lead and drive the academic future of not just this university but the entire academic world. May God continue to bless and strengthen your resolve in this and numerous other directions that are continuously lifting our university up as a centre for academic excellence.

As I had earlier mentioned, I was employed as an Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Religion in 1992 from where by not just a dint of hard work but particularly God's grace, I was promoted from one position to another until October 2005 when I was elevated to the rank of Professor of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

However, the career I have pursued in the past 20 years was nearly torpedoed soon after I accepted the offer of appointment as an Assistant Lecturer. At the time I was offered the appointment in July 1992, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) was on a nationwide strike. The strike, as ASUU convincingly argued, was not only critical but inevitable to save the Nigerian University System from imminent collapse and so engaged the Military government of General Ibrahim Babangida head on. It was really a trying moment for the survival of the university system in Nigeria as there were innumerable

indices showing that the system was actually on the thresh-hold of abysmal collapse: Subvention to the university was, speaking for those days, at its lowest ebb. Laboratories, teaching and other research facilities including libraries were hardly extant. The salary structure was in general not only degrading but laughable. The salary of an Assistant lecturer which was my level at the time was ridiculous and unbelievable. In fact, my appointment letter dated 1st July 1992 reads partly as follows: “you have been offered ... appointment as Assistant Lecturer ... on a salary of N7, 221.00 ... per annum ...” Although I had accepted the appointment, the aspect informing me that my “annual salary is N7, 221.00 per annum” was, to say the least, shocking.

Few days after my acceptance of the offer, I ran into Dr. J. O. Eneh, a lecturer in the department of Philosophy. Dr Eneh took to liking me after I made an A grade in Philosophy 101 (Introduction to Philosophy) which he taught a class in my first year. When he asked after my progress, I readily informed him of my appointment as an Assistant Lecturer. He took a long painful and pitiable look at me and shook his head left and right several times before he slowly uttered the following words: “Malachy, why are you coming to waste yourself with us here. Those of us who are here are too pained that we are too old to leave this collapsing system and I cannot stand a brilliant young man like you joining us to waste your potentials here.” After he spoke, both of us stood motionless moping at each other for nearly what looked like eternity as if to allow the frightening import of what he had just said to properly sink. When I recovered, I thanked him and left determined to take a deep reflection on the dangers of attempting to make a career in academics as has been so succinctly put by my own teacher and lecturer. I did spend several days and nights ruminating over what he said and for countless

times re-read that part of my appointment letter which stated “... on a salary of N7, 221.00 ... per annum ...” Recall, as I earlier stated, that at this time I had just finished a 3 year direct entry Law programme at UNEC and was waiting for senate approval of the degree results for 1991/1992 academic session. I therefore decided that my final decision had better wait until I had a Law degree in my pocket and this could only happen at the end of the 1992 strike. What is more, the strike just as any battle could end with success or failure.

The crux of the 1992 strike was that ASUU was demanding that the Federal government should implement the agreement which it freely entered with ASUU via a tortuous process of negotiation in 1992. Meanwhile the high sounding legal jurisprudential contraption of the concept of “the Doctrine of Imperfect Obligation” by Prof. Ben Nwabueze, the revered constitutional law expert who was then Secretary (surrogate for Minister) of Ministry of Education, not to say his ill-advised overnight decree called 'Teachers' Essential Services etc Decree of 1992' did not help matters. Indeed, they were actually intended to complicate rather than resolve the impasse. With the recalcitrant military regime and the near devil's advocate disposition of Prof. Nwabueze it seemed as if the strike was bound for eternal immortality. But in September, 1992 after about three months of testing the resolve of ASUU, government in a somewhat dramatic turn of events finally agreed to give life to the almighty ASUU-FGN 1992 agreement and the strike ended in favour of not just ASUU but the university system.

Consequently, in the same September, the Senate met and approved the degree results of the 1991/1992 session. I came out with what one of my lecturers and supervisor, Dr. now Prof.

George Amadi, described as a high-breed Second Class Honours Upper Division. I won the Nigerian Industrial Bank Development Bank (NIDB) prize for the best graduating student in commercial Law. All these left me on the brink of truncating an academic career that had hardly started in pursuit of an unarguably potential promising professional career in the legal profession. I was nearly decided on pursuing it.

Incidentally, I received a message that Dr. Eneh wanted to see me and the message carried the highest indication of emergency behind it. Meanwhile, the salary component of the ASUU-FGN 1992 agreement had so improved academic salary that it was undeniably somewhat attractive at least relative to the paltry stipend called salary prior to the agreement. Almost every academic staff was excited and proud of both the salary and the general achievement made by the 1992 agreement. As the import of this kept sinking, the sort of confusion in my head kept building up until it reached that level when, as someone would say, there was 'confuse.' It was in the mix of this confusion that I went to see Dr. Eneh. He smiled broadly at me and started thus: "my son, you can now in view of the ASUU-FGN 1992 agreement start a career here. I am glad you didn't have to go out of an academic career because you belong here. I was only concern for you and how you were going to cope first with caring for yourself and eventually a family." As he spoke I remained calm and somewhat worried that Dr Eneh, not realizing the other alternative career, had assumed that I was already going to stay. Anyway, my final decision a few weeks later proved him right. I was certainly going to stay because as he correctly noted: "I belong here".

The long and short of this story is to point out the role the ASUU-FGN 1992 agreement played in my decision to make a career in academics. I belong here to the extent that the 1992 agreement was a huge success. If it had failed to achieve the measure of success that it did, I would most probably have looked elsewhere for a career. So I am one of those whose career in the university system was saved by the FGN-ASUU 1992 agreement. I cannot but recall that the Generalissimo of the 1992 battle was none other than our legendry Prof. Attahiru Jega, former Vice-Chancellor, Bayero University Kano and now Chairman, Independent National Election Commission (INEC).

He was quickly followed by our own Asisi Asobie who led ASUU to a strike in 1996 which equally successfully established that the 1992 agreement was/is indeed the 'grund norm' of all subsequent ASUU agreements. I still recall how at the end of his tenure as ASUU President, ASUU UNN chapter, in conjunction with and on behalf of ASUU National drove him in a motorcade around the whole of Nsukka town in 1997 as ASUU's own way of appreciating his contribution to the survival and growth of the Nigerian University system.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, as I move over to what has been the major concern of my research life and publication over these past 20 years, may I thank you for indulging me the opportunity to make the above epigrammatic remarks about how I began to make a career as an academic.

The Teething Days of My Research as an Academic

As a student of the Bible, my first researches focused essentially on the Bible particularly the Old Testament (OT) variant. Although the Old Testament is to a large extent the history of the Jews, it is the Israelite God that is the God of that history in such a way that makes the Bible a history of a 'difficult' nature. This difficulty which is in the area of understanding its narratives arose because the Bible is not a 'complete' historical book in some scientific and modern sense of the term. The Bible is designed to be a book of religion rather than history. Therefore, in order to read the Old Testament intelligently, we must remember that its history is marked by and built around not only simple historical events but is basically a spiritual and religious history. This fact may not sound too strange to one, if one realizes that every history involves an element of interpretation to the extent that no history in this age may be described simply as a catalogue of dates and events.

This statement is true of the Old Testament where the literary and historical merits of the narratives are all subordinated to its profound religious interest and purpose. Simply put, the interpretative instrument of Old Testament history is religion. Thus in the Old Testament, history as a factual chronicle or factual information is very lean. Here historical events are special acts of God. It was God for instance, who had sent Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldeans into the land of Canaan; who led the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob out of famine into Egypt, who delivered them out of the Egyptian bondage by the hand of Moses, who fed them on quails and manna in the wilderness, and who led them into the promised land.

Hence to the Hebrew mind as to no other, every event in their history from its remotest beginning to its end, held not only a profound religious significance, but was in itself a religious experience since it had been designed by God in his continuous and never failing care for his people.

The Bible writers naturally did not therefore pay much attention to historical events in their life that did not possess any vital religious significance. Indeed, the historical records which the Old Testament contains were compiled and given their present form not primarily to provide information about political, military, social and economic development but to interpret the vicissitudes of Israel's life in terms of the divine purpose, to describe important religious development and crisis and to drive home religious lessons (Anderson, 1966:2). This more than anything else made the biblical record 'incomplete historically'. The history of the Hebrews for instance and that of the origin of the Hebrew fore-bears is rather in-completely told by the Bible. We learn vaguely that Abraham was called out by God from Haran where his father Terah had lived (Gen. 12:1ff). The story of the nations and tribes that impinge on Hebrew development is hardly told at all. The Bible writers only paid attention to those periods, persons, institutions, and events which seemed to them to be of special religious importance and passed over other things in silence. In fact, bluntly put, the Bible limits our knowledge of the historical circumstances surrounding the events which it narrates or describes.

It has therefore been recognized that it is not sufficient merely to read the Bible if one wishes to understand the significance of its narratives. As a result of this, a genuine interest has been placed in the study of extra-biblical materials as a supplement to our

Bible story. Attention has subsequently been drawn to the rich literature of other nations of the ancient Near East with which Israel interacted profusely. Speaking on the importance of extra-biblical materials to the study of the Bible Walter Bayerlin, has indicated how unthinkable it has now become that the Old Testament could really be understood without taking this comparative material into account. He urges that no one should suppose that the religious convictions expressed in the Old Testament texts can be grasped satisfactorily regardless of the religious evidence from the world of the ancient Near East. Anyone who wants to understand the Old Testament and the religion to which it bears witness faces the task of making good use of possibilities of comparing the material within the Old Testament with that outside it (1975:xxi).

Secondly, the Hebrew forebears had semi-nomadic origin and as a result moved from one place to another (cf. Gen. 11:31; 12:4; etc) especially around the area known as the ancient Near East and specifically within what is called the fertile crescent. The main purpose of the wandering appears to have been agricultural. This movement appeared to have been common among all semites hence Anderson notes that the Fertile Crescent has been the scene of human activity centuries before the arrival of the first Hebrews (1958:16). This semi-nomadic life highly characterized the patriarchal times, when the Hebrews entered upon the discoverable beginnings of their history, and had after the Exodus from Egypt, slowly conquered the land of Canaan, they found themselves in surroundings teeming with distractions of every sort. The neighbouring tribes (either within their own borders or closely outside them) were mostly of Semitic race like them and doubtless spoke virtually the same language. Yet these peoples' ways of life, their knowledge of

agriculture, their employment of metals and their use of tools, their stone houses in the place of tents and above all, the various gods which they worshipped with ceremonies abhorrent to the Hebrews, must have seemed to these still half-nomadic Israelites not only baffling and strange, but filled with dangers to their own strong sense of national unity hence the sermonic warnings of Moses in the book of Deuteronomy. The above informs adequately that the Israelites settled in an environment that was originally alien to them. Naturally, they came under the influence of the environment culturally, religiously, socially and politically. It cannot but be acknowledged that "Israelite culture... exhibits numerous similarities with those of the ancient Near East... On this basis, scholars have repeatedly argued that Israel's 'crude' culture in general ... copiously fed from the highly Aristocratic ... ideas of the ancient Near East" (Okwueze, 1989: vii). Most scholars "conclude without much hesitation that Israel's tradition was fed from the rich stock of similar and prior tradition in the ancient Near Eastern environment" (Okwueze, 1989: ix). There is this incessant stress that Israel borrowed copiously from Mesopotamia. What is more, the OT itself insists on the Mesopotamian origin of Israelite forebears. Abraham was born in Ur, one of the greatest cities in the region. Subsequently he moved to Haran still in Northern Mesopotamia (Okwueze, 1989: 73, see Daiches, 1975:11; Vos, 1977:99).

Admittedly, the Israelites were gravely impoverished in terms of material culture in comparism with their more civilized neighbours. The extent of this impoverishment is dramatized in the narrative we see in 1 Samuel 13:19-22 which reads as follows: "now there was no smith to be found throughout the land of Israel for the Philistines said "lest the Hebrews make themselves swords or spears"; but everyone of the Israelites went down to

the Philistines to sharpen his ploughshare, his mattock, his axe, or his sickle... so on the day of the battle there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people with Saul and Jonathan but Saul and Jonathan his son had them." This passage clearly shows that to sharpen their machetes Israelites would have to go down to the Philistine territory. It is not only that they lacked the ability to produce machetes and the like but that even when they bought machetes they could not afford both the resources and the 'ancient technology' required to own the instrument with which machetes etc could be sharpened. As a result, even the myth with which the Bible opens its narrative has been the subject of discourses on the influence of her neighbours.

What drew my first research attention was the subject of Myth for at least two reasons. The first is that Myth is not only one of the strongest indications that Religion is the 'OPIUM' of life but secondly and equally important is the fact that the Old Testament opens its message and narrative with the literary genre called Myth. From the early chapters of Genesis it was clear that in the Old Testament, religion was not just the substance that aided life but indeed the superstructure upon which life itself was built and lived. This is evident in the story of creation of the Israelite world as expressed in the Myth of creation and all over the Old Testament. Following their (Israelites) conviction that religion was life every other thing became secondary. Myth became the key with which the lives of individuals are unlocked. Life is all about our belief in the Myth that we exist. It is precisely this myth that many philosophers were battling with in their various theories of existentialism.

Admittedly, myth has been the subject of several scholarly works. Nevertheless, myth remains one of the greatest phenomena in the field of religion, the definition and meaning of which tend to stimulate serious controversy. The subject of myth is as it were, an old 'wound' that is ever new, an illness that has defied so many attempts at a decisive cure.

As a result, the study of myth by various scholars and schools of thought has been saddled with the preoccupation of arriving at a generally acceptable definition of myth. This has led scholars into a burning controversy about what should be the exact ingredient and criteria for determining whether a literary material belongs to the 'typology' called myth.

The degree of attention paid to this controversy by scholars is so high that an impression is created suggestive of the fact that every student of myth has, as a matter of course, to be part of it. This situation puts the student of myth *ab initio* in a very difficult position. This is especially so when such a student does not intend to make such a controversy the core of his study.

The idea expressed by Bayerlin and others above is recapitulated by many other scholars (including H. Ringren, Ivan Engnell, N. W. Porteous, F. M. Jasper) who insist that all we (me and you) know or read about Israel in the Bible with regard to her culture and way of life were borrowed from their more civilized neighbours of the Ancient Near East. These scholars would say this with such absolute certainty that could get a budding biblical scholar of my status worried. Indeed, they got me worried enough to take on the matter as my first research interest.

This eventually culminated into my M. A. research project which was entitled **Old Testament Mythology: The Ancient Near East Impact** and subsequently my Ph. D thesis entitled **Myth: The Old Testament Experience**

The background and the main issues which these researches on myth addressed therefore focused on demonstrating that:

1. Myth is not only fundamental but foundational and life is dependent on mythical realities.
2. The definition of myth has been unnecessarily limited and that myth can otherwise be defined.
3. Myths contrary to popular scholarly opinion at the time are copiously present in the Old Testament and that.
4. Mythical categories that cut across many cultural traditions must not necessarily occur as a result of borrowing.

A beginner on myth research may even become completely disillusioned as a result of this unyielding direction of popular scholarship. As a young academic, I came to the threshold of such a frustration in my early days of the study of myth. The experience was even more frustrating here particularly because the study centred on the Old Testament where several scholars had vigorously contended that what is in the Old Testament does not fall within the general framework of 'real myths'. Johannesen had maintained that the presuppositions of mythology were not really present within the framework of Israelite Yahwism. In the same light, Gunkel insists that "the fundamental trait of the

religion of Jahveh (Yahweh) is unfavourable to myths for this religion from its beginning tends towards monotheism. Therefore the Israel which we observe in the Old Testament could not tolerate genuine and unmodified myths.

This contention by several scholars that there is no real myth in the Old Testament with its consequent implication for the study of myth was what inspired me to wade into the study of myth as experienced in the Old Testament.

Furthermore, the central concern of many Old Testament researches has been to lay bare Israelite borrowing and appropriation of myths from neighbouring countries. In reality, most researches on myth in the Old Testament have been directed towards basically two directions: they either assert that there are no real myths in the old Testament or insist that any traces of myth within the old Testament must have been borrowed from her neighbours.

In fact, it is the utter dissatisfaction with the above unyielding and uni-directional scholarship that formed the basic problem of my research interest on myth in the Old Testament. A proper reappraisal of the above attitude makes it increasingly necessary for researches on myth in the Old Testament to move against the wave of current and popular scholarship. Scholars of myth, should redirect their enormous energies towards the more valuable and fruitful concern of the usage and experience of myth in the Old Testament.

The study of myth raises a methodological problem both within the Old Testament and outside it. In appreciating this Levin begins by quoting Valery who laments that we could hardly begin

any discussion on myth without recognizing that we are beset on all sides by the temptations of verbalism. We cannot even talk about myth without indulging in the myth of myths (1960:103).

Since the time of Plato, the myths of classical antiquity have been the subject of detailed investigation, and in the nineteenth Century, the work of the early ethnographers broadened the field to include the myths of contemporary savages. Since then, specialists in a variety of disciplines have regarded myth as falling within their province. Some have appropriated mythology as a sub-division of comparative linguistics; others have seen myth as a form of religious feeling.

The theme of mythology is of perennial interest, and, more than this, it possesses a value that is very real. It is a document and record existing not merely in the dim past but in the living present of man's thought, of his ceaseless endeavour to attain that very happiness which as Vergil tells, arises from the knowledge of the causes of things. Man finds himself dwelling in a world filled with phenomena that to him are strange, sometimes friendly and often hostile. Rightly, mankind perceives that a phenomenon is not a thing in itself, an absolute, but that it is an effect, the result of the cause. Now, the immediate cause may often be found, but then it will be seen that this cause is itself only a result of an anterior cause; and so, step by step, the search for ultimate cause proceeds. Thus mythology is a very real phase perhaps the most important primitive phase of that eternal quest for truth which drives us on, though we know that in its full beauty it may never be revealed to mortal eye nor heard by ear of man that quest more precious than meat or raiment that quest which we may not abandon if we will still be men.

Mythology is not then a thing of mere academic interest; its value is real. It is the history of the thought of early man, and of primitive man today. In it, we may find much to tell us how he lived, and how he had lived in the ages of which his myths recount. As it affords us materials for a history of civilization, mythology is of inestimable value. We know that history is something more than a matter of dates and events. So, too, we read mythology, not only for its specific statements its legends of gods and heroes, its theories of the world, and its attempt to solve the mystery of the destiny of each and every individual but also with a wider purview, for the light which it sheds upon the infancy and childhood of the race to which we belong.

One attitude of mind is absolutely essential in reading mythology sympathy and almost as important a requisite is that while reading it, its premises must be granted. If we approach mythology with the preconception that it is false or nonsensical or trivial, it will be but a waste of time to read it, for reading in such a spirit will only embitter. It is perhaps, not sufficiently recognized how important a factor one's attitude of sympathy is, not merely in regard to religion or psychology or philosophy, or any other mental and moral science but also toward the exact sciences. If for example, one makes up one's mind that spectral analysis is utterly impossible, the discovery of a new element in the gaseous emanation of a distant planet by such analysis will be to one nothing but folly. If again one rejects the mathematical concept of infinity, which one has never seen, and which cannot be weighed or measured, then one might as well deny that parallel lines meet in infinity especially as the precise location of infinity remain indeterminate. This is clearly an attitude which is far too common in regard to mythology and religion. This does

not, of course, mean that we implicitly believe all that we read' but it does mean that we should approach with kindly hearts.

In the 'primitive' world, where the clues of the origin of mythology must be sought, gods and demons are not conceived in the way of hard and fast positive realities. The phenomenon of the primitive mask, for example, is a case in point. The mask is revered as an apparition of the mythical being that it represents. Yet everyone knows that a man made the mask and that a man is wearing it. The one wearing it, furthermore, is identified with the god during the time of the ritual of which the mask is a part. He does not merely represent the god: he is god. The literal fact that the apparition is composed of: a mask, its reference to a mythical being, and a man, is dismissed from the mind, and the presentation is allowed to work without correction upon the sentiments of both the beholder and the actor. In other words, there has been a shift from the logic of the normal secular sphere, where things are understood to be distinct from each other, to a ritual/theatrical or play sphere, where they are accepted for what they are experienced as being, "as if".

The convention is surely that of a primary spontaneous device of childhood: a magical device by which the world can be transformed from banality to magic in a trice. Leo Frobenius wrote in a celebrated paper on the force of the daemonic world of childhood;

A professor is writing at his desk and his four-year little daughter is running about the room. She has nothing to do and is disturbing him. So he gives her three burnt matches, saying, "Here! Play!" and

sitting on the rug, she begins to play with the matches: Hartel, Gretel, and the witch. A considerable time elapses, during which the professor concentrates upon his task, undisturbed. But then suddenly, the child shrieks in terror. The father jumps. "What is it? What has happened?" the little girl comes running to him, showing every sign of great fright. "Daddy, Daddy, she cries, take the witch away! I can't touch it anymore!" (1928:143-5).

This eruption of emotion is characteristic of the spontaneous shift of an idea from the level of sentiments to the level of sensual consciousness. The match is not a witch; nor was it a witch for the child at the beginning of the game. The process, therefore, rests on the fact that the match has 'become' a witch on the level of sentiments and the conclusion of the process coincides with the transfer of this idea to the plain of consciousness.

The subject of myth is often an infinite variety; it is incalculable and 'unfathomable'. But the motives of mythical thought and mythical imagination are in a sense always the same. In all human activities and in all forms of human culture we find a unity in the manifold. Art gives us a unity of intuition: science shows us a universe of laws and principles; religion and myth begin with the awareness of the universality and fundamental identity of life.

Myths occur in the history of all human traditions and communities and are a basic constituent of human culture. People in every culture or tradition have developed a stock of

myths in addition to other early forms of literature (e.g. legends, saga, etc).

Because the variety of mythical themes, characters, and styles of narration is so great, it is difficult to make general statements about the nature of myths, which in their details indicate what the self-image of people in a given civilization is. The study of myth thus claims a place next to the study of language, art, philosophy and science.

The primacy of myth stands out most clearly in certain practical situations. In the middle of the nineteenth century, for instance, a newly appointed British governor of New Zealand, Sir George Grey, found himself face to face with the problem of how to come to terms with the warlike Maroi. He learned their language but that was not enough to understand what caused their military, social and political upheaval. To understand the intention of the Maroi chiefs in negotiations, he found it above all necessary to study their frequent reference and allusions to Maroi mythology. Similarly, other government officials and Christian missionaries of the nineteenth centuries made extensive efforts to understand the mythologies of nations or tribes, because only such understanding made communications 'possible'. It is therefore, the realization of the place of myth in every tradition that makes the study of myth as experienced in the Old Testament inevitable for the understanding of the Old Testament and its message. Indeed myth is life in the Old Testament.

The main platform upon which the denial of the existence of myth in the Old Testament was based relates to the unnecessary limited definition of myth applied by majority of scholars at the

time. A convincing removal of the said false limitation was what my research on myth pursued and successfully executed. Where it is impossible to deny the existence of myth in the Old Testament, the other attitude as we have mentioned earlier, is to insist that it is non-Israelite in origin. Below is a mixture of both the limiting definitions, the claim of external influence and my research responses to them.

According to Sherwood, "myth is a statement, or a virtual statement as implied in a symbol or an attribute, or an epithet accepted as true by its original maker and his hearers and referring to the eternal nature and past acts of beings greater than man, and frequently to circumstances which are to us improbable or impossible" (1964: xliii).

Myth has also been defined as "the expression of unobservable realities in terms of observable phenomena. The language of myth is the language of a reality that is not empirical but existential" (1961:52).

The world of myth is a continuous source of knowledge needed for solving crucial problems in man's existence: war and peace, life and death, good and evil.

Throughout the inhabited world; in all times and under every circumstance, the myths of man have flourished; and they have been the living aspiration of whatever else may have appeared out of the activities of the human body and mind. It would be appropriate to say that myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestation. Religions, philosophies, arts, the social forms of primitive and historic man, prime discoveries in science

and technology, the very dreams that blister sleep, boil up from the basic, magic ring of myth.

Although, as clearly suggested above myth making is a basic constituent of human culture, many scholars have held the view that the absence of polytheism in the Old Testament is fatal to the claim that there is myth in the Old Testament.

We have noted that there is in every human culture the tendency of the human mind to take account of a large variety of data within a chosen compass of thought or experience and to circumscribe these data by means of convenient schemes of laws of causation or association. This tendency may be credited to that instinctive curiosity in human beings by which these seek to understand the vast inscrutable world of ideas and objects in which they live. The essential thing here is the involvement of a scheme of convenience which helps the society to take account of the variety of ideas and experiences which it has inherited over time.

The people of the Old Testament just as all peoples of the world developed a mythical tradition in their quest to understand the world in which they lived. This is evident in what we find in the early chapters of Genesis where the Old Testament tried to capture primeval events.

Beyond the book of Genesis there are other parts of the Old Testament where we find the extensive use of mythical language. This is particularly true of the Psalms and the Prophetic literature. As a result, time was taken in discussing the use of myth in the Psalms and the Prophets.

Furthermore, an attempt has been made to compare myth in the Old Testament and outside it. From the record of the flood stories which are available to us, we saw that there exist extensive resemblances in narrative details between the Old Testament record of the myth of the flood and those of the Ancient Near East in particular.

The question which has been raised earlier by Okwueze (1989) is 'what do we do when we find these resemblances?' Scholarly opinion about this issue is very fluid. Some opine that literary materials from the Ancient Near East determined the formation of Israel's mythical tradition. In talking about the relationship between the Old Testament and Canaanite literature, Ivan Engnell's view is that it is futile to look for any element original to Israel: He says "what I have spoken of is the strong dependence of Israelite literature on the Canaanite, a special form of which we have in the ugarit..." (1958:26). Anderson is milder in his view but makes the same basic point that the Yahwist appropriated a number of traditions than can be paralleled in the folklore of antiquity. The similarity of this ancient story (Gilgamesh Epic) to the biblical account "shows that the Yahwist borrowed freely from the found of popular tradition..." (1958: 167).

Though no one can deny the influence of other traditions on the Old Testament, care must be taken to avoid uninvestigated conclusions. Each case of resemblance must first be investigated before conclusion should be made about borrowing or not. To begin with, there are similarities between biblical and extra-biblical texts which are not necessarily due to foreign influence. Similarities sometimes arise as a result of the general or common nature of themes treated by these myths. The vast richness of stories about the creation, the flood, etc. from other cultures

other than the Old Testament is enough to alert us that it is not by mere coincidence that there are so many parallels to Gen. 1-2 and 6-8 in the history of religions. Similarities may therefore arise as a result of the very content of this part of the Bible, which is deeply embedded in the history of religions or the world. H. Baumann has observed that all the themes in the biblical story of primeval events occur too in the myths of primeval time among African peoples and that there are many African creation myths which contain ancient mythological material common to Semitic and Hamitic cattle breeders of Africa (Westermann, 1974: 22). The ways in which the people of all places and at all times are doing to present the origin of humanity and the universe or of the present state of the world are not without limit; they are relatively few, and so there will be many similarities even though direct influence is not excluded.

Therefore beyond the similarities that exist in the narration of the flood stories, we still have to explain how in the first place men came so commonly to believe that at some time or the other the earth, or at all events, the whole inhabited portion of it, had been submerged under the waters of a mighty flood in which almost the entire human race perished. As earlier noted, the old answer to it was that such a catastrophe actually occurred. But this is hardly the case. In other words, the explanation of how men of varying races came to conceive and believe in this tradition still has to be given.

In recognizing the resemblances between Israelite mythical traditions and those of the Ancient Near East, it is not therefore a simple question of literary dependence direct or indirect only. Some resemblances may have arisen independently through the similar working of the human mind under similar circumstances.

Finally, as noted earlier, an attitude of sympathy is very necessary in reading the Old Testament. This attitude could propel us against the current wave of thought which insists either that it is inconceivable to talk about myth in the old Testament or that the mythical tradition which we find in the Old Testament is entirely bequeathed to it by non-Israelite traditions.

The issue, in simple language, is that many scholars insist on defining myths as stories about gods and their supernatural activities which they equally insist applies only to Polytheism (worship of more than one God) and never to Monotheism (worship of only one God). Their thesis is that myth admits of only a polytheistic framework and that the monotheistic framework of the Old Testament does not admit of myth as defined (actually confined) by them (Okwueze, 1995:13-14). My work was able to change the fixated mindset on the issue of myth in the Old Testament as I tackled the unnecessarily confining definition of myth.

However, because Myth epitomizes the ability of any people not only for imaginative thought generally but specifically the ability of any people to explain life and existence it is fundamental to every human culture including the Hebrews.

These researches established that the defining characteristics of myth are: a) the supernatural character of the dramatis persona, b) the extraordinary nature of the events of the mythical story, c) and most importantly the character of time in the story (Okwueze, 1995:18, 25, 28, and 34-41). Okpeho (1983:68-83) adds the flight of fancy in the story but my problem with Okpeho's position which was canvassed in extensor in the

dissertation is that he stretches this flight of fancy to such limitless dimensions suggesting erroneously that the narrator can afford to be ignorant of not only the experiential limitations but, much more worrisome, the imaginative limitations of his immediate and potential audience (Okwueze, 1995:34-41). Part of the result of this research is that it defined myth as the sacred story of a primordial event that constitutes and inaugurates a reality and hence determines man's existential situation in the cosmos as a sacred world (Okwueze, 1995:53) and was able to sustain my main contention that the Old Testament does in fact contain myths contrary to the popular opinion at the time.

This contribution made it possible for an ordinary (rather than an expert) reader of the Old Testament (and Genesis in particular) to come to terms with the fact that the Genesis narrative of Genesis 1-2:4a indeed undeniably belongs to the literary genre called Myth. This key is so fundamental that anyone who misses the central message which myth conveys would certainly have missed the entire message of the Old Testament.

The point being made is that one should apply caution the way influences are assumed. At the end, the research was able to draw attention of readers and scholars of the Bible alike to the fact that similarities may arise as a result of various factors. This therefore means that "the idea of match-making biblical ideas with extra-biblical parallels and then concluding that Israel borrowed this or that which many scholars are turning into a convention can no longer be accepted." The factor(s) responsible for each similarity must be determined by case by case basis to see if it is due to

- i) common heritage,
- ii) influence of similar environmental exigencies or then
- iii) direct borrowing (Okwueze, 1989: 81).

Many years of my research on the Old Testament following the completion of my Ph.D research on Myth (discussed above) resulted in the text entitled **Old Testament as History, Religion & Literature** published by Africana First Publishers and which became such a sought after text by both undergraduate/postgraduate students and colleagues from the field of religion as well as many disciplines outside it that it had a record sale of 20, 000 copies within one year of its circulation by Africana First Publishers. It is unfortunately out of stock now. However, with unceasing demands not only from my own students but also students and colleagues from several universities and seminaries it will soon return to the shelves of bookshops across the country.

From this point onwards, I re-focused the attention of my research to the challenges of contemporary society especially on the import/impact of religion on uncountable number of significant issues in society Nigeria, Africa and the World. Some of the many such outstanding issues on Religion and Society which caught my research attention include: Religion, Culture and Conflicts; Religion, Politics and Social Justice; Religion, Science and Technology; Religion, Health and Healing, Religion, Peace and Security

Religion, Culture and Cultural Imperatives

It has already been observed while discussing the meaning of religion that of the many intriguing phenomena in life the world over, religion and religious belief stand out. Religion, being a major part of culture of any people usually carries with it the cultural imports and imperatives of any people. Many a time the nature of the relationship between religion and culture is hardly properly appreciated.

There are numerous definitions of culture but one of the most celebrated is Sir Edward Tylor's "*that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a members of society*" (189:1). For Shorter culture comprises the learned aspects - as opposed to the inherited aspects- of human thinking and human behaviour. A more modern tendency is to reverse the order and to define human society in terms of culture. According to this way of thinking, it is what human beings share culturally, their customs, values and distinctive way of living, that constitute them as a recognizably distinct human group or society. Human societies not only possess a culture, but are distinguished from non-human societies by it (1988:4).

The terms "religion and culture" are often used in a rather confusing manner. Some use the two terms as if they were two sides of the same coin: that is, in contexts that suggest that religion is one half of a whole and culture the other half. Others use the two terms in a way that suggests an opinion that one could be interchanged with/for the other: in words, that religion and culture mean one and the same thing.

Admittedly, Religion and Culture are related in a special way which is not easily discernible without a close examination. But it is hardly the case that any of the above understanding of religion and culture is exactly correct. The two terms can neither be used interchangeably nor can they be regarded as two parts of a single thing. Rather one- that is religion- is part of the other- culture.

From the definitions of Religion and Culture, it is clear that religion is an aspect of culture. Culture is, therefore, much wider than religion as religion derives from culture and is located within culture. That is why each religion is informed by what obtains in the culture from where it derives its life. This relationship can be likened to the relationship between a mass of water and the aquatic life (eg fish) that it supports. A fish out of water is undoubtedly ill-at ease and stands the risk of losing its life when it is outside water and on its own. Just as a fish cannot exist outside of the water that gives it life, religion cannot exist outside of culture from where it derives its source and power. However, it must be quickly observed that religion is an overwhelming part of culture and very easily dictates what obtains in a culture. It dictates what the speaker says and the manner in which he says, what is to be eaten and in which form it is to be eaten, what is to be worn and how it should be worn within a culture are all subjected to the dictates of religion and religious belief or if you like 'the world view. This re-enforces the title of this lecture which posits that Religion is indeed the 'opium' of life as life cannot be lived without the inevitable imports of religion.

Religion, therefore, has the herculean burden/task of always encumbering itself with the demands of the culture form where it arose. In fact, it has to be properly garbed in the accepted

garments of the culture within which it is located. Although no two religions are the same, each has the uneasy task/duty of carrying with it the traits and character of the culture within which it grew. Christianity is no exception in this regard.

The recognition of the above nature of religion is very germane for the proper appreciation of what is usually the task of a given religion when it has moved from the culture environment within which it was born and bred to an otherwise strange/new environment. That required it to create, even if in an artificial manner, a replica of the environment within which it was nurtured. The challenge which Christianity had to accomplish in this situation could be likened to a fertilized egg hatches (produces the normal chicken), then an environment which is a replica of the one usually provided by the 'mother hen' must be created.

Christianity, like every other religion, carries with it certain cultural imperatives. When Christianity arrived Africa, it sought to create the necessary environment for its spread and growth. One major way by which it did this was by attacking the traditional culture it sought to replace with the culture within which it grew. This attitude gave rise to conflicts resulting in the disorientation and disruption of the traditional Igbo socio-economic order. In the instant example, the egg is the religion while the hen and/or the environments provided by the 'mother hen' is the culture. The fact is that religion being the substance and the strongest component of culture (not language as linguists argue) is also a cultural propaganda, which hardly admits of any objectivity in assessing the opposing culture. Every religion sees any other culture, apart the one it represents, as a conquerable battle-field.

This led to uncountable incidences of cultural conflicts/crises across Igboland including Imilike, Igogoro and Nanka which were captured in the result of our research/publication entitled '*Religion as a Potential Instrument for Cultural Conflicts*' (Okwueze, 1999:136). Religion has a way of pitching one culture against another. It was in a deep appreciation of this fact that two African scholars of religion, namely, Professors Ogbu Kalu and Ikenga Metuh (all of blessed memory), had titled their books '**The Embattled Gods**', and '**The Gods in Retreat**' respectively.

The experience of Mr. A in one of my researches on this matter paints a practical picture of the complex nature of this relationship between religion and culture and the challenges that usually arise from same.

Some time ago, an argument ensued between Mr. C, a parishioner and his parish priest over what religion (Christianity) had to do with culture. The issue, simply put, was that Mr. C had been slated for conferment with a traditional (cultural) title of some sort in his village. As he was preparing for the title-taking ceremony, news filtered into the parish house that the traditional title which was to be conferred on him and the ceremonies arising therefrom had some cultural vestiges which were not exactly in tune with Christian demands. He was immediately summoned by the parish priest and asked to explain why he, a Christian of high standing, should suddenly 'nose-dive' into things that were un-Christian.

Embarrassed, bewildered and confounded, he innocently asked the Priest what Christianity had got to do with this aspect of his culture, namely, title-taking. Before he knew it, from the very point of asking this question he had become enmeshed in a

cultural crisis which left him bemused. This short anecdote clearly points to at least two things, First, it restates the importance of appreciating the nature of the relationship between religion and culture and secondly makes clear the fact that religion controls the direction of most activities in daily life. It is always more intricate when the issue has to do with burial and funeral rites.

Traditional Burial and Funeral Rites

A few years ago, an intricate situation arose when the father of my family's closest neighbour in the village died. After paying an initial condolence visit to the family of the deceased, I left the village with the date of the funeral. As soon as I arrived home for the funeral on the agreed date, I noticed my mother pacing up and down and looking gravely worried. As she walked towards my car, I knew something was wrong. Hardly acknowledging my greeting she announced pointing at the direction of our neighbour's house "you are not going in there." Surprised and at a loss about what she was talking about I asked why? She quickly replied "because they have decided to do the funeral in the traditional way instead of the Christian way." We stared at each other for several minutes before I managed to ask "what in particular have they done?" "They did not invite the Church as a group", she retorted. In Imilike, at the time, what essentially determined whether a burial/funeral was classified either as traditional or Christian was whether the funeral cow was handed over to the oldest man (onyishi) in the village or to the Chairman of Catholic community. Cautious of her mood, I requested that we get into our house and talk over the matter. We talked and talked but the difficulties and the complexities of the situation at hand including the fact that, naturally, some items such as cooking utensils, chairs, etc usually borrowed from neighbours

had already moved from our house to the house of the bereaved and yet I am expected not to move over to be part of the funeral ceremony.

Although the rest of what followed is now history, the import of this short anecdote is to show that as Ezeanya and Ilogu had long observed years ago, there is indeed a worrisome and growing tension between traditional culture and Christian culture reaffirming the position of this lecture that religion dictates and controls life.

Generally speaking, it appears that the most conflict oriented aspects of the traditional burial/funeral rites are connected with presentation of material items especially life animals used for burials/funerals ranging from the goat to a cow. The usual issues giving rise to controversies or conflicts include: (a) to who are these animals handed over? (b) in what manner are the animals killed? and (c) for what purpose(s) or to what end?

In most traditional societies, especially among the Igbo, a cow is usually presented as part of burial/funeral rites. Disagreements over how to handle the funeral cow have been the basis of considerable tensions in a number of situations. Other tensions are associated with certain traditional practices following death. These tensions have manifested themselves in various parts of Igbo land but due to want of space, I will talk about just two practical situations showing how religions compete between and amongst themselves for the control of our lives.

The Imilike Burial/funeral Rites Crises

The problem, briefly put, was that sometime in the early 1990s, the Rev. Fr. in charge of Isienue Parish, to which Imilike community then belonged, set out to enforce what was then a new regulation for burials/funerals involving Christians. One of the central elements of traditional burial rite in Imilike, which does not go down well with Christian demands, is the issue of who eats, and how he eats parts of the carcass of the traditional cow normally killed during the funeral ceremony of the dead.

Normally, when a traditional cow is killed to celebrate a traditional funeral, there are certain parts which are taken to the eldest person in the village of the deceased person as his entitlement. In most traditional ceremonies, the eldest person always occupies the position of the chairman. This part of the meat goes to him strictly because of his age and position, just as a modern wedding celebrant organizes the best part of the meat, food, drink, etc. before the chairman of the occasion. It is this presentation of certain parts of the meat for the funeral to the eldest person that has been, more than anything else, responsible for the uncompromising condemnation of the traditional funeral by some Christians. This is because the understanding of these Christians is that this part of the meat given to the eldest person is done to enable him perform certain un-Christian rituals. So the question is "how can anyone who calls himself a Christian provide items for traditional religious rituals?" Some Christians have argued that the taking of some parts of the meat to the eldest person has nothing to do with any ritual, but simply the socio-economic benefit of being the eldest person. The Christians who reasoned this way have therefore

become pitched in what seems to be an unending battle with fellow Christians on the other side.

It must be pointed out that this implied two levels of demand on the Christian. First, that a Christian must be given a 'Christian burial'. The second and perhaps, more complex demand was that a Christian who is bereaved of a relation, who by all standards was never a 'Christian, must bury and carry out the funeral rites of the deceased relation in a 'Christian way', or must not be involved at all. The average Imilike Christian found himself in what seemed to be an inescapable dilemma. The magnitude of the problem may be better appreciated with a little illustration of just one of the practical situation that arose, and in which many Christians found themselves. Paul is a Christian but Ogbu is an ardent traditionalist. Ogbu is Paul's father and had repeatedly before his death requested his sons including Paul not to do anything that will inhibit his getting his so much valued traditional burial and funeral rites whenever he dies. Paul is neither the only nor the first son of Ogbu. Ogbu died. His sons and daughters prepare to bury and celebrate Ogbu's funeral traditionally as he had so much desired. In this situation, according to the demands of Christianity in Imilike and many other places, Ogbu should not involve himself in any of these arrangements for the final rites of the man he had known all his life as his father, and who had so much cared for him including financing his high-profile education which exposed him to the 'dangers' of Christianity in the first place.

While the numerous arrangements for Ogbu's burial and funeral rites were still going on, Paul who had all this while avoided getting involved, went to bed two nights to the burial/funeral but could not sleep. One voice kept him awake and, in an unusual

refrain, incessantly asked “why should religion act as an instrument for crises instead of peace in my life?” this was the cultural crises in which many Imilike Christians found themselves. In the case of Paul, he woke up the next morning with a full realization that what was happening was a struggle between two religions for the control of his life. He therefore came to a definite decision. Without any formal announcement, Paul quickly joined his other brothers and sisters in the arrangement for the traditional burial/funeral of his father.

The Catholic community in Imilike reacted in two different ways. Those who felt that what Christianity was demanding was the real test of being a Christian immediately condemned and reported Paul to the parish priest, who swiftly suspended him from participating fully in the Eucharistic meal during masses. However, those who deeply appreciated the kind of mental trauma which the demands of Christianity in Isienu parish had subjected Paul to, and who did not see why one cannot be a Christian and at the same time participate in the burial/funeral of his non-Christian father, pitched their support with Paul. In retrospect, most people now say that Paul was right in so much as he abstained from those things that infringed upon his Christian obligations.

The rest of the story of the Imilike crises is now history which cannot be fully recounted here, but suffice it to say that the crises which subsequently engulfed Catholic Christians in Imilike between 1990 and 1995 resulted in what was then (and still is) popularly referred to as 'Uka 1'(one) and 'Uka 2' (two) (literally meaning church one and two). 'Uka 1'(one) referred to the fundamentalists, who condemned the attitude of the likes of Paul, while 'Uka 2' (two) was derogatorily used to refer to the

attitude of the likes of Paul and his supporters. The crises between the two groups which eventually became the subject of a court case at Obollo-Afor raged on unbridled. Of course the Catholic Bishop of Nsukka diocese would very easily recall that it took him a marathon session of at least ten hours of continuous homiletics, counseling, blunt reproach, and even outright marching orders to get the warring Christian parties back on the part of the worship of God.

A recent near replica of the above incidence as experienced by a prominent family in Lejja has been documented and published (Opata: 2011). A number of questions posed directly by the author or which arises from the text can only be answered through the realization that although religion is supposedly only a part of culture, it is a part that actually controls and drives the whole. That is why religion is perceived by this lecture as the 'opium' of life. It is the wont of all religions to battle among themselves over which of them takes control of our lives and they can only loose or win the battle through substantial control or lack of control of the way we live our lives which is in itself essentially the meaning of culture.

The Nanka Sigthing Of Corpse Crisis

The crisis in Nanka (a town in Anambra State) as records show appear to have arisen from a traditional culture which prohibits a married woman (widow) from seeing the corpse of her dead husband immediately after death. From the information I obtained after oral interviews with some of the indigenes of Nanka including with Mr. Polycarp Nwankwo, it appears to me that the culture is intended to prevent a widow from gaining access to the husband's disposable/moveable property after the husband's death.

This is easy to appreciate if one considers that in traditional African (Igbo) setting, a man's 'Obi/Okwu', where he lives and keeps his most valuable assets, is a separate house from that of the woman. Ordinarily, the woman comes to the obi/okwu when she has something to discuss with the man or when the man sends for her, or when she brings food, etc to the man.

In most Igbo traditional setting, when a man dies, his property is inherited by his sons and immediate relations (brothers), and in rare cases, only the latter. Generally, a man dies in his 'obi/okwu'. In fact, this is one of the features of a good death. The reasoning is that if a woman were allowed into the 'obi/okwu' where the man's corpse and his valuable possessions are, she may be tempted and/or opportuned to remove some of the man's valuable assets for her own benefit before raising alarm about his death, knowing the impending difficulties of economic survival as a widow, who traditionally hardly had any right to any of her husband's property. Some women, as was alleged, had in the past beaten this tradition by taking away their husband's valuable possessions before raising an alarm about his death, from which moment she can no longer have access to the 'obi/okwu'.

My own interpretation, which is not bound to be right, is that to ensure that no widow is availed of this opportunity; the Nanka people declared it an abomination for a widow to behold the corpse of her late husband. The calculation is that since the man's corpse will ordinarily lie in his 'obi/okwu' where his valuables are also located, the woman cannot have access to the 'obi/okwu' without committing an abomination. This grew into an undisputable tradition until some Christians started challenging this prohibition, as is evidenced in the incidence

recounted below not necessarily because of any proprietary or pecuniary interest.

The actual details of what transpired may be varied but the crux of the matter, as the finding showed, was that there was a woman who, being an 'ardent Christian', did not see why she should be subjected to this traditional culture. So, on the death of her husband, she insisted on beholding the sight of her husband's corpse. The villagers were said to have regarded her action as an abomination and refused to be involved in any way with his burial until a cleansing ritual removing the abomination had been performed. She said she was not going to do anything of such, and threatened to bring her Christian brethren to perform the burial if the villagers did not do same. The extreme positions could not be resolved. So, the Christian brethren, largely made up of the members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, rallied round her in solidarity. On an agreed date, the Christian family came to help her bury the deceased. The ceremony started and progressed as a very great Christian carnival. The solidarity was so overwhelming that it angered the villagers, who ambushed and physically attacked the procession leading the corpse to the Church premises already chosen as his final resting place (the villagers having refused to provide any land for his burial). At the end of the violent clash, at least two people were left dead.

Although the above highlighted areas of conflict between traditional burial/funeral rites and Christianity have long been there, the more recent pattern of the cultural conflicts triggered off by the continuing battle between traditional and Christian rites/cultures is of an entirely different nature. In the past, the conflict was drawn between non-Christian traditionalists on the

one hand and the Christians on the other hand. But the recent conflicts show the Christians waging cultural wars against themselves. One finds a situation, for instance, where the Catholics in a particular town or community are divided among and against themselves on an issue or issues having to do with traditional rites and culture. This was exactly what happened at Holy Family Parish Imilike-Enu that gave rise to Uka 1 and Uka 2 in the early 1990s.

This present pattern of the cultural crises is so widespread and commonplace in many towns and communities that it became one of the most vigorously canvassed issues during the last Synod of the Catholic Diocese of Nsukka held two years ago. Admittedly worrisome, however, is the fact that Catholic Diocese of Nsukka is yet to publish its Synod decisions on the issue of what clearly constitutes a Catholic or non-Catholic burial/funeral. Since the issue of burial/funeral rites has continued to plague individuals and catholic communities in Nsukka diocese, we are holding our breath until the diocese speaks hopefully before our breath terminates our pilgrimage on this earth.

The Church in the belief that traditional culture is essentially a conquerable battle field is yet to show the level of concern proportionate to the worrisome nature of the tension between the two cultures. Its concern appears to be more on how to get more and more people inside the church building. This is not only linked to but indeed largely explains the attitude of the first Christian missionaries towards African culture as exemplified by the following instruction given by Father Superior to hesitant missionary trainee. The church has continued unwaveringly along the line of nearly a century old instruction given by Fr.

Superior to Fr. Smith, who was working in the 'vine' fields of Africa:

We have on our side the vast numbers who in the Africa of the future will sustain their Church with their numerical strength. Call it vote for the masses if you like. In pursuit of this objective I am afraid we have got to be impatient with the culture of the people. There just isn't time to sort out first and label their customs as acceptable or unacceptable (Munonye, 1966: 146).

This is certainly the kind of impatient attitude that led to a lot of misinterpretation and mistranslation of many positive traditional Igbo concepts clothing them in negative garbs. Opata (2005) had argued that Ekwensu rather than being a Christian Devil is a Heroic Igbo Deity.

Little wonder why the battle for the control of our lives by Christianity and traditional religion has gone on un-abated. The pattern of the crises, as captured here, is indicative of something. The fact that many of the crises have shifted from the rituals that follow birth, initiation into adulthood, marriage ceremonies and title-taking to burial and funeral rites, which is the last on the rungs of the ladder of rites of passage, suggest that Christianity is waging one of its last wars on African (Igbo) culture. The irony, however, is that the Church is 'conquering' souls without 'winning' them for Christ.

Religious symbols are replaced and used in manners indicative of the fervent belief that they are the same and interchangeable. So all one needs to do is to remove the red rope-like cloth from the Dibia's house tied round one's neck and replace it with the brown rope-like scapular from the parish house. The Churches are filled to the brim with a lot of people singing, drumming and dancing apparently in reverence to the Christian God but the lyrics of the loudest of the songs is a celebration of the singers' joys that his/her traditional belief has not been subverted by Christianity. Imagine the import of the song: Ekpere b'ogwum gworo, Ekpere b'ogwum gworo, agam agwo y'ozo (meaning 'prayer is my charm, it is my charm. I will make the charm again and again) within the four walls of a Christian church.

It is in this respect that Enweonwu's Ph.D research entitled Christianity and Socio-Cultural Practices in Onitsha Contemporary Society is very informing. I hope that Asogwa's (2008) book entitled: Half Christian Half 'Pagan' is meant to be, rather than a satire on the congregation, an agonizing reminder to the Church that **in the raging cultural battle, the Church is indeed 'conquering' cultures and souls without 'winning' them for Christ.**

Religion, Politics and Social Justice

In our looking at this aspect of religion, my research focused on the Church as an example of how religion relates with the society in its concern or role in politics and social issues. The church is an organized body of followers of Jesus, the people of God on earth organized as such.

On the proper attitude of the Church to issues of politics and social justice two separate stands can be observed. The first is the view that the Church should not involve itself in issues of social justice. The argument of those who hold this view is that the church is not a Red Cross Society and that its only goal is to evangelize- that is the only justification for the existence of the Church is to carry out the Great Command of Matt. 28:19-20- Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in... They also argue that if the Church is to engage in social justice it will loose its potency to evangelize, it will have less time and resources for its main goal. The passage in Jn. 18:36 where Jesus rebuked his disciples for taking his Kingship/Messiahship to be of worldly political liberation is sometimes cited in support of this opinion. Further, they argue that issues of social justice are not usually straight but ambiguous. Consider, for instance the claims and counter-claims of the black and white in South Africa.

However, the social ecumenist, insist that the church should be involved in issues of social justice. A look through the scriptures may be helpful in considering these two stands. The first Sermon of Jesus after 40 days in the wilderness reflects his concern for human problem. Jesus taught in two ways, via parables and miracles. All the miracles had a common denominator always a response to somebody's vulnerable state or need- concern for

human bodily problem. Jesus used the miracles as a confrontation to the forces, which dehumanize human beings (sickness, demons). Jesus also confronted those who distort the law. The parables he told were not mere stories but a challenge to those attitudes of ours that 'negatived' the call to be fair and caring towards our fellow human being. So, whether it is the parable of the good Samaritan or that 5,000 fed, Jesus' ministry was apparently and insistently focused on the poor and the materially deprived (though he distinguished this from spiritual poverty) reiterating his call on us to care for all needy ones around us.

Jesus believed that the spiritual and the physical needs of man should not be isolated as such. This attitude destroys the distinction the evangelists make between evangelizing, baptizing (spiritual) and material comfort (physical). For instance, the story of the 5,000 fed in Matthew 14: 15ff. In Luke (7:20ff), John set his disciples to find out who Jesus' was. Jesus' response reflected this concern for human physical problem. The liberation of Israel in exodus becomes a paradigm of God's will to liberate the political and socially oppressed. The church should therefore be involved in the process of social justice and apartheid which is a replica of the Egyptian situation. This concern is reflected in Luke 4:18, where Jesus reads from the Book of Isaiah "the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed..."?

As if in support of the social ecumenist during the Catholic Second Session of the Vatican Council (Vatican II), the Pope had declared that racial prejudice, poverty, injustice, 'have not' and a host of other plagues are no longer to be regarded as evils that are inevitable and necessary. Rather they are to be viewed as mockeries of the mercy of God and are to be attacked (by the

church) again and again until they are eliminated. No longer is the Church to be apart from the world and aloof from its concerns, it is to be in it. The church is no longer to conduct a dialogue with itself but to open one with the world.

The fathers of the Church worried by conflicts all over the world especially as their causes are related to poverty and injustice set up a Pontifical Commission in the church's central administration charged with the duty of:

Bringing to the whole of God's people the full knowledge of the part expected of them in the present time, so as to further the progress of poorer peoples, to encourage social justice among nations, to offer less developed nations the means whereby they can progress its name which is also its programme is justice and peace (1965:588)

Politics is the science of arranging, determining and influencing allocation of power and resources in the life of a people, an organisation, a community, nation and the world at large. Politics is the vehicle which transports power in its raw form to authority and legitimacy which are its refined forms. Authority is legitimised power. In view of this, politics can therefore be defined, from an ethical point of view, as a system that ensures the use of power responsibly to provide the good life for the people. Politics is associated with power. Power in itself is neutral. Power like the wind can only be known by its direction as dictated by the science of politics. Therefore the only ethical question about power is the responsibility of use of power which is politics.

However, the more complex, ambiguous and confounding question is: what does it mean to take part in politics? This raises the question of what constitutes politics. We would, for example, easily assume that activity within a political party or an organization which regards itself as a pressure group should count as politics or political activity. But what about activity in other sorts of organization, such as the Church, Professional Associations, Labour and Trade Union Associations, Women and Youth Associations, Social and Cultural Associations etc? Although not overtly political, these organizations set the context of politics given their active members' experiences and given that they are capable of overt political action if their interests or principles are threatened. In other words, Politics in its broad and dynamic perspectives can be seen as a process of adjustment and inter-play of power and interest within the public sphere of a society whether at a local, national or international levels. To participate in this process in any manner is to take some part in politics. Thus, whether an election or a referendum is lost; whether an opinion canvassed fails to carry the day all those on the losing side, not to say those on the winning side, are engaged in the act of politics and political participation. We must therefore note that that the use of the word politics here is by no means limited to acts of politicians or to those who occupy public offices either as elected or appointed officers or to card carrying members of Political Parties. The meaning is much wider than this.

In the Bible, a lot of injunctions abound in support of the above stand. Right from the Old Testament, the Exodus liberation story provides a paradigm. God says to Moses (Ex. 3:7ff), "I have seen the affliction of my people...I have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, known their suffering". The issue in question

is purely that of political and social oppression and subjugation. To these God says "I have come down to deliver them". If God himself intervenes politically to stop human oppression the Christian is equally exhorted to imitate him.

In Luke.4:18 Jesus says, "he has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, recovering of sight to the blinds, to set at liberty those who are oppressed". Jesus taught in parables and the parables were not mere stories but used as a confrontation to those who distort the law. In the Old Testament, we see the prophets criticizing the capitalist and extortionist tendencies of their own societies. Amos and Hosea are prominent in this direction. The church therefore should not only be spiritual but also human. The church, as Jesus and God did, must learn to show concern for human political problems. It must strive to solve human political problems. It must strive to create a humanly habitable society otherwise it would have failed in its mission to the world.

The Church cannot escape from power, for to escape from it, means to fail and to divorce itself from all human relationship since all human relationship involve power in one way or the other. Robinson even went to the extreme to opine that no life is possible without power. Since all human relationship can be viewed as a process of adjustment of interest and power position the church cannot avoid human relationship. It therefore cannot avoid the process of adjustment of power. The church cannot therefore condemn power and politics cannot be foreign to the church. The church must operate in politics with a deep sense of commitment, with a definite sense of ministry to the people. Since all human beings are born into an inescapable network of power we find ourselves in the vortex of power structures-

personal, domestic, social, ecclesiastical, political, industrial, economic, civilian and military powers. The church should be there to debunk any power intoxication since all these sphere of power have their impact on the freedom and rights we exercise. A living dynamic church should not opt out of politics.

St Paul, in Romans 13:3, testifies that “there is no authority but by act of God and the existing authorities are instituted by him...” It is therefore clear, from Christian revelation view point, that power, social or political is from God and therefore divine. The God of the church is the same God of politics, therefore to regard politics as a demonic God free zone is a distorted vision. In the words of Howard Crosby “to let politics become a cesspool and therefore avoid it is a double crime”. The church should know this. In fact, Kukah (1999:177) Quotes Pope Gregory the Great as follows:

A religious leader should be careful in deciding when to remain silent and be sure to say something useful when deciding to speak. In this way, he would avoid saying things that would better not be said, or leaving unsaid things that ought to be said... ill-advised silence can leave people in error when they could have been shown where they were wrong. Negligent religious leaders are often afraid to speak for fear of losing favour. With people... they are acting like hirelings, because hiding behind the wall of silence is like taking flight at the approach of a wolf.. If a religious leader is afraid to say what is right, what else can his silence mean but that he has taken flight? Whereas if he stands firm in defense of his flock, he is building up a wall for the house against its enemies. Anyone entering the priesthood accepts the office of herald and must by his words, prepared the way for the terrible judgment of the one who follows. If then the priest neglects his

preaching, what sort of warning cry can he, a dumb herald give? That is why the Holy Spirit settled on the first religious leaders in the form of tongues: because those whom he fills, he fills them with his own eloquence’

From the ongoing, it is logical to hold that the church must be in politics but not of politics. She must be in and 'above' politics. It is a matter of striking a balance, a harmony between pasture and grace and this requires a courageous church with adequate personnel and expertise; an adaptive foresighted and energetic church for a respectable role in politics.

Religious leaders cannot keep mute at a time when social change is nothing but that which is achievable within the framework of traditionally conservative norms, and when political and economic development are regarded as foolish ventures. Should the church be mouthing till eternity when the cherished future of a nation (Nigeria) is under the threat of secession? What is the anticipated duty of the church to the faithful in period of tyranny and oppression, in times of want and penury, in moments of pain and agony, in times of maiming and destruction, in periods of misery and regret, and when the sanctity of human life is being trampled upon with impunity? How should the people of God react to salient issues when the situation at hand involves how to replace resentment and frustration with laughter and joy, injustice and oppression with justice and reconciliation and separation and alienation with caring and sharing. What should the Church and religious leaders do in a situation where dictatorship overwhelms democracy, where the former has no other language but that of force and flaunting of ill-gotten wealth? Should religious leaders fold their arms and watch in times of state coercion, inhuman treatment and retro-active

laws, and as the faithful are being indoctrinated with new ideologies of confusion, poverty and madness?

The fall of communism in USSR, the Iranian revolution, events in the Philippines, China, Benin Republic, Congo, Malawi and South Africa should serve as relevant examples of what the church did or did not do when called upon by providence to act. In East Timor, an annexed country that demands independence, no fewer than half a million people have either been killed or hounded into exile. About one third of their building has been razed. It is to the eternal credit of the Catholic Bishop of Deili, Carlos Belo, a Nobel Peace laureate and victim of power-brokers' cleansing, that East Timorese are currently rejoicing in the fragile peace now reigning in the Latin American country.

El Salvador provides another good example of the place of the church in a situation of flagrant injustice and oppression. The church, which had hitherto allied with the rich men and the all-powerful military suddenly, woke up from her slumber to declare her "preferential option for the poor". Thus the 1968 proclamation and its 1979 reaffirmation became the church's focal point in requesting from the El Salvadorian power brokers a more just, social and economic system. In the midst of this struggle was Oscar Romero made the Archbishop of San Salvador. Romero saw the need to be on the side of the people and never to go to sleep when his people were awake to suffering and intimidation and, strengthened by the murder of Jesuit Rutillion Grande and many others, the church became firmly convinced that she should not wane in her support for the oppressed and repressed.

Even the once worrisome Germany had its own dose of the church's caring pills. In his response to Pius XII's refusal to meet Adolf Hilter, who was on a visit to Italy in 1938 at the invitation of Benito Mussolini, Martin Bornmann, an Adolf Hilter apologist, angrily, said: "We Germans are the first to be appointed by destiny to break with Christianity... our intention is not to raze the Cathedrals to the ground, but to fill them with a new ideology and with proclamations of a new faith." In ages past, the dogma of churches, alongside the absolutism of monarchies, the terror of dictatorships and the iron grip of totalitarianism had, in no small measure, contributed to the danger to people's liberty and happiness. Certainly, Nigerians no longer need religious bigotry or ethnic chauvinism. Without doubts, it is difficult to divorce religion from politics. Even in Britain, ascendancy to the throne and other important offices is strangely hinged on an Anglican background. When Jesus Christ urged his followers to "be in the world, but not of it", he never wished that his disciples should either be made scavengers or be turned into second class citizens wherever they chanced to be.

It is sad that the church is never criticized when, in times, of unrest and war, she renders only relief services to the homeless, the wounded and the prisoners of war and disasters. One wonders whether the only moral aspect of the church's duty is to provide shelter, food and other needs in times of war, without taking any precautionary measures to avert the wars that give rise to the need for such assistance. If the church offers spiritual and moral imperatives, what stops her from adding a little moral 'push' when necessary? If the leader refuses to hearken to the words of wisdom as contained in the churchmen's spiritual and moral advice what should be the next line of action? To maintain a *siddon look* approach or to 'Andrew out' of a suffering

sovereign state? If the people suffer and the Church is too constrained to act, where then lies the role of the Church?

A typical example of the active participation of the Church in politics was the action taken in 2007 by the Catholic Bishop of Nsukka diocese to ensure voter turnout for registration of voters. The Bishop made evidence of registration a condition for receiving sacramental services in the church. I still recall how the media, Local and international, reported this with a lot of relish under the heading "Bishop uses Religion to promote Democracy"

A church in politics must not lose her sense of mission and ministry. She will understand and particularly acknowledge that Christian and ecclesial ministry is opposed to dominion and domination and to selfish exploitation of power. The objective of the church in politics should be a humanitarian one. It has job of marrying politics and justice for the achievement of true peace and social harmony. The church has to participate in politics if she is to exhibit herself as sensitive to the problem of men. A policy of political withdrawal and isolationism will be committing itself to a course of political sterilization and to do this would be to mutilate and fetter the dimension of the mission of the church to the people and to society.

The church must be in politics to protect human dignity, rights and values. It must stand as an antidote to the anonymity of power. It should be the moral watch dog of the nation in politics. The presence of the church in politics as the conscience of the nation is necessary for nation building. It must be in politics if an instrument of common good is to be maintained. The presence

of the Church in politics does not require any further justification as interest in and the quest for the common good render this necessary. The role of the church should be determined by factors of time place and historical contingency. We note the Pope's statement in Vatican II, the W.C.C. in sending funds to Liberation Movements in Anglo, South Africa, the action of the Catholic Bishops in Philippines during the Marcos affair, the Church in South Africa and the role of Desmond Tutu in truth and reconciliation panel which reconciled South Africans to themselves.

On the whole politics in our land require the presence of the Church for the restoration of human dignity, liberty, justice rights and values. The form and extent of this vehement will depend on the maturing of the Church. The Church can serve God and the people of God without any detriment to religion.

Social Justice

Very closely related to the issue of politics is the Church's attitude to issues of social justice. Admittedly, issues of social justice and politics overlap and are sometimes the same and the Church's attitude to it ought not to differ from its attitude to politics. Orjinta (1998) has spoken of the need of the Catholic Church to engage issues in Nigerian society.

The church has, of course, always been involved in assuaging the physical ills and miseries of mankind (compare Jesus' reaction to social/physical ills). Through the centuries, the Church would establish their presence together with building of hospitals, orphanages, homes for the aged and infirm, while orders of monks, nuns, priests and brothers, were devoted to the corporal works of mercy. Typically, any mission almost automatically had

attached to it a clinic or dispensary where medical aid was rendered to those in need of it. Hence, there is nothing usual about the church's concern for mankind. But the complexity of modern life has added new dimensions to the problems plaguing mankind. Hospitals, orphanages, etc. are still needed but in addition the overall social problems of the world are demanding attention as problems of such dimensions that a new philosophy is desperately needed to solve them. In the past, it used to be concerned with treating symptoms and results. Now it should prepare herself to attack the causes. For instance, to take of a child whose parents have been killed in a Boko Haram attack is good but in this way only the symptom gets treated but to fight and eliminate the attacks, the Church must join hands with all concerned to eliminate the root cause of the attacks. This should be the Christian way.

It is worthy to note that the World Council of Churches also expresses the same concern as the Vatican. This concern is borne out of the biblical image of Shalom, which is a condition of wholeness and harmony, peace, justice, righteousness, of healing and salvation, of freedom, prosperity and well being. This concept stands in stark contrast to the many conditions of life in which we find ourselves today and which are the results of injustice, oppression, racism, sexism, conflict and war. While there is no biblical blueprint for a foreign or global policy, the vision of shalom is placed before the church as a challenge and God continues to stir up people (the church) who take fresh initiatives and help create the conditions of peace as enshrines in shalom.

Hence social justice is no longer to be a textbook phrase or a moral statement of policy by church officials. It is in this respect that Dr Saale's Ph. D research entitled 'Christianity and Conflict Resolution in the Niger Delta: The Ogoni Case' becomes relevant in assessing the practical involvement of the church in social issues. Every individual Christian must involve himself wholeheartedly in every area of human concern where injustice prevails. At that level, a society cannot afford to be adamantly aloof to social issues around it. The Church being within the society, is influenced by social issues and these directly or indirectly affect the spiritual part. For example, one who is degraded socially and otherwise and who does not even possess the fundamental human rights of which freedom of religion is one can hardly attain or sustain his spiritual excellence.

It is in this context that I place the Ph. D research done by one of my former Ph. D students Rev. Dr. David Ononogbu on **Youth Unemployment and the Social Responsibility of the Church in Nigeria**. This study brought to the fore the inevitable role of the Church in addressing societal problems. It identified models for the involvement of the Church in addressing unemployment among the youth. It appreciated that in the contemporary Nigerian socio-political space there is a bulging youth population and the structures and efforts of government are inadequate, thereby explaining the high level of youth unemployment. While this problem continues to appear intractable, the rates of youth anti-social and violent crimes have also become alarming. The study demonstrated that the church has a fundamental and practical interventionist capacity in the public space and provided a platform to evaluate how the church currently engages the public space.

There are many areas where the church is currently doing something to support the less-privileged, including the sick, widows and the unemployed. Yet, the church lacks a national empowerment policy for young people. It equally noted the social theology approach of Christological engagement. The research underscored the fact that youth unemployment is generally more severe than unemployment among adults due to certain youth-specific factors and constraints. Against this backdrop, government efforts have proven inadequate and the challenge is that all hands, including that of the church, must come on deck to address the problem. The study proposed a social theology of Christological engagement and social action evangelism as the praxis for intervention as it is a viable model for directing and sustaining the active role of the church in the socio-political realm.

The Ph. D studies done by Rev. Dr. Princewill Ireoba on 'The Old Testament Concept of Poverty and its application to the Contemporary Nigerian Church'; by Rev Fr. Dr. Martin Onukwuba on 'Crises of Democracy and Elections in Nigeria in the Light of the Good Shepherd Discourse in John 10:11-15'; by Dr. Fabian Nnadi on 'Christianity, God Fatherism and Democracy in Nigeria' have made significant contributions on the issues of Politics and Social Justice in society.

On the whole, the church in a dynamic society will do all it can to socialize the individual, to promote social solidarity, foster stability in society, establish personal rights and status, flourish fellowship, support morality, exercise social control, provide social welfare and philanthropic needs, provide economic educational and medical services. There lies the social dimension of the mission of the church. The consequences of

this commitment of the church are staggering to contemplate. Such pressure by millions and millions of Christians would yield, to a new age of reminiscent. Such is the benefit of the church's involvement in political and social justice because as the Church herself admonishes, a helping hand is much better than a praying lips.

Religion, Science and Technology

The Concept of Science

Science means knowledge which is obtained through careful and systematic observation and testing of facts. Science deals with experiments with a view to establishing facts (Odedele and Egotanwa 1999). Science is a process which is used to probe a phenomenon in order to understand causes and effects as well as relationship between them. Science consequently gives rise to general principles, theories, laws which lead to a better world through improved conditions of man in his society. Science is knowledge based on observed facts and tested truths arranged in an orderly system. Science therefore comprises only of knowledge capable of being validated and communicated to others (Barnhant, 1995:312).

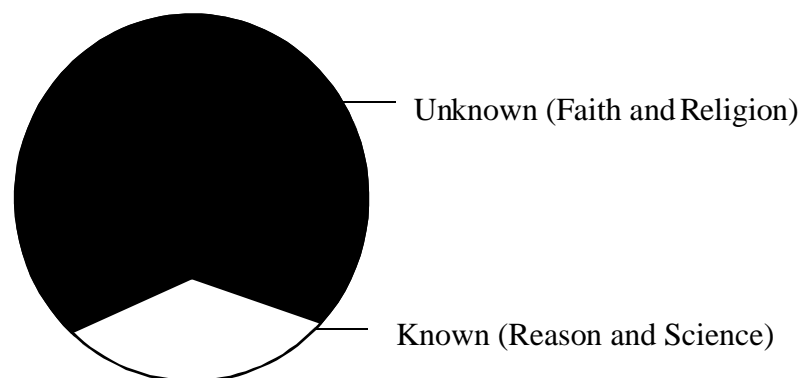
The Relationship Between Religion and Science

From definitions of both religion and science, it appears that the central relationship between religion and science is that while one is understood to have capacity for dealing with the 'unknown', the other is said to deal with the 'known'. They (religion and science) are therefore two pillars, which although parallel to each other support the same house (structure) to the extent that should anyone of them get so weakened that it does no longer provide any support to the house, the house faces the danger of imminent collapse no matter how much stronger the other pillar has grown in its support. It is in recognition of this complementary role between religion and science that Martin Luther King Jr. asserted that while Science investigates, religion interprets, science gives man knowledge which is power; religion gives man wisdom which is control. Science deals mainly with facts, religion deals mainly with values. The two are not rivals.

They are complementary. Science keeps religion from sinking into the valley of crippling irrationalism and paralyzing obscurantism. Religion prevents science from falling into the mash of obsolete materialism and moral nihilism. They may appear to the ordinary eye as competitive goods but in reality they are as complimentary as a car and petrol.

It is perhaps as a result of the 'competitive' aspect of the complementary role played by religions and science that has sometimes made their relationship to be characterized by controversy and mutual suspicion. In this sense, the relationship could be described as competitive as the proverbial relationship between the cat and the mouse. Given the competitive aspects of their complementary roles the mutual suspicion which has characterized the relationship between science and religion is not surprising because as we know, competitive goods are always competing for an upper hand in the demand graph of final consumers. We may take a practical illustration to drive home this point. Let us take meat and fish as competitive goods. Mr. A has only N2000.00 to spend on both meat and fish. If on getting to the shop where he is to make purchases and for one reason or the other he buys meat worth N1800.00 he can only buy fish worth N200.00 for the same day. The same misfortune will befall the demand for meat if Mr. A reverses and buys fish worth N1800.00. If there are many who behave like Mr. A in our first example, it means that the demand for fish will nose-dive and may in fact make fish appear less fashionable and desirable than it used to be. But in the case of religion and science the consumer needs both religion and science as they are at the end of the day complementary and not competitive.

Religion and science being 'competitively complementary' goods are bound to compete on how much of the total money in the buyers' pocket will be attracted to their respective sides. Religion wants people on its side and so does science. This is especially so if we reflect on our earlier comment that while one is understood to deal with the 'unknown' the other deals with the 'known'. If we conceive the 'unknown' and 'known' aspects as one big whole which it is, it will be seen that one can limit the extent of the other. Let us represent the whole as a circle divided into two with one marked religion ('unknown') and the other marked science ('known'). For better understanding we shall take the unknown part as the part covered by faith (Religion) and the known part as the part covered by reason (Science).



In the circle, the unknown part is bigger because naturally what human beings are yet to have precise scientific knowledge about is much more than what is already known. At the onset of the world, the area known is always smaller than the unknown areas. It is undoubtedly so of every pursuit of knowledge and understanding. We move from the known to the unknown. The known part of the circle comprises of those things that can already be explained by reason that is by science and the

scientific method. For the unknown part, which is bigger, religion and faith provide succor in the absence of rational (Scientific) understanding (or as it sometimes happens over rationalization) of the phenomenon involved; so that instead of leaving man hopeless and helpless, hope and help come from religion to take control.

However, a corollary to what we have said above is that the size of each part of the circle is not stagnant or permanent. While the smaller part of the circle (the known) has the potential of increasing its size as more precise scientific body of knowledge infiltrate, intrude and 'conquer' the large part of the circle (the unknown), the unknown part has the potential of decreasing its size as some parts of the unknown gradually fall into to the known part. The mutual suspicion existing between religion and science is therefore inevitable as religion naturally fights back the intrusion and infiltration, which reduces its size and sphere of influence.

As knowledge about some aspects of life become certain religion looses grip and control over those aspects. In Africa, for instance, there was a time when almost all ailments were understood to be caused by some evil spiritual forces which usually manifest through various media including witches and wizards. After being informed of the cause(s) the African would usually end up with a lot of sacrifices aimed at making the ailment to disappear. But as scientific medical knowledge continued to improve and to explain many of these ailments, the first port of call when those ailments come changed from the diviner's or pastor's house to the hospital therefore reducing the influence of religion.

What is being said is that what determines whether allegiance is paid to religion or science when there is a problem is largely dependent upon what the victim or those around him understand to be the causative agents. If for the absence of knowledge, malaria is interpreted as arising from witchcraft instead of mosquito related agents then religion dictates the course to be followed in seeking the cure. But if otherwise, science then dictates what steps to follow in pursuing the cure. That is why those who live in the world where the causality of malaria is taken to be from witchcraft will ask a question entirely different if not opposite the one that would be asked by those who live in the world where the causality of malaria is taken to be from mosquitoes related agents. For the one, malaria equals to witchcraft. For instance, a Pentecostal pastor will put the following question to a person who complains about unceasing headache and cold: "have you prayed about it. But the other for whom malaria equals to mosquito related agents will put a different question, namely, "have you seen a doctor".

The truth is that as things become more granted and certain, following a matter of course formula, the sphere of the circle, or in fact of life controlled by religion will continue to decrease. As this progresses, fewer and fewer people will be counting on religion for those aspects of their life they regard as certain and guaranteed. In a seminar, held sometime in April 1999, the question arose as to what is the explanation for the following sets of facts: while Africa is becoming more religious America and Europe are becoming less and less religious yet things are not working well in African societies.

The explanation to the above situation has been provided by what was said about the fact that when almost everything in life is certain and guaranteed, the erroneous thinking that you need religion not for daily survival as such but only for eternity comes in. In Europe and America, many things in daily life are almost guaranteed and certain. If you work, your salary is guaranteed and will certainly come at the appropriate time. You do not therefore need prayer or religion in order to receive your salary after working. In Africa, in Nigeria you do need prayers asking God to make your employer benevolent enough to pay your salary after you have worked for it. If you are an artisan who needs electric power supply to work and thereby earn a living you are certain of a guaranteed power supply if you live in America or Europe. If you are in Nigeria (and many parts of Africa) you need very fervent prayers asking God to touch the heart of both the material and human factors connected with public power supply. If your salary is not paid or there is no power supply to enable you work and earn a living there is no doubt that religion and prayer will be your most potent response. There are innumerable examples of the uncertainty of life in Africa which makes the African more and more religious with religion providing the only hope which actually makes it possible for the deprived to remain alive perhaps instead of committing suicide or indeed killing others as an alternative response to hardship.

This uncertainty which is another word for the unknown is the area controlled by religion and faith. Conversely, the certainty which characterizes many aspects of American and European daily life makes them less religious than their African counterparts. This certainty is the known and that explains why while in Europe and America almost every church is being used as a warehouse (resulting from uncontrolled decrease in church

membership), in Africa every warehouse is being used as a church (resulting from uncontrollable increase in church membership).

However, the danger is that in embracing scientific knowledge and its application, human beings erroneously think and act as if religion has become old fashioned and useless yet the most advanced societies have not been spared the corresponding challenges of developed societies. If your society is not ravaged by unemployment and poverty it may be ravaged by drug abuse, if it is not ravaged by disease it may be ravaged by instability in family life through separations/divorces, if it is not ravaged by corruption it may be ravaged by floods, tsunami and tornadoes, windstorm and cyclones, if it is not ravaged by drought and hunger it may be ravaged by depression and suicide. Human problems are never completely eliminated by scientific advancement and economic empowerment. Human problems are unending and will remain so until 'thy kingdom come'.

Religion needs to remain in control of lives but our attitudes to scientific knowledge makes this difficult and for this reason religion and science are pitched in a mutual unending conflict as science daily battles to reduce the areas controlled by religion by cutting some parts of the unknown into the known. When science charts a new course of knowledge, religion responds in many cases by challenging the new scientific finding or outrightly rejecting it as untrue, misleading, devilish, immoral and unacceptable. To be fair to religion, many a time, the ethical implications of some scientific assertions are frightening. For instance, the concept of human cloning entails the danger of duplicating human beings of any desired quality-bad or good. Bill Clinton, speaking as United States President, referred to it as "a morally reprehensible act"

The battle between science and technology has been fought on many fronts since the 17th century but one of the most recent has to do with the science of cloning. Although there has been cloning experiments relating to plants what jolted the world was the announcement by Willmot, a Scientist, that he has successfully cloned a sheep, which he named Dolly, from the cell of an adult sheep. This revelation drew attention to the reality that if scientists are left completely on their own, they will begin to clone human beings. The real shock came when Dr. Richard Seed, a physicist from Chicago, U.S.A., announced that within eighteen months he would develop the world's first human clone from an adult cell using the same techniques as those used to produce Dolly, the sheep. In fact, he vowed to continue his work in Mexico if the U.S. congress obstructs it.

The reason why religion has condemned human cloning is obvious. First, it challenges the belief that God creates and endows human beings as he thinks fit. Human beings would begin on their own to decide which endowment they will bestow or remove from fellow human beings. A further implication is that it would also make it possible for man to choose whether to clone a moral or amoral person, tall or short, slim or fat, beautiful or ugly and indeed able or disabled. One can even choose to clone amoral rather than moral persons. According to social Criminologists, one of the many theories of crime the demonological theory crime can be devil caused and may be perpetrated by people who not by their own fault are possessed by demons. The science of cloning may choose to clone demon possessed human beings and thereby unleash them on society. In fact, it is dreadful to contemplate the ethical implications of human cloning. As earlier mentioned, Bill Clinton, speaking as President of United States of America, condemned this science of human cloning as "a morally reprehensible act".

In spite of the heat generated by the controversy between religion and science many insist as we have observed earlier that religion and science are not just competitive goods but more importantly complementary goods. This means that if you buy one you necessarily need to buy the other if each to be optimally useful in life. Those who think that religion and science are fundamentally irreconcilable are wrong as those who think that religion is old fashioned and useless or that science is essentially distractive and evil or so superior that nothing else should be regarded. What is more, the Scientist must realize that there are other truths in addition to , if not beyond, scientific truths. The proper position is that of those who insist that there can be no genuine conflict between religion and science since each, in the main, assists and responds to human problems.

Religion, Peace, and Security

Peace is defined by the Longman Dictionary of contemporary English as “a condition in which there is no war between two or more nations; a period in which there is no war, a state of freedom from disorder within a country with the citizens living according to the law, a state of agreement or friendliness among people living and working together...” (Procter, 2008:799)

One impression, which emerges from the above definition, is that peace means the absence of war *simpliciter*. Fortunately it has been realized in recent times that peace does not just mean the absence of war between people or nations but the presence of warm, good and positive relationship between and among peoples, nations and continents.

Peace, the second Vatican council says “is not merely the absence of war. Nor can it be reduced solely to be maintenance of a balance of power between enemies. Nor is it brought about by dictatorship. Instead, it is rightly and appropriately called, an enterprise of Justice (Isaiah 32:7). Peace results from that harmony built into human society by its divine founder and actualized by men as they thirst after ever-greater justice” (Ilogu, 1985:6). The above is the peace that would make the world a better place to inhabit and such, is the one that the religions of the world seek. Every religion preaches 'peace' peace with oneself, peace with others and peace with God. Unfortunately, there is hardly any peace in our society today.

The Crises of Peace in the World

The world in which we are is often said to be a global village. The implication of the above assertion is that whatever happens in

one part of the world not only be easily known but may even quickly spread and affect other parts of the world within the shortest possible time. There are various ways through which this globalization takes place. Science and Technology have made the world to be very small with its attendant problems. The bombing of the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in America by terrorists, which was beamed to the world as it was taking place is a typical example. This generated instant reactions from both enemies and friends of America. While the enemies were rejoicing over the calamity, their friends were sad. Each side then started to plan their next line of action immediately. The world had had cause to be involved in one crisis or the other at various times. These crises had led to the two world wars and the recent gulf war between the allied forces (led by America) and Iraq over the forceful annexation of the Oil rich Kuwait by Iraq. Social contract theorists have long observed that, "Life in the state of nature was solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short." The above statement shows that since creation, the world has all the years been bedeviled with conflicts. Every human being lives with other human beings in the same world. These human beings that inhabit the world have different views about things, different desires etc. the result of these desires without the corresponding proper means of achieving them makes the world and social life fraught with conflicts and violence. The implications are obvious as they result in the war of every man against every man. This has of course been affecting the world over the years.

Following the emergence of the defunct Soviet Union as a superpower at about 1945, the climate of international relations became fraught with threats of nuclear war: Military technology was inevitably developed with unprecedented rapidity.

Dangerous weapons that could easily annihilate the human race were massively produced in military industries of the two global powers namely United States of America and USSR. This was to achieve the position of super actor in the event of any conflict involving the use of weapons.

Prior to the rise of the Soviet Union to a global power position after the Second World War, America was the only global power because of her monopoly of superior military weapons, and a rich economy with which she influenced the course of her relations with other States. Thus, immediately after the 1917 October revolution of the Socialist in Russia, the government of the United States of America adopted a hostile stand towards the new Soviet State, which off course led to serious world crises. There was a divide in the world as some supported America while other supported the new Soviet Union.

Even the celebrated collapse of the Soviet Union which many hoped would automatically bring peace to the world hardly made a difference. Generally, the unhealthy rivalries that characterized international relations unavoidably limited the areas of co-operation between States. The international environment as a result has been full of suspicions and threats of nuclear war and even actual wars and other forms of crises including "Cold wars" and terrorism. Many reports from all parts of the World show how deep terrorism has taken over the world threatening peaceful living and co-existence. Different parts of the world have been engaged in one crisis or the other at various times. These crises arise from a number of reasons including selfishness, greediness, abuse of trust, political struggle, imposition of self will, communication gap between the government and the governed, leadership tussle, racial

discrimination, ethnicity etc. History is replete with several reports of such crises around the world including Bosnia Herzegovina, Liberia, Somalia, Mozambique, Afghanistan, Egypt, Syria, Israel, Palestine etc and indeed most parts of Africa. Nations that have been involved in such crises have suffered monumental losses. Yet crises have continued to abound in Egypt, Syria, Iran, Sudan, Southern Sudan and Nigeria.

The Crises of Peace in Nigeria

The first major sign of conflict which brought about tension among Nigerians came on the heels of the 15th January 1966 coup led by Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu, a young military officer of Igbo origin.

The killings that epitomized that coup gave rise to feelings of mutual suspicion among the ethnic groups in Nigeria. In fact, it was this mutual suspicion that gave rise to the killing of uncountable number of civilians mainly of Igbo origin forcing a few who survived the pogrom to relocate from the northern part of Nigeria to the east their homeland. The implication of this was that although the Igbo people are Nigerians, they became *persona non-grata* in the North. In quick response, the eastern region made up of majority of Igbo people declared a republic known as Biafra for themselves. The rest of Nigerians led by the Northern led Federal government declared a war on Biafra. Although the war ended just in 30 months, the crisis of peace in Nigeria has never abated since then.

While it is true that this crises of peace appeared to have reached their crescendo during the military regime especially under Babangida and Abacha things have continued to get worse. The

recent crisis, in the polity started from the restiveness of the Niger Delta region where youths of the region unable to reconcile the wealth the region gives the nation with the impoverishment which the region lives in took to arms and violence that created anxiety, tension and conflict. The rash response of the Abacha government leading to the execution of Ogoni leaders, led by Ken Saro Wiwa, and popularly referred to as Ogoni Nine after what many saw as an over-reaching Judicial kangaroo trial. This not only exacerbated the crisis in the Niger Delta region but also culminated in the formation of an ethnic militia known as Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) who pursued this emancipation through violent means/methods. MEND made the Niger Delta insecure peaceless and unpeaceable environment.

Arising from such bottled up tension across the country and the activities of MEND ethnic militias were formed across the regions of the nation whose major goal has clearly shown to be to effect violent changes. The events arising from this situation and which depict the crises of peace just in this one part of Nigeria and only for the year 2000 was variously reported and compiled as at 2001 when this study was done. The report as compiled by Young is as follows:

It was reported by the Nigerian press that on the 14th of March, 2000 armed youths occupied Shell Oil company building in Lagos and held hostage 30 Nigerian employees and four guards of the Anglo-Dutch-owned company. No group claimed responsibility and it took a serious force such as that of the Nigeria army to overcome the group on March 15 releasing the 34 hostages.

On the 7th of April, 2000 armed militants kidnapped 40 persons including 15 French and 10 Korean citizens from residences belonging to EIF Oil Company in Port Harcourt according to press reports. The 40 hostages were released unharmed several hours later. Although no one claimed responsibility it was suspected that the kidnapping was carried out by disgruntled landowners.

On 18th June, 2000 press reported how in the Niger Delta region armed militants kidnapped 22 Nigerian citizens and two unidentified foreign nationals working for chevron, a U.S.-owned oil company. The militants later released the two foreign nationals and four Nigerians, No one claimed responsibility.

On 13th July 2000, the press reported that armed youths stormed two oil drilling rigs, taking 165 persons hostage. The hostages include 145 Nigerians, seven US citizens, five Britons, eight Australian and Lebanese national. All were employed by service contractors of Shell Oil Company. No one claimed responsibility but the gunmen were believed to be ethnic Ijaw. On 4th August all hostage were released unharmed.

The above is just a few of the cases of the crises of peace in just one part of Nigeria in just one year that the press was able to record. The data gives an induction that peace has been an elusive condition in Nigeria in particular and the world in general.

The problem of ethnic militia and their activities has brought numerous crises in Nigeria. There is also religious intolerance. The negative activities of groups like the Odua people's congress, Bakassi Boys, Egbesu, Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Arewa Peoples Congress etc have been on the increase. The Tiv and Jukun crises

have claimed lives in its wake especially the lives of 19 soldiers sent to keep peace. The Jos religious crisis shows the situations the nations is passing through. The introduction of the Sharia legal system in some northern states, nearly brought the country to a standstill. In Kaduna, the class between Muslims & Christians led to the loss of about 1,000 lives.

On July 6, 1967, a revolutionary gunshot was heard signaling the start of the Nigerian civil but genocidal war. This war lasted for about two and half years. Beyond public pronouncements in condemnation of the civil war, the Churches made concerted efforts to bring succor to the embattled Biafran people. The church embarked upon campaigns of mediation making several trips abroad to appeal to international humanitarian agencies to come to the rescue of the Biafrans. Consequently, food, clothing, and drugs, were donated in large quantity by such humanitarian bodies as UNICEF, WHO UNESCO, WCC and the RED CROSS SOCIETY.

It should be noted that long before the outbreak of the war, Christian leaders campaigned vigorously with a view to nipping the eventual hostilities in the bud. On March 21, 1967, a delegation of Church leaders made up of representative of the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Communion, the Methodist, the Presbyterian Church and the Salvation Army called on the then military Head of State, Col. Yakubu Gowon (as the then was). The aim of this visit was to appeal to the head of the military government to see reason and vote for peace.

On February, 4, 1969, bishops from both sides of the divide rose from an Episcopal Conference with a declaration of their avowed stand on dialogue between the two warring parties.

In order to alleviate the sufferings of the helpless civilians on the Biafran side, the Church got Caritas International, a humanitarian organization, to help. Food and medication were sent in by this agency in abundance. Among the Biafrans, the name Caritas suddenly, became synonymous with life.

Worthy of mention is the fact that while that war lasted, with the government forces bulldozing their way through Biafra, the Church was “underground” as it were, fighting the real battle against hunger, disease and despondency.

When the situation in Biafra appeared very hopeless and everybody in the country seemingly abandoned the easterners, the local church and the Christian world stood by them. This was of course made possible by the powerful backing, which they got from the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Vatican.

The last visit of Pope John Paul II to Nigeria was historic. The pontiff's message during the visit was very simple and clear: an appeal to the Military junta to mend its human rights record. The Pope's audacious pronouncements rattled the Abacha- led military Junta culminating in the maximum ruler's promise to release political prisoners. The pontiff appealed to the Abacha government to expedite action in finding solution to the country's numerous socio-political problems.

The eventual demise of Sani Abacha and the fall of that regime have been attributed to the military strong man's stubborn stance to the Pope's appeal. Anyway this is just the presumption of a section of Nigerians. However, Gen Abacha's fate seemed to have influenced the subsequent regime of Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar as it towed the line of peace, releasing political

prisoners. In addition, he handed over to civilians in a very short time, the shortest in the history of Nigeria transition to civil rule programme.

Religious organization are not keeping quite in the wake of all these crises. The Pentecostal fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), recently issued a statement to that effect aimed at achieving peace. The statement as signed by its president, Dr. Mike Okonkwo read inter alia:

The spate of ethnic and religious violence and the kid gloves with which the federal government is handling the matter is fast sending dangerous signals to this nascent democracy. PFN has noted that oftentimes, the federal government is quick to take very hard decisions on helpless civilians whenever there is social unrest in areas that are predominantly inhabited by Christians. For instance, the destruction of Odi town in Rivers State (in the early days of this administration) and the recent massacre in Benue State tend to propagate partiality if we are to seriously consider the damage, which Sharia has caused to date in the North.

The statement went further to add:

Relatedly, we want to reiterate our call on the federal government to check all the excess of Islamic hoodlums who parade themselves as Jihadists. We have received report of plans to destabilize the country via protests in various states with Lagos as a hotbed... We are, therefore, calling on the federal government to do everything possible to call these Jihadists to order, so as to avoid a looming crisis.

The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), the umbrella organization of all Christian in Nigeria have risen in condemnation of the crisis.

On the home front, during the General Sani Abacha years, different religions in Nigeria, especially Christianity and Islam held series of meetings together aimed at bringing sanity, stability and peace to Nigeria. In one of such meetings, Emmanuel Gbonigi, Anglican Bishop of Akure insisted that the military must pave way for peace. Rev. Father Mathew Kukah of the Catholic Secretariat, Lagos (now Bishop of Catholic Diocese of Sokoto) asked for the release of all detainees and a fundamental restructuring of the military in order to achieve the much desired peace. Lateef Adegbite, Secretary of the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islami Affairs, (SCIA) was among those who called for a government of National unity to ensure that peace reigned.

The view has been commonly expressed that if the gaps between the various religions of the world are narrowed down through dialogue and inter faith worships and conferences, the inter religious conflicts that are ravaging different parts of the world can be stemmed. Chukwulozie (1982) who worked a lot in the area of inter-religious dialogue drew many other scholars in that direction leading Akwanya (1999) to edit a book on inter-religious dialogue. The world religious conference of the sort held in Jordan is usually a platform for advancing the notion that all religions have the same objective and destiny, and profess the same truth, though couched in different languages and cultural dispositions.

The foregoing has been an attempt at taking a critical look at the efforts made so far by many religious bodies in the world to bring peace in the face of antagonistic tendencies of man.

The Role of Religion in the Search for Peace

A social commentator has described the age in which we are as "an age of perpetual conflict and turmoil (Kraemer, 1938:393). To this end, many countries of the world have not known peace for many years. It is this reason that necessitated the formation of many international organizations whose objectives were and still are the maintenance of world peace and security (Vivienne, 1990:261)

The League of Nations, formed in the wake of world wars was designed with the prevention of the previous war in mind. The organization worked assiduously to see that peace and the respect for the fundamental rights of man prevailed during the Second World War which lasted from 1939 to 1945. The end of the war saw the birth of so many international humanitarian organization whose objectives were similar to those of the league of Nations the prevention of war and maintenance of peace. Prominent among some of those organization were NATO. (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) THE UNITED NATIONS (UN) and various non-governmental organizations (NGO'S). These organizations have in recent times played mediatory and humanitarian roles in seeming intractable conflicts such as the Iraqi war, the Arab-Israeli war, the conflict in Apartheid South Africa, the Namibia struggle for self determination, the Nigerian Civil war and the Liberian war, just to name but a few.

Latin America is made up of countries of South and Central America and West Indies in which Spanish, Portuguese and French are freely spoken. These third world countries, like their African counterparts, have never known real peace, "From Peru to Brazil and Guatemala, it has been tales of woes: hunger, struggle against racial and gender bigotry: and every form of man's inhumanity against fellow man (Chukwulozie, 1991:11).

The political developments in these enclaves have caused the Church serious embarrassment. To the Church in Latin America, it is scandalous for a "Catholic continent" to be immersed deep down in sin. A conference of Latin American Bishops in the City of Medellin, Colombia, in 1968 acknowledged and expressed shock over the level of poverty and servitude engendered by institutionalized violence. The resultant communiqué of the Episcopal conference sounded very revolutionary. The Bishops in unequivocal terms condemned the institutionalized violence in the continent; opposed perpetual dependency of Latin America's economy on North American economy and reinstated their commitment to the aspirations of the oppressed people of the continent. During an Episcopal Conference in 1971, the Peruvian bishops noted: Like other natives of the world, we are victims of system exploit our national resources, control our political decisions and impose upon us the cultural domination of their consumer civilization... At a similar conference in Puebla, Mexico, Latin American Bishops expressed their solidarity with the poor and the oppressed.

On March 31, 1994 Pope John Paul II, embarked upon a 13- day tour of Latin America. The trip was the Pope's eight visit to Latin America and the longest of his papacy and was described by Vatican officials as a pastoral pilgrimage to commemorate the

1984 Vatican mediated settlement of the Beagle channel dispute between Argentina and Chile.

During a Church festival in Buenos Aires attended by 450,000 people on April 11, 1994, Pope John Paul reportedly made his first reference to the "dirty war: urging: may there be no more kidnapping of victims and disappeared people". In an open air mass in Melo, Uruguay, the Pope emphasized the need for social justice and gave his support to trade unions.

In Bolivia, the poorest country in Latin America, (after Haid), the Pope in an apparent reference to liberation theology, labeled any theological deviations as "dangerous" but went on to say that priests should play an active role in denouncing evil and injustice. While on a visit to Cochamhaha and Oruru, the main cocaine producing areas, he criticized the gulf between rich and poor in Bolivia, as well as the levels of infant mortality, malnutrition, unemployment and illiteracy.

After visiting Sucre, Bolivia's constitutional capital, and Santa Cruz on May 12, 1987, the pontiff called for reconciliation between the political forces on the right and on the left through the acceptance of the church's teaching. On his arrival in Paraguay John Paul Pope II, held an open air mass at the Nu Guaz Park where he commented on the unfair distribution of land in Paraguay. He appealed for liberty, justice and democratic participation and of the moral cleansing of Paraguay.

The pontiff was generally described as an Apostle of Peace. He was the most widely travelled of all the Popes. In fact, the pope, as at last count, has so far made about 55 trips outside the Vatican-all in a bid to spread the message of peace and reach out

to all those whose lot have become pain, servitude and misery. On the African scene, using Nigeria as a case study, the church's peace and humanitarian initiatives have been glaringly demonstrated.

THE BOKO HARAM SECURITY CRISES

What we have rehashed above is now not only history but a child's play in the face of the unending security challenges posed by the Boko Haram violence. Boko Haram formed about 2002 started with minor and pockets of disturbances and killings in the North Eastern state of Borno about 2009. Soon, they became more sophisticated especially after the killing of their leader Mohammed Yusuf. Boko Haram, which means "Western education is sinful" in the Hausa language, is loosely modeled on Afghanistan's Taliban and the al Qaeda. It has claimed responsibility for bombing churches, police stations, military facilities, banks and beer parlours in the mainly Muslim north of Nigeria. This group widely acclaimed as an Islamic sect/group demands among other things, the enthronement of the Sharia Law in its fullness across all the states of the North in spite of the fact that non-Muslims form a large percentage of the people living in the area.

It is in this context that I place the completed Ph.D research entitled: A Critical Analysis of Human Rights in Nigeria's Islamic Sharia Praxis: Implications for the Nation's Constitutional Democracy (1999–2011) by my former student Rev. Fr. Dr. Kenneth Oraegbunam. The study, among other things, established that, theoretically, provisions on human rights are contained in the sources of sharia. However, it is revealed that the practical implementation of sharia law violates, among

others, some fundamental rights such as the right of minorities to practise the religion of their choices, the right to life, and the right to be free from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, which attitudes in turn, violate Nigeria's international human rights obligations. This work found out that the victims especially the minorities have sometimes reacted to this violation of their rights with violence, which incident had occasioned inter-religious conflicts that have claimed thousands of lives and property worth huge amount of money since the adoption of the recent sharia regime in 1999. This research equally very convincing in its insistence that in a multi-religious country like Nigeria, unlike in pure Islamic countries like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, jurisdictional freedom of sharia enforcement to personal aspects would be harmful to the growth and sustenance of democracy and to nation building efforts in Nigeria. The projections of this study is already manifest in current senseless killing of Nigerians by this group.

The sect initially focused its attacks mostly on the police, military and government, but has now increased its attacks on Christian institutions. It says it is fighting enemies who have wronged its members through violence, arrests or economic neglect and corruption. The Boko Haram sect has killed at least 935 people since it launched an uprising in 2009, including more than 250 in the first weeks of 2012. The nature of this violence un-anticipatable, widespread, multi-directional, dastardly, senseless, fatalistic and most worrisome suicidal has made our security agencies helpless. Just between January 2011 and April 2012 Nigeria has recorded over scores of terrorist oriented attacks in various parts of the country especially in the North from the Boko Haram group. Let us take a brief look at the spate of Boko Haram attacks between 2009 and April 2012

In July 2009 the sect launched an uprising in the northeast in which more than 800 people were killed in five days of fighting with security forces. Before this incidence, there had been other attacks in Maiduguri, the Borno state capital in which over 100 people mostly the militants were killed. In fact, it is estimated that 550 people were killed in 115 separate attacks by Boko Haram mostly in the far north-eastern state of Borno in 2011.

Among the series of killings and bombings by the group are the attacks on police headquarters, churches and mosques in the town of Damaturu, Yobe state capital that led to the massacre and killing of more than 90 persons in November 2011 (Roggio:2011).

On December 25, 2011 the Boko Haram sect carried out the most dastardly attack on Christian worshipers in Suleja. The Christmas day havoc in St. Theresa Catholic Church, Madalla in Suleja, which left scores of people dead was wrecked by a Boko haram suicide bomber (Yusuf et al (2011). More than 25 people were killed, 13 cars burnt and nine apartments shattered by explosions at the frontage of St. Theresa's Catholic Church in the town. They were families of three, four and five.

Three families were burnt to death in their vehicles, after boarding to depart the church. Four motorcyclists (a.k.a. Okada riders) were killed, their bikes becoming heaps of crushed metals premises.



The frontage of Saint Theresa Church, Mandalla in Suleja after the bombing



Similarly, another Catholic church in the city of Jos was bombed in February 2012 leaving two people dead and many others wounded (Orsbon: 2012). As if to restate that the church was one of its most targeted enemies Boko Haram fighters bombed and attacked nine churches in Damaturu. More than 90 people may have been killed during the battles in Damaturu and Potiskum. On January 20, 2012 bomb attacks and gun battles in Nigeria's second largest city, Kano, killed 186 people in Boko Haram's most deadly attack to date.

The group has claimed responsibility for the recent bombings at offices of major Nigerian newspapers in Abuja and neighbouring Kaduna state and warned of more such attacks. The bombings, which took place on Thursday April 19, 2012, killed eight people. Boko Haram, in a statement published in a news website Premium Times, claimed that the press was not reporting the group accurately. It said the group attacked Thisday to send a strong message to the media that it would no longer condone reports misrepresenting it in the press, or blaming it for acts it knows nothing about. "The media in Nigeria are not a problem to us if they do their jobs professionally without taking sides," a spokesman for the group said using the nom de guerre Abu Qaqa, adding that each time they say something, it is either changed or downplayed.



Dead Nigerians are brought to a police station in the northeastern city of Bauchi after a gun battle in the early morning. Photograph: ArdoHazzad/Reuters

Before now it used to be believed that this group had respect for those engaged in sports until April 24 2012 when it attacked a Television viewing centre in Tudun Wada, Jos. The bomb exploded around 9.00 p.m. while soccer fans were watching the UEFA semi final match between Barcelona FC and Chelsea FC. One of the victims of the explosion, Mr Felix Samtiem, 30, says he only saw himself "lying helplessly" on the ground when the bomb went off close to his seat at a football viewing centre. "I just heard some loud sound and discovered that I was on the ground and unable to stand even when many others were shouting and rushing out. I just tried to crawl," Samtiem said.



A Victim of Bomb Blast At A Television Viewing Centre in Tudun Wada Area of Jos Metropolis Receiving Treatment At Jenvak Hospital in Jos on Tuesday Night (24/4/12).

NAN The recent Boko haram onslaught on innocent Nigerians is not unconnected to sentiment emanating from weird religious beliefs.

The case of Boko Haram attacks show how bad things can go and how far people can go in harm against fellow human beings when

such people abandon religion and God in their lives ironically in the name of religion

Religion no doubt influences the thought processes of an individual. Religious views and beliefs could control an individual in many different ways. Most adherents of litanies of religious groups in the world anchor their rules of action in relation to the societal ethos on mainly faith based issues and concerns. In other words, religion can excite and improve a person's moral standing such that he or she becomes a responsible member of the society. That is indeed the mandate of religion and religious belief. Religious persuasion and conviction of an individual could among other variables affect his food choices and eating habits, how and what to learn. People's love for good neighbourliness, peaceful coexistence and amiable feeling for humanity are the outcome of the endearing religious love.

Nonetheless, it is disheartening to observe that in spite of the aforesaid gains, religion is made to stand on its head making it a source for taking rather than sustaining life. Perhaps this happens when the bitter and sour taste of the seed opium overwhelms its character of suiting the frayed nerves of some recalcitrant members of society. My thesis however is that this in spite of the frightening magnitude of the Boko Haram and other such killings in the pretended believe in a religion, in comparism, they remain the exception that proves the rule.

Religion, Health and Healing

“They are as sick that surfeit with too much as they that starve with nothing”

One of the most challenging obstacles to national development in a developing country like Nigeria is ill-health. It not only weighs down the sick, creates burdens for the un-sick but equally depletes the percentage of the working/productive population of the society. Many of the ailments that besiege and weigh us down today arise from life habits especially those habits connected with not just what we eat but how and when we eat what we eat. Hence the title of Prof M. I. Ogbeide's lecture delivered on 23/11/78 at the University of Benin admonishes us to be wary of what we eat. One of our researches on this was the study done by my former Ph.D student, Dr Mrs. Uzonna Echeta entitled **'Dietary Laws of the Old Testament Pentateuch and Contemporary Health Challenges'**

The study and the paper published from it (Okwueze and Echeta; 2010) identified, with emphasis, improper dieting as a major source of the poor health situation in contemporary Nigerian society amongst other factors. It argued that proper dieting has not been given its rightful place and this has promoted ill health, impoverishment and ultimately hinders development. The study therefore attempted to see how the dietary guidelines of the Old Testament Pentateuch can address this problem of health in society. It noted that imbibing good dietary pattern can restore and transform health in contemporary society. Secondly, good and well structured dietary choices enhance health, whereas bad eating habits worsen health. Thirdly, the Jews who adhered to the laws had huge health benefits, and were kept from vermin

and communicable diseases. The case of Daniel and his friends was an outstanding proof). These Hebrew men were additionally blessed in matters of spiritualism, intellectualism and creativity (Daniel 1:12ff). Fourthly, the dietary laws figuratively and inferentially can address ethical issues about human behaviour, justice, discipline and self control. Herbal diet of fruits and vegetables (Gen. 1:29, Ezek. 47: 12) is a good source of primary health care, a health care delivery system that has been proposed by the World Health Organization as one way of achieving global (being one of the critical goals in the Millennium Development Agenda). It then recommended the inculcation of the Pentateuchal dietary pattern for preventive, curative and optimum health of society. Passages in Leviticus (chapters 11, 19, 25 etc), Numbers chapter 6 and Deuteronomy chapter 14 with their copious dietary provisions were recommended to us to heed for our healthy eating and living.

When we fail to heed advises on healthy eating we then must heed calls to hospitals and healing homes. In the course of my research, I discovered a close connection between the beliefs and practices of Pentecostals and the Igbo traditional religion especially in the area of explaining causality of sickness and healing. Sometimes, when one looks closely into beliefs and practices in the Old Testament one finds it difficult to distinguish certain beliefs and practices from the Igbo primal religion. This difficulty in distinguishing between practices and belief in Igbo primal religion and the Old Testament on the one hand and the beliefs and practices of Pentecostal Christian denominations on the other hand, does indicate that there is both a connection and a relationship between the three the African (Igbo) primal religion, the Old Testament and the Christian Pentecostals. We shall examine health and healing using the platform of healing in

traditional Religion, Old Testament and among the Christian Pentecostals.

In the Igbo religious space, misfortunes, ill-lucks, failures, ailments, sicknesses etc and indeed death do not just occur by chance. They are not ordinary hence their causes are usually very easily traceable to man or to the gods or even both. In the Old Testament Yahweh causes the Sea to rage and to be calm. In Pentecostalism, principalities and powers abound bringing hardship of ill-luck, misfortune, failure sickness and death upon the children of God. In all, the three are connected especially as they relate to the concept and use of spiritual gift in countering and/or exorcising negative spiritual forces and how these are called in to solve not only health problems but also general problems in society. Although Pentecostalism is a concept within Christianity, it may be necessary to bring the concept into the context of this lecture.

Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism is from the word Pentecost. Although it has a Greek origin meaning fiftieth, it refers to the Jewish festival of Shabuoth celebrated on the seventh Sunday or the 50th day after the Passover. All Jews observed this feast.

The Apostles of Jesus, yet unable to overcome the shock of the death of their master and afraid that what happened to Him in the hands of the Jews might as well befall them, assembled together to quietly observe the Shabuoth festival. While they were together:

Suddenly a sound came from heaven
like the rush of a mighty wind, and it
filled all the house where they were

sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and rested on each other. And they were filled with Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues as the spirit gave them utterance. (Act2: 2-5).

Although the feast of the Pentecost was strictly speaking a Jewish festival, it took on a new meaning in Christianity when in the first Century A. D. the occasion of the celebration of that feast was used as a medium to endow the group which formed the nucleus of the first Christians with the gift of the power of the Holy Spirit. From Acts 2:5ff to the end of the book we see the elaborate testimony of the use to which the direct recipients put that power. The disciples of Jesus used this power on various occasions to cure the sick, rise the lame, restore sight and speech to the blind and to the dumb respectively. Of all the feasts of the Christian calendar Pentecost is second in importance only to Easter.

The understanding of some Christians is that beyond the direct recipients; this gift of the Holy Spirit avails itself to every Christian who cared to wield it. However, the history of the church for a long time showed the fear of the Church hierarchy in the 'uncontrolled' exercise of the gift of the spirit. The Episcopal churches that pay a lot of attention to organization and structure were and are still very apprehensive of the consequences of the unrestricted use of this gift. But sooner or later, a number of smaller Churches with little or no emphasis on organization and structure and who believed that the life and practice of Christians should be guided only by the Bible and not by an ecclesiastical hierarchy, sprang up and encouraged the free exercise of this gift

of the Holy Spirit as received and used by all the Apostles of Jesus on the Pentecost. For the earlier Pentecostals and even many Pentecostals of today it was/is more important to pray than to organize. The day of the Pentecost on which the gift was received came to symbolize and epitomize the gift and use of spiritual gifts in such a manner that any who tended to emphasize and encourage the use of spiritual gift was referred to as a Pentecostal. The churches and their members are generally referred to as Pentecostal Christians. The movement itself came to be called Pentecostalism.

The Pentecostal movement originated in the United States as a protest against the increasing formalism, modernism and the middle-class character of the mainstream denominations. An essential feature of Pentecostalism is its emphasis on the baptism of the spirit attested to by speaking in tongues.

This emphasis on speaking in tongues by the Pentecostal as a distinguishing characteristic of the baptism of the spirit, which every Christian needs, is evident in the following testimony of a Pentecostal at a camp meeting.

I came to camp meeting last year feeling very much down in spirit, but the third night I was here, the power of God came down in a wonderful way and I got gloriously refilled. I spoke with other tongues for an hour and a half and it was such a wonderful refreshing. (Hollenweger; 1972:31)

But soon after the camp meeting she got so busy again with routine things that she slipped back into the spiritual desert from where she was earlier rescued. She now came to this year's camp meetings and again gave the following testimony.

I was so dried up and so hungry. How I looked forward ... to this year's camp meeting so that I could be filled again. Well, last night it came and oh how the glory poured down on me. I spoke in tongues for hours and words cannot express how wonderful it was. (Hollenweger; 1972:31)

It is clear from the above that the emphasis is on speaking in tongues. The only time she is convinced that the spirit is with her is when she speaks in tongues and in each case the longer the duration of the speaking in tongues the better.

Exorcism

Exorcism comes from the Greek word *exorkosis*, which implies the driving out of evil powers or spirits by prayers, performance of rituals or even magic. Exorcism was and still is a popular and significant feature of Igbo primal religion. Hardly can any adherent of the religion do without exorcism for reasons we shall see shortly.

As mentioned earlier, the Igbo acknowledge a Creator- a Supreme Being. But apart from this Creator there are numerous spiritual beings and forces whose activities impact on man's daily life. The Igbo perceive without difficulty these influences form the world of the spirit because the traditional Igbo imagination

exhibits an acuteness of perception beyond that of the people who are subject only on modern tradition. The Igbo is sensitive to the deeper layers of experience in a way that is no longer common in modern industrialized societies. The Igbo perceive without difficulty the reality of the world of the spirits, gods, deities, ancestors and the mythical bonds that unite all beings. They have a total view of the universe as a continuum and a perpetual flow of being and experience comprehending the world of nature, the supernatural, and the living dead (Obiechina: 1976: 131).

These spiritual and supernatural forces inhabit the waters, the earth, the air, the forests the mountains, the rocks the trees and other natural objects. Many of these spirit beings, are malevolent spirits who inflict man with all manner of calamities and hardships ill-luck and lack of success, poverty and want, sickness and epidemic, drought and famine, sterility and impotence, insanity and madness and above all, death. As a result, the causality of sickness, poverty, ill-luck, failure, bereavement, childlessness and all manner of misfortunes are seen as coming not from the material world of man but from the unseen forces in the forces in the domain of the spirit. Gods both benevolent and malevolent, compete to help and haunt men. So when a man has malaria it is not enough to explain it from the point of view of mosquito bites: when a man is sterile, a low sperm count explanation will never suffice as an adequate answer. The causality of sickness or of sterility must be seen from the point of view of evil spirit whose activities must be checked. Anderson (1990:71), summarized this picture when in talking about the African world, he noted that "the world is plagued by uncertainty".

The menace of these spiritual forces is so manifest in the Igbo universe that man's greatest struggles appear not to be so much against poverty, sickness, bareness, etc, simpliciter, but against the numerous evil spirits, which populate his universe and act as causative agents of all these misfortunes. In fact, as Kalu (1978:37-44) pointed out years ago, the African perception of his universe is essentially precarious. In order to survive such a precarious universe, the Igbo wears charms, lacerates his body for the purpose of rubbing in protective medicines. He joins secret societies which promise members power of the spirits. But these preventive measures are sometimes overpowered by an evil spirit. When this happens the evil spirit enters to do the havoc that is its lot and in such a situation one battles to ensure the exit of the evil spirit by just one means exorcism. Life in the universe is therefore lived by man's untiring efforts to acquire power with which he can exorcise the evil spirit of sickness, of poverty, of failure, of bareness, etc., which continuously loom large in the Igbo universe. It is in this light that Deotis (1974: 96), refers to Wright who asserts that without power life cannot become what it must be and that power is basic life. As Mbiti (1969: 197) equally insists, "the whole psychic atmosphere of African village life is filled with belief in this mystical power.

One of the most popular evil spirits which afflict man and to which exorcism is applied if an effective cure is to be achieved is the evil spirit of 'ogbanje', which Achebe describes as the spirit of transmigrating children (1958:56). The concept of ogbanje is used among the Igbo to depict a situation where a couple keeps losing child after child especially at tender ages. When a couple loses up to three children or so in 'quick succession a diviner is consulted to find out what could be wrong and the diviner may

confirm that the children are infested with the ogbanje' spirit right from their birth. When this happens, any of the children who is still alive is taken to a powerful 'Dibia' (medicine man) to exorcise the spirit of 'ogbanje' from the child's body. The medicine man names the ritual objects he would need for the dreadful battle against the evil spirits. In the course of my fieldwork, I observed a child of about six years who is said to possess the 'ogbanje' spirit undergoing this ritual of exorcism. She was asked to strip naked and pieces of cloth colouring white, red and black were tied round her waist.

She was asked to carry a calabash containing an unnamed liquid substance while the Dibia made incantations touching her and shouting at her at intervals to confess that she is an 'ogbanje'. The ritual of exorcism went on for a very long time. Following a stringent hysterical cry, which was interpreted as confession, she fell down looking helpless and exhausted. The Dibia announced to her parents' relief that the spirit of 'ogbanje' has left her. This observation took place at Imilike in Northern Igboland.

In the Igbo universe, there is hardly any misfortune, which is not associated with one evil spirit or the other. When there is a little change in weather and the season resulting, for instance, in the lack of rain or an outright drought the Igbo make consultations on how to avert this situation which threatens reproduction both at the animal (human) and plant levels. In Igbo communities success in agriculture still largely depends on the regularity of rainfall and any shortfall in rainfall put crops and plants which support human and animals life in serious jeopardy. One could easily understand the seriousness of the matter and the community would quickly consult powerful Dibia and Ritualist to exorcise the community of the evil spirit that has entered it

making it impossible for rain to fall. The same process is followed when there is an epidemic or even a natural disaster.

When the misfortune is of some other nature, for instance, the birth of twins by a couple the event is considered an abomination which would require a cleansing ceremony the principal part of which is ritual exorcising the evil spirit which brought the abomination upon the family or community. It was an abomination for a human being to give birth to more than one child in one pregnancy, Animals could be born in pairs but not human beings Even a prolonged labour during childbirth is understood as being brought upon the expectant mother by an evil spirit which stops her each time she attempts to give the push required to force out the child. When this happens, the husband goes for a Dibia who performs certain rituals to exorcise the evil spirit, which has entered the expectant mother hindering her safe delivery. As soon as the ritual is completed and the evil spirit leaves her, she delivers safely.

Another situation is where one has the habit of stealing especially when one is a kleptomaniac. Usually a medicine man is called in to bind and exorcise that evil spirit which forces the person it inhabits to steal even when he does need the items stolen by him.

The use of exorcism is so important to the Igbo that even the good spirits need it to ensure the exit of any evil spirit that enters the domain (area of influence) of a given god or deity, for instance, in several Igbo communities shrines and deities are held in every cooperative regard. There is an understanding that this relationship is contractual and only valid as long as the contractual requirements are being effectively satisfied. Therefore if a community should find that its god is working

against the contract and destroying its own people for no just cause they discard the god (Achebe, 1988:31). They call in a strong medicine man to banish it from existence that is to exorcise the god cast it out from the community. Achebe's Arrow of God contains this picture when the great god 'ulu' appeared weak and destructive in peoples war against Christianity through the priest of Ezeulu (1964:159-60). Such is the frequency and the regularity with which exorcism is required and employed by the Igbo primal religion without the frequent and urgent aid of exorcism. Life can only be lived by man's ability to exorcise the evil powers which hinder life.

Exorcism in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, belief in spirits-good or evil, 'clean or unclean, is very commonplace. That the Old Testament recognizes the harmful potentials and impact of the evil or 'unclean' spirits is clear right from the opening chapters of Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament.

In Genesis, we find the narrative about the creation of the Old Testament world. Here, the creative acts of Yahweh are conceived as a battle against negative spiritual forces. In the beginning that is just before creation the world was pictured as being void, formless, empty, waste and was covered by darkness. All the qualities which characterized the world at its beginning were things which could only emanate from evil spirit. As a result, Yahweh's act of creation starts with exorcising the formlessness, the voidness, the emptiness and the darkness from the face of the earth.

That Yahweh's act of creation was a battle against the evil spiritual forces is perhaps easy to appreciate when we consider the concept of darkness employed in Genesis as a character of

the world at its beginning. This is so because in all religions of the world darkness is conceived as coming from evil spirits and as the exact opposite of light which comes from the good spirit. Hence often expressed in the phrase 'the powers of darkness and the powers of light'. Light and Darkness cannot coexist. In the New Testament, Jesus spoke about himself as the light whose essential duty is to banish, to cast out and to exorcise darkness from his presence

Genesis further conceives the earth as being covered by water before the creative acts of Yahweh. Water here symbolizes the chaos, the disorder, which was holding sway before Yahweh, exorcised it from the face of the earth so that the order inherent in Yahweh prevailed over chaos, the negative force. Although this order is introduced at the creation, the battle between the two forces is continuous so that the creator God sustains the created world against all of the threatening evil spiritual powers which rage against him and this he does by a continuous exorcising of the demonic powers from their places. Thus in the drama of the New Year Festival, the Israelites experienced the events whereby Yahweh overcame and slew the chaos powers symbolized by the Leviathan anew and repeated the creation event.

We get this picture of creation as battle between two opposing powers in the book of the Psalms. The various psalms arose in various contexts. Some arose in contexts which show the manner in which Old Testament conceive the question and use of spiritual power for the purpose of overcoming a negative spiritual force. For instance, the psalmist in Psalm 74: 12-15 says:

God is my king... you frightened away
the sea, in your power you crushed
the heads of the dragons on the water
...the heads of leviathan and gave
them as food to the beast of the
desert. Thou didst dry up ever flowing
streams.

The above shows the use of Yahweh's power in exorcising the negative effect of the sea-oriented spirits and sending them- exorcising them-from the sea to the desert.

In Psalm 89:9-10, the psalmist praises Yahweh as the ruler of the raging sea making its waves still and crushing the head of Rahab the sea dragon. This passage reminds us of the fact that Leviathan and Rahab are the Hebrew names for the chaos monster that Yahweh destroyed and exorcised at the battle of creation. In other passages such as Psalm 104:6, the chaos power bears the name *tehom* the cosmic deep, the monster we encounter also in the Babylonian epic of creation. The water of the ocean and its destructive aspects are personified as the chaos power- the Leviathan, the Rahab, the *tehom* that Yahweh exorcises to bring order.

Even in the Igbo and Yoruba myths of creation the concept of cosmic water is equally present. In what appears to be the most popular Igbo myth of creation, the first man came down from the sky through a ladder to find a watery marshy earth, which had to be removed before order could prevail. For the Yoruba it was the enterprising god, Obatala who exorcised the watering domain of Oluku. Evidence abound in the Old Testament about the belief in

the existence of demons and their power to harm men's bodies and minds. This is clear, for instance, in Gen. 32:25ff: Lev. 16:10; Is. 3:21; 34:14; Sam. 16:15; I King 22:22-23; Ps. 91: 5-6; etc.

The point being made is not just that the Jews believe in demons and possession by demons who have to be exorcised from the individual or location but that this belief is very fundamental as it arises from the world view of the Old Testament itself. The Ph.D research done by Agbo Paulinus entitled 'The Effect of Ignorance on the Spread of Leprosy and HIV/AIDS: O.T and Contemporary Perspectives' indicated how far the understanding of the causality of an ailment can go in dictating the attitude of people towards the person living with the ailment particularly if the ailment is a terminal or an 'incurable' one.

Exorcism in Pentecostalism

We have already defined Pentecostalism as a movement started and carried on by those Christians who fervently believe in the 'unrestricted and uncontrolled' or to put it more positively, the 'free' use of the gift of the spirit by individual Christians. These Christians believe that through the baptism of the spirit testified to by the act of speaking in tongues, they gain a deeper understanding of the love of God and the desire to read and use in Bible (Hollenweger:1872:5). It also brought a deeper recognition of sin and the acute awareness or consciousness of the negative spiritual powers which bring sin and suffering.

With the above emphasis on negative spiritual powers, every misfortune in the human world sickness, ill luck, failure or lack of success in life endeavors, etc is interpreted as being brought upon the sufferer by an evil spirit that has taken control of him.

This is so true that if cure is wished, the only effective step is to exorcise the individual of the evil spirit that has overcome (POSSESSD) him/her.

The Pentecostals believe in the personality of the evil who influences or torments people by taking possession of them. They cite Jesus as their model. Jesus was said to have healed every sickness and every disease among the people and to him were brought all sick people that were taken by diverse diseases and torments (Matt, 4: 23:24)

Perhaps more instructive than the healing Jesus performed is the manner in which Jesus conducted his healing ministry. The healings were affected in a manner which suggested that Jesus himself understood that these diseases and their causes were not just from the material body but from the spirit. A spiritual cure not ordinary bodily cure was therefore necessary and this cure is made effective by exorcising the evil spirit. A few instances will suffice to make this clear. Jesus cures a Roman captain's palsied servant by only speaking the word (Matt, 8:13), the first 'absent treatment' in his ministry. On another occasion he healed a dumb man by casting out a demon from him. When the demon was exorcised the dumb man spoke (Matt. 9:33). Much later, a lunatic boy who his disciples could not cure was brought to him and he rebuked the demons in the boy and cast (exorcised) it away (Matt.17: 18).

In the above instances, the source of cure just as the conceived sources of the cause of the infirmities was spiritual. To show the significance of exorcism in healing diseases and infirmities, Jesus gave his disciples power over unclean spirits while sending them

to preach and even specifically asked them to “cast out demons” (Matt. 10:8). In New Testament and rabbinic literature, demons are called 'unclean or evil' spirit and in the synoptic gospels the prince of demons has the name Beelzebub.

Jesus assured his disciples that:

These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons: they will speak in new tongues, they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick and they will recover (Mk, 16:17-18)

The Pentecostals therefore hold fervently the belief that diseases are caused by demons and that the cure is to assault the demons by exorcism. For many Pentecostals therefore, the thing to do when a brethren is sick is not to call a doctor for medication but the elders of the church for prayers and anointing as instructed in James 5:14-15:

Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the Church: and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil 'In the name of the Lord: and the prayers of faith shall save the sick man and the lord shall rise him up and if he has committed sin he will be forgiven.

The Pentecostals expect miracles at the present day especially the healing of the sick through prayer. There are many occasions

where this attitude has been put top practice. For instance a child Bertha Bradley, an epileptic, had fallen into fire during a seizure and was badly burnt but the Pentecostal father refused to call a physician. He told his friend who was persuading him to call a doctor for the child that “Jesus is all the doctor I want. He is the greatest physician of all” adding that “doctors are for people who ain't got Jesus.” (Cawley; 1969:17-18). The child later died of the burns.

This belief that disease is caused by the evil who have to be exorcised to effect a cure is a long standing one among the Pentecostals. As far back as at 1880, George O. Barnes, a Pentecostal evangelist in Kentucky. USA., attracted a large following. Believing that the devil caused sickness, he cured by anointing and invocation. Between 1847-1907, John Alexander Dowie a fanatical Scot, opposed physicians and all science and taught that disease was devil caused and that the only cure was prayer and the laying on of hands (Cawley: 1969:34-35). Both the anointment by Barnes and the laying on of hands by Dowie were directed towards exorcising the devil from the patient.

Among the modern Pentecostal, especially those operating within the Igbo world, the same understanding pervades their belief and practice. Pastor Patrick Awuzie, founder of Zoe ministry, a Pentecostal church, believed and taught that the most effective way to cure diseases was by deliverance from the devil or his agents who operated through the diseases. The late Archbishop Benson Idahosa, founder of the Church of God mission, taught that poverty and want are not the lot of his God but that of the devil and that any person living under the bondage of poverty and want needs deliverance from the possession of

the devil. He therefore applied exorcism as a method of attacking the evil spirit of poverty and want.

In the case of sickness, the Pentecostals in the Igbo religious space sought the cure for illness not in any material medication, etc, but at the level of spiritual medication. Exorcism is employed as the principal means of addressing suffering be it that of sickness, sterility, poverty and general feeling of failure in life.

A large part of my academic career has been engaged in the discharge of my burning desire to train and mentor younger researchers/academics either as general adviser or as specifically and directly as the supervisor of their Postgraduate researches. I have so far completed the supervision of more than 20 Masters' Projects and 12 Ph. D dissertations with a number of others already in the 'labour room'.

Former students who have completed their Ph. D researches in the Department of Religion & Cultural Studies, UNN under my supervision include:

S/N	NAME	REG.NO.	DEGREE	TOPIC OF RESEARCH/STUDY	DEGREE &
1)	Dr. Emeka Ugwueye	PG/Ph.D/03/34177	Ph. D	Theodicy in the Qoheleth: The Problem of Evil in Ecclesiastics	Ph. D 2006
2)	Rev. Dr. Paul Enweonwu	PG/Ph.D/03/34177	Ph. D	Christianity and Socio-Cultural Practices in Onitsha Contemporary Society	Ph. D 2007

3)	Dr. Lazarus Saale	PG/Ph.D/04/35577	Ph. D	Christianity and Conflict Resolution in the Niger Delta: The Ogoni Case	Ph. D 2007
4)	Rev. Dr. David Ononugbu	PG/Ph.D/05/40041	Ph. D	Youth Unemployment and the Social Responsibility of the Church in Nigeria	Ph. D 2008
5)	Dr. Mrs. Uzonna Echeta	PG/Ph.D/05/39972	Ph. D	Dietary Laws of the Old Testament Pentateuch and Contemporary Health Challenges	Ph. D 2010
6)	Rev. Dr. Princewill Iroba	PG/Ph.D/04/26155	Ph. D	The Old Testament Concept of Poverty and its Application to the Contemporary Nigerian Church	Ph. D 2010
7)	Rev. Fr. Dr. Martin Onukwuba	PG/Ph.D/04/35577	Ph. D	The Crises of Democracy and Elections in Nigeria in the Light of the Good Shepherd Discourse in John 10:11:15	Ph. D 2011
8)	Rev. Canon Dr. Collins Ugwu	PG/Ph.D/06/42218	Ph. D	Moses: A Model for the Nigerian Contemporary Christian Priests	Ph. D 2011
9)	Rev. Fr. Dr. Ken Oraegbunam	PG/Ph.D/07/48186	Ph. D	A Critical Analysis of Human Rights in Nigeria's Islamic Sharia Praxis: Implications for the Nation's Constitutional Democracy (1999 – 2011)	Ph. D 2011
10)	Dr. Fabian Nnadi	PG/Ph.D/05/39588	Ph. D	Christianity, Godfatherism and Democracy in Nigeria	Ph. D 2012
11)	Rev. Dr. Bernard Itebiye	PG/Ph.D/07/43782	Ph. D	Environmental Crisis In Niger Delta, Nigeria: Re-Interpreting Old Testament "רדה" ('Subdue') and "כוש" ('Dominate')	Ph. D 2012
12)	Dr. Agbo Paulinus	PG/Ph.D/08/49266	Ph. D	The Effect of Ignorance on the Spread of Leprosy and HIV/AIDS: O.T and Contemporary Perspectives	

Concluding Remarks

A major concern, which has therefore emerged in the study of religion, is the examination of its relationships with economic, political, cultural and social institutions as well as its diverse functions and dysfunctions in the life of society. The universality of religion manifest itself in the ease with which we see in virtually all societies, certain sacred ritual and belief which obtain in circumstances with unpredictable outcome and in which people more often than not appear subjected to forces beyond their own control. These events bring with them uncertainties and anxieties concerning so many questions about life, death, success or failure in human endeavour. The answers, which come to allay these anxieties, are often couched in supernatural and transcendental values that make religion the only source, which can provide the succor ('opium') that can help man cope with the frustration, anxieties, and vicissitudes that characterize human life (Oyo: 1988:127).

From our discussion so far it is clear that the three religions were examined in this lecture viz: Africa (Igbo) primal religion, the Old Testament and Christianity acknowledge two levels of reality the material 'seen-world' and the spiritual 'unseen-world'. There is a clear understanding in the three 'religions' that the spiritual 'unseen-world' influences the material 'seen-world'. Arising from this understanding, events at the material level are understood as mere manifestations of what has been pre-determined at the spiritual level. Life in all the three religions is fraught with a hidden warfare (Kalu, 1996:31) between gods good and evil- and by extension between man and evil spiritual forces who seek to distort the creative order and therefore hinder man's enjoyment of same.

The average Pentecostal Christian highlights the import of the passage in Ephesians 6:12 as no other Christian does "our battle is not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers". There are demons of sickness, of lies, of fornication, Hilter demons and divorce demons etc.

The three religions respond to this reality in very similar and related ways. The Igbo react by covenanting with numerous spiritual beings from whom they seek protection from the evil forces of the unseen-world. The Old Testament response comes through the action of Yahweh who started subjugating the negative spiritual forces variously called chaos, tehom, dragon, Leviathan, etc. Who sought to cause disorder in the creative order. Pentecostalism responds by drawing the attention of its members to the activities of Satan and the harm it is capable of doing if one does not wield the gift of the Holy Spirit which Jesus advised Christians to see as their companion in their battle against evil forces.

Although Kalu had made the point that in their encounter both Christianity and Igbo primal religion found points of contact/continuity, the point which remains largely unappreciated is that as between the Igbo primal religion and the Pentecostals, as a distinct Christian group, there appear to be special points of contact and continuity which go beyond the 'ordinary' affinity between Christianity and Igbo primal religion pointed out by Kalu. This is because Pentecostalism shows a strong ability to incorporate elements of both traditional and modern modes of thought and behaviour into a sub-culture that has served as a bridge between the two. Its more pre-scientific, non-rational outlook gives it an affinity with non-Christian

religions. Its emphasis on subjectivity, emotional expression, spirit baptism, healing, exorcism and miracles make it congenial to adherents of the so-called primitives religions such as the Igbo primal religion characterized by animism, spirit possession, divination, etc. Arising from this special appeal and affinity with Igbo primal religion Pentecostalism has drawn a lot of membership from adherents of Igbo religion as they not only interpret events similarly, but even employ elements of traditional religious ritual including in some cases the killing of an animal surrogate victim whose blood is shed as a propitiatory sacrifice.

Anderson (1990:66), in appreciating this point said, "often the Christian element is closer to the African element than the Western idea" (1990:66). Danceel (1990:226), in his work on the use of exorcism as a means of combating wizarding among the Pentecostals of African independent churches in Zimbabwe equally showed the concern of some scholars like Bosih and Shorter that the undue emphasis on spirit possession and exorcism has perpetuated and entrenched instead of supplanting the traditional paradigm. The socio-economic pressure on the average Nigerian especially the youth today has made him/her a good candidate to look upon religion whether traditional or Christian to make the difference between complete hopelessness with its dangerous consequences and hope that tomorrow will be better. A projection from the 1985 2.2million (Elidade; 1985:235) estimate of Pentecostal Christians in Nigeria has put it at 10 million. The number will continue to grow as long as hardships including especially economic hardships do not abate. If the number drops without a proportional drop in economic hardship then the society will be

in crises and those whose business is to engage in name-calling against religion will also end up with much more than a bloody nose.

The Pentecostal responds to these hardships with packages of job for all, health for all, life for all, wives for all, husbands for all not in the year 2020 but instantly. One major problem, however, is that the Pentecostals have sometimes expounded a theology of success and power at the expense of a theology of the cross. There are not always instant solutions to life's vicissitudes. Spirituality should not be measured merely in terms of success as some Pentecostals do (Anderson, 1990:73). Modern Priests and Pastors, Pentecostal or otherwise, must reconsider their attitude today by looking back to priestly responsibilities borne by those who played priestly roles even before the formal establishment of the institution. It is in this direction that we see the actual relevance of Rev. Dr Collins Ugwu's Ph.D research entitled **Moses: A Model for the Nigerian Contemporary Christian Priests**. The question of why should the righteous suffer or why there is the existence of evil dates back to time immemorial as exemplified in the book of Job and the Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes). It is in this connection that we chose to look at the problem of evil Theodicy in the Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes) during Dr Emeka Ugwu's Ph.D research. The study among other things observed that the non-existence of formula for life (uncertainty and mysteries) in Ecclesiastics does not agree with the easy life expected and preached today, hence the focus of the research. The research investigated traces of theodic constructions in Qoheleth, the socio-political dimension of Qoheleth theodicy and the general functions of Qoheleth theodicy. The work is significant for the problem of evil and to know how to cope with

them, while maintaining pure faith in God, is the mark of religious maturity. This work provides such insight. Divine justice is not limited to jurisprudence but also includes God's sovereignty. The high point of Qoheleth theodicy is that evil exists because it is vanity and temporal. This calls us to our spiritual sense. Only the development of spiritual character has abiding value because it survives death. The suffering and evil attendant to human mortality are limited by that same mortality. Finally, the work concludes that theodicy and God's justice in Qoheleth are not speculative issues but concerns the handling of power through human agencies. God owns the power and justice being exercised by men in evil ways; the wielders of power in our society, who all happen to be religious people, should reflect, maintain and act out his justice every time.

However, what is important is that by relying on its own methods religion reduces and diminishes the social tensions which would have followed poverty and deprivation, injustice and discrimination, oppression and suppression, misfortune and disasters, ill-luck and failure, sickness and bereavement etc which has become the lot of modern society and in this way help to stabilize the society for continued effort towards development. When religion is ignored, prevented from or fails to play this role everything becomes a 'Haram' that deserve to be attacked repeatedly in the mind of the irreligious.

When we perceive religion properly as life reality it enables us to examine its social relevance to wit, its regulation of conduct in the form of regarding as right and good or bad and evil certain conducts of individuals in society. This is where religion clearly links up with societal development and therefore brings out the

fatality of the extremists' view that religion is only about the world next to the present world and has nothing to offer to impact on our present earthly existence or even an outright deceit as claimed by some.

Religion is not just Karl Marx's opium that blindfolds and causes sleep its relief is also practical and real. In fact, it awakens and propels religious leaders (Church or otherwise) as well as adherents to their practical responsibilities to society.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn also observed like the Vatican fathers that the Church has it as an obligation to criticize policies and oppressive political regimes. The story told of philosopher Confucius of ancient China reminds us of the danger of oppressive regimes:

While passing by the side of Mount Thai, Confucius came on a woman who was weeping bitterly by a grave. The Master pressed forward and drove quickly to her. Then he sent Tse-lu to question her. Your wailing said he, is that of one who has suffered sorrow on sorrow, She replied, that is so, once my husband's father was killed here by a tiger. My husband was also killed, and now my son has died in the same way. The Master said: why do you not leave this place? the answer was, There is no oppressive government here. The Master then said "Remember this my children: Oppressive government is more terrible than tigers.

Advising the Church on the proper role of religion in justice and peace the great leader, Maulimu Julius Nyerere (1974:85) warned:

Unless we participate actively in the rebellion against those social structures and economic organizations which condemn people to poverty, humiliation and degradation, the Church will become irrelevant to the people and the Christian religion will degenerate into a set of superstitions accepted by the fearful. Unless the Church, its members and its organizations, express God's love for people by involvement and leadership in constructive protest against the present conditions of humankind, then it will become identified with injustice and persecution. If this happens it will die.

In substance, religion involves a pattern of behaviour or practices based on common belief patterns. Thomas Aquinas, in fact, defines religion as the virtue, which prompts man to render to God the worship and reverence that is his by right. Religion can therefore be understood as a regulated pattern of life of a people in which experiences, beliefs and knowledge as reflected in man's conception of himself are viewed in relation to his social world, the physical as well as the metaphysical world. The elements of beliefs and practices with the former finding expression in the latter are common even with concepts outside religion (1998:94). This appreciation of the import of religion, has led social scientists in recent times to pause and reflect on

the real meaning of religion. This attitude is at variance with many earlier ones, which simply sought to dismiss religion and belief in God as a product of ignorance, superstition and confusion. In his response to this prevailing attitude towards religion in his time, Radcliff-Brown (1952:154) argued that even:

Religious, which we think to be erroneous or even absurd and repulsive such as those of some salvage tribes, may be important and effective parts of the social machinery and without these false religions, social evolution and the development of modern civilization would have been impossible.

Boughet (1973:1), emphasized the central place of religion in the life of a people when he asserted that:

Religion cannot wisely or safely be ignored or neglected as it is by frivolous persons today. Even a defective or obsolete scheme of religion will serve the individual better than none at all. This is why so many old fashioned persons possess, in spite of their defective views on some topics, a wholesome and completeness of character, which is absent in young ultra-moderns.

Recently a popular Judgment was given by a Florida Court in USA reminding Atheists that a day had long been set apart for them to celebrate Atheism.

In Florida, an atheist filed a case in court against Easter and Passover Holy days. He hired an attorney to bring a discrimination case against Christians and Jews and observances of their holy days. The argument was that it was unfair that atheists had no such recognized days. The case was brought before a judge. After listening to the passionate presentation by the lawyer, the judge banged his gavel declaring, "Case dismissed!"

The lawyer immediately stood objecting to the ruling saying, "Your Honor, How can you possibly dismiss this case? The Christians have Christmas, Easter and others. The Jews have Passover, Yom Kippur and Hanukkah, yet my client and all other atheists have no such holidays.." The judge leaned forward in his chair saying, "But you do. Your client, counsel, is woefully ignorant."

The lawyer said, "Your Honor, we are unaware of any special observance or holiday for atheists."

The judge said, "The calendar says April 1st is April Fools Day. Psalm 14:1 states, 'The fool says in his heart, there is no God.' Thus, it is the opinion of this court, that if your client says there is no God, then he is a fool. Therefore, April 1st is his day.

Court is adjourned."

Appreciations

Mr. Vice Chancellor, may I crave your indulgence to pause and pay tributes to many deserving individuals and groups including my great parents, siblings, teachers, mentors, colleagues, friends and of course my dear wife and lovely children.

First, I thank in an immeasurable way the Vice-Chancellor of our dear University, Professor Bartho Okolo, for the uncommon strides that he has made and is still making to transform this university to an International Centre of Learning and thus restore this university not only to its pride of place in the committee of universities but more importantly restore the vision of its founding fathers. His commitment, dedication, zeal, enthusiasm and passion for the cause of this university typify, exemplify, symbolize and epitomize leadership. On a very personal note, may I on behalf of my family thank the Vice-Chancellor immensely for finding me worthy to be retained as Dean, Student Affairs when my initial tenure expired especially even after the very trying moments for me as Dean of Student Affairs in view of the January 2010 students' riots. What is more, Mr. Vice-chancellor has now entrusted me with the huge responsibility of such a challenging office as that of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration) of this university. I count on God to help me justify this amazing trust and confidence the Vice-Chancellor has reposed in me. Mr. Vice-Chancellor may God bless you and your family abundantly.

What the 'white man' would call my nuclear family deserves one of the highest tributes I can ever pay. My very dear and lovely wife, Osondu, is an exceptional gift from God through her very uncommon parental upbringing and background. Otherwise how

else can I describe a woman who would process palm nuts into palm oil within the confines of a 3 bedroom flat, who would make a prize winning cake within an hour of its demand, who would plait my children's hair, make/mend their clothes and decorate rendezvous as if she took a degree in fashion & designing and/or interior decoration, who delivered the family menu in such a way that made my children replicate the savory and healthy diet I had 42 years ago in the house of my maternal uncle where I partly lived out my childhood, whose artistic character made me a laughing stock among my children each time I foolishly braved the children's bobby trap invitation of "daddy please draw a cat for us because mummy is cooking." We have been married and have been living in the enjoyable union since 1996. She has ever since been so extremely caring and supportive that I have absolutely no excuses for not achieving much more than I am said to have done. I fondly call her 'LIFE' because her care and support have indeed been my life. Our six lovely and exciting children are both unspoken evidence of her 'cooperation' as well as unspeakable testimonies of God's blessings. They are: Chinenyenwa Lynda Who is now in SS 2 at the University of Nigeria Secondary School, Nsukka; Ikenna Kyrian, now in SS 1 at St. John Cross Seminary, Isien; Obiora Kennedy, now in JS 2 at the University of Nigeria Secondary School, Nsukka; Ifunanya Olive, Chinwendu Vivian and Nneoma Joy all of whom are still at the primary level at Hill-Crest Preparatory and Primary School, Nsukka. I thank them for bearing the greatest burden of the absence of my attention at those times I had to sit up on my table distracting them away from their desire for my attention (just like the Professor which Frobenius spoke about within the indented parts of pages **29 & 30**). My foster children Everestus, Cheluchi and Kenneth (all of whom are undergraduate students of this university) completes my full house hold team as the family flag can fly only at half mast

without them. Osondu who is an academic staff of the Department of Public Administration and Local Government is on the verge of presenting the final report of her Ph. D field work research to the department.

The very next person is Mr. Elias Eze Okwueze, my father, who is unfortunately now late. He was a teacher who through a combination of private, correspondence, part time and full time studies rose from the very lowly position of a 'PT teacher' to the rank of Headmaster Special Grade before his retirement in 1985. He was so obsessed with the value of not just basic education but did all he could to ensure that as many of his children as possible went into academics as a career. One short story which I recall very vividly epitomizes this obsession. After my elder brother, Emeka Okwueze, a Professor of Geophysics at the University of Calabar, graduated from the Department of Physics of this University and had just left for his M. Sc. Programme, a letter of appointment offering him a job with the Elf Oil Nigeria Ltd in Lagos was collected by my father through our Post Office Box at Oboolo-Afor. This was in 1976. After reading the letter, my father filed away the letter in his then almighty bookshelf. My elder brother knew about the offer of appointment only a year later when he had completed his M. Sc. Programme in Geophysics. When he inquired from my father why he did not inform him at the time he received the letter, my father simply said he didn't want him to be distracted from making an academic career especially as the University of Calabar had earlier offered him a training position of a Graduate Assistant. This was the obsession with which my father urged us all on never to think that education was ever enough or too much. Blessed be his Soul.

As for my mother, the best way to refer to her is just to say she is Mama. While my father was the teacher at school, Mama was

(and still is) the teacher at home. She was not only very supportive to Papa but wielded the disciplinarian cane at home as firm as Papa would wield it at school. Although she did not have the opportunity to go all the way in education and had only Standard six certificate, she loved education so much that as I present this inaugural lecture she is a registered student of an evening secondary school at Imilike-Enu. A situation that has led her to become a regular visitor to Optical Services Hospitals in her desire to see every printed word including those written in italics. Indeed, on one occasion early this year, one of her doctors who manages to speak only a bit of smattering English, in response to her unceasing request to have her lenses changed as she was/is finding it difficult to read words in tiny prints/fonts retorted thus: "you very old, cannot see well, your lenses no problem, you very old." Because God blessed her with good health, to the delight and relish of her children, she hardly realizes that she is already an octogenarian. She has 7 children (who are all married and blessed with children), 36 grand children and 6 great grand children. For not only this but, by the grace of God, particularly for the enviable and exemplary Christian life she has led, mama was honoured with the befitting title of NNEMUROHA by his Lordship Very Rev. Dr Francis Okobo, the Bishop, Catholic Diocese of Nsukka, in 2008. Mama, NNEMUROHA INDEED, **ek'lem'g'**.

I thank God for my siblings starting from my eldest bother to my younger sister as I am the 6th out the 7 living children of my parents. I thank them for their love, support and particularly for living together in enviable love and peace since God brought me into the Okwueze family. My elder brother, as I had earlier mentioned, is a Professor of Geophysics at the University of Calabar where he was Dean, Student Affairs from 2002 to 2006 and currently a member of the Governing Council of the

University. My eldest sister, Mrs. Ngozi Agbo, is a non-academic staff of UNN currently serving at the Department of Social Science Education while my twin sister, Mrs. Ifeoma Nweze, is a Ph.D Student of the Department of Linguistics, Igbo and other Nigerian Languages. I assume the permission of my other siblings as I salute her in a very special way. She is such a wonderful gift not just to me or Okwueze family but to humanity. My younger sister, Mrs. Glad Abugu, is a staff of the PPSMB, Enugu. My other brother, Frank, is a Deputy Corps Commander with Federal Road Safety Commission currently serving in Nassarawa State while my other sister, Mrs. Patty Ugwu, is a Staff of the Ministry of Information, Enugu. Whenever I remember their love, which is often, I get overwhelmed by what it means to not just have a family but a peaceful, loving family. The thought of them is reminiscent of a lullaby which makes me sleep like a baby surrounded, shielded and protected by many loving and caring hands.

The next group consists of my teachers many of whom are still very much around. Although due largely to lack of space, I intend to concentrate on my university teachers, permit me to mention just one of my secondary school teachers who is a member of this community. I recall how as WEAC candidates of Nsukka High School, Nsukka in 1980, our understanding of the subject of Biology was greatly accentuated by a very caring and inspiring lady who joined the equally wonderful Mrs. Inyang O. Anya (Prof Anya O. Anya's wife) in teaching us Biology. We were so enthused with everything about this lady that everything that proceeded from her mouth on the subject just got stock in our memories. Apart from my making a high breed Division One (aggregate 13), many in that class ended up with an A grade in Biology in the 1980 WASC result. That lady is today Professor (Mrs.) Nkadi

Onyegebu. Mummy, I salute you.

I thank all my lecturers including Prof. E. N. Chinweokwu, Dr. S. O. Onyeidu, and many colleagues in the department my HOD, Rev. Dr. E. A. Ituma, Professors A. Ekwunife, Agha U. Agha, C.O. T. Ugwu, Drs. B. D. C. Diara, M J Obiora, Anuli Okoli, David Ononogbu, Uzonna Echeta, Collins Ugwu, Nkechi Onah and Fabian Nnadi. Others colleagues and staff include Ngele Omaka, Chris Ibenwa, Stanley Nweze, Chris Okwor, Ekene Eze, Chinyere Nwoga, Onyekachi Onwuka, Mrs. Susan Onyishi, Uka Ndukwe, Mrs. Cordelia Ugwu, Mr. Fidelis Eze as well all students of the Department of Religion and Cultural Studies. Being part of the Department of Religion is like living in a family. May I also appreciate all Professors, Academic and non-Academic Staff of the Faculty of the Social Sciences for the good times we have shared together. Let me appreciate in a special way Prof E. O. Ezeani, the current Dean, for showing exemplary leadership in the Faculty. Prof. RNC Anyadike who my elder brother handed me over to when I first arrived this university as a first year student in the 1983/1984 session has over the years given me a lot of guide and protection and I thank him immensely.

I equally acknowledge the contributions of the various sets of students I have over the years had the privilege of teaching and supervising at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. These include those who have not only completed their Ph.D studies under me but who have become accomplished researchers in their own rights. Their eagerness and curiosity to know were great motivations for the ending researches that gave me the opportunity to be standing before this audience today.

I crave your indulgence to speak briefly on 3 of my university teachers who were somewhat outstanding in their mentor

oriented teaching and relationship. May I appreciate Rev. Fr. Professor Emmanuel I. Ifesieh of blessed memory who as Head Department of Religion recognized that I belong to academics and invited me to join the Department of Religion in 1992 as an Assistant Lecturer having concluded my M.A. Religion in 1989 and was writing my degree examination as a direct entry student in the Faculty of Law, Enugu Campus. Perhaps without Prof. Ifesieh's invitation, I could have been better or worse but certainly not likely to have had this rare privilege of standing before this particular audience as I do today to deliver this lecture. May his Soul continue to Rest in Perfect Peace - Amen.

My other teacher and mentor is Professor Ogbu Uke Kalu also of blessed memory. It was difficult to resist an attachment to Prof. Kalu after encountering him in any way. He mentored many of us in several ways. Is it his dexterity in handling his subject? his impeccable dressing?, his unceasing assistance to any academic challenge no matter what the issue was or his general but unusually affectionate attitude towards students. He had a special gift. No matter how academically poor a student was, you would notice sufficient positive change in the academic life of the student after his/her interaction with Prof. Kalu. Even long after joining the department as a staff, one sometimes have had to make sudden detour from one's direction in order to avoid Prof Kalu and his unceasing inquiry about not only what you are working on but the follow up question of have you read Prof A's this and Prof Z's that on the issue? Indeed, Kalu enjoyed mentoring and never seized to continue to do so until his death, even in the face of

barriers caused by geographical distances. He had a deep penchant for very warm relationships with people old and young, student and staff (academic and administrative), which

was too obvious to go unnoticed. Prof. Kalu was a teacher and mentor with an unusual candor. May God eternally bless his Soul.

I now turn to Venerable Dr. Joel Daberechukwu Ebo, my most valued teacher and mentor. The largest part of the credit for my modest strides in the academic world must go to him. As I had noted in a preface to one of my books (The Old Testament as History, Religion and Literature) "his understanding and manner of teaching Old Testament are both striking and spectacular and I could not help being overwhelmed by his method. Ven. Ebo supervised both my M.A. and Ph.D. research projects and throughout these periods and long after, he was untiringly willing to discuss issues in the Old Testament every time and everywhere in his office, in his car and even while eating". Ven. Ebo is not just a teacher, a mentor but indeed a great friend. Dr. Ebo is now of Imo State University, Owerri. I am happy that this most valued mentor is still hale and hearty lest this audience is tempted to think that I revere only the dead. May God continue to bless, keep and protect him.

Although Professor Chinedu Nebo never taught me in the classroom, he taught me many lessons of life. In late 2006, he challenged me with the position of Associate Dean, Student Affairs and subsequently with the burdensome responsibilities of Dean, Student Affairs. My modest knowledge of Administration was accentuated by this challenge in addition to not just the little lessons he taught as one was learning on the job but, more importantly, the charisma, commitment and dedication with which he discharged his own responsibilities as Vice-Chancellor. Just being around him was in itself mentoring. I thank him for the opportunity of observing and listening to him.

The Deputy Governor of Enugu State, His Excellency, Mr. Sunday Onyebuchi more than deserves my immense thanks for his genuine friendship, goodwill and support since our university days. He was physically present on Sunday December 6th, 2009 during the thanksgiving service marking my elevation to the rank of Professor of this University which event was a prelude to today's inaugural lecture. My regard to all other classmates of mine wherever they may be.

I am grateful to members of the University of Nigeria Governing Council for the honour their presence today has bestowed on me.

The Chairman and members of the Senate Ceremonials Committee deserve lots of thanks and commendations for the very good job the committee has been doing over the years. It is a herculean task to be charged with the very onerous responsibility of regularly organizing and managing such a huge academic harvest as inaugural lectures. Please keep it up. In this connection, I appreciate the University Orator, Dr Mrs. Edith Nwosu and I thank God for the wonders of her mind and voice. In this same token, may I express my appreciation to the ever performing Department of Music and the Public Relations office of the University for their various roles.

I salute the President and members of the Senior Staff Club, University of Nigeria, Nsukka for the secure relaxation environment one finds in the Club each time one needs to ease off at the end of the day's work. Relaxation in the Club ranges from playing games to exchange of ideas on how we may do things better and thereby become more effective in the performance of our respective duties in the university for the

overall goal of making our university a centre excellence which the current administration is vigorously pursuing.

I thank the President and members of Elite International Club of Nigeria. The Elite family has been a wonderful group who through her spirit of mutual assistance to members, spirit of service to the university (where members are serving in various official capacities) and the spirit of charity has made tremendous positive impact on the life of members, university community, as well that of the less privileged in our society.

I have the privilege of being the Chairman, Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Nsukka Branch. This professional Constituency did me the honour of electing me Chairman on January 28, 2011. I thank the Executive Committee and the entire members of NBA, Nsukka for being very supportive to me as Chairman and for your solidarity today.

Until March 2012, I was the President, Enugu Regional Association (ERA). The cooperation and support I got as President was very overwhelming and enabled ERA executive under my Presidency to attract strong membership in the last two years. I thank the Leadership and members of ERA for your re-assuring presence today.

The Association of Nsukka Professors (ANP) is an umbrella organization of all Professors in the globe who are of Nsukka extraction. I salute the Leadership and members of ANP for the wonderful strides so far in so short a time especially in respect of the largely successful intellectual harvest called the Adada Lecture Series. I thank you for honoring me with your esteemed presence.

Unique Ladies Association is particularly dear to my family. My wife is their current President and I thank them immensely not only for being here but for entrusting the leadership of such a group of hard working and enterprising ladies in the hands of my dear wife.

May I thank all Judges, Priests and Royal Fathers who found time to be here in spite of their usual very busy schedules. I have quite a number of friends among them and I really thank them immensely for the privilege of their presence.

I thank the Chairman and members of my own committee on both the '**matters arising**' aspect of this lecture and my 50th birthday celebrations. The committee has worked very hard not only to ensure that there will be water to drink after this lecture but also some Champagne to pop for my 50th Birthday.

Imilike Community, University of Nigeria, Nsukka is blessed with very interesting personalities among whom one has had the privilege of raising and discussing issues of interest to one as an indigene of Imilike. Many of them either as Staff or as students are here in their numbers and I am very thankful to them for this honour.

The Imilike Town Union, Nsukka Branch which represents my ancestral origin at Nsukka has been a very fatherly association to me. The Union has always been by my side on occasions such as this and I remain as thankful as ever to its leadership and members. In this respect, I thank immensely all Imilike sons and daughters who through their presence have honoured me today.

The FRSC Nsukka Unit Command, Special Marshals especially the Adada Unit Special Marshals have shown me the kind of confidence that is difficult to find among peers in our society today. I have served as Coordinator of the Unit for several years. Even when in 2008 responsibilities of my office as Dean, Student Affairs became a challenge in terms of time, members insisted that I remain Coordinator. I cannot thank the Unit enough for her wonderful goodwill and solidarity.

The Chaplain, St Peter's Chaplaincy UNN, Rev Fr. Monsignor T. Onoyima, has been a Spiritual Director in many ways. Although I have known the Vicar General of the Catholic Diocese of Nsukka for many years, our ways crossed more when he got to know about the memo I wrote to the University Administration in September 2005 on the need for a dress code. The memo for which the Committee of Deans commended me in writing read partly as follows:

“There is no gainsaying that no matter how much effort we make to improve learning, it remains an exercise in futility unless the moral characters of those who learn improve, at least, in the same proportion with their learning. Unfortunately ... the choice of dressing modestly ... is left entirely in the hands of our students. With the increasing complaints about sexual harassment and especially rape there is an obvious need to remove this choice from the hands of our students many of whom are not only young, undiscerning but exuberant.”

I doff my cap for all previous 66 Inaugural Lecturers for fanning the embers that have over the years kept alive the motivation, impetus enthusiasm, inspiration and the drive for this continued intellectual harvest.

Admittedly, it is hardly possible to cover the field in respect of acknowledgements of indebtedness in situations such as this. May I, therefore, apologize to all those who made various contributions in my life and to the success of this lecture and 50th birthday whom I have not mention directly or by name including my other teachers/lecturers, academic colleagues, friends and relations. May the almighty God bless you abundantly for your various roles in my life and career. In this respect, I appreciate all that found time to be present to listen to me today. I cannot thank you enough. May God help me meet you at the point of your own need.

I thank in a special way Dr. Paulinus Agbo for all his unfailing assistance towards the last stages of this lecture.

I fervently disassociate myself from the feeling of those who think that things happen because human beings have planned them well or have worked hard enough for them to happen for such people hardly realize the significance of what the Psalmist sang in Psalm 27:1 to the effect that **“unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain and that unless the Lord watches over the city the watchmen stay in guard (stay awake) in vain”**. I thank the almighty God for all that he has done in not only my career in this University but also in my whole life. As I celebrate my 50th birthday today I confess and testify that God has been extremely kind to me. He has been and shall continue to be my one and only Ebenezer. Blessed be His Holy name now and forever.

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