

Calvin University

## Calvin Digital Commons

---

Calvin Theological Seminary Dissertations

Calvin Theological Seminary

---

2017

### Spirit Determinism in the Christian Anthropology of Yorùbá indigenous Churches

Bernard T. Ayòṣá

*Calvin Theological Seminary*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.calvin.edu/cts\\_dissertations](https://digitalcommons.calvin.edu/cts_dissertations)



Part of the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Ayòṣá, Bernard T., "Spirit Determinism in the Christian Anthropology of Yorùbá indigenous Churches" (2017). *Calvin Theological Seminary Dissertations*. 5.

[https://digitalcommons.calvin.edu/cts\\_dissertations/5](https://digitalcommons.calvin.edu/cts_dissertations/5)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Calvin Theological Seminary at Calvin Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Calvin Theological Seminary Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Calvin Digital Commons.

CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

SPIRIT DETERMINISM IN THE YORÙBÁ CHRISTIAN  
CONCEPT OF HUMAN BEING

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

BERNARD T. AYÒQLÁ

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

MAY 2017

Copyright 2016 by Bernard T. Ayòḡlá  
All rights reserved



**DEDICATION**

To JK

**Spirit Determinism** [ *'spir-ət di- 'tər-mə-ni-zəm*]:  
the thesis that the personal forces in the world –  
such as ancestors, witches, and demons –  
subordinate the human will and actions to theirs,  
and exert their supernatural influences in ways  
that alter human destiny and well-being.



## CONTENTS

DEDICATION	iii
CONTENTS	v
ABSTRACT	x
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2 EARLY CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO TRADITIONAL NOTIONS REGARDING SUPERHUMAN SPIRIT BEINGS	31
2.1 Christian Response to Benevolent Spirits	33
2.1.1 Ancestral Veneration and Socio-cultural Identity in Asia	34
2.1.2 Ancestral Veneration and Socio-cultural Identity in Africa	39
2.1.3 Role of Ancestors in Yorùbá Society	44
2.2 Christian Response to Demons and Witches	47
2.2.1 Demons and Witches in Traditional Cultures	48
2.2.2 Witch-hunts in Medieval Europe	52
2.2.3 Witchcraft in Modern Africa	56
2.2.4 Witchcraft in the Yorùbá Culture	62
2.3 Summary	71
CHAPTER 3 YORÙBÁ TRADITIONAL NOTIONS REGARDING HUMAN RELATIONSHIP WITH SUPERHUMAN SPIRIT BEINGS	73
3.1 Yorùbá Society and Cosmology	74
3.1.1 Yorùbá People and Religious Spirituality	74
3.1.2 Yorùbá Traditional Cosmology	76
3.1.3 Role of Religion in the Yorùbá Culture	78



3.2	Role of Superhuman Spirits in Yorùbá Society	80
3.2.1	The Supreme Being, Olódùmarè	81
3.2.2	The Divine Economy	83
3.2.3	Ancestors as Intermediaries	85
3.2.4	Quasi-human Spirit Beings	88
3.2.5	Death as Transition	93
3.3	Summary	100
<b>CHAPTER 4 YORÙBÁ CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO TRADITIONAL NOTIONS REGARDING SUPERHUMAN SPIRIT BEINGS</b>		101
4.1	Aspirations of Yorùbá Christian Leaders	101
4.1.1	Quest for Autonomy and Identity	103
4.1.2	Desire for Religious Relevance	104
4.1.3	Spiritual and Communal Growth	107
4.2	Traditional Ideas in Yorùbá Christianity	112
4.2.1	Human Relationship with Spirit Beings	114
4.2.2	Humanism in Religious Spirituality	117
4.3	Spirituality of Power in Yorùbá Churches	123
4.3.1	Power and Religious Piety	123
4.3.2	Church as Arena of Power	126
4.3.3	Church as Refuge from Adversities	128
4.4	Summary	132
<b>CHAPTER 5 DELINEATING BOUNDARIES BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND CHRISTIAN IDEAS OF EVIL AND SALVATION</b>		135
5.1	Evil in the Yorùbá Culture	136
5.1.1	Evil as Abnormality	136
5.1.2	Evil in Christian Theism	138

5.1.3	Yorùbá Idea of Evil	143
5.1.4	Èṣù, the Deity of Evil	145
5.2	Manifestations of Evil in the YIC	150
5.2.1	Evil as Antithesis of Life	151
5.2.2	Malice from “Enemies”	155
5.2.3	Death as the Ultimate Evil	157
5.3	Salvation as Well-being in the YIC	160
5.3.1	Relief from Socio-economic Exigencies	162
5.3.2	Protection from Evil Spirits	164
5.3.3	Healing from Diseases	165
5.4	Soteriology of Fear in the YIC	170
5.4.1	Demonizing Socioeconomic Problems	171
5.4.2	Overcoming Evil	174
5.5	Summary	178
CHAPTER 6 REDEEMING TRADITIONAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL NOTIONS IN THE YORÙBÁ CULTURE		181
6.1	Destiny as Mere Potentiality	182
6.1.1	Human Nature and Destiny	182
6.1.2	Destiny and Preordination	183
6.1.3	Destiny and Potentiality	185
6.2	Human Influences on Destiny	187
6.2.1	Changeability of Destiny	188
6.2.2	Role of Character in Human Destiny	191
6.2.3	Enhancers of Destiny	192
6.2.4	Notions of Destiny in the YIC	196
6.3	Divine Determinism and Human Freedom	200

6.3.1	God, the Great Determinist	201
6.3.2	Compatibility of Divine Action with Human Freedom	202
6.3.3	Predestination and Demonic Influences	204
6.4	Sin, Character and Moral Responsibility	206
6.4.1	Role of Religion in Yorùbá Ethics	207
6.4.2	Determinism and Moral Responsibility	210
6.4.3	Sole Responsibility vs. Full Responsibility	211
6.4.4	Communal Nature of Sin	213
6.4.5	Character as a Defining Human Trait	218
6.5	Communion of Saints	220
6.5.1	Christology of the Ancestors	221
6.5.2	Christian Communion and the Eucharist	224
6.5.3	Christ, the Great Ancestor	226
6.6	Summary	229
CHAPTER 7 THEOLOGICAL CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS		231
7.1	Missiological Concerns	233
7.1.1	Role of Christianity in Yorùbá Culture	235
7.1.2	Impact of Yorùbá Culture on Christianity	237
7.1.3	Resolving the Problem of Evil	239
7.2	Pastoral Concerns	241
7.2.1	Pneumatology of Fear	241
7.2.2	Human-centered Worship	243
7.2.3	Superficial Spirituality	247
7.3	Biblical Concerns	249
7.3.1	Original Sin	251

7.3.2	Christ's Atonement	254
7.3.3	Eschatological Hope	256
7.3.4	Work of the Holy Spirit	258
7.4	Conclusion	260
APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS		263
APPENDIX B: CIRCLES OF INFLUENCE		267
APPENDIX C: LADDER OF BEING		268
APPENDIX D: YORÙBÁ PEOPLES AND CITIES		269
APPENDIX E: THESES		270
BIBLIOGRAPHY		273

## ABSTRACT

There are people who think everything in life is an accident. Then, there are the Yorùbá of Southwestern Nigeria who believe that life outcomes are prearranged by the Supreme Being but may also be altered, for better or for worse, by the spirit beings in the universe. Yorùbá Christians, like their non-Christian kin, believe that many experiences in life are manifestations of the activities of the superhuman spirit beings in the community. While the good spirits (such as ancestors and angels) ordinarily have positive impacts on society, the evil spirits (such as witches, wizards, and demons) often work in collaboration with one another to thwart human aspirations and life goals. This dissertation examines the Yorùbá Christian notion of human identity within the framework of traditional Yorùbá perception of the world as a spiritual space where the living and the dead – human and non-human beings – commingle and interact in ways that have dire consequences on individual and communal well-being. Whereas Yorùbá Initiated Churches (YIC) experience numerical growth by promoting key anthropological and pneumatological notions entrenched in the Yorùbá culture, an authentic Christian theology must be formulated on doctrines already revealed in Christ and in Scripture.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Pioneers of African Christian theology, such as Andrew Walls, Kwame Bediako, and John Mbiti, have stressed the need for Christianity to utilize the indigenous religious beliefs in the presentation of the gospel to Africans.<sup>1</sup> These scholars maintain that the traditional religions of Africa, rather than being adversative to the spread of the gospel, provide real *praeparatio evangelica* (preparation for the gospel) in traditional African settings.<sup>2</sup> Thus far, most theologians and pastors are in agreement. The more difficult task, however, is finding the means to communicate the gospel in culturally sensitive

---

<sup>1</sup> See esp. Andrew Walls, "The Gospel as the Prisoner and Liberator of Culture," *Missionalia* 10, no. 3 (November 1982): 102, where Walls remarks: "The indigenising principle ensures that each community recognises in Scripture that God is speaking to its own situation." Elsewhere, Walls identifies two inescapable challenges Christian mission faces when communicating the gospel in the traditional African culture: "One is that of making Christianity at home in the life of a people rooting the gospel in its culture, its language, its habits of thought—'indigenizing' it ... The other is the conforming of a church's life to standards outside itself—standards which can cut across anyone's pattern, a process which reminds the Christian that he has no abiding city, no home on earth" ("Africa and Christian Identity," in *Mission Focus: Current Issues*, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk and Arthur F. Glasser, 212–21 [Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press, 1980], 214–15). Like Walls, Kwame Bediako maintains that the African world is replete with traditional religious ideas that may be used to make the gospel more relevant to African Christians: "In this setting of ubiquitous forces and mysterious powers, the Christian who has understood that Jesus Christ is a living reality, can be at home, assured in the faith that Jesus alone is Lord, Protector, Provider and Enabler" (*Jesus and the Gospel in Africa: History and Experience* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008], 9).

<sup>2</sup> Bediako agrees with Mbiti that African Traditional Religions are "real 'praeparatio evangelica' (preparation for the Gospel); and it is now up to African theologians to interpret the meaning of that preparation for the Gospel, in the African context of not only the past but today and tomorrow," (Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa* [Milton Keynes, U.K.: Regnum Books, 1999], 315–16; cf., John Mbiti, "A Change of the African Concept of Man through Christian Influence," in *For the Sake of the Gospel: Essays in Honour of Samuel Amirtham*, ed. Gnana Robinson [Madurai, India: T. T. S. Publications, 1980], 54); Mbiti also remarks: "This African Religion prepared African peoples for the rapid expansion of Christianity among them: it made them religiously disposed, providing them with a religious vocabulary and a religious understanding which are largely compatible with Christianity" ("The Future of Christianity in Africa," *CrossCurrents* 28, no. 4 [1978]: 390); cf., David O. Ogunbible and Akintunde E. Akinade, *Creativity and Change in Nigerian Christianity* (Lagos: Malthouse Press Limited, 2010), xxi.

manners without it becoming unrecognizable when measured by biblical standards. In the African context, many scenarios lend themselves to critical evaluations as far as the interactions between Christianity and the African traditional religions are concerned. Broadly speaking, the scenarios can be categorized into either the continuity which the indigenous churches must maintain with the traditional religions or the distance which Christians must preserve in their selective use of traditional religious ideas and idioms.

Many essays have been written on the displacement that takes place whenever Christianity enters an indigenous culture. Edward Pritchard's *Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, for example, published in 1976, remains a classic today because it presented the cultural beliefs and religious practices of a people group, the Azande of Central Africa, that could be extrapolated to interpret the religious beliefs and practices of other closely related African cultures. Perhaps, more than any other African community, the Yorùbá of West Africa are an ideal people for a theological discourse on the impact of Christianity on the African culture for a variety of reasons: first, unlike many societies in modern Africa, the Yorùbá culture remains relatively untouched by the two world religions, namely Christianity and Islam.<sup>3</sup> The Yorùbá tradition endured colonization, political independence, and modernization with minimal change in the cultural beliefs and religious practices. Second, scholars like Jacob Olupona have suggested that the

---

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Lawson, for example, asserts that the Yorùbá like the Zulu of South Africa have consistently resisted all radically alien systems, such as forces of colonialism, Christianization, and new religious movements because of the "complex and differentiated symbol system" which they have put in place (*Religions of Africa: Traditions in Transformation* [San Diego: Harper & Row, 1984], 25). In a different assessment, Herbert Klem suggests that every serious missionary or African pastor should study the Yorùbá traditional religion because it is, "representative of the general kind of indigenous religious thought which could be found in West Africa, and perhaps it may reflect much that is shared across large parts of the entire Africa" ("Yoruba Theology and Christian Evangelism," *Missiology* 3, no. 1 [1975]: 50).

well-developed Yorùbá customs may have attracted scholarly attention: “They are also the most studied ethnic group in Africa. Indeed, the prominence of Yoruba studies in scholarly work is underscored by the prominence of their arts, music, religion and oral literature, all of which have received adequate scholarly investigation.”<sup>4</sup> Third, there is renewed interest in the impact of the traditional religions on Yorùbá Christianity in recent time because of the sudden surge in membership in the indigenous churches led or founded by Yorùbá Christian leaders.<sup>5</sup> Despite all these observations, it is surprising that there is no serious theological assessment of the aspects of traditional religious beliefs that could serve as real *praeparatio evangelica* for Yorùbá Christians.

In delineating boundaries between Christianity and the traditional religious beliefs in many parts of Africa, perhaps no notion has left a more indelible impression on the African Christian mind than the influence of the superhuman spirit beings such as ancestors, demons and witches on the social, economic, and spiritual well-being of human beings.<sup>6</sup> As such, many African theologians have suggested that the gospel may not have much relevance in the African society until the reality of superhuman spirit beings, especially the ancestors, are taken into consideration. In this regard, the Yorùbá

---

<sup>4</sup> Jacob Olupona, “The Study of Yoruba Religious Tradition in Historical Perspective,” *Numen* 40 (1993): 241.

<sup>5</sup> Some scholars who have pointed out the prolificity of Yorùbá churches around the world include: Richard Burgess, *Nigeria’s Christian Revolution: The Civil War Revival and Its Pentecostal Progeny [1967–2006]* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), 2; C. Peter Wagner and Joseph Thompson, *Out of Africa* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2004), 10; Daniel Olukoya, *Praying by the Blood of Jesus* (Lagos: Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministry, 2010), 25.

<sup>6</sup> See e.g., James Amanze, “Christianity and Ancestor Veneration in Botswana,” *Studies in World Christianity* 9, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 43, where Amanze remarks: “In almost all African societies there is a strong belief in ancestors despite strong Christian presence.” Cf., Peter Nyende, “An Aspect of the Character of Christianity in Africa,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* no. 132 (November 1, 2008): 42.



Initiated Churches (YIC),<sup>7</sup> as this study will show, are very keen to accommodate the traditional religious beliefs that attribute much of the evil in society to the meddlesome activities of the superhuman spirit beings with which human beings co-habit the world.<sup>8</sup> Theologians who advocate including basic traditional African religious ideas regarding superhuman spirit beings into African Christian theology maintain that such cultural sensitivity will present African Christians with viable responses to the reality of evil in their milieu.<sup>9</sup> It is the thesis of this dissertation, upon closer scrutiny of the Yorùbá Christian beliefs and spiritual practices, that the ascription of deterministic attributes to ancestors, witches, and demons:

a. exacerbates the fear which the Yorùbá have for these superhuman spirit beings,<sup>10</sup> and

---

<sup>7</sup> The term Yorùbá Initiated Churches (YIC), in this dissertation, refers essentially to the group of churches within the *Aladura* and the Nigerian Pentecostal church movements. “*Aladura*” is the generic term used by the Yorùbá to describe individuals and groups of African Christians who engage in fervent prayer as the primary means of resolving life’s crisis. The word “*Aladura*” literally means “the one(s) who pray.” *Aladura* Christians are known for their penchant to pray fervently in all confounding situations. They use healing, prophecy, and exorcism as spiritual tools to confront physical and spiritual challenges.

<sup>8</sup> Marguerite Kraft’s remark regarding traditional African cosmology is insightful: “Causality deals with the forces that are at work in the universe. Many societies see sickness and misfortune as caused by offending a spirit or an ancestor spirit, being cursed by an elder, failing to show respect, or a bad interpersonal relationship. Often the good things that happen to a person are seen as due to help from the spirit world, too” (“Spiritual Conflict and the Mission of the Church,” in *Deliver Us from Evil: An Uneasy Frontier in Christian Mission*, ed. A. Scott Moreau and Tokunboh Adeyemo [Monrovia, CA: World Vision Publications, 2002], 287). Cf., Deji Ayegboyin, “Ota Ile, Ota Ode: Reflections on the Yoruba Obsession with the Enemy and the Use of Imprecatory Prayers in the *Aladura* Church Movements,” *Journal of African Christian Thought* 12, no. 1 (June 2009): 32–40.

<sup>9</sup> Klem, e.g., has suggested that, “Instead of denying the traditional Yoruba world view, we should accept it as a valid context in which to preach the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It is a context in which to preach that there is but one mediator between God and man, even the man Christ Jesus, and that the other spirits are actually usurping the glory and honor which God wants given directly to himself,” (“Yoruba Theology,” 51).

<sup>10</sup> On a wider scope, Samuel Olarewaju has remarked that the current trend in many African Indigenous Churches to ward off evil spirits by spiritually “covering” various objects with the “blood of Jesus” has, “inadvertently promoted the presence of demonic activities today far beyond the reality by finding a demon under every bush” (“Efficacy of Prayer in the Blood of Christ in Contemporary African Christianity,” *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 22, no. 1 [2003]: 45).

b. undermines the biblical notion of sin and its debilitating effect of sin on human society.

In addition, Yorùbá Christianity, in its current form, fails to equip Yorùbá Christians with a biblical pneumatology that adequately resolves the problem of evil or assures Christians of the potency of the once-and-for-all victory of Christ over evil powers.

The second part of our thesis requires further explanation. I do not dispute that Christianity would not have an enduring impact among the Yorùbá if it ignores key anthropological and pneumatological notions entrenched in the Yorùbá tradition. I also am aware that Yorùbá Christianity, in its current form, succeeds in relating the gospel to the pragmatic social and economic needs in the Yorùbá culture by accommodating traditional notions regarding superhuman entities. However, since Scripture, and not cultural or humanistic expediencies, must provide the theological framework for interpreting human existence and the relationship which human beings may have with the superhuman entities in the universe, this accommodation must be challenged. To accomplish this, I propose that Yorùbá Christian theology must underscore biblical themes not found in the traditional religion – such as teachings on original sin, Christ’s atonement, and human hope in the resurrected life – without ignoring traditional notions about the reality of evil superhuman spirit beings that negatively influence the quality of human life in this world. This requires a robust biblical pneumatology or doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

There are four areas and issues in scholarly discourse that are relevant to our study. First, we must deal with responses to the impact of the gospel on non-Christian societies and cultures. Then, we need to examine more specifically the way in which

Yorùbá Christians understand the impact of superhuman spirit beings on their lives, including the persistent notion that much of the evil in human society can be attributed to the activities of superhuman spirits. This leads, finally to questions of human morality. If these influences are real and determinative, especially as the cause of evil, how can we speak of human moral agency and culpability? Four prominent themes emerge in scholarly discourses regarding the impact of superhuman spirit beings on Yorùbá Christians. First is the general characterization of the impact of the gospel in a non-Christian culture; second is more specifically on the Yorùbá Christian perception of the roles of superhuman spirit beings – vis-à-vis ancestors, witches, and demons – in determining (or influencing) the outcome of events in the human world; third is the interpretation of the persistent notion among the Yorùbá that much of the evil in human society can be attributed to the activities of superhuman spirits; finally, culminating from the second and third points above, is the issue of how human morality and culpability for sin may be assessed in a Yorùbá world that attributes most evil to the activities of the spirit beings in society.

Early Christian missionaries to Africa and Asia have been criticized in modern times for endeavoring to sever new converts from their traditional religious beliefs or practices when they became Christians. The missionaries who agreed that some aspects of traditional religious beliefs may be retained in the propagation of the gospel also wrestled with the difficult decision of ascertaining what aspects of the indigenous tradition to keep and what aspects were inimical to Christianity. For the latter group, American philosopher, William Hocking, proposed the “Way of Radical Displacement”

or the “Way of Reconciliation” as two extreme positions Christian missions had frequently considered in their evangelization of non-Christian cultures.<sup>11</sup>

Hocking maintained that, “Radical Displacement is animated by the belief that the faith to be conveyed is complete in itself. It requires no contributions from the surrounding world of ideas.” Thus conceived, Christian missionaries discarded all alien cultures and presented the gospel as an entirely new faith. Reconciliation, on the other hand, takes a different approach: “Reconciliation is the way of a *true conservatism*: it conserves as much as possible of what is worth conserving in other faiths.”<sup>12</sup> Arthur Capell aptly sums up Hocking’s views: while the *Way of Radical Displacement*, “proceeds from the presumption that whatever belongs to the old way is evil and must go,” the *Way of Reconciliation* is “based on the belief that the old way has much good in it and that at any rate the missionary must start where the people are and build on the old foundations, replacing only those stones that are found to be unsafe.”<sup>13</sup> With specific reference to the early twentieth-century Christian missions in China and Korea, Hocking concludes that the missionaries should have chosen the Way of Reconciliation instead of the Way of Radical Displacement that they employed: “The cost of radical displacement to individuals in terms of personal suffering is not a decisive matter: its moral cost is a more serious concern, when it tells in this way upon the fabric of the church.”<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> See William E. Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1940), 143–76; 190–207.

<sup>12</sup> Hocking, *Living Religions*, 198.

<sup>13</sup> Arthur Capell, “One New Man: Success or Failure of Christian Mission,” *International Review of Mission* 50, no. 198 (1961): 149.

<sup>14</sup> Hocking, *Living Religions*, 152.

In more recent time, Dutch theologian, J. H. Bavinck, has pointed out the challenges of communicating the gospel in pagan cultures.<sup>15</sup> In Bavinck's opinion, the central goal of Christian mission is to extend God's kingdom over the whole earth through church planting: "The conversion of the heathen is in the last analysis a necessary element in the planting of the church."<sup>16</sup> The church planter must, however, discern the aspects of prevalent customs and practices that may be "accommodated" in the newly established church and the practices or mores that must be discarded. In addition, the missionary must be sensitive to the pace at which converts are asked to relinquish pagan practices for the new Christian way of life: "The preaching of the gospel must in other words take place with great care, so that the old tribal relationships are not too quickly and too carelessly broken."<sup>17</sup> Bavinck suggests that the process of *possessio* should be employed rather than that of *accommodation*: "The Christian life does not accommodate or adapt itself to heathen forms of life, but it takes the latter in possession and thereby makes them new."<sup>18</sup> Whereas *adaptation* or *accommodation* connotes the mutilation of culture, *possessio* seizes culture for God's use: "Within the framework of the non-Christian life, customs and practices serve idolatrous tendencies and drive a person away from God. The Christian life takes them in hand and turns them in an entirely different direction; they acquire an entirely different content."<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> See J. H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions*, trans. David H. Freeman (Philadelphia, PA: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1960), 169–190.

<sup>16</sup> Bavinck, *Science of Missions*, 159.

<sup>17</sup> Bavinck, *Science of Missions*, 163–64.

<sup>18</sup> Bavinck, *Science of Missions*, 178–79.

<sup>19</sup> Bavinck, *Science of Missions*, 179. Elsewhere Bavinck remarks: "It is certainly possible to make use of those psychological elements which are incorporated in those religions, even though they are thoroughly contaminated. They can be appropriated, taken out of their context and put in the hands of the

Even though decades have passed since Hocking wrote *Living Religions and a World Faith* and Bavinck his *Introduction to the Science of Missions*, their proposals are still relevant today in theological debates on the extent of continuity (or discontinuity) that Christianity may maintain with non-Christian cultures. One consideration, which peaked in the early twentieth century with Emil Brunner's *Revelation and Reason*, was the idea that "points of contact" or "common grounds" (German, *Anknüpfungspunkt*) may be established between Christians and non-Christians.<sup>20</sup> In strong rebuttal to Brunner, Karl Barth had responded, "No!" (German, *Nein!*).<sup>21</sup> Today, many African theologians would side with Brunner, maintaining that some concepts regarding ancestral veneration, for example, even though deeply ingrained in the traditional African religious consciousness, can still be reinterpreted in line with sound biblical doctrines.<sup>22</sup> Some

---

Lord" ("The Problem of Adaptation and Communication," *International Review of Mission* 45, no 179 [Jul 1956]: 313).

<sup>20</sup> According to Emil Brunner, "The bad conscience, the sense of guilt, is the point of contact for faith. It is the spot at which the change of direction ought to begin. The sense of guilt, as a negative relation with God, is the point of contact for faith" (*Revelation and Reason* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946], 214). Donald McKim remarks that the term, *Anknüpfungspunkt*, specifically focused on finding anything that "may be appealed to as a means of preparing one for the gospel from within one's self" (*Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996], 12).

<sup>21</sup> In Barth's opinion, the only point of contact occurs when a sinner responds to God in faith (*Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. G. T. Thomson and Harold Knight, [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956], 265). For the dialectical discourse on faith formation between Brunner and Barth, see, Emil Brunner, *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace," by Professor Emil Brunner and the Reply "No!" by Karl Barth*, trans. Peter Fraenkel (London: The Centenary Press, 1946).

<sup>22</sup> Catholic theologian, Alexander Jebadu, for example, argues that "ancestral veneration does not contradict the Christian faith. It has a place in the Christian faith and should be incorporated into, at least, in Catholic Christian devotion" ("Ancestral Veneration and the Possibility of Its Incorporation into the Christian Faith," *Exchange* 36, no. 3 [January 1, 2007]: 246). Cf. Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference, "Communion between the Living and the Dead: Christian Response to Spirit Possession." *Afer* 29, no. 5 (October 1987): 309–14, where a commission of Zimbabwean bishops propose that African Christian theology can find meaningful expression by developing the traditional African belief in the ancestors. See also, Ogbu U. Kalu, "Ancestral Spirituality and Society in Africa," in *African Spirituality: Forms Meanings, and Expressions*, ed. Jacob K. Olupona (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000), 55.

Western theologians, like Herbert Klem, agree that, “points of agreement are best treated as *points of contact* which can be used as a framework from which to build a more biblical understanding of life and salvation ... To condemn completely all local beliefs is to miss the truth, to alienate the people and probably to make significant communication impossible.”<sup>23</sup> Others, like J. Parratt, adamantly maintain that “the central aspect of the Christian faith has no real parallels or points of contact in African traditions.”<sup>24</sup>

Whichever side of the mission debate one stands on, the consensus is that church planters must continue to find ways to make the gospel accessible and meaningful to Africans. The process of “Africanization,” then, may be akin to Hocking’s “Way of Reconception,” or Bavinck’s “*possessio*.” Whatever term we employ, the general notion is that Christianity must absorb as much of the traditional religious practices of Africans as possible to make the religion relevant in the African context. Such a *possessio*, in taking Bavinck seriously, would not only make Christ a true member of the African society, it would also provide African Christians with the means of assessing the impact of Jesus Christ amidst their dire social and economic conditions. Jesus Christ in an “Africanized” Christian theology, several African scholars claim, must be received as the “Great Ancestor” who meets the social, economic, and spiritual needs of Africans.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Klem, “Yoruba Theology,” 49.

<sup>24</sup> J. Parratt, *Reinventing Christianity: African Christian Theology Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 198.

<sup>25</sup> Ghanaian Methodist priest and theologian, Kwesi Dickson asserts that “Christ was the perfect victim; by his death he merits, to use an African image, to be looked upon as Ancestor, the greatest of ancestors, who never ceases to be one of the ‘living-dead,’ because there always will be people alive who *knew* him, whose lives were irreversibly affected by his life and work” (*Theology in Africa* [Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1984], 197–98). Like Dickson, Bediako proposes that Christ may be regarded as an Ancestor: “Christ, by virtue of his Incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension into the realm of spirit-power, can rightly be designated, in African terms, as Ancestor, indeed Supreme Ancestor” (*Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* [Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995], 217). For other views advocating for Ancestor-Christology, see: Charles Nyamiti, “Contemporary African Christologies:

A major ambition of the *Africanization* process, in Birgit Meyer's view, is to stall the flow of Christians from the mission-established churches to the "syncretistic movements" where African traditional values are promoted, or at least accommodated: "Under the banner of *africanization* or *indigenization* a successful combination of both elements is strived after in order to provide an authentic African expression of Christianity."<sup>26</sup> Edward Fasholé-Luke, in line with Meyer's reasoning, warns that because of the deep influence of ancestors on African consciousness, the Christian enterprise "will be abortive, unless the Churches develop a theology of Communion of Saints that will satisfy the passionate desire of Africans, Christian and non-Christian alike, to be linked with their dead ancestors."<sup>27</sup> Indeed, Christian G. Baeta may have anticipated the deep yearning among Africans to maintain communication with their departed loved ones when he said decades ago that, "Whatever others may do in their own countries; our people live with their dead."<sup>28</sup>

---

Assessment and Practical Suggestions," in *Paths of African Theology*, ed. Rosino Gibellini [Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994], 70; Charles Nyamiti, *Studies in African Christian Theology: Jesus Christ, the Ancestor of Humankind: Methodological and Trinitarian Foundations, Vols. 1-2* (Nairobi, Kenya: Catholic University of East Africa, 2006); John Pobee, *Toward an African Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 94; Bénédet Bujo, *African Theology in its Social Context*, trans. John O'Donohue (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992), 79; Bénédet Bujo, *Foundations of an African Ethic: Beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality*, tr. Brian McNeil (New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 2001), 102; Marc Ntetem, "Initiation, Traditional and Christian," in *A Reader in African Christian Theology*, ed. J. Parratt (London: SPCK, 1997), 102; Rodney Reed and Gift Mtukwa, "Christ Our Ancestor: African Christology and the Danger of Contextualization," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 45, no. 1 (April, 2010): 144–63.

<sup>26</sup> Birgit Meyer, "If You Are a Devil, You Are a Witch and, If You Are a Witch, You Are a Devil: The Integration of 'Pagan' Ideas into the Conceptual Universe of Ewe Christians in Southeastern Ghana," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 22 (1992): 99.

<sup>27</sup> Edward Fasholé-Luke, "Ancestor Veneration and the Communion of Saints," in *New Testament Christianity for Africa and the World: Essays in Honor of Harry Sawyerr*, ed. Mark E. Glasswell, and Edward Fasholé-Luke (London: SPCK, 1974), 210.

<sup>28</sup> C. G. Baeta, "The Challenge of African Culture to the Church and the Message of the Church to African Culture," in *Christianity and African Culture: The Proceedings of a Conference Held at Accra, Gold Coast, May 2–6, 1955* (Accra, Ghana: Christian Council of the Gold Coast, 1955), 51.



On the other side of the theological debates on how Christianity should respond to non-Christian traditional religious practices are those who tread the “Way of Radical Displacement.” These are those who maintain that the traditional religious beliefs of Africa that have no direct validation in Scripture must be rejected or at least treated with suspicion. Proponents of this view maintain that unless the African culture is “Christianized,” the gospel will have an insignificant impact on Africans. A major goal of the “Christianization” process, was to sift out all the “pagan” practices in the African culture that the missionaries considered to be inimical to the spread of the gospel.<sup>29</sup> African converts to Christianity were persuaded by the missionaries to embrace new ideas and cultural practices before they could consider themselves to be Christians. David Frankfurter, in his assessment of the Christian mission from late antiquity to modern times, remarks that the perceived influence of “ambiguous spirits, which were enacted through possession,” remains the central feature of the Christianization efforts: “Christianization itself involved the reorganization of traditional and institutional pantheons to bring Christianity into local relevance, as a source of authority, morality,

---

<sup>29</sup> Makani Kabweza, e.g., remarks that Shona Christians in Zimbabwe have “Christianized” the rituals of ancestral veneration by singing Christian hymns instead of traditional songs during the ceremony: “While church leaders argued the theological aspects of the matter, ordinary Christians continue to perform the ritual” (“Ancestor Veneration and Christian Worship,” *Afer* 25, no. 4 [August 1, 1983]: 243); cf., B. Afeke, and P. Verster, “Christianisation of Ancestor Veneration within African Traditional Religions: An Evaluation,” *In die Skriflig* 38, no. 1 (2004): 47-61; Victor Cole, “Africanising the Faith: Another Look at the Contextualisation of Theology,” in *Issues in African Christian Theology*, ed. Samuel Ngewa, Mark Shaw, and Tite Tienou, (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1998): 12; Ray S. Anderson, *On Being Human: Essays in Theological Anthropology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 16. Jørn Olsen, however, warns that not everything in the African culture can or should be adapted because “those elements that are so absorbed may need some considerable modification before they can be of material usefulness ... It is true that some aspects of this culture – the ancestors, the community, the world of spirits, and so on – may well be part of the present experience of the average African Christian, and to this extent they are valid points of departure” (“Contextualized Christology in Tropical Africa?” *Svensk Missionstidskrift* 85, nos. 3–4 [January 1, 1997], 256).

power, and myth.”<sup>30</sup> To the proponents of “Christianization,” the potency of the gospel is in its ability to eradicate “unchristian” practices from the African culture, not to affirm them.

Both the “Africanization” and the “Christianization” proposals have been critically assessed by scholars. While Western theologians, in general, are wary of the possible negative impacts which the traditional religious beliefs may have on African Christian spirituality, African theologians, on their part, are more critical of the “Christianization” process introduced by the early Western missionaries to Africa.<sup>31</sup>

Tugume Hassan, for example, notes the condescending attitude of the European missionaries to East Africa in the late nineteenth century: “The perceptions that Christianity was superior to, and in no position to negotiate and dialogue with African religion, contributed significantly toward their failure to understand and evangelize fully the societies they came in contact with.”<sup>32</sup> In polemical response to the “Christianization”

---

<sup>30</sup> David Frankfurter, “Where the Spirits Dwell: Possession, Christianization, and Saints’ Shrines in Late Antiquity,” *The Harvard Theological Review*, 103, no. 1 (January, 2010): 29.

<sup>31</sup> David Maxwell, e.g., remarks concerning the impact of Christianity among the Shona of Zimbabwe: “Christian exorcism and demonisation have provided a new means of contesting the authority of patriarchal ancestor religion. Witchcraft eradication movements have been Christianised, and more recently undercut, through witch cleansing in Pentecostal churches” (“Witches, Prophets and Avenging Spirits: The Second Christian Movement in North-East Zimbabwe,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 25, no. 3 [August 1, 1995]: 310). In J.D.Y. Peel’s view, “The Christianization of Africa is a case of a more general type of process that has occurred to other peoples at different times and places: the gradual supplanting of local or ethnic religious identities by the world religions. ... It was missionaries of Christianity and Islam who talked about ‘religion’ and asked themselves which practices of the ‘pagan’ constituted their ‘religion’, and so needed to be abandoned on conversion” (“The Christianization of African Society: Some Possible Models,” in *Christianity in Independent Africa*, ed. Edward Fasholé-Luke, Richard Gray, Adrian Hastings, and Godwin Tasie [Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1978], 443). In a different reaction, however, Tugume Hassan criticizes early missionary activities among the Buganda of Uganda: “The missionaries who operated in Buganda were, by and large predisposed to consider themselves as bearers, not only of a superior religion but a superior culture, the two being inseparably intertwined. The superiority complex was a by-product of centuries of European prejudice about Africa” (“Attitudes of Christian Missionaries towards African Traditional Religious Beliefs in East Africa During the British Colonial Rule,” *African Journal of History and Culture* 7, no. 10 [October 2015]: 195).

<sup>32</sup> Hassan, “Attitudes of Christian Missionaries,” 193.

ideas, many African theologians expound the valuable contributions of ATR to the spread of the gospel in Africa. To these African theologians, the time has come for African Christians to assert their spiritual identity by rejecting any attempt to supplant the African culture with Western Christian values.<sup>33</sup> Bishop Sarpong of Kumasi, Ghana, believes he speaks for many African theologians in his remark: “If Christianity’s claim to be universal is to be believed, then it is not Africa that must be Christianized, but Christianity that must be Africanized.”<sup>34</sup>

Arguably, proponents of both the “Africanization” and “Christianization” ideas have an identical end goal in mind: to give Jesus Christ an enduring presence in the African culture. The early nineteenth century Christian mission to Africa which began as a Christianization process may have had Africanization as its ultimate goal. Also, many of the recent theologians who clamor for more generous accommodation of traditional religious values in African Christianity would admit that their purpose is not to totally eliminate Western values from the African brand of Christianity.<sup>35</sup> It must be said,

---

<sup>33</sup> Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator, e.g., remarks concerning the apparent conflict between African traditional and Christian ethics: “This situation stems from the tendency to impose prohibitions on the debate of some moral issues erroneously considered as “Western” and, therefore, “un-African” (“Ethics Brewed in an African Pot,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 31, no. 1 [Spring/Summer, 2011]: 9). For other claims of impositions of Western values on African Christians, see, Patrick Kalilombe, “The Salvific Value of African Religions,” in *Readings in African Traditional Religion: Structure, Meaning, Relevance, Future*, 195-210 (Bern: Peter Lang, 1991); Bujo, *Foundations*, esp. 73 – 74; L. Ugwuanya Nwosu, “African Religion in Ecumenical Perspective,” *Africa: Rivista Trimestrale di Studi e Documentazione Dell’Istituto italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente*, 19, no.2 (June, 1994): 161–79; Anthony Ekwunife, “Integration of Traditional African Values in Priestly Formation,” *Afer* 39, no. 4 (1997): 194–211; Chukwudum Okolo, “The Traditional African and Christian Values: Dimensions of Dialogal Encounter,” *Afer* 29, no. 2 (1987): 81–92.

<sup>34</sup> Peter Sarpong is quoted in Joseph Healey and Donald Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 19.

<sup>35</sup> Henk J. van Rinsum, e.g., points out that, “The African Independent Churches thereby constituted a hybridization of Western Christianity and African religious values and norms” (“Wipe the Blackboard Clean’: Academization and Christianization—Siblings in Africa?” *African Studies Review* 15, no. 2, Special Issue: African Universities in Crisis and the Promotion of a Democratic Culture [September, 2002]:” 41).

therefore, that while the “Africanization” camp stresses the need for Christianity to be more inclusive in its theological dialogue with the traditional religions, proponents of the “Christianization” process are more concerned with the negative impact which such accommodation would have on genuine Christian spirituality.

Now, to return to the more specific issues relating to the ubiquity of superhuman beings in the African world and the Yorùbá perception of the impact of these spiritual entities on human well-being, the dearth of Christian treatises has, in a way, been compensated by the copious writings by theologians and philosophers on the traditional religious beliefs and practices of the Yorùbá as precursors to Christianity. Several scholars have shown that the Yorùbá believe the quasi-human spirit beings, or witches, in their midst are responsible for much of the evil in society. In its more specific usage, the term “witchcraft,” connotes for the Yorùbá the notion that a distress or an affliction has been caused through the use of superhuman powers.<sup>36</sup> Stephen Afolabi, for example remarks that the Yorùbá do not hesitate to blame the spirits for any event that causes distress in human life: “It is discovered among the Yorùbá people that natural disasters and other forms of human suffering and pains are blamed directly on wicked people,

---

<sup>36</sup> According to Nelson Tebbe, “A witch is a human being who secretly uses supernatural power for nefarious purposes. Witchcraft, then, is the practice of secretly using supernatural power for evil – in order to harm others or to help oneself at the expense of others” (“Witchcraft and Statecraft: Liberal Democracy in Africa,” *Georgetown Law Journal* 96 [2007], 190). Like Tebbe, Diane Lyons defines witchcraft as a mysterious ability to harm others: “African witchcraft is a personal act of one individual using supernatural powers to harm another” (“Witchcraft, Gender, Power and Intimate Relations in Dela, Northern Cameroon,” *World Archaeology* 29, no. 3 [1998], 343); cf. Raymond Prince’s remark: “A witch’s malignancy may be turned upon a man for almost any reason – for some slight impoliteness, or because he accuses her of being a witch, or because he is getting too high in the world or often for no reason,” (“Yoruba Image of the Witch,” *The Journal of Mental Science* 107 [1961]: 798)

divinities, and ancestral spirits who may inflict evil punishment for error or for breaking taboo.”<sup>37</sup>

Three themes emerge from the scholarly assessments of Yorùbá understanding of the impact of the superhuman spirit beings on the human world: first is the perception that human beings are naturally susceptible to the spiritual influences of ancestors, demons and witches in ways that significantly impact their social, economic, and spiritual well-being (determinism); second is the persuasion that much of the evil in the human world can be traced to the activities of the superhuman spirit beings in the universe (theodicy). Finally, the Yorùbá assume that certain actions that human beings perceive to be performed by human beings are actually induced by the superhuman spirit beings in the community. This line of thinking significantly affects how human responsibility is assessed whenever evil is perceived to have occurred in society (morality).

Whereas the term, “determinism,” holds a variety of meanings for philosophers and theologians, Oladele Balogun’s definition of determinism as, “simply the thesis that every event, with respect to the past, present and future, has a cause” will suffice for the purpose of this dissertation.<sup>38</sup> For in the Yorùbá world, while human beings are free to act according to their God-given abilities, some of their actions are perceived to be coerced by the superhuman spirit beings – such as ancestors, witches and demons – in the community. In addition, human life experiences are strongly determined by the spiritual aspect, or *Orí*, in each individual. In the traditional Yorùbá setting, *Orí* is believed to be

---

<sup>37</sup> Stephen Afolabi, "Yoruba Cultural Reflections in the Christ Apostolic Church," *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 17, no. 2 (January 1, 2012): 146.

<sup>38</sup> Oladele Balogun, “The Concepts of Ori and Human Destiny in Traditional Yoruba Thought: A Soft-Deterministic Interpretation,” *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 16, no. 1 (2007): 120.

responsible for human destiny.<sup>39</sup> Life outcomes, then, are not only dependent on human ability, they are, more importantly, consequences of individual pre-ordained destinies and the level of influence which the superhuman spirit beings in the community have on the individual.

Balogun submits that “soft determinism is more consistent and coherent with the Yorùbá belief in the concepts of *Ori* and human destiny than any other metaphysical interpretations.”<sup>40</sup> For, Balogun, the Yorùbá are not hard determinists because they do believe that what has been ordained can still be changed through the nature of one’s *Ori*. Like Balogun, Abimbola explains the strong belief among the Yorùbá that every aspect of the human life can be traced to the nature of the *Ori*: “To the Yorùbá, the end for which a person is made is inextricably bound up with his destiny. They believe that man’s doings on earth have been predestined by *Olódùmarè*.”<sup>41</sup> Furthermore,

*Ori*, therefore, is the element which represents human destiny. The choice of a good *ori* ensures that the individual concerned would lead a successful and prosperous life on earth while the choice of a bad *ori* condemns the individual concerned to a life of failure. Thus, if a man achieves great success in life, the Yoruba usually attribute his attainment to the choice of a good *ori*; but if a man

---

<sup>39</sup> M. Akin Makinde, e.g., remarks: “Apart from the body and soul which, in Yoruba thought, are the two *main* elements (the physical and the spiritual) of a person, there is a third element, also spiritual, of a person, known as *ori* (Inner head) whose function it is to determine human destiny” (“An African Concept of Human Personality: The Yoruba Example,” *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 7, no. 3 [September 1, 1984]: 189). Like Makinde, Kazeem Adegoke and Y. K. Salami, underscore the determinism in the Yorùbá conception of *Ori*. According to Adegoke: “Technically, ‘*Ori*’ means human’s fortune or luck and chance which comes to people in a way that affects their lives. In short, it is a force that causes good or bad things to happen to people” (“The Theory of Evil among the Theologians in Islam and Yoruba Traditional Religion,” *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* 43, no. 1 [June, 2011], 55); in Salami’s view, “*Ori* is the Yorùbá concept of pre-destination and consequently a form of determinism. Among the Yorùbá, the *Ori* of an individual is the bearer of his destiny” (“Predestination and the Metaphysics of Identity: A Yoruba (African) Case Study,” *África: Revista do Centro de Estudos Africanos* 24–26 [2002-2005]: 7).

<sup>40</sup> Balogun, “Concepts of *Ori*,” 118; cf., Y. K. Salami, “Pre-destination, Freedom and Responsibility: A Case in Yoruba Moral Philosophy,” *Research in Yoruba Language and Literatures* 7 (1996): 7.

<sup>41</sup> E. Bolaji Idowu, *Olódùmarè: God in Yoruba Belief* (London: Longman, 1962), 15.

fails in an important endeavor or if he fails to catch up with his colleagues, his failure is attributed to the choice of a bad *ori*.<sup>42</sup>

With such a strong attachment of *Ori* to human destiny, it is easy to assume that the Yorùbá have a fatalistic view of life because they relate everything that happens in life to that which God had pre-determined before human existence. However, Balogun points out that determinism, in the Yorùbá world, is not synonymous with fatalism;<sup>43</sup> whereas fatalism connotes a sense of absolutism – “what will be must be” – human freedom is totally unrestrained in the Yorùbá deterministic universe.<sup>44</sup> If a label must be put on the Yorùbá beliefs on freedom and determinism, one may find Marie-Louise Friquegnon’s categorization of determinism into *soft*, *hard*, and *animistic fatalism* helpful:

The animistic fatalist holds that future events are determined by *personal* forces, that is, by beings of higher intelligence than man. On this view, human knowledge is not *intrinsically* impotent, it is merely outmatched, and its efficacy nullified, by the greater knowledge of supernatural beings, who, for any strategy we devise to avoid an unpleasant fate, devise a counter-strategy that defeats us.<sup>45</sup>

In finding application to the pervasive traditional African notion that the superhuman spirit beings, in their higher state of existence in comparison to human beings, exert their influence in ways that affect individual and societal well-being,

---

<sup>42</sup> Wande Abimbola, “The Yoruba Concept of Human Personality,” in *Notion de Personne en Afrique Noire*, 73–89 (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1973): 80; Abimbola further asserts: “whatever *ori* does not sanction cannot be given to any person by the *orisa* [the deity] or even by *Olodumare* [Supreme Being] himself. *Ori* is therefore an intermediary between each individual and the *orisa*. The *orisa* will not attend to any request which has not been sanctioned by a man’s *ori*,” 81.

<sup>43</sup> See e.g., Balogun, “Concepts of Ori,” 116–30.

<sup>44</sup> Balogun proposes that the Yorùbá hold a “soft-deterministic” view of *Ori* (Balogun, “Concepts of Ori,” 120); cf. Paul Edwards’s remark: “When we call an action ‘free’ we never in any ordinary situation mean that it was uncaused; and this emphatically includes the kind of action about which we pass moral judgment” (“Hard and Soft Determinism,” in *Determinism and Freedom in the Age of Modern Science*, ed., Sidney Hook [New York: Collier Books, 1961]: 118).

<sup>45</sup> Marie-Louise Friquegnon, “The Paradoxes of Determinism,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 33, 1 (September 1972): 114–15.

Friquegnon's "animistic fatalism" may be rephrased in terms that address the specific views of the Yorùbá. Thus, the term, "spirit determinism," is used in this dissertation to denote the thesis that the personal forces in the world – such as ancestors, witches, and demons – subordinate the human will and actions to theirs, and exert their super-natural influences in ways that affect human destiny and social well-being. Put differently, "spirit-determinism" is the notion that some events in the human world are predicated on causal laws set in place by the more powerful superhuman spirit beings with which human beings share the universe.<sup>46</sup> In the Yorùbá world, ancestors and witches are believed to be the exceedingly powerful and intelligent superhuman spirit beings responsible for many of the disastrous events in society.<sup>47</sup> Two questions remain unanswered in the literature regarding the Yorùbá deterministic interpretation of human relationship with the spirits: first, to what extent can the superhuman spirit beings be held responsible for the evils that occur in society? Second, how much of the problem of evil and the unrealized human goals can be traced to human sin or moral negligence?

The problem of evil is not discussed in Yorùbá Christian scholarship the same way it is in Western Christianity. While Christian theologians debate the origin and possible purpose for evil in a universe created and supervised by a good God, Yorùbá

---

<sup>46</sup> J. Omisade Awolalu remarks that, in the Yorùbá world, "Those that have gone to the life beyond are believed not only to be alive but also to be more powerful than those on earth because they have been released from human limitation" ("The Yoruba Philosophy of Life," *Presence Africaine. Nouvelle Serie*, no. 73 [1er Trimestre 1970], 36).

<sup>47</sup> Barry Hallen asserts that even though the Yorùbá attribute more power to the *Aje* (or witch) than they are due, the *Aje* can be said to be more intelligent than the ordinary human being: "if *intellect* as a term is also used to refer to cognition, to the power(s) of human understanding, certainly the *aje* exercise these in a superior manner – with all that implies about knowing and believing – in comparison to ordinary persons" ("Witches' as Superior Intellects: Challenging a Cross-Cultural Superstition," in *Witchcraft Dialogue: Anthropological and Philosophical Exchanges*, ed. George C Bond and Diane M. Ciekawy [Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2001]: 94).



theologians, in their assumption that every disaster in the universe can be traced to an evil being, *Èṣù*, are more content to attribute the good things of life to God and the calamities that befall human beings to the Devil, *Èṣù*, or to any of his demonic agents in the world.<sup>48</sup> In other words, as Babajide Dasaolu and Demilade Oyelakun aptly put it: “In the Yoruba-African context, evil is understood as originating from or associated with spiritual beings other than God.”<sup>49</sup>

The dualism in the Yorùbá concepts of good and evil is reflected in the writings of Yorùbá theologians, who attribute all the best qualities of life to God and link every evil in the universe to the Devil, or *Èṣù*.<sup>50</sup> Bewaji sums up Idowu’s attributes of *Olódùmarè*, God as, “creator, king omnipotent, omniscient, judge, immortal, and holy.”<sup>51</sup> Whereas God encapsulates every desirable thing in the human world. *Èṣù* on the other hand, represents the unpleasant aspects of life. Abimbola points out the negative depiction of *Èṣù* in the Yorùbá traditional corpus, *Ifa*: “Death, Disease, Loss, Paralysis, Big Trouble, Curse, Imprisonment, Affliction, they are all errand boys of *Èṣù*.”<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> For succinct descriptions of key Western theories of evil, see esp. Harry Blumberg, “Theories of Evil in Medieval Jewish Philosophy,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 43 (1972): 149; J. Patout Burns, “Augustine on the Origin and Progress of Evil,” *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 16, no. 1 (Spring, 1988): 12; Carlos Steel, “Does Evil Have a Cause? Augustine's Perplexity and Thomas's Answer,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 48, no. 2 (December 1994): 251–73.

<sup>49</sup> Babajide Dasaolu and Demilade Oyelakun “The Concept of Evil in Yoruba and Igbo Thoughts: Some Comparisons,” *Philosophia: E-Journal of Philosophy and Culture* (October 2015): 2.

<sup>50</sup> John Bewaji, e.g., opines: “When the African theologian scholars discuss the attributes of God among the Africans, they ignore the problem of evil” (“Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief and the Theistic Problem of Evil,” *African Studies Quarterly* 2, no. 1 [1998]: 4).

<sup>51</sup> Bewaji also sums up Mbiti’s attributes of God as “transcendence, immanence, self-existence, pre-eminence, greatness, causal powers, immateriality, mysteriousness, unity, eternity, plurality, mercifulness, kindness, love, faithfulness, and goodness” (“Olodumare,” 4).

<sup>52</sup> Wande Abimbola, “Gods versus Anti-Gods: Conflict and Resolution in the Yoruba Cosmos,” in *Evil and the Response of World Religion*, ed. William Cenkner (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 1997), 170.

Even though the traditional Yorùbá invariably trace every evil in the society to the doorstep of *Èṣù*, they are aware that evil can manifest itself in ways that implicate human beings and the higher intelligent spirit beings, including God. Oyelade identifies four kinds of evil in the Yorùbá religious universe: “physical evil, moral evil, inflicted evil and predestined evil.”<sup>53</sup> In Oyelade’s view, a “physical evil” is a natural disaster – such as the destruction of a house by lightning or thunder – that human beings have no control over; a “moral evil” is caused by human beings; an “inflicted evil” is often induced by a witch in the community; a “predestined evil” is that which has been preordained by God to occur.<sup>54</sup>

Kazeem Adegoke, in his comparison of the theories of evil in the Yorùbá traditional religion with the Islamic concepts of evil, identifies two broad categories of evil in the Yorùbá world: first is the “metaphysical and physical evils,” a group in which Adegoke includes the calamities of life “such as suffering, agony, sickness, blindness, disaster, misfortune, penury, calamity, poverty, death and other things that limit the capability, handling and control of many in the universe.”<sup>55</sup> Human beings have little control over “metaphysical and physical evils” because they are related to human destiny or *Ori*.<sup>56</sup> Adegoke calls the second kind of evil, the “moral evil.” Whereas moral evil, in Islam, “comes into being as a result of man’s interaction and inter-relationship in the

---

<sup>53</sup> E. O. Oyelade, “Evil in Yoruba Religion and Culture,” in *Evil and the Response of World Religion*, ed. William Cenkner (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 1997), 161.

<sup>54</sup> Oyelade, “Evil in Yoruba Religion,” 161–63.

<sup>55</sup> Adegoke, “Theory of Evil,” 164, Adegoke defines *metaphysical evil* as “the handiwork of evil and wicked people in the Yoruba society, such as witches, wizard and wicked people,” 164.

<sup>56</sup> In Adegoke’s view, “*Ori* literally means metaphysical head. In the technical sense of the term it means human fate or luck” (Adegoke, “Theory of Evil,” 162).

society,”<sup>57</sup> in the traditional Yorùbá religion, it is “an evil action which is independently created by wicked witches, wizards and their agents among men and women.”<sup>58</sup> In Adegoke’s view, “Both Islam and Yoruba Traditional Religion condemn moral evil as sin and wrongdoing emanating from one man to another and which is punishable in this physical world and in the life beyond.”<sup>59</sup>

Like Adegoke, Salami and Abimbòla opine that the traditional Yorùbá do not exonerate human beings from moral responsibility because human beings had the opportunity to exercise their free will to choose their own destiny before coming into the world.<sup>60</sup> In Salami’s opinion, “If *Ori* is a conscious choice, then individuals must be ready to enjoy praise or suffer blame concerning their deeds or misdeeds accordingly.”<sup>61</sup> Because human life events are related to predetermined principles that involve human free will before birth, the traditional Yorùbá hold human beings accountable for the moral decisions they make in life.

Two broad themes can be gleaned from the assessments of the aforementioned scholars on the Yorùbá view of evil and the agencies responsible for evil in the human world: first is the firm belief among the Yorùbá that evil can be traced to the activities of the human and superhuman spirit beings in the world. Second, drawn from the first

---

<sup>57</sup> Adegoke, “Theory of Evil,” 164.

<sup>58</sup> See Adegoke, “Theory of Evil,” 162; Adegoke also remarks: “Islam only recognizes moral evil as a real evil which comes into being as a result of man’s interaction and inter-relationship in society ... As for Yoruba traditional religion, moral evil is the negative action or any action not morally accepted in the society,” 164.

<sup>59</sup> Adegoke, “Theory of Evil,” 164.

<sup>60</sup> See Salami, “Pre-destination, Freedom and Responsibility,” 6; cf., ’Wande Abimbòla’s assertion: “A man’s destiny, that is to say his success or failure in life depends to a large extent on the type of *Ori* he chose in heaven” (*Ifá: An Exposition of Ifá Literary Corpus* [Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1976], 113).

<sup>61</sup> Salami, “Pre-destination, Freedom and Responsibility,” 6.

inference, is the perception that the responsibility for evil lies with either the human or the nonhuman spirit beings in society. What is not clear from the second theme, however, are the criteria for determining when to apportion blame to the superhuman spirit beings and how to know when human beings are responsible for their moral actions. In either case, this dissertation is more concerned with how, and if, these well-formed notions of evil and their manifestations in society can be utilized in developing a robust theology of evil in Yorùbá Christianity. The spirituality in the YIC, especially, provides ample materials for evaluating both the influences of community and religion on Yorùbá Christian ethics. In assessing the impact of the superhuman spirits on individuals and society, this dissertation will discuss how Yorùbá Christians find spiritual strength in utilizing the traditional religious ideas of evil in their Christian spirituality.

An anthropological study of any culture or religion, not to mention culture and religion together, cannot be without its limitations. This dissertation is no exception in this regard. In the first instance, this dissertation will not be an exhaustive assessment of the anthropological beliefs of *all* the Christians who are commonly known as the “Yorùbá” in the Southwestern part of modern Nigeria. Rather, the word “Yorùbá Christians,” will be used in the limited reference to the Christians who regularly attend the Yorùbá Initiated Churches (YIC) as defined in this dissertation. As such, some basic assumptions made about the spirituality or theology of “Yorùbá Christians” may not represent the religious views of the Yorùbá Christians who attend the mission-established churches, such as the Baptist, Methodist, Anglican and the Catholic denominations. Also excluded from the scope of “Yorùbá Christians” are members of the nontrinitarian

churches, such as the Jehovah Witnesses, the Christian Scientists, and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

As will be discussed in the later chapters, only two broad groups of churches are included in the YIC classification: the *Aladura* Church Movement, and the Nigerian Pentecostal churches, especially those founded by Yorùbá Christian leaders.<sup>62</sup> These two categories of churches are considered for two reasons: first, the *Aladura* Movement has been linked to the development of most African indigenous churches around the world.<sup>63</sup> Second, several scholars have also traced the numerical growth in many indigenous African churches to the willingness of Yorùbá church leaders to accommodate traditional religious ideas in communicating the gospel to their members.<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> For historical accounts of factors and events leading to the formation of the *Aladura* Church Movement, see esp. J. D. Y. Peel, *Aladura: A Religious Movement among the Yoruba* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968); Akin Omoyajowo, "The Aladura Churches in Nigeria since Independence," in *Christianity in Independent Africa*, ed. Edward Fasholé-Luke et al. (London: Indiana University Press, 1978), 96–110. For accounts of Yorùbá Christian leaders' contributions to the development of Nigerian Pentecostal Churches, see esp. Ogbu Kalu, "Pentecostal and Charismatic Reshaping of the African Religious Landscape in the 1990s," *Mission Studies* 20, nos. 1–39 (2003): 84–111; Olufunke Adeboye, "'Arrowhead' of Nigerian Pentecostalism: The Redeemed Christian Church of God, 1952–2005," *Pneuma* 29 (2007): 24–58; Matthews A. Ojo, "Pentecostalism, Public Accountability and Governance in Nigeria," *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 13, no. 1 (2008): 110–133; Jacob K. Olupona, "New Religious Movements in Contemporary Nigeria," *Journal of Religious Thought* 46, no. 1 (June 1, 1989): 53–68.

<sup>63</sup> The literature is replete with accounts of the influence of *Aladura* Christianity on the beginning of several African Indigenous Churches. See esp. Allan Anderson, "The Newer Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches: The Shape of Future Christianity in Africa?" *Pneuma, Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 24, no. 2 (Fall 2002), 167–84. Allan Anderson, "African Independent Churches and Global Pentecostalism: Historical Connections and Common Identities," in *African Identities and World Christianity in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Klaus Koschorke, and Jens H. Schjorring, (Gottingen, Germany, 2005), 63–71; John Pobee and Gabriel Ositelu, *African Initiatives in Christianity: The Growth, Gifts and Diversities of Indigenous African Churches – A Challenge to the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998), 34; Umar H. D. Danfulani, "Globalisation, Fundamentalism and Pentecostal/Charismatic Movements in Nigeria," *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 13, no. 2 (2008): 1–40; Samson A. Fatokun, "The 'Great Move of God' in an African Community: A Retrospect of the 1930s Indigenous Pentecostal Revival and Its Impact on Nigerian Pentecostalism," *Exchange* 38 (2009): 34–57; Richard Burgess, Kim Knibbe, and Anna Quaas, "Nigerian-Initiated Pentecostal Churches as a Social Force in Europe: The Case of the Redeemed Christian Church of God," *PentecoStudies* 9, no. 1 (April 2010): 97–121.

<sup>64</sup> See e.g., E. O. Babalola, "The Impact of African Traditional Religion and Culture upon the Aladura Churches," *AJT* 6, no. 1 (1992): 130–40; Gabriel Jegede, "The Impact of Cultural Values on

The term “Traditional Yorùbá” will be used in this dissertation to distinguish the beliefs of Yorùbá Christians from those of their non-Christian kin. Unlike the “Yorùbá Christians” who identify with or generally participate in the rites and activities of their Christian communities, the “traditional Yorùbá” do not identify with either of the two world religions of Christianity or Islam; they also may or may not participate in the rites or activities of the local Yorùbá religions. Appendix A, “Glossary of Terms,” is a list of some of the terms used in this dissertation.

The discussions in this dissertation will also be confined to the three major themes (determinism, theodicy and morality) identified as central to the Yorùbá Christian understanding of what it means to be human in a universe influenced by superhuman spirit beings. Important philosophical and theological themes in Western Christian anthropology which do not generate significant interest in Yorùbá Christian theology are avoided. While Western Christian scientists, philosophers and theologians debate issues regarding human identity in life and post-death – such as: are human beings complex structures with irreducible nonphysical properties, or are we amalgams of mortal bodies and immortal souls that disintegrate at death? Yorùbá Christians are more concerned with the influences which the superhuman spirit beings have on individual and societal well-

---

Aladura Churches in Ekitiland (South-Western Nigeria),” *Journal of Arts and Contemporary Society* 2 (December 2010): 46–59; Akintunde E Akinade, “New Religious Movements in Contemporary Nigeria: Aladura Churches as a Case Study,” *AJT* 10, no. 2 (1996): 316–332; Akintunde E Akinade, “A Place to Feel at Home: Aladura Christianity in Yorubaland,” in *The Agitated Mind of God: The Theology of Kosuke Koyama*, ed. Dale T Irvin, and Akintunde E. Akinade (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996): 188–200; Deji Ayegboyin, “‘Heal the Sick and Cast Out Demons’: The Response of the Aladura,” *Studies in World Christianity* 10, no. 2 (2004): 233–49; Deji Ayegboyin, “Aladura Spirituality: Authentic African Initiative in Christian Missions,” *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 16, no. 1 (2011): 165–77; Benjamin Ray, “Aladura Christianity: A Yoruba Religion,” *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 23, Fasc. 3 (Aug., 1993): 266–91.

being.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, since it has already been established in the literature that the Yorùbá hold a tripartite notion of human being – i.e., a human being is made up of body (*Ara*), spirit (*Èmí*) and destiny (*Orí*)<sup>66</sup> – greater emphasis will be placed on the role of the destiny-spirit (*Orí*) on how the Yorùbá perceive human behavior or action in society. Epistemological issues regarding how the Yorùbá derive their knowledge of the existence of ancestors and witches will not be explored. It is also not the concern of this dissertation to prove or disprove the existence of witches in the African world; notable scholars have already established the widespread belief in the reality of ancestors, demons and witches in many African societies.<sup>67</sup>

In its presentation, fundamental questions surrounding the impact of traditional Yorùbá anthropological notions on Christian theology and spirituality are established in

---

<sup>65</sup> For key Western philosophical and theological debates on the relationship between human body, soul, and/or spirit in this life and in the afterlife, see esp. Nancey Murphy, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies? Human Nature at the Intersection* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); William Hasker, “On Behalf of Emergent Dualism,” in Joel B. Green and Stuart L. Palmer, eds., *In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005); Shelly Kagan, *Death* (Yale, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), esp. 6–23; John Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000); Joel B. Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 3–34.

<sup>66</sup> See e.g., Oladele Balogun, “The Nature of Human Person in Traditional African Thought: Further Reflections on Traditional Philosophies of Mind,” *Afroeuropa* 3, no. 2 (2009): 1–18; according to Barry Hallen and J. O. Sodipo, “For the Yoruba, the essential element of the person (*eniyan*) when in the world (*aye*) are the body (*ara*), the vital spirit of the body or soul (*emi*) and the destiny (*ori*), that which determine every significant event during the particular life time” (“Knowledge, Belief and Witchcraft” [London: Ethnographical, 1986], 105).

<sup>67</sup> Bolaji Idowu, e.g., opines: “In Africa, it is idle to begin with the question whether witches exist or not ... To Africans ... witchcraft is an urgent reality” (*African Traditional Religion: A Definition* [New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1973], 175); for David Bosch, “he who pooh-poohs the existence of witches only reveals himself an ignoramus in the eyes of Africans” (“The Problem of Evil in Africa: A Survey of African Views on Witchcraft and of the Response of the Christian Church,” in *Like a Roaring Lion: Essays on the Bible, the Church and Demonic Powers*, ed. Pieter G. R. de Villiers [Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1987], 43); cf., Matsobane Manala’s remark: “The question whether witchcraft really does exist, does not belong in an African context. In the minds of many African people there is no doubt as to the reality of witchcraft” (“Witchcraft and Its Impact on Black African Christians: A Lacuna in the Ministry of the Hervormde Kerk in Suidelike Africa,” *HTS* 60, no. 4 [2004]: 1503).

the introductory section of this dissertation. Even though I agree with scholars who maintain that Christianity may not have meaningful impact in a non-Christian culture until it “possesses” salient traditional notions for its use, I also state, with specific regard to Yorùbá Christian assumptions regarding the influence of superhuman spirit beings on human well-being, that care must be taken to delineate boundaries between socio-culturally induced spirituality and sound biblical doctrines.

Chapter 2 sets the groundwork upon which the central thesis of this dissertation is developed, namely: Christianity must be open to assess the value of anthropological notions in the Yorùbá culture in propagating the gospel. With specific regard to the “good” spirit beings (ancestors) and the “evil” spirits (demons and witches), early Christian missionaries to Asia, Africa and parts of Europe, may have missed valuable opportunities to allow traditional existential concepts to aid their presentation of the gospel to new converts. Like many traditional cultures in Asia and Africa, the Yorùbá have vivid notions regarding superhuman spirit beings and their impact on human society.

Chapter 3 further develops the traditional Yorùbá conception of a universe inundated by superhuman spirit beings who take keen interest in human activities, both for good and for evil. Because Yorùbá Christian anthropology is firmly rooted in traditional religious beliefs, as will be seen in later chapters, an overview of Yorùbá cosmology and traditional ideas regarding human relationship with God and with the superhuman spirit beings in the universe is inevitable. Chapter 3 also provides foundational notions regarding the spiritual elements in the Yorùbá culture that



indigenous leaders in the YIC would later find to be useful in communicating the gospel to their members.

Having established the fundamental notions that undergird Yorùbá traditional ideas of human existence amidst meddling superhuman spirit beings, chapter 4 begins with a historical overview of the quests by Yorùbá Christian leaders, first in the 1920s and later in the 1960s, to utilize some existing traditional anthropological concepts in the doctrines and spirituality of the church. Not only that, these indigenous Christian leaders also addressed the social and economic threats in their milieu through the interpretative lenses of Scripture and traditional notions that identify some superhuman spirit beings as perpetrators of evil in society.

While chapters 2 through 4 describe the impact of traditional religious beliefs on Yorùbá Christian spirituality, these chapters also identify how Yorùbá Christian leaders have utilized traditional anthropological ideas to communicate the gospel to their church members. Because modern Yorùbá Christian concepts regarding human relationship with superhuman spirit beings often revolve around notions of evil, its manifestation and human salvation, chapter 5 examines these themes with the goal of identifying traditional ideas that can be “possessed” for Christian use and notions that must altogether be rejected.

In addition to ideas revolving around the concept of evil and the roles of superhuman spirit beings in transmitting evil in society, secondary concepts pertinent to interpreting the Yorùbá Christian notion of the role of superhuman spirit beings in society include: destiny, freedom, determinism and human moral responsibility in a world tainted by sin. These ideas, particularly, help us to distinguish traditional religious ideas from

doctrines that have already been established in Christian theology. In delineating boundaries between traditional Yorùbá religion and Christianity, chapter 6 presents themes that leave room for dialogue and at the same time show the unique claims of the Christian religion.

One would expect that a theological study on Yorùbá Christian anthropological views would evince pastoral and missional concerns. As such, chapter 7 identifies major issues that Christian theology must address in its effort to utilize existing traditional religious ideas among the Yorùbá for communicating the gospel to the people. Yorùbá traditional anthropological notions that are difficult to reconcile with sound biblical doctrines are carefully considered. Teachings that clearly undermine the integrity of Scripture are discouraged from influencing the doctrines and spiritual life of the church. The emphasis in this final chapter is that Christian theology must find ways to utilize existing traditional notions in the Yorùbá culture and at the same time delineate clear boundaries between Christianity and traditional Yorùbá religion.

In conclusion, this dissertation agrees with the basic idea behind the *Africanization* proposal, as espoused by older theologians like Kwame Bediako, Andrew Walls, John Mbiti and Bolaji Idowu, and more recently by scholars like Christian Baeta, Birgit Meyer and Fasholé-Luke that Christian theology must utilize as many traditional religious notions in the African culture as possible if it would have an enduring presence among Africans. With specific regard to the Yorùbá of Southwest Nigeria, however, care must be taken not to allow the current assumptions in the YIC – which do not, in many instances, separate traditional religious beliefs regarding the influence of superhuman

spirit beings on human well-being from biblical doctrines – to obliterate the demarcation line that sets Christianity apart from all pagan religions.

Yorùbá churches may have succeeded in relating the gospel to the pragmatic social and economic needs in the Yorùbá culture; the churches have, however, failed to make biblical pneumatology the bedrock of Christian theology. In this regard, I agree with Adetutu Adenugba, Samuel Omolawal, Chima Agazue, and other scholars who have suggested that many indigenous Nigerian church leaders instill fear for the ancestors and other evil spirit beings in the minds of their members to attract large followership to make financial gains. In making Scripture, and not social or cultural expediency, the framework of Christian theology, Yorùbá churches must develop biblical anthropological and pneumatological notions that uniquely identify the central role of Jesus Christ in human existence, both in life and death. Particularly, Christian doctrines of creation, Original Sin, Christ's atonement, and the resurrection, that have no bearing whatsoever to traditional religious beliefs, must be developed and systematically taught in the Yorùbá churches.

## CHAPTER 2

### EARLY CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO TRADITIONAL NOTIONS REGARDING SUPERHUMAN SPIRIT BEINGS

Christianity's encounter with non-Christian cultures is a complex development that must take competing realities – such as political, economic, and cultural factors – into consideration. American missionary, Arthur Smith states it well in his remark regarding the twentieth century Christian enterprise in China: “Christianity must gain people's acknowledgment, reverence, consent and acceptance before it can win a strong foothold in China.”<sup>1</sup> Among these competing realities, prevailing traditional religious ideas present the greatest challenge to the propagation of Christianity in non-Christian cultures, especially in Asia and Africa.

Like in Africa, many converts to Christianity in Asia do not relinquish their pre-Christian religious beliefs and practices as soon as they became Christians. Jingyi Ji, for example, remarks concerning the state of Christianity in rural Chinese communities in modern times: “The reality in the Chinese church is that there is no system of theology, or that little attention is paid to theological thinking, and the majority of Chinese Christians in the rural areas do not have a thorough grasp of their faith. Some easily blend

---

<sup>1</sup> Sir Arthur Smith is quoted in Luo Weihong, *Christianity in China*, trans. Zhu Chengming (China: China Intercontinental Press, 2005), 40.

Christian faith with folk religion or superstitious practices.”<sup>2</sup> A concern among rural Chinese Christians, in Ji’s view, is the difficulty of distinguishing “between Christianity based on Jesus Christ in light of the Bible and Christianity in the Western form.”<sup>3</sup> Ji opines that many Chinese converts to Christianity perceived a conflict between the new cultural allegiance demanded by the Western missionaries and the traditional worldview already ingrained in their culture.

Chapter 2 begins with an overview of the challenges which Christianity faced as it encountered the traditional cultures in Asia, Africa and parts of Europe. Specifically, this chapter discusses Christian response to issues relating to human relationships with the superhuman spirit beings in the world. Broadly speaking, Christian and non-Christian cultures have reacted to superhuman spirit beings depending on their perceptions of the benefits or harm they may receive from these entities. While many non-Christian cultures in Asia and Africa were generally receptive of the “good spirits” (mostly the ancestors), the already Christian Europe, especially in the thirteenth to seventeenth centuries, expressed vehement opposition to what they perceived as the diabolic impact of spiritual activities (broadly referred to as witchcraft) on the continent. The main position in this chapter is that Christian theology must begin from the humble posture of learning how human culture and the attitude towards the benevolent spirits, on the one hand, and the evil spirits, on the other, can enrich the presentation of the gospel to people in cultures which believe in the existence and activities of these spiritual entities.

---

<sup>2</sup> Jingyi Ji, *Encounters between Chinese Culture and Christianity: A Hermeneutical Perspective* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 204.

<sup>3</sup> Ji, *Encounters*, 184.

## 2.1 Christian Response to Benevolent Spirits

Christianity may not have made significant impact in many Asian and African cultures because of the reluctance of early Christian missions in these places to accommodate traditional religious ideas in the presentation of the gospel. For example, Christianity, according to Kenneth Fleming, has for long been received in Thailand as a foreign religion: “The challenge is often conceptualized under the term ‘inculturation’, the process of a religious tradition becoming embedded in the local context so that it can speak out of and to that context.”<sup>4</sup> For Thai Christians, Christianity remains a western religion because it fails to speak to the cultural aspirations in the Thai society which has already been indelibly shaped by Buddhism.<sup>5</sup> The superficial posture of Christianity may not change until Christian leaders and missionaries find ways to address prevailing traditional religious ideas in Thailand: “The aim is to appreciate and adapt the Christian faith to what is good and noble in the ways of thinking and practices of the people, but also to challenge those aspects that are found to be harmful, unjust, or irreconcilable with the gospel.”<sup>6</sup>

With specific regard to beliefs regarding the activities of the superhuman spirit beings in human society, Christianity confronted Asian cultures with skepticism. The Christian enterprise in Korea, for example, opposed any form of ancestor worship.<sup>7</sup> Even though the Protestant missionaries who first broke into Korea did not know how to

---

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth Fleming, *Buddhist-Christian Encounter in Contemporary Thailand* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 2014), 157.

<sup>5</sup> Fleming, *Buddist-Christian Encounter*, 157.

<sup>6</sup> Fleming, *Buddist-Christian Encounter*, 160.

<sup>7</sup> See Jung Young Lee, *Ancestor Worship and Christianity in Korea: Studies in Asian Thought and Religion Volume 8* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), 1.

connect with the non-Christian culture, they were adamant that any rite connected with ancestor worship or veneration was incompatible with the Christian faith.<sup>8</sup> The missionaries could not successfully establish a new paradigm of thinking about the ancestors because they did not even attempt to relate the message of the gospel to the Korean spiritual experiences which inevitably involved their ancestors. In dismissing ancestral worship as “un-Christian,” the missionaries may have missed the opportunity to relay the gospel to the cultural identity, not to talk of the religious spirituality, of their Korean converts. They failed, as Young-chan Ro has declared, because, “Ancestor worship not only manifests the religious consciousness and spirituality of the people who practice it, but also reflects their world view, life style, and value system.”<sup>9</sup> Instead of harnessing the pre-Christian religious ideas which were already on the mission fields, Christianity alienated itself by disregarding the traditional beliefs and practices of the people.

#### 2.1.1 Ancestral Veneration and Socio-cultural Identity in Asia

There is a tremendous opportunity for Christian theology to interact with traditional religious beliefs to find ways to utilize existing ideas and idioms for redemptive purposes. Such is the benefit of a careful assessment of beliefs regarding the activities of the ancestors in non-Christian cultures. It also helps to know how the existing social, economic and political structures in societies that believe in the existence and activities of spiritual entities affect their religiosity.

---

<sup>8</sup> Lee, *Ancestor Worship*, 1.

<sup>9</sup> Young-chan Ro, “Ancestor Worship: From the Perspective of Korean Tradition,” in *Ancestor Worship and Christianity in Korea: Studies in Asian Thought and Religion Volume 8*, ed. Jung Young Lee, (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), 8.

Guy Swanson, Terrence Tatje, Francis Hsu and Dean Sheils, among others, have linked ancestral belief with the kind of structure maintained in a human society.<sup>10</sup> Tatje, for example, asserts that ancestral cults “are significantly more likely to be found in societies organized on the basis of clans or lineages than in societies not so organized.”<sup>11</sup> This is so because the desire to be close to one another inspires people in the clan society to value the relationship they have with every living and departed member of the community. This sentiment is reflected in Anning Hu’s and Benjamin Dorman’s observations that many Asian cultures where close kinship is maintained also tend to venerate the departed members of the clan with the hope that such activity would bind the larger community together.<sup>12</sup>

Lyle Steadman, among others, has suggested that belief in ancestors is a universal concept even though many anthropologists fail to acknowledge this fact: “Claims of ancestor interaction with the living have not been recognized as universal because the

---

<sup>10</sup> Guy Swanson asserts: “There is a positive and significant relationship between the presence in a society of sovereign kinship groups other than the nuclear family and a belief that ancestral spirits are active in human affairs” (*The Birth of the Gods: The Origin of Primitive Beliefs*, [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960], 108); cf. Terrence Tatje and Francis Hsu, “Variations in Ancestor Worship Beliefs and their Relation to Kinship,” *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 25, no. 2 (Summer, 1969): 156; see also Dean Sheils, “The Great Ancestors Are Watching: A Cross-Cultural Study of Superior Ancestral Religion,” *Sociological Analysis* 41, no. 3 (Autumn, 1980), 248, where Sheils remarks: “The belief in ancestral spirits, it is argued, occurs because such beliefs perform definite functions for preserving and maintaining certain types of family structure and descent. Ancestor worship appears in societies with more elaborate family types and certain forms of descent (especially unilineal) as a stabilizing mechanism (i.e., promotes social cohesion).”

<sup>11</sup> Tatje and Hsu, “Variations in Ancestor Worship,” 156;

<sup>12</sup> Anning Hu asserts that, “ancestor worship, as a type of diffused religion, is embedded in secular institutions, so it is difficult to separate ancestor worship from Chinese cultural habitus” (“Ancestor Worship in Contemporary China: An Empirical Investigation,” *The China Review* 16, no. 1 [February, 2016], 172); Like Hu, Benjamin Dorman remarks: “Ancestor worship is not religious practice, but one can practice ancestor worship through the religion of one’s family (Buddhist or Shinto) ... Ancestor worship is not intrinsically connected with Buddhism – this is an error many people make today ... Ancestor worship is connected to what it means to be Japanese” (“Representing Ancestor Worship as ‘Non-Religious,’” Hosoki Kazuko’s Divination in the Post Aum Era,” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 10, no. 3 [February, 2007], 39).



anthropologists' stress on differences has caused them to be overly narrow in their definitions of both 'ancestor' and 'worship.'"<sup>13</sup> Anthropologists may have missed the pervasiveness of belief in ancestors because, as Steadman and others have pointed out, they have excluded "societies whose religious practices concern ghosts, shades, spirits, souls, totemic plants and animals, or merely the dead," from their understanding of cultures that venerate or worship ancestors.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the word "worship" does not connote the same idea for traditional Asians and Africans as it does for Western Christians. Meanwhile, some African theologians have rejected the idea that Africans "worship" their ancestors, insisting instead that the rites that the Africans observe are their way of "venerating" their departed loved ones.<sup>15</sup> Even though scholars disagree on how to properly define such terms as "ancestral worship," "ancestral veneration," or "ancestral cult," there appears to be a consensus in scholarship that many people around the world are committed to keeping the memories of their dead loved ones alive. One reason the spirits (or souls) of the departed individuals are still alive and active in the community is because their loved ones do not want them to leave.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Lyle B. Steadman, Craig T. Palmer and Christopher F. Tiller, "The Universality of Ancestor Worship," *Ethnology* 35, no. 1 (Winter, 1996): 63. Cf. Swanson's observation that, claims of ancestors influencing the living and being influenced by the living can be recorded in 24 societies that have been identified as "lacking ancestor worship" (*The Birth of the Gods*, 108).

<sup>14</sup> Steadman et. al., "Universality of Ancestor Worship," 63.

<sup>15</sup> John Mbiti, e.g., insists that when Africans pray to the ancestors, "it should not be carelessly judged simply as spirit or ancestor worship, by people who only betray their ignorance about African religious feeling and practice. Praying is not all worship: it is also rhetorical dialogue, a one-way dialogue, a platform for man's questioning and heart-searching, in the presence of God and the other spiritual realities" (*The Prayers of African Religion* [Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1976], 44).

<sup>16</sup> In Hu's view, "Ancestor worship refers to various rituals and practices of paying veneration to deceased ancestors" ("Ancestor Worship," 171); cf., Steadman et. al., "Universality of Ancestor Worship," 64, where the authors point out: "The failure to see the connection between ancestors and spirits or gods often causes societies to be excluded from the ancestor worship category ... if however, the term worship is used in its broader sense of reverence or respect, the claim that ancestor worship is not universal is open to question." Meanwhile, some scholars, like Willie Abraham, insist that the rituals associated with ancestors

Ancestor veneration is ingrained in the fabric of many traditional Asian cultures because it fulfills social and emotional needs. In Anning Hu's estimation, about 70% of the adult population in China still engages in one form of ancestral veneration or another because the rites help the Chinese to affirm their cultural identity.<sup>17</sup> Many Asians worship their ancestors to keep the memories of these sages alive to ensure they are never forgotten by their kin. Regarding the Chinese, Hu remarks: "The fundamental cosmology that underpins ancestor worship is the perpetuation of family line that is believed to be unbroken by death. The deceased family members, or ancestors, thus keep a strong tie with living family members."<sup>18</sup> Through ancestral worship the Chinese express their solidarity with their dead loved ones in the hope that the dead would maintain some positive level of influence on individuals and on the larger society.<sup>19</sup>

Like the Chinese, many Japanese venerate their ancestors to keep the memories of their revered dead elders alive in the community. Japanese Christians and non-Christians alike agree they feel a sense of connectedness to their dead loved ones.<sup>20</sup> Dorman suggests that, in the Japanese culture, "people's ancestors are the point of contact

---

in many parts of Africa, "are not rites of worship but means of communication" (*The Mind of Africa*, [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1966], 63).

<sup>17</sup> Hu, "Ancestor Worship," 169.

<sup>18</sup> Hu, "Ancestor Worship," 171.

<sup>19</sup> The worship of ancestors, according to Maurice Freedman "was essentially a means of group action in which the power and status structure of the community was given ritual expression" (*Lineage Organization in Southeastern China* [London: Athlone, 1958], 91); the value of ancestor worship is also underscored in Hu's remark: "In Chinese society, ancestor worship (*zuxian chongbai*) is one of the most important cultural traditions, with its rituals, scripts, beliefs, and courtesies penetrating in almost every aspect of an individual's daily life" ("Ancestor Worship," 170); see also Tatje and Hsu, "Variations in Ancestor Worship," 153, where the authors assert: "Ancestral beliefs and practices are a reflection and extension of kinship behavior among the living. Different types of belief systems are related to the dominance of different dyads in the kinship systems."

<sup>20</sup> David Reid, "Japanese Christians and the Ancestors," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 16, no. 1 (Dec. 1989): 271.

between themselves and kami, the source of life, as a result, they receive a life force. If they hold feelings of gratitude towards their ancestors, this constitutes ancestor worship. On the other hand, if they neglect ancestor worship, their connection with kami is lost and they lose life force.”<sup>21</sup>

Ian Clarke remarks that ancestor worship among ethnic Chinese in Malaysia is the means through which Chinese Malaysians connect with their Chinese cultural roots:

“Through the activity of “worship (*chongbai*) descendants were able to pay their respects to the ancestor(s), in the same way they might do for an elderly family member.”<sup>22</sup>

Because the ancestral rites are not normally considered “religious,” many Christians see these rituals as, “simply a Chinese way of memorializing the dead, devoid of any religious significance and thus conflicting in no way with standard Christian belief.”<sup>23</sup>

Ancestor belief has also been linked with the sense of stability which traditional cultures derive from knowing that their departed sages continue to play vital roles in the community. According to Steadman and others:

The claim that ancestors can influence the living and be influenced by them may have been a part of such rituals because it strengthened kin ties and the transmission of traditions ... the reference to long-dead ancestors provides a

---

<sup>21</sup> Dorman, “Representing Ancestor Worship,” 40; in a separate assessment, Hu explains the value of ancestral veneration in the Chinese culture: “For instance, when a new family member is born (especially a son), one common ceremony is to visit the gravesite of ancestors or to burn incense toward ancestral tablets to express gratitude for ancestors’ blessings of this newborn,” (“Ancestor Worship,” 173).

<sup>21</sup> Hu, “Ancestor Worship,” 172.

<sup>22</sup> Ian Clarke, “Ancestor Worship and Identity: Ritual, Interpretation, and Social Normalization in the Malaysian Chinese Community,” *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 15, no. 2 (October, 2000): 281; Clarke further asserts that because ancestor worship is not generally perceived as a religious ritual by most Malaysian Chinese: “Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, along with the initially successful overtures by Christian Jesuit missionaries, all managed to integrate ancestor worship within their particular ideological systems of belief by ascribing to it a variety of interpretations, both ‘religious’ and ‘non-religious’ consistent with these systems,” 277.

<sup>23</sup> Clarke, “Ancestor Worship,” 285

means of involving many more co-descendants than the few who could trace their common ancestry through only a few generations.”<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, ancestral belief in modern China has been linked with some of the social, economic and political decisions made at different levels of government. According to Hu: “Ancestor worship has an intrinsic connection with the habitus of son preference. Ancestor worship also has a certain connection with public life. For example, it plays a role of sanctioning local officials, and affects people’s voluntary donation in Taiwan.”<sup>25</sup>

Considering the overall positive attitudes that many Asians in traditional settings – notably in China, Taiwan, Thailand, Japan and Malaysia – have towards their ancestors, one can see why many recent Christian converts in Asia are reluctant to sever ties with their ancestors. To do so would be tantamount to breaking cultural and familial connections with the community, which may have both emotional and social implications for the converts.

### 2.1.2 Ancestral Veneration and Socio-cultural Identity in Africa

Many traditional Africans do not perceive ancestors differently from their Chinese or Japanese counterparts. In defining the African ancestors as “certain individuals of the past generations of a lineage who are said to have distinguished themselves in many ways, and in particular, to have led virtuous and exemplary lives worthy of emulation by succeeding generations,”<sup>26</sup> Kwame Gyekye underscores the impression in many parts of Africa that the departed sages, or at least some of them, continue to exert some level of

---

<sup>24</sup> Steadman et. al., “Universality of Ancestor Worship,” 73.

<sup>25</sup> Hu, “Ancestor Worship,” 172

<sup>26</sup> Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction* (Accra: Sankofa Publishing Company, 1996), 162.

influence on the living members of society. The ancestors, as bona fide members of society, contribute to the harmony or disruption of society. Even though these leaders are dead, their spirits are believed to be active in the community where they participate in the events that involve their kin.

J. Phelps points out that, “The spirit of the ancestors is a vital part of the African concept of the community, in which the collective power of all members of the community – the living and the ‘living-dead’ – energizes and pervades the daily life of everyone.”<sup>27</sup> Some ancestors are believed to appear from time to time to influence the decisions made in the clan. They are also believed to bestow blessings on their kin and punish evil doing in human society.<sup>28</sup> Thus perceived, ancestors are needed to maintain harmony in traditional African societies where they are recognized and honored. Moreover, the decisions made by the elders in the community are respected when such decisions have the sanction of the ancestors.

Like the ancestors in many traditional Asian cultures, the African ancestors are generally believed to be benevolent even though some occasionally express their anger towards society. J. P. Kiernan, points out the contradiction in the general notion that the African ancestors can both be benevolent and evil at the same time in his remark: “Can a mystical agent who equally serves the common welfare of all single out an individual

---

<sup>27</sup> J. Phelps, “Black Spirituality,” in *Spiritual Tradition for the Contemporary Church*, ed. Robin Mass and Gabriel O’Donnell (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 335.

<sup>28</sup> Offiong Asuquo, e.g., remarks that in many African societies: “the ancestors play an important role in the communal life. They are not cut off from the living, for they may still reveal themselves in dreams or appear to their living relatives to guide or correct them” (“A Rationalization of an African Concept of Life, Death and the Hereafter,” *American Journal of Social and Management Sciences* 2, no. 1 [2011], 171.); cf., Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1973), 139; Y. Turaki, *Foundations for African Traditional Religion and Worldview* (Nairobi: Word Alive, 2006), 23-29;

from his fellows and afflict him with disease and suffering or even death? Of course not . . . . It is inconceivable that evil can be caused by good.”<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the African ancestor can both be good and evil at the same time. Kiernan completely missed the point that in the African world, or at least in the Yorùbá culture, the ancestors are capable of every human attribute. In as much as human beings exhibit both good and evil actions in society, ancestors are capable of expressing both their good and evil attributes.

A major reason many Africans are unwilling to confine their dead to the grave is because they are determined to keep the memory of their departed loved ones alive. Concerning the Ewe of Ghana, for example, D. K. Fiawoo remarks: “The basis of Ewe ancestor worship, as in other parts of West Africa, is that there is life after death and that the dead members of the lineage and clan continue to show active interest in the mundane affairs of their living world.”<sup>30</sup> By involving the dead in the events of life, these members of the clan are never forgotten; the impressions they made when they were alive continue to live on in the community.

In the African world, a human being is a social person whose identity is defined, not by individualism, but more importantly, by the active participation of everyone in community life.<sup>31</sup> As such, life is perceived as a continuum which involves the living and

---

<sup>29</sup> J. P. Kiernan, “The ‘Problem of Evil’ in the Context of Ancestral Intervention in the Affairs of the Living in Africa,” *Man New Series* 17, no. 2 (Jun., 1982): 288.

<sup>30</sup> D. K. Fiawoo, “Characteristics of Ewe Ancestor Worship,” in *Ancestors*, ed. William H. Newell (Chicago, IL: Mouton Publishers, 1976), 266; cf. Akintunde Akinade’s statement that in many traditional African culture, “the dead are believed to be able to interfere in the affairs of the living” (“Death: An African Perspective,” *Living Pulpit* 7, no. 3 [July 1, 1998], 14).

<sup>31</sup> In Peter Paris’ view, e.g., “All African peoples agree that the tribal or ethnic community is the paramount social reality apart from which humanity cannot exist” (*The Spirituality of African Peoples: The Search for a Common Moral Discourse* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995], 51); cf. Placide Tempels’ statement regarding the Bantu of Central Africa: “For the Bantu, man never appears in fact as an isolated individual, as an independent entity. Every man, every individual, forms a link in the chain of vital forces, a living link, active and passive, joined from above to the ascending line of his ancestry and sustaining below

the dead, both visible and invisible beings.<sup>32</sup> Every member of the community, including the ancestors, contributes to the strength and weakness of society. The ancestors, particularly, strengthen communal ties by bestowing blessings on their kin who hold them in high regard.<sup>33</sup> Occasionally, these sages express their wrath toward family members who ignore their needs. According to the Zimbabwean theologian, Masiwa Gunda: “Men attribute their successes to the protective and guiding power of their ancestral spirits and some generous alien spirits while their failures and misfortunes are blamed on the lack of protection from the same spirits.”<sup>34</sup> However, ancestors only direct their social responsibilities and wrath towards members of their own community.<sup>35</sup> In many traditional African settings, the Ancestors may not be ignored because they are perceived to be essential to the right-ordering of the human society.

---

him the line of his descendants. It may be said that among Bantu the individual is necessarily an individual within the clan,” (*Bantu Philosophy* [Orlando, FL: HBC Publishing, 1959], 108).

<sup>32</sup> Keith Ferdinando sums up the traditional African notion of being in his remark: “While the invisible world remains to some degree mysterious, human fortunes are significantly influenced by the activities and attitudes of the spirits which inhabit it,” (*The Triumph of Christ in African Perspective: A Study of Demonology and Redemption in the African Context* [Cumbria, UK: Paternoster Press, 1999], 27).

<sup>33</sup> Etim Okon, e.g., insists that “Africans do not worship their ancestors. Ancestors are held in great respect and revered memory” (“African World-View and the Challenge of Witchcraft,” *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* 2, no. 10 [2012], 69).

<sup>34</sup> Masiwa R. Gunda, “Christianity, Traditional Religion, and Healing in Zimbabwe: Exploring the Dimensions and Dynamics of Healing among the Shona,” *Svensk Missionstidskrift* 95, no. 3 (January 1, 2007): 232; cf., ‘Wande Abimbola, “The Yoruba Concept of Human Personality,” in *Notion de Personne en Afrique Noire*, 73–89 (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1973): esp. 75, where Abimbola asserts that part of the duties of ancestors is to protect human beings from evil and to act as intercessors between human beings and the spirit entities in nature.

<sup>35</sup> Rodney Reed and Gift Mtukwa, e.g., remark: “The cult of the ancestors in the African context is the extension of community to the members of the community who have physically died. However, it is important to be reminded that, even though the community encompasses those who are dead, it is still limited only to members of the community which one is part. If one does not belong of the community, he or she is considered an outsider and cannot participate fully in the life of the community” (“Christ Our Ancestor: African Christology and the Danger of Contextualization,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 45, no. 1 (April, 2010): 148).

The pervasive belief in the ancestors and their impact on human society is rooted in the traditional African belief in life after death.<sup>36</sup> South African Lutheran theologian, Rev. M. P. Moila, in his study of the effect of Christianity on the people of Northern Sotho, Tswana, Zulu and Xhosa of South Africa, remarks: “It is a fact that many a people in these societies never stopped believing in the living dead when they became Christians. They never ceased to believe that the real power is vested in and monopolized by the ‘abaphansi’ (ancestors).”<sup>37</sup> Like Moila, South African Catholic priest, Archbishop Jabulani Nxumalo, also points out that “conversion and faith in Christ do help to wipe out

---

<sup>36</sup> Augustine Musopole, e.g., remarks that for Africans, “Time and history do not end at physical death, because existence continues beyond the grave” (*Being Human in Africa: Toward African Christian Anthropology* [New York: P. Lang, 1994], 53); cf., Kwame Gyekye’s quote of an Akan maxim: “When a man dies he is not (really) dead” (*onipa wu a na onwui*) (“Akan Concept of a Person,” in *African Philosophy: An Introduction*, ed. Richard Wright [Washington: University Press of America, 1979], 207); for other theological assessments of African notions in the continuity of life after death, see: Lee Brown, “Understanding and Ontology in Traditional African Thought,” in *African Philosophy: New and Traditional Perspectives*, ed. Lee M. Brown (Oxford, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2004), 158; E. Ikenga-Metuh, “The Concept of Man in African Traditional Religion: with Particular Reference to the Igbo of Nigeria,” in *Readings in African Traditional Religion*, ed. E. M. Uka (Bern: Peter Lang, 1991), 53-68; Didier Kaphagawani, “Some African Conceptions of Person: A Critique,” in *African Philosophy as Cultural Inquiry*, ed. Ivan Karp and D. A. Mosolo (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000): 66-79; Heinz Kimmerle, “The Concept of Person in African Thought: A Dialogue between African and Western Philosophies,” in *Ontology and Consciousness: Percipient Action*, ed. Helmut Wautischer (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 507-524; Mbiti, “African Concept of Man,” 54-63; Omidade Awolalu, “The African Traditional View of Man,” *Orita* 6, no. 2 (Dec. 1972): 101-118; Ademola Fayemi, “Human Personality and the Yoruba Worldview: An Ethico-Sociological Interpretation,” *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 2, no.9, (March 2009): 166-176; David Crutchley, “Being Fully Human: A Spirituality Out of Africa,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 45, no. 2 (March 1, 2003): 64-79.

<sup>37</sup> M. Philip Moila, “The Effect of Belief in the Living Dead on the Church’s Mission in South Africa,” *Africa Theological Journal* 18, no. 2 (January 1, 1989): 143; J. Beyers and Dora N. Mphahlele also point out that many Africans see the ancestors as living members of their community: “Ancestors stand in a personal relationship with descendants. Ancestors can be implored from time to time for advice on personal issues. Ancestors are worshipped and venerated ambiguously. Ancestors are simultaneously feared and adored. The same ancestors can bestow gifts of good fortune on one and can also cause harm and misfortune for those who neglect to acknowledge the ancestors” (“Jesus Christ as Ancestor: An African Christian Understanding,” *HTS Theological Studies* 65, no. 1 (Jan., 2009): 1); the African ancestors, according to B. Afeke and P. Verster, “are called the living dead because the living are conscious of their presence and they communicate with the living by revelations and other means” (“Christianisation of Ancestor Veneration within African Traditional Religions: An Evaluation,” *In die Skriflig* 38, no. 1 (2004): 50).



fear of ancestors, but does not imply rejection. They are part of lineage and family.”<sup>38</sup>

The notion persists among African Christians that the spirits of some elders live on and continue to participate in communal activities. Moila’s sentiment is echoed in Gabriel Setiloane’s poem concerning the persistent belief in ancestors among modern African Christians:

Ah ... yes ...! It is true;  
They are very present with us ...  
The dead are not dead, they are ever near us;  
Approving and disapproving all our actions,  
They chide us when we go wrong,  
Bless us and sustain us for good deeds done,  
For kindness shown, and strangers made to feel at home.  
They increase our store, and punish our pride.<sup>39</sup>

Perhaps more than their Asian counterparts, African theologians have clamored for Christian theology to find ways to accommodate the notions in the African culture regarding the beneficial contributions of the ancestors to societal harmony.

### 2.1.3 Role of Ancestors in Yorùbá Society

The Yorùbá world, as in other parts of Africa and Asia, is inundated with spirit beings who maintain keen interest in the fortunes (and misfortunes) of their kin. Yorùbá ancestors are particularly interested in blessing their kin and protecting them from evil.<sup>40</sup>

These venerated departed sages, according to Abimbòla, “are believed to be friends of

---

<sup>38</sup> Jabulani Nxumalo, “Christ and Ancestors in the African World: A Pastoral Consideration,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* no. 32 (September 1, 1980), 9.

<sup>39</sup> Gabriel Setiloane, “How the Traditional World-View Persists in the Christianity of the Sotho-Tswana,” in Edward Fasholé-Luke et al., eds., *Christianity in Independent Africa* (London: Rex Collings, 1978), 34.

<sup>40</sup> According to Abimbòla, the *orisa* are generally believed to be helpers of human beings against the forces of evil known as *ajogun* (literally meaning “warriors against man”) (Abimbòla, “Yoruba Concept of Human Personality,” esp. 75;

man. They protect him from the *ajogun* [evil spirits] and act as intercessors between man and the *orisa* [or deities].”<sup>41</sup> Even though the Yorùbá are aware of the great harm that ancestors can inflict on individuals and on the community, they are optimistic that the ancestors are more likely to bestow blessings on the clan than to harm it.

In the spirit realm, “Ancestors and other divinities serve as secondary mediators who facilitate the spiritual encounter” between human beings and the Supreme Being.<sup>42</sup> The ancestors also preserve cosmic harmony between the living and the dead by facilitating ease of movement for the spirit beings who cross over from the spiritual sphere to the material world through reincarnation.<sup>43</sup> In the physical world, ancestors, like the Catholic saints, intercede for their kin.<sup>44</sup> They also act as guardians of moral and religious values in Yorùbá society and have enormous influence over cultural life.<sup>45</sup> Because of their protective and providential services to the Yorùbá community, ancestors are highly honored or venerated in traditional settings.<sup>46</sup> These “living-dead,” as they have frequently been referred to, are accorded greater honor in death than when they

---

<sup>41</sup> Abimbola, “Yoruba Concept of Human Personality,” 75.

<sup>42</sup> Simon-Mary Ahiokhai, “Ancestorhood in Yoruba Religion and Sainthood in Christianity: Envisioning an Ecological Awareness and Responsibility,” *International Journal of African Catholicism* 1 <http://www.saintleo.edu/media/131009/aihiokhai-ancestors-saint.pdf>, (downloaded August 17, 2016), 3; cf. Hassan, “Attitudes of Christian Missionaries,” 195, according to Hassan, “The ancestors among the *Baganda* [of Uganda] were highly respected as mediators between the living and *Katonda* [God].”

<sup>43</sup> See, Ahiokhai, “Ancestorhood in Yoruba Religion,” 4.

<sup>44</sup> Ahiokhai remarks: “Both Yorùbá religionists and Christians have rituals that commemorate the lives of men and women who are considered ancestors or saints” (“Ancestorhood in Yoruba Religion,” 12).

<sup>45</sup> See Afeosemimo U. Udogame, “Yoruba Cultural Matrix,” in *Celestial Church of Christ: The Politics of Cultural Identity in a West African Prophetic-Charismatic Movement*, ed. Afeosemimo Udogame, 107-129 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 1999), 122; cf. Segun Ogungbemi, “The End of Man in Yoruba Thought: Critical Assessment,” *Africa Theological Journal* 21, no. 2 (January 1, 1992): 193.

<sup>46</sup> Udogame points out that “A proper veneration is due to the ancestors and this ensures benefit. However, a failure to show proper respect to the ancestors invites misfortune. This also reveals the benevolent and malevolent potentials of the ancestors” (“Yoruba Cultural Matrix,” 121-122).

were alive. This is so because they are believed to have now acquired greater power in the spirit realm to harm or bless society.<sup>47</sup>

The benevolent nature of Yorùbá ancestors is known beyond the coasts of Africa. Manfred Kremser observes the influence of Yorùbá ancestors on the *Djine*, a predominantly Catholic African community on the Caribbean Island of St. Lucia: “Success in life depends on the goodwill of the ancestors, therefore offerings are made to them in order to ensure their benevolent influence.”<sup>48</sup> In a similar assessment, Judith Gleason, in her article, “Oya in the Company of Saints,” sees in Afro-Cuban Christian worship, an association of Oya, the favorite wife of the Yorùbá deity, Sango, with some of the saints in modern Catholicism: “As it happens, Oya in Cuba is identified with one of two: either Santa Teresa (of Avila) or Candelaria (Our Lady of Candlemas), depending on the house or spiritual lineage to which one belongs.”<sup>49</sup> Such associations, in Gleason’s view, helped the African settlers in Cuba relate the Christian characters to the heroine, Oya, in their culture.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> Abimbola asserts that the Yorùbá deities, or *Orisa*, were former human beings who lived on earth but have now returned to heaven where they now help the Supreme Being, *Olódùmarè*, as deputies (Abimbola, “Yoruba Concept of Human Personality,” 75); elsewhere, Abimbola points out that sacrifices are offered as food to the deities or *Orisa* as “a form of gratitude for their protection or anticipated protection” over human beings, (“The Notion of Sacrifice in the Yoruba Religion,” in *Restoring the Kingdom*, ed. Dean W Ferm (New York: Paragon House, 1984), 178-179); cf., ‘Wande Abimbola, *Ifá: An Exposition of Ifá Literary Corpus* (Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1976), 151, where remarks that the Yorùbá ancestors are “sometimes angry with Man if he neglects his duty either to his fellow man or to the supernatural powers.”

<sup>48</sup> Manfred Kremser observes that the rites to appease the “visiting ancestors” are ceremonially opened with a prayer offered by the high-priest. Furthermore, “all participants would be baptised Catholics and regular church-goers” (“Visiting Ancestors: St. Lucian Djine in Communion with their African Kin,” *Caribbean Quarterly* 39, nos. 3-4 [Sept./Dec., 1993], 90).

<sup>49</sup> Judith Gleason, “Oya in the Company of Saints,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 68, no. 2 (Jun., 2000), 266.

<sup>50</sup> Gleason, “Oya in the Company of Saints,” 281.

The early Christian enterprise among the Yorùbá, both on the continent of Africa and those who were transported to the Caribbean Islands through slavery, may have significantly diminished the fear or respect which the Yorùbá have for their departed loved ones. However, Christian missions did not fully remove the assumption that the ancestors are important members of the Yorùbá clan. Even today, there is no evidence that the Yorùbá, Christians and non-Christians alike, have diminished fear or respect for their ancestors.

## 2.2 Christian Response to Demons and Witches

Whereas ancestors are ordinarily revered in many traditional Asian and African cultures, other spirit beings are received with suspicion or outright fear in many ancient and modern societies around the world. Evil spirits, for example, were classified according to their origin in ancient Greek culture. Some spirits are believed to derive their existence from human beings while others are perceived to act independently of any human control. Kempe Algra identifies three kinds of demons in Greek philosophical thought: the internal demon, the external demon and *heroes*.<sup>51</sup> Whereas an internal demon has a human origin and resides in the human soul, an external demon, on the other hand, is believed to exist apart from human nature. In ancient Greek mythology, external demons were frequently associated with the Devil (*diábolos* “slanderer”) even though they may simply be human souls that have survived death (*heroes*), or non-human spirits

---

<sup>51</sup> Kempe Algra, “Stoics on Souls and Demons: Reconstructing Stoic Demonology,” in *Demons and the Devil in Ancient and Medieval Christianity*, ed. Nienke Vos and Willemien Otten, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill NV, 2011), 74.

that roam among human beings.<sup>52</sup> The Greek demon, according to Algra, “could be good, bad or neutral. As for their function, they could represent and explain the unexpected or strange, or they could be conceived of as somehow supervising human affairs, either as a kind of guardian angels or as avenging spirits.”<sup>53</sup> Greek *heroes* may be compared to the African ancestors; in both cultures, revered dead members are welcomed into the community where they assume some level of interaction with their living kin. Both the Greek *heroes* and the African *ancestors* are capable of showing benevolent attitudes toward members of their clan; they also occasionally exhibit destructive penchants towards individuals and society.

### 2.2.1 Demons and Witches in Traditional Cultures

Like in cultures that believe in the existence of ancestors, certain traits have been linked with societies that believe in witches and demons. In the first instance, witchcraft belief has been linked to close-knit traditional cultures where scientific means of interpreting life events are lacking.<sup>54</sup> Simon Mesaki may be right in his remark that, “Witchcraft reasoning is a mode of deciphering existence for those without knowledge of scientific causation.”<sup>55</sup> Because they have a variety of means to interpret the events in their world, most people in developed societies are not as inclined to seek mystical explanations for the unexpected events of life as are those in under-developed

---

<sup>52</sup> See Algra, “Stoics on Souls,” 84.

<sup>53</sup> Algra, “Stoics on Souls,” 76.

<sup>54</sup> See Clive Dillon-Malone, “Witchcraft Beliefs as a Pastoral Problem,” *Afer* 28, no. 6 (December 1986): 378.

<sup>55</sup> Simon Mesaki, “The Evolution and Essence of Witchcraft in Pre-Colonial African Societies,” *Transafrican Journal of History* 24 (1995), 166.

communities. As such, people in scientifically-challenged societies often rely on myths and traditional lore that include witches and demons to make sense of the seemingly incomprehensible things of life.<sup>56</sup> However, Harriet Hill warns that because it lacks empirical means of assessing cause, effect, morality and the likes, witchcraft worldviews, “tend to be reductionistic, explaining everything in terms of one cause. This prevents people from considering other aspects of the situation, such as personal responsibility, safety, skills, or appropriate medical intervention.”<sup>57</sup> It is not clear how much the slow pace of scientific progress in many parts of modern Africa has impacted beliefs in witchcraft and demons on the continent.

Second, belief in witches and demons has been linked with the insatiable human need to explain the existence of evil in the world. In Dillon-Malone’s view, “Witchcraft beliefs are an attempt to understand and cope with the problem of evil as it expresses itself in the concrete exigencies of life, a problem which is ultimately as mysterious as it is universal.”<sup>58</sup> Because human beings often seek logical explanations for every event in life, they are uncomfortable when life’s adversities seem to point them towards the activities of intelligent beings other than human beings. Witchcraft belief helps people who believe in the existence of superhuman spirit beings link the mysteries of evil to the activities of these spiritual entities. Most “mysteries,” especially those connected with the

---

<sup>56</sup> Philip Mayer, e.g., remarks: “There are some cosmologies into which the concept of witchcraft does not fit at all, because they represent everything that happens as being fundamentally right, proper, or natural ... Witches can only have place in a cosmology that admits to the possibility of things going wrong, that is, departing from the natural moral order” (“Witches,” in *Witchcraft and Sorcery: Selected Readings, Second Edition*, ed. Max Marwick [Suffolk, Great Britain: Penguin Books Ltd, 1982], 60).

<sup>57</sup> Harriet Hill, “Witchcraft and the Gospel: Insights from Africa,” *Missiology: An International Review* 24, no. 3 (July, 1996), 328.

<sup>58</sup> Dillon-Malone, “Witchcraft Beliefs,” 376.

undesirable circumstances of life, can fit under the general idea of “witchcraft.” In Bosch’s opinion, witchcraft belief, “provides a channel through which people can deal with hatred, hostility, frustration, jealousy and guilt. The witch epitomizes the exact opposite of what a given culture considers normal and normative.”<sup>59</sup>

Joseph Klaitis, among others, asserts that the existence of evil in society prompts people to believe that diabolic beings are at work.<sup>60</sup> Klaitis suggests that the 12<sup>th</sup> century Christians did not hesitate to identify Satan as the instigator of misery and witchcraft in human society:

A preoccupation with death, perceptible from the twelfth century and greatly magnified by the arrival of the plague in the mid-fourteenth century, led many Christians to fear the end of life as the moment of Satan’s victory. Dissent, death, and the devil became interlinked in the late medieval traditions. Finally, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the stereotype of the witch slowly emerged as the focus for this complex fear.<sup>61</sup>

Overwhelmed by the incessant evil in their world, twelfth century Christians in Europe found solace in personifying evil in the superhuman and non-human spirit beings which they assumed were present in society. According to Edward Bever: “The witch figure is an archetype of evil, an antisocial menace who betrays the bonds and the values of the

---

<sup>59</sup> David Bosch, “The Problem of Evil in Africa: A Survey of African Views on Witchcraft and of the Response of the Christian Church,” in *Like a Roaring Lion: Essays on the Bible, the Church and Demonic Powers*, ed. Pieter G. R. de Villiers (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1987), 43; cf. M. A. Adeney’s remark that witchcraft belief is “an outlet for anxiety, a means for making the dark unknown manageable ... Through reducing anxiety, managing the unknown and containing evil, society maintains its equilibrium” (“What is ‘Natural’ about Witchcraft and Sorcery?” *Missiology* 2 [1974], 385).

<sup>60</sup> According to Joseph Klaitis, “The fear of disease and death pervasive in a society that suffered from epidemics, famines, and chronically high mortality rates inevitably prompted deep popular anxieties. Under the right circumstances, such stresses could turn villagers against a defenseless member of the community” (*Servants of Satan: The Age of the Witch Hunts* [Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985], 8).

<sup>61</sup> Klaitis, *Servants and Satan*, 43.

community.”<sup>62</sup> Put differently, in the words of E. M. Pattison, an American professor of psychiatry and human behavior, human beings “see the personification of social evil in demons, and a displaced social protest in the form of accusations of witchcraft and personal experiences of possession,” amidst their social and emotional difficulties.<sup>63</sup>

Third, many traditional cultures of the world have associated witchcraft with feminine antisocial behaviors.<sup>64</sup> The English, for example, have documented their reproach, especially in the middle ages, for the women whom they perceived exhibited antisocial behaviors in society.<sup>65</sup> The prevalent view in sixteenth century Europe was that women, far more than men, had the propensity to cause affliction in society. According to Klaitis: “Evidence from about 7,500 witch trials in diverse regions of Europe and North America during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries shows that nearly 80 percent of the accused witches were female, and, in parts of England, Switzerland, and what is now Belgium, women accounted for over nine out of ten victims.”<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> Edward Bever, “Witchcraft Fears and Psychosocial Factors in Disease,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 30, no. 4 (Spring 2000), 575.

<sup>63</sup> E. Mansell Pattison, “Psychosocial Interpretations of Exorcism,” in *Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion: An Anthropological Study of the Supernatural*, ed. Arthur C. Lehmann and James E. Myers, (Alto: CA: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1985), 202.

<sup>64</sup> Margaret Denike, e.g., suggests that some deviant women were scapegoated during the witch hunts as “personified form as the devil incarnate” (“The Devil’s Insatiable Sex: A Genealogy of Evil Incarnate,” *Hypatia* 18, no. 1, Feminist Philosophy and the Problem of Evil [Winter, 2003], 25). See also, Dev Nathan, Govind Kelkar, and Yu Xiaogang. “Women as Witches and Keepers of Demons: Cross-cultural Analysis of Struggles to Change Gender Relations,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 33, no. 44 (1998): WS58–WS69; Edward Scott, “Witches, Wise, Weak or Wicked Women,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 15, no. 2 (Apr., 1976): 136-139; Jo Pearson, “Resisting Rhetorics of Violence: Women, Witches and Wicca,” *Feminist Theology* 18, no. 2 (January 2010): 141–159; Kalya Nutrella, “Witchcraft and Women: A Historiography of Witchcraft as Gender History,” *History Workshop Journal* (n.d.): 1–15; J. K. Swales, “Witchcraft and the Status of Women: A Comment,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 30, no. 3 (Sept., 1979): 349–358; Brian P. Levack, *Witchcraft, Women and Society* (Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992).

<sup>65</sup> See e.g. Barbara Rosen, *Witchcraft in England, 1558-1618* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1969); see also P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, *An Abundance of Witches* (Gloucestershire, Great Britain: Tempus Publishing Ltd., 2005).

<sup>66</sup> Klaitis, *Servants and Satan*, 52.



Female sexuality, particularly, presented a problem in the sixteenth century for women with deviant behaviors: “Women as witches were never far from their sex-related identity ... The stereotype witch was obviously a deviant – but she was also a deviant *woman*. In particular, her sexuality was out of control, since the authorities saw her as having transferred her sexual allegiance from men to the Devil.”<sup>67</sup> In their study of witchcraft among the Santhal, a group of Austro-Asiatic people of central-eastern part of India, Nathan, Kelkar, and Xiaogang remark that witchcraft persists in modern India because it was the leaders’ way of establishing the authority of men over women: “Women are turned into the source of all evil. Such an ideology is certainly conducive to the social process of controlling women. The threat of being declared a witch will help to restrict non-conformism or deviance from the rules that are being established.”<sup>68</sup> In the authors’ views, the political leaders used witch-hunting to launch “ideological, religious and political attacks on women” in order to constrain or suppress feminine rights in society.<sup>69</sup>

### 2.2.2 Witch-hunts in Medieval Europe

The attitudes towards witchcraft in thirteenth to seventeenth century Europe deserves special treatment because it sheds enormous light on the possible functions witches serve in human society. For example, Margaret Denike explains that witchcraft accusation, during the European witch-hunt era, “captures the spirit of the deeply misogynist campaigns launched by the church and the state during man’s ‘renaissance,’

---

<sup>67</sup> Julian Goodare, “Women and the Witch-Hunt in Scotland,” *Social History* 23, no. 3 (October, 1998), 307;

<sup>68</sup> Nathan et al., “Women as Witches,” WS61.

<sup>69</sup> Nathan et al., “Women as Witches,” WS61. The authors claim that the life interest of a widow in her husband’s land, for example, is severely undermined when she is accused of witchcraft, WS62.

which relied on the demonization of female sexuality, and which specifically and ruthlessly aimed to bring a brutal, punitive and regulative machinery to bear directly on women.”<sup>70</sup> For Denike, the sixteenth century witch-hunt in Europe was the church’s way of suppressing female sexuality and freedom:

The sexualized demonology born of the doctrine of the Fall, and elaborated through Christian asceticism, speaks of a deep ambivalence toward femininity and female sexuality. It ensures that, on the one hand, *woman* was to remain the weaker, feeble, *other* sex – an embodied passivity, prone to deception and seduction, and that, on the other hand, she represented a destructive force and malevolent power; in consorting with the devil, woman became dangerous enough to pose a perpetual threat to the world, and especially to man.<sup>71</sup>

In line with Denike’s reasoning, Klaitis asserts that the European witch-hunts reflected the misogynistic view of the day that depicted women as inferior to men: “Those who advocated witch trials saw nothing in this sexual imbalance. It conformed perfectly with the dominant notions of female inferiority, while it confirmed the legitimacy of woman-hatred with each new case ... the dynamics of the witch trials were one expression of deep-seated misogyny in early modern times.”<sup>72</sup> In the male-dominated Christian culture of the Renaissance, the witch-hunt was used to control and regulate feminine sexuality and freedom.<sup>73</sup>

Certain attributes characterized the seventeenth century witch. The English witch, according to Rosen, was invariably a poor, elderly woman who had a bad reputation for

---

<sup>70</sup> Denike, “Devil’s Insatiable Sex,” 12

<sup>71</sup> Denike, “Devil’s Insatiable Sex,” 23-24

<sup>72</sup> Klaitis, *Servants and Satan*, 52; for Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, “all witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which in women is insatiable” (*Malleus Maleficarum: The Hammer of Witchcraft*, trans. Montague Summers [New York: Dover, 1971], 47).

<sup>73</sup> Denike, “Devil’s Insatiable Sex,” 14; see also Nathan et. al. “Women as Witches,” WS59, where the authors repeat Maria Mies’ conviction that witchcraft is “the reaction of the male-dominated classes against the rebellion of women.”

unchastity and malice that she transferred to her descendants.<sup>74</sup> To suppress her malice and maintain order, men in positions of authority accused the witch figure of devising harm against society.<sup>75</sup> The European witch-hunt provided the rich and powerful aristocrats with the opportunity to suppress the weak and vulnerable women whom they perceived as threats or nonconformists in society. Invariably, the strong were the men who sought to exert control over “rebellious” and “non-conforming” women.<sup>76</sup>

The predominantly male-controlled European cultures that sought to suppress feminine power also used witchcraft accusation to mitigate other non-conformist behaviors in society. Dillon-Malone asserts that witchcraft belief functions, “as a social institution for the control of deviant behavior, as a means of perpetuating the position of the powerful in society, as a means of legitimating social segmentation, and as an institutionalized outlet for a culture’s forbidden aggressions through the social mechanism of scapegoating.”<sup>77</sup> As a political tool, witchcraft accusation proved

---

<sup>74</sup> Rosen, *Witchcraft in England*, 29; cf., Goodare, in his remark on the absurdity of accusing women of witchcraft at a time in the European history when few people lived to advanced ages, suggests that, “Witches may have been older women because of the poverty and widowed state of so many ... witches needed time to build up a reputation, and this may have been a more significant factor determining their age” (“Women and the Witch-Hunt,” 292).

<sup>75</sup> Marvin Harris, e.g., remarks: “The principal result of the witch-hunt system (apart from the charred bodies) was that the poor came to believe that they were being victimized by witches and devils instead of princes and popes ... It was the magic bullet of society’s privileged and powerful classes” (*Cows, Pigs, and Witches: The Riddles of Culture* [New York: Random House, Inc., 1977], 237).

<sup>76</sup> Jeffery Russell suggests that the witch-hunt evolved as “... an episode in the long struggle between authority and order on the one side and prophecy and rebellion on the other ... The witch was a rebel against church and society at a time when they were wholly defined” (Jeffery Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* [London: Cornell University Press, 1984], 2-3); like Russell, Goodare suggests that during the European witch-hunt era, the authority was concerned with “the rising tide of *disorder* which threatened the state ... The state also sought to assert its authority over women, and one of the ways in which this happened was through witch-hunting” (“Women and the Witch-Hunt,” 293); Nathan et. al., on their part, link witch-hunting in medieval Europe to, “the attempt of men to professionalize and monopolize healing, taking it out of the hands of non-professional women” (“Women as Witches,” WS59).

<sup>77</sup> Dillon-Malone, “Witchcraft Beliefs,” 378.

successful in keeping non-conformists and rebels in check. Rosen points out that in thirteenth century England, sorcerers were arrested and punished with death by civil authorities on suspicion that they were involved in conspiracy or rebellion.<sup>78</sup> The people in authority, who decided what was acceptable behavior in the society, also decided the punishment to be meted out to nonconformists. Furthermore, any general uncertainty or discomfiture in Europe which may be linked to an increase in the level of immorality in the society was often attributed to witchcraft. Such a presumption would not be strange to Goodare who asserts that, “At times of moral panic ... people suddenly become convinced that a particular form of behavior is not just undesirable, but is a threat to society’s fundamental values.”<sup>79</sup>

Economic reasons may also have contributed to the widespread witchcraft belief in seventeenth century Europe. The European witch-hunt, in Goodare’s view, was “a way of scapegoating women at a time when women were part of an economic problem. Since the problem of famine could not be tackled directly, witch-hunting was perhaps a displacement activity.”<sup>80</sup> Witch-hunting came to an abrupt end toward the end of the seventeenth century when Europe began to enjoy social and economic growth. In addition, the rise of science and technology swayed human attention toward the use of reason as the most reliable method of assessing reality.<sup>81</sup> Klaitz remarks:

The obsessive fear of women also seems to have receded as a widespread cultural feature during the era of witch hunting’s decline. The traditional Christian view of

---

<sup>78</sup> Rosen, *Witchcraft in England*, 22.

<sup>79</sup> Goodare, “Women and the Witch-Hunt,” 291.

<sup>80</sup> Goodare, “Women and the Witch-Hunt,” 293.

<sup>81</sup> Klaitz notes that, witch-hunting declined when “the life of the mind was being transformed by the rise of science, the seventeenth century was the great turning point in the intellectual history of Western civilization” (*Servants of Satan*, 161).

woman as temptress and source of evil, a stereotype that religious reformers brought to the forefront of elite consciousness in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, had fueled the misogyny that underlay witch hunting.<sup>82</sup>

Although religious reasons were adduced for the persecution of witches in Europe during the Renaissance, some other social, economic and political factors have clearly contributed to the aversion for witches during the European witch-hunt era. Surprisingly, the Christian culture in sixteenth century Europe did not protect women from being accused as witches even though other factors, other than religious, were responsible for the aversion for witches at the time. Remarkably though, whereas Europe overcame its preoccupation with and aversion for witches by the close of the seventeenth century, scholars are confounded by the fact that the fear of witches persists in modern Asia and Africa.

### 2.2.3 Witchcraft in Modern Africa

E. Mansell Pattison, in his “logical explanation” for the widespread belief in demons and witches in many cultures of the world, observes that, “the eruption of demonology is coincident with social situations where there is an oppressive social structure, a loss of trust in the efficacy of social institutions, and a seeming inability to cope with the evils of the social structure.”<sup>83</sup> Pattison’s stereotype may be an over-generalization. His description, however, adequately captures the situations in many parts of modern Africa where poorly developed social and political structures contribute to the harsh economic conditions and drive citizens to religious institutions that blame demons

---

<sup>82</sup> Klaitz, *Servants of Satan*, 172.

<sup>83</sup> Pattison, “Psychosocial Interpretations of Exorcism,” 202.

and witches for societal woes. It is not surprising, then, that some scholars have linked witchcraft belief among Africans to the dire social and economic situations on the continent.<sup>84</sup>

Like in many parts of Asia and Europe, “witchcraft” is the term commonly used by Africans to depict a supernatural act in society brought about by a superhuman spirit being. James Brain defines witchcraft as “The power to exert supernatural harm upon another person or his possessions, that power depending upon inherent evil qualities in the evil person (witch) himself/herself.”<sup>85</sup> Differentiating between witchcraft and sorcery, Opoku Onyinah remarks that, “The witch performs no rites, utters no spells, and possesses no medicine. Sorcery is the deliberate employment of magical rites, and the use of spells or mechanical aids in the attempt to bring a result. Witchcraft can be used either for a good or an evil purpose.”<sup>86</sup>

Witchcraft may connote positive or negative meanings among Africans. As a positive influence on society, Michael Gelfand remarks concerning the Shona: “a belief in witchcraft encourages good social behaviour. If an individual harms another, breaks laws, or becomes anti-social he lays himself open to the suspicion of being a witch.”<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> C. O. Oshun, e.g., believe that the depressed economic condition in Nigeria is caused by the “hierarchy of supernatural powers” in the country, “Nigeria is in bondage to these evil powers, a bondage that is evidenced by a series of spiritual, personal, moral, domestic socio-economic, political, religious and judicial disfunctionalities. To reverse this trend, therefore, this bondage must be broken,” (“Spirits and Healing in a Depressed Economy: The Case of Nigeria,” *Mission Studies* 15-1, no.29 [1998], 32).

<sup>85</sup> James L. Brain, “Witchcraft and Development,” *African Affairs* 81, no 324 (July, 1982): 373; in addition, Brain describes witchcraft as, “The supernatural power to cause another person or that person's possessions harm through the use of various substances or acts,” 372; cf. Okon’s definition of witchcraft simply as, “the use of supernatural power for harmful purposes,” (“African World-View and the Challenge of Witchcraft,” 69).

<sup>86</sup> Opoku Onyinah, “Contemporary ‘Witchdemonology’ in Africa,” *International Review of Mission* 93, nos. 370/371 (Jul./Oct., 2004): 331

<sup>87</sup> Michael Gelfand, *Witch Doctor* (London: Harvill Press, 1964), 51.

The fear of being labelled a witch, in Gelfand's opinion, motivates members of society to act appropriately. Green points out that "Belief in witchcraft also serves in a very direct way to undergird the retributive order. Although their motives are entirely malicious, witches help to punish wrongdoing."<sup>88</sup> With specific regard to the women in polygynous relationships in many parts of Africa, Green suggests that the fear of being labelled as witches prompts these women to good behavior: "Fear of witchcraft thus serves as a powerful incentive to maintaining good relations with all of one's wives, kinswomen and other female acquaintances."<sup>89</sup> The husbands, on their part, are encouraged to maintain peace within the home when they realize that witchcraft, caused by disgruntled wives, will eventually destroy their families

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, in its 2016 economic report, remarks that: "Despite healthy economic growth (often higher than elsewhere in the world over the last decade), it has rarely been inclusive; the number of Africans in absolute poverty has risen and inequality remains a major issue."<sup>90</sup> Meanwhile, in several parts of Africa poverty and economic disasters have been blamed on witchcraft since witches are believed to be responsible for most misfortunes and set-backs in the human world.<sup>91</sup>

---

<sup>88</sup> Ronald Green, "Religion and Morality in the African Traditional Setting," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 14, no. 1 (1983), 16.

<sup>89</sup> Green, "Religion and Morality," 16.

<sup>90</sup> United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, *Greening Africa's Industrialization: Economic Report on Africa* (Addis Ababa: Economic Commission for Africa, 2016), 23.

<sup>91</sup> Aderemi Ajala and E. N. Ediomu-ubong, e.g., assert that "witchcraft belief among the Ibibio of South-South Nigeria continues to influence social relations, and forms the basis for the determination of health security or lack thereof among the people" ("It's My Stepmother": Witchcraft, Social Relations, and Health Security in Ibibio, South-South Nigeria," *Anthropos* 105, no. 2 [2010]: 455); cf., Okon's view: "Absolute poverty has heightened the fear of the African on witchcraft. Poverty is interpreted as the

Many Africans see witchcraft as the primary means through which evil is carried out in society.<sup>92</sup> As Aylward Shorter rightly remarks, “When misfortunes are overwhelming, inexplicable, irrational, they are attributed to witchcraft.”<sup>93</sup> Sickness, persistent failures and death, are some of the ways through which witches cause affliction in the community.<sup>94</sup> Some scholars maintain that witchcraft is the result of the misogynistic desires of African men to suppress female sexuality and morality.<sup>95</sup> Carine Plancke, for example, remarks concerning the Punu women who participate in the possession Trance: “It is through their spirits that women manipulate men and obtain influence in a social life that is otherwise denied to them.”<sup>96</sup> Witchcraft has also been linked with the despotic wishes of some African leaders to exercise political control over their competitors.<sup>97</sup> John Cohan sums it all up in his remark: “Africans of all walks of life

---

outcome of witchcraft persecution. Business failure, poor harvest, epidemic and natural disasters are attributed to witchcraft” (“African World-View and the Challenge of Witchcraft,” 70).

<sup>92</sup> Brain suggests that in the African culture, “The problem of the presence of evil in the world is one of which humans have wrestled with since time immemorial. A belief in witchcraft is part of an attempt to solve that problem,” (“Witchcraft and Development,” 371).

<sup>93</sup> Aylward Shorter, *African Culture and the Christian Church* (New York: Orbis Books, 1974), 139. Here, Shorter also says, “When misfortunes are overwhelming, inexplicable, irrational, they are attributed to witchcraft.”

<sup>94</sup> E. E. Evans-Pritchard, e.g., remarks concerning the Azande of Central Africa: “Belief in death from natural causes and belief in death from witchcraft are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they supplement one another, the one accounting for what the other does not account for” (*Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande* [Oxford, London: Clarendon Press, 1976], 25).

<sup>95</sup> Isak Niehaus suggests, concerning the people of Bushbuckridge region of South African Lowveld, that “the most appropriate perspective on witchcraft is one that seeks to integrate a concern with broader political economic processes with a rigorous analysis of the micro-politics of sexuality, kinship and morality” (“Perversion of Power: Witchcraft and the Sexuality of Evil in the South African Lowveld,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 32, no. 3 [Aug., 2002]: 269).

<sup>96</sup> Carine Plancke, “The Spirit’s Wish: Possession Trance and Female Power among the Punu of Congo-Brazzaville,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 41, no. 4 (January, 2011): 366.

<sup>97</sup> Nelson Tebbe, e.g., asserts: “During apartheid, many people inferred from [the] combination of policies that the government had sided with witches and was even relying on them to bolster its power” (“Witchcraft and Statecraft: Liberal Democracy in Africa,” *Georgetown Law Journal* 96 [2007], 197); cf.,



utilize witchcraft as a means of gaining advantages, often at the expense of others, such as to ensure success in warfare or in sports, to thwart a romantic rival, to win a political race, or to exact vengeance against an enemy.”<sup>98</sup> Many Africans attribute almost any confounding situation to the activities of witches.

It is not surprising, therefore that the slow pace of development on the continent of Africa has been linked to the activities of witches. In Etim Okon’s assessment: “Witchcraft is hindering genuine social and religious progress in Africa. It is not an exaggeration to say that Africa is lagging behind in socio-economic, and political development, the continent is among the poorest in the world. Spiritual causation can be attributed to the problems of Africa.”<sup>99</sup> Consistent with the spirit world-view in many parts of modern Africa is the view that the superhuman beings in the world are responsible for the woes in the human world.

Christian mission has reasons to be concerned with the persistent belief in witchcraft in many parts of Africa. Despite the numerical growth that many observers have recorded in Africa, Manala asserts that witchcraft belief actually hampers the growth of Christian mission on the continent: “The impact witchcraft has on the way in which the church fulfils the *missio Dei* is devastating. The growth of the church is greatly impeded. Members leave in their thousands those churches that do not take seriously and address the threat posed by witchcraft.”<sup>100</sup> Nowadays, many indigenous churches develop

---

Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic*, 33-55; Siegfried F. Nadel, “Witchcraft in Four African Societies: An Essay in Comparison,” *American Anthropologist* 54, no. 1 (Jan.-Mar., 1952): 18.

<sup>98</sup> John A. Cohan, “The Problem of Witchcraft Violence in Africa,” *Suffolk University Law Review* 44, no. 4 (December 2011), 804.

<sup>99</sup> Okon, “African World-View and the Challenge of Witchcraft,” 75.

<sup>100</sup> Matsobane Manala, “Witchcraft and Its Impact on Black African Christians: A Lacuna in the Ministry of the Hervormde Kerk in Suidelike Africa,” *HTS* 60, no. 4 (2004): 1502.

their teachings and build the religious spirituality of the church around the fear or anxiety of their members for the superhuman spirit beings they perceive are responsible for their problems.

African church leaders, especially those in the indigenous Pentecostal churches, have been accused of propagating witchcraft fear among their members so as to attract large followership and/or make financial gains.<sup>101</sup> The poor economic conditions in many parts of Africa may have provided charlatans with the incentives to turn Christianity into a lucrative business by exploiting the fear of anxious citizens.<sup>102</sup> Legal and humanitarian

---

<sup>101</sup> See e.g., Dominic Umoh, "Superstition and Syncretism: Setbacks to Authentic Christian Practice in Africa," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention* 2, no. 7 (July 2013): 37, where Umoh asserts that "the mushroom churches, as they are sometimes called, go beyond the search for cultural identity or enculturation to adulterate the very essence of the Christian message by embellishing it with superstitious and syncretistic doctrines. This is done in a bid to attract clients"; cf., Dillon-Malone, "Witchcraft Beliefs," 374; Adetutu A. Adenugba and Samuel A. Omolawal, "Religious Values and Corruption in Nigeria: A Dislocated Relationship," *Journal of Educational and Social Research* 4, no 3 (May, 2014): 522; Chima Agazue, *The Role of a Culture of Superstition in the Proliferation of Religio-Commercial Pastors in Nigeria* (Bloomington, IN: AnthorHouse, 2013); C. O. Ogunkunle, "Commercialization of Religion in Nigeria: The Christian Perspective," *Issues in the Practice of Religion in Nigeria*, ed. M.T. Yahya et al., 296-305 (Ilorin, Nigeria: Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions (NASR), 2006), 302-303; Samuel W. Kunhiyop, "The Challenge of African Christian Morality," *Conspectus (South African Theological Seminary)* 7 (2009): 64; Adenugba and Omolawal, "Religious Values," 522; Daniel J. Smith, *A Culture of Corruption: Everyday Deception and Popular Discontent in Nigeria*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 218.

<sup>102</sup> See e.g., Tola O. Pearce, "She Will Not Be Listened to in Public: Perceptions among the Yoruba of Infertility and Childlessness in Women," *Reproductive Health Matters* 7, no.13 (1999), 76, where Pearce says concerning the proliferation of charismatic churches in Nigeria: "Economic development has proved elusive in Nigeria. Instead, military dictatorship, corruption, economic mismanagement, falling per capita income, soaring food prices, a rise in malnutrition among women and children, discontinued free primary education and ethnic rivalry for power between the three major ethnic groups (Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa) have all contributed to insecurity and a declining quality of life. In this context, ethnic, religious and secret associations and other community-based organizations have grown in their capacity to explain experience and compete with the state for the loyalty and support of people"; cf., John Magbadelo's assertion that "the Pentecostal field in Christendom in Nigeria is being mined by men who through the utilisation of business principles in discharging their pastoral responsibilities have an intense interest in profit-making" ("Pentecostalism in Nigeria: Exploiting or Edifying the Masses? *African Sociological Review/Review Africaine de Sociologie* 8, no. 2 [2004]: 18); C. O. Ogunkunle, on his part, suggests unemployment and poverty have worsened the religious terrain in Nigeria: "In fact, unemployment has contributed greatly to the commercialization of religion in Nigeria, especially as people try to find solution to their predicament" ("Commercialization of Religion," 301).

issues have been raised regarding witchcraft accusations in some African societies.<sup>103</sup>

Women who were accused of witchcraft have endured emotional and physical abuse; many “witches” have also been deprived of social and economic privileges in society.<sup>104</sup>

Regardless of the various problems it creates in society, witchcraft belief is a vivid reality in the African world.<sup>105</sup>

#### 2.2.4 Witchcraft in the Yorùbá Culture

The Yorùbá culture typifies the African community where witches are exceedingly feared. Yorùbá witches, or *Aje*, are comparable to the witches in other parts of the world in their propensity to cause affliction in society. Abimbola remarks: “Like witches in other cultures, they suck human blood, eat human flesh, and afflict human beings with diseases like impotence, stomach disorders, blood and liver diseases.”<sup>106</sup>

---

<sup>103</sup> Cohan, e.g., observes that in many African countries, “Prosecutions for witchcraft under the very laws intended to suppress it are rare ... on the one hand the practice of witchcraft is illegal, yet making accusations of witchcraft is also illegal” (Cohan, “Problem of Witchcraft,” 804); cf., Maakor Quarmyne, “Witchcraft: A Human Rights Conflict between Customary/ Traditional Laws and the Legal Protection of Women in Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa,” *William & Mary Journal of Women and the Law* 17, no. 2 (2011): 475-507; Tebbe, “Witchcraft and Statecraft,” 211;

<sup>104</sup> Mary A. Ajayi and Abiodun O. Olotu, remark that in the Yorùbá culture: “It is regarded a curse to remain childless after years of marriage. In such a situation, the woman faces pressure from the in-laws, especially her mother-in-law, and may even be called a witch ... many women have been maltreated and divorced, which has then led to the loss of her rights to any property in the family” (“Violation of Women’s Property Rights within the Family,” *Empowering Women for Gender Equity* 1, no. 1 [2005]:61).

<sup>105</sup> Several authors have stated the futility of proving or disproving the existence of witches to Africans. For George C. Bond and Diane M. Ciekawy, “Whether witches do or do not exist is unimportant; the relevant issue is that people believe that they do. That is, people believe in the capacity of individuals to use a personal force to affect others, events, and ultimately the course of human affairs” (*Witchcraft Dialogues: Anthropological and Philosophical Exchanges* [Athens, OH: Center for International Studies, 2001], “6); cf. Gerrit Brand, “Witchcraft and Spirit Beliefs in African Christian Theology,” *Exchange* 31, no. 1 (January, 2002): 6, where Brand suggests that, “the acceptance of witchcraft and spirit beliefs by Christian theologians might help solve some of the logical problems internal to the Christian understanding of evil.”

<sup>106</sup> Wande Abimbola, “Gods versus Anti-Gods: Conflict and Resolution in the Yoruba Cosmos,” in *Evil and the Response of World Religion*, ed. William Cenkner (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 1997), 173; cf. Bolaji Idowu’s remark: “A person’s destiny may be altered for the worse by *Omo Ar’aiye* – “Children of the World” ... *Omo Ar’aiye* includes witches, secret cults with a bias towards evil practices, any who are given to evil practices or machinations ... they are believed to have the power of spoiling any

However, the Yorùbá do not believe that all witches are wicked. Some *Aje* are benevolent and may exhibit humane feelings towards members of society. When they are in a good mood, they can bless human beings or make people rich or successful in life.<sup>107</sup>

Witchcraft elucidates tremendous dread among the Yorùbá because, as Awolalu rightly notes, “Witchcraft is considered the greatest factor that causes the abnormal to happen and brings about disruption in harmony.”<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, witchcraft often creates irreversible consequences in society. Unlike ancestors who will readily accept human offerings whenever they are angry, witches generally cannot be easily placated when they are angry. Abimbola remarks that, “an evil force afflicting a human being and which is diagnosed as emanating from the *Aje* cannot be resolved by the offering of a normal sacrifice. Only a special type of sacrifice can partially affect the *Aje*.”<sup>109</sup> This way, human beings suffer exceedingly in the hands of wicked witches who delight in human pain.

Like in other cultures, women are both perpetrators and victims of witchcraft in the Yorùbá culture.<sup>110</sup> Judith Hoch-Smith asserts that in the Yorùbá culture, “any woman

---

person’s lot, however good it may have been to begin with” (*Olódùmarè: God in Yoruba Belief* [London: Longman, 1962], 15).

<sup>107</sup> Abimbola, “Gods Versus Anti-Gods, 174.

<sup>108</sup> J. Omisade Awolalu, “The Yoruba Philosophy of Life,” *Presence Africaine. Nouvelle Serie*, no. 73 (1er Trimestre 1970): 29; cf., John Pobee, *Toward an African Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 100, where Pobee remarks that in evil is principally attributed to witches in the African culture.”

<sup>109</sup> Abimbola, “Gods Versus Anti-Gods, 173.

<sup>110</sup> See, J. D. Y. Peel, “Gender in Yoruba Religious Change,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 32, no. 2 (May, 2002): 136. The Yorùbá are not alone in their suspicion of women; according to Edward Bever, “Across cultures, women tend to exhibit irritable and other socially disruptive behaviors during this phase of life due to the combination of psychological and biological adjustments the end of reproductive potency triggers ...” (“Witchcraft, Female Aggression, and Power in the Early Modern Community,” *Journal of Social History* 35, no. 4 [Summer, 2002], 967).

can become a witch since all women are mystically linked together through their menstrual blood, and power is housed in their abdomens.”<sup>111</sup> Invariably, a woman is labeled a “witch” to suppress her sexuality or deviance to male authority.<sup>112</sup>

Hoch-Smith compares the attitudes of the men in the contemporary African culture to the tradition in the Middle Ages when the European men suppressed the sexuality of the women folks: “In Africa, also, women are ‘accused’ of ‘female sexuality’ by men, and female power is believed to be derived from this sexuality.”<sup>113</sup> The misogynistic Yorùbá culture, Hoch-Smith suggests, is wary of the successful, independent female because she threatens the balance of power that ought to tilt to the advantage of the men in the community. Such a woman, “has a strongly negative mirror image: She is a carnal witch who possesses incredible strength of psychic power with which she attacks male-controlled society.”<sup>114</sup> In Hoch-Smith’s view, the image of the female witch emerges as the male-controlled Yorùbá society keeps the aggressive, independent women under tight scrutiny and supervision.

---

<sup>111</sup> Judith Hoch-Smith, “Yoruba Female Sexuality: The Witch and the Prostitute,” in *Women in Ritual and Symbolic Roles*, ed. Judith Hoch-Smith and Anita Spring, (New York: Plenum Press, 1978), 250;

<sup>112</sup> Several scholars have linked witchcraft accusation to the male ambition to suppress feminine sexuality; Prince, e.g., remarks that the two most emphasized propensities of the witch among the Yorùbá is that witches, cause wasting diseases or death through sucking the blood and through interfering with male sexuality (“Yoruba Image of the Witch,” 800); cf., Andrew Apter, “Discourse and Its Disclosures: Yoruba Women and the Sanctity of Abuse,” *African Journal of the International African Institute* 69, no. 1 (1998): 87; Demosthenes Savrants, *The Satanizing of Woman: Religion Versus Sexuality*, trans. Martin Ebon (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1974),” 8; Bever, “Witchcraft, Female Aggression,” 955-988; Hoch-Smith, “Yoruba Female Sexuality,” 245; Ayo Opefeyitimi, *Women in Yoruba Culture* (Ibadan: Penthouse Publications, 2009), 164; Phillips Stevens, Jr., “Women’s Aggressive Use of Genital Power in Africa,” *Transcultural Psychiatry* 43, no. 4 (December, 2006): 592.

<sup>113</sup> Hoch-Smith, “Yoruba Female Sexuality,” 248.

<sup>114</sup> Hoch-Smith, “Yoruba Female Sexuality,” 249.

Unlike, Hoch-Smith, Oyeronke Olajubu does not believe that the Yorùbá culture intentionally seeks to suppress the feminine power. For Olajubu, the political structure of the Yorùbá, rests not on competitive struggles between men and women, but on the assigned roles which members of society are expected to adhere to for harmony to exist in the clan:

Yorùbá political structures are believed to rest on certain pillars composed and sustained by mystical principles. These principles are within the custody of women. This ritual power is used to maintain harmony in the society; hence, while men in principle held political offices and authority, women controlled the ritual base that made political rule possible.<sup>115</sup>

Elsewhere, Olajubu remarks that for the Yorùbá, “Methods of operation in [the] groups reinforce principles of complementary gender and power relations. Cooperation and harmony are elevated above competition, oppression, and domination, because the individual’s welfare is dependent on and embedded within the communal well-being.”<sup>116</sup>

Olajubu’s view is consistent with John Odeyemi’s opinion that the Yorùbá culture is not suppressive of feminine power or ability. In Odeyemi’s view, “Pre-arrival of the colonialists and missionaries, Yoruba women had no notion of gender subordination. Yoruba men were not thinking in terms of patriarchy, because everyone understood

---

<sup>115</sup> Oyeronke Olajubu, *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), 26; cf., Joseph A. Omoyajowo’s remark: “In every Yoruba community, there is an elaborate code of manners and etiquette, the observance of which helps to reduce the strains and frustrations of interpersonal relationships. A breach of this code tragically disturbs the rhythm of society and undermines the authority of the gods whose duty it is to ensure, if not enforce, strict obedience to the norms,” (“The Role of Women in African Traditional Religion,” in *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society*, ed. Jacob K Olupona [New York: Paragon House, 1991]: 78).

<sup>116</sup> Oyeronke Olajubu, “Seeing through a Woman’s Eye: Yoruba Religious Tradition and Gender Relations,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 20, no. 1 (Spring, 2004), 59; cf., Oyeronke Olademo’s remark: “The Yoruba notion of interdependency ensures that there is no room for absolutism in any quarter. The male principle needs the female principle to function well just as the female needs the male for meaningful human relations” (“Religion and Women’s Sexuality in Africa: The Intersection of Power and Vulnerability,” in *Women and New and Africana Religions*, ed. Lillian Ashcraft-Eason, Darnise C. Martin, and Oyeronke Olademo [Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2010]: 193).

relations in terms of family, tribe or cultural unity.”<sup>117</sup> Odeyemi further reiterates that, “Although Yoruba culture is hierarchically based with men on top of the ladder, respect is reciprocal and understood to work for the preservation of the community. For this reason, every member of the community knows his or her own responsibility to the one or the whole.”<sup>118</sup> Historically, then, the progressive Yorùbá woman did not pose a greater threat to society than her male counterpart because she contributed her own quota to the economic and political well-being of the family. This may have prompted Olajubu’s remark: “We may posit then, that an aggregate portrait of the woman in Yoruba history and myth presents us with an individual who is economically independent, socially active, and politically enthusiastic. Moreover, power and gender relations as presented by these sources confirm that women were not passive or oppressed but vibrant and powerful.”<sup>119</sup>

In modern times, more Yorùbá women are taking more prominent roles in decision-making and leadership in Yorùbá communities. Women now run their own businesses and buy properties in their own names; many have also become the breadwinners in their families. In Olugboyega Alaba’s view, “The modern Yoruba husband and wife remain as a complementary unit each contributing according to his/her earnings to the keeping of their home.”<sup>120</sup> Feminine power, which may have challenged the male ego decades ago, is gradually becoming less threatening in recent time as more

---

<sup>117</sup> John S. Odeyemi, “Gender Issues among the Yorubas,” *The International Journal of African Catholicism* 4, no. 1 (Winter, 2013):18.

<sup>118</sup> Odeyemi, “Gender Issues among the Yorubas,” 5.

<sup>119</sup> Olajubu, *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere*, 29.

<sup>120</sup> Olugboyega Alaba, *Understanding Sexuality in the Yoruba Culture: (No. 1 – Understanding Human Sexuality Seminar Series)* (Lagos: Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Center, 2004), 5.

families are relying on women to contribute to the economy of the home. That many women are becoming the breadwinner in the home does not diminish their primary duties as wives and mothers.

The Yorùbá assign two distinct but mutually inclusive roles for a woman in society. On the one hand, feminine power is celebrated in “motherhood;” on the other hand, feminine power is suppressed in “wifehood.”<sup>121</sup> According to Olademo:

The positive side translates to power for the Yorùbá woman ... Motherhood confers power through the spiritual connotations given to the blood shed at childbirth and the mother’s breast milk that nurture the child ... The negative side of this ambiguous stance of the Yorùbá on women’s sexuality translates to restrictive sexual expression, manipulation, and subservience.<sup>122</sup>

A woman’s contribution to her family’s well-being, therefore, rests on the nurturing posture she maintains in the community. The sexually immoral woman, on the other hand, paints a graphic picture of disruption. Society employs all means, including witchcraft labeling, to suppress her activity and trade.

The challenges of bearing and rearing children potentially set women up for witchcraft accusation. As Olademo rightly points out, “African sexuality is geared towards one goal – procreation – to achieve continuity of the human race.”<sup>123</sup> Women who have several living children, for example, are perceived to be extremely blessed and

---

<sup>121</sup> Taiwo Makinde, e.g., remarks: “The issue of Motherhood is central to Yoruba culture. Motherhood is also attached to wifehood. The contradiction in the perception as a mother (positive) and as a wife (negative) can be resolved through positive socialization of the society” (“Motherhood as a Source of Empowerment of Women in Yoruba Culture,” *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 13, no. 2 [2004]: 172).

<sup>122</sup> Olademo, “Religion and Women’s Sexuality in Africa,” 202.

<sup>123</sup> See Olademo, “Religion and Women’s Sexuality in Africa,” 194.



powerful while those who do not have children or who repeatedly give birth to stillbirths are treated with pity or shame.<sup>124</sup>

The problems of a barren woman are often compounded by the rejection she faces from her in-laws. According to Koster-Oyekan, “The pressure from in-laws on a barren woman is high. They do not think of the happiness of the woman, but of the continuation of their lineage. Children are the connection between the ancestors and future generations. A barren woman is useless to her in-laws and may be abused.”<sup>125</sup> Even when her husband does not mind that his wife has not conceived, the in-laws still make it their duty to exert pressure on the woman to either produce a child or be ready to receive a co-wife who would. Any member of her husband’s family may consult a traditional priest or *Babaláwo*, for advice why the marriage has not produced a child. Predictably, a disgruntled woman, usually on the wife’s side, is identified by the *Babaláwo* as being responsible for the childless situation of the marriage. Yorùbá Christians, on their part, pray vigorously to resist demonic spirits that may be responsible for barrenness. Olukoya instructs women in such a situation: “Desert spirits are satanic powers responsible for keeping a person in an awful state of barrenness or unfruitfulness. It is your responsibility as a child of God, to take up the weapons of God and fight against these wicked spirits.”<sup>126</sup>

---

<sup>124</sup> See, e.g., Makinde’s remark: “By becoming a mother, a woman is promoted to the esteemed position in which she can be referred to as a precious stone. Therefore, it is a tragedy for a Yoruba woman not to have a child” (“Motherhood as a Source of Empowerment,” 167); cf., Winny Koster-Oyekan’s remark: “Children are there to take care of their parents in old age, to take over the family business, inherit the properties that their parents have worked for, and have to bury their parents when they die. A person without a child has nobody to bury him or her. The life of a person without a child is miserable. It is more miserable for women than for men” (“Infertility among Yoruba Women: Perceptions on Causes, Treatments and Consequences,” *African Journal of Reproductive Health* 3, no. 1 [May, 1999]: 22).

<sup>125</sup> Koster-Oyekan, “Infertility among Yoruba Women,” 22.

<sup>126</sup> D. K. Olukoya, *The Prayer Rain* (Lagos: Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, 1999), 7.

The dynamics in many traditional Yorùbá families may have contributed to the portrayal of the independent, sexually active woman as a “witch.” In the first instance, the male head of the community may be wary of the assertive woman’s ability to supplant his authority in the clan. Moreover, the married women in the community are suspicious that the independent sexually active woman may lure their husbands away from their spousal responsibilities. Because she is not received as one under the authority or control of a man, the independent woman, as Hoch-Smith has rightly pointed out, is liable to be called a witch or a prostitute because of the possibility that she may cause disharmony in society.<sup>127</sup> Because it takes some time to build deviant reputations in the community, older women are more likely to be called witches than the younger women.

Women in polygynous relationships are by far more likely to be accused of witchcraft than those in monogamous homes. It is not unusual for women to react to the unfair treatments they face in the extended family structure by lashing back at their co-wives or husbands. A man who marries several wives has already set each one of them up for witchcraft accusation. Apter sums it up well:

Status among co-wives by seniority is offset by the number of their children, how successful they are, and perceptions of favoritism by their husband ...A wife who remains childless is not fully incorporated into the family, since she is not contributing to its reproduction and expansion, and might be sent back to her parents ... Likely seen as a victim of witchcraft, she is also destined to become something of a witch herself, taking revenge on her rivals.<sup>128</sup>

When things go wrong in the polygynous home, the grieving wife looks for someone to blame for her woes. She does not hesitate to accuse any of her co-wives of causing her

---

<sup>127</sup> Hoch-Smith, “Yoruba Female Sexuality,” 246.

<sup>128</sup> Andrew Apter, “The Blood of Mothers: Women, Money, and Markets in Yoruba-Atlantic Perspective.” *Journal of African American History* 98, no. 1 (Winter, 2013): 74-75.

affliction through witchcraft: “If a wife loses a child to disease, or fails to conceive, divination usually reveals a jealous co-wife as the cause, one who used her witchcraft to sabotage her rival.”<sup>129</sup>

Whatever step a woman in a polygynous relationship takes to retaliate on her husband or on any of the women with which she competes is usually interpreted as an act of witchcraft. A very dim future awaits a witch in the Yorùbá culture. A woman who was not a “witch” when she married into a polygynous family could easily become one after enduring the neglect and shame that are often found in such relationships. In the traditional setting, women in polygynous relationships frequently consult the local priest, or *Babaláwo*, either to put spells on the other wives or to protect themselves from spiritual attacks from the other women. Yorùbá Christian women, on their part, even though they are mostly monogamous, are still conscious of the harm which the other women in their families are capable of inflicting on them. How can they forget? Leaders in the YIC, capitalizing on the general notion that women are purveyors of witchcraft in society, constantly remind their church members to protect themselves from the older women in their families.

Mothers, grandmothers, and the older female members of the family, especially, are regarded with suspicion whenever events do not turn out as expected within Yorùbá families. Women (and girls) flock to the indigenous churches in modern time to protect themselves from possible spiritual attacks, mostly from female family members that their

---

<sup>129</sup> Apter maintains that among the Yorùbá, “Witchcraft accusations within the domestic group are directed primarily between co-wives and focused on their children” (“Blood of Mothers,” 75); elsewhere, Apter suggests that among the Yorùbá, “witchcraft and fertility are inversely related as irreducible values of female power, (“The Embodiment of Paradox: Yoruba Kingship and Female Power, *Cultural Anthropology* 6, no. 2 [May, 1991]: 226); cf. Apter, “Discourse and Its Disclosures,” 87, where Apter remarks that in the polygynous Yorùbá society, “it is common for a witch to attack the child of a co-wife.”

church leaders have identified as potential threats. It is also not surprising that many Yorùbá churches are filled with women (and girls) who, not wanting to be accused of witchcraft, publicly exhibit their Christian faith for all to see.

### 2.3 Summary

The Yorùbá have an ambivalent attitude towards the spirit beings with which they co-habit their world. On the one hand, they perceive some of these spiritual entities as having benevolent interest in individual and communal well-being. On the other hand, the Yorùbá are convinced that some human and non-human spirit beings make it their vocation to cause affliction in human society. While the benevolent spirits are generally revered in traditional cultures, evil spirits are rejected and vehemently opposed in societies that believe in these entities. Pragmatic factors, more than religion, appear to have greater consideration in how societies perceive superhuman entities and their impact on community. Most anthropological studies have underscored the social, emotional and cultural benefits that societies derive from believing in the existence and impact on society of both the good and the evil spirit beings. Recent assessments by Asian and African theologians, especially, have pointed to the errors of early Western missionaries who dismissed the traditional notions on the mission fields regarding ancestors and witches. Instead of seeking redemptive use for notions that could enhance existing cultural identities, Christianity sought new paradigms for converts from traditional cultures.

Christian theology must rise to the challenge of investigating how traditional notions in non-Christian cultures may advance the cause of the gospel. In this regard, Kwame Bediako's insight is helpful regarding the benefits of reflecting on the real life

experiences of converts from non-Western cultures to Christianity: “The study of non-Western Christianity needs to show a ... deepening awareness of the impact of culture on Christian thought and to pay greater attention to the contribution that the new languages of Christian experience make to the development of Christian thought.”<sup>130</sup> Christian anthropology need not ignore the view of non-Western cultures regarding the activities of both the good and the evil superhuman spirit beings in society; it must ensure, however, that ideas embedded in culture do not conflict with sound biblical doctrines.

---

<sup>130</sup> Kwame Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa: History and Experience* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 82.

CHAPTER 3  
YORÙBÁ TRADITIONAL NOTIONS REGARDING HUMAN RELATIONSHIP  
WITH SUPERHUMAN SPIRIT BEINGS

Christian mission, it has been shown in prior chapters, has maintained a cautious relationship with the traditional religion of the Yorùbá for fear that non-Christian notions would corrupt the message of the gospel. With respect to Yorùbá ideas regarding human existence amidst superhuman spirit beings, it is ironic, therefore, that the Yorùbá churches that are thriving in modern times are those that utilize traditional religious ideas in communicating the gospel to their members. It is therefore imperative to understand the general Yorùbá perception of the world in which human beings live and the relationship which human beings have with the other spirit beings in the world.

In setting the foundation for interpreting Yorùbá Christian anthropological notions, Chapter 3 provides an overview of traditional Yorùbá cosmology, the role of religion in the Yorùbá culture, and the place of human beings in a world they share with other human and non-human spirit beings. Because more competent Christian historians and theologians such as Samuel Johnson, Jacob Olupona, and J.D.Y Peel, have thoroughly described the historical and religious ethos in the Yorùbá tradition over the years,<sup>1</sup> the discussions in this chapter will be limited to details that pertain to the Yorùbá perception of superhuman spirit beings and their influence on human well-being.

---

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), ed. Obadiah Johnson; Jacob

### 3.1 Yorùbá Society and Cosmology

#### 3.1.1 Yorùbá People and Religious Spirituality

At 35 million, the Yorùbá account for twenty-one percent of the 170 million people who call modern Nigeria home.<sup>2</sup> Although most Yorùbá are located in the southwestern part of Nigeria, they are also found in the southern part of the Benin Republic, where they form about twelve percent (or just over 1 million) of the population, and in Togo (see Appendix D for a map of major Yorùbá cities in Nigeria, Benin and Togo).<sup>3</sup> The Yorùbá-speaking people comprise about twenty-five distinct ethnic subgroups and share cultural, religious, and historical affinities with the Ewe, Ga, Akan and Kru peoples who dwell in the southern part of West Africa.<sup>4</sup>

Outside Africa, the Yorùbá comprise a very prominent people group in Jamaica, in Cuba (where they are known as *Lucumí*), in Brazil (where they are known as *Nagô*), in Trinidad and in the United States.<sup>5</sup> The Yorùbá arrived in the Caribbean islands and in

---

Olupona, *City of 201 Gods: Ile-Ife in Time, Space and the Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Jacob Olupona, "The Study of Yoruba Religious Tradition in Historical Perspective," *Numen* 40 (1993): 240–273; J. D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> *CIA World Factbook 2014* (New York, NY: Skyhorse Publishing Inc., 2013), s.v. "Nigeria," 536.

<sup>3</sup> See also, *CIA World Factbook*, s.v. "Benin," 78. J. S. Eades, *Changing Cultures: The Yoruba Today* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 13–14.

<sup>4</sup> See Nathaniel S. Murrell, *Afro-Caribbean Religions: An Introduction to their Historical, Cultural, and Sacred Traditions*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 14.

<sup>5</sup> For accounts of the impact of Yorùbá religions on America, South America and the Caribbean Islands, esp. through the influence of the Yorùbá religion, Santería, see e.g., Wande Abimbola, "Yoruba Religion in Brazil: Problems and Prospects," in *Actes du XLVI et Congres Societe des Americanistes*, vol. 6, (Paris: Societe des Americanistes Musee de l'Homme, 1979), 619–39; Roger Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil: Towards a Sociology of Interpretations of Civilizations*, trans. Helen Sebba (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); William Bascom, "The Focus of Cuban Santería," *Southeastern Journal of Anthropology* 6 (1950): 64–68; William Bascom, *Sixteen Cowries: Yoruba Divination from Africa to the New World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980); Joseph Murphy, *Santería: An African Religion in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988); G. Hunt, *Oyotunji Village: The Yoruba Movement in America* (Washington: University Press of America, 1979).

South America in the sixteenth century in connection with Spanish and French slave trade ventures and they promptly infused their traditional religious beliefs into Catholicism.<sup>6</sup> In Michael Mason's estimation, of the nearly one million slaves brought to Cuba between 1511 and 1886, "a great plurality were from Yorùbá-speaking areas of what are now Nigeria and Benin."<sup>7</sup>

To allay the hardship created by slavery, the Yorùbá in South America infused their traditional religious beliefs into their new Christian faith. The spirituality that would later evolve into Christian religion known as *Santería* in North and South Americas is a fusion of traditional Yorùbá religion and Spanish Catholicism.<sup>8</sup> While the Yorùbá in their homeland in Continental Africa struggled to infuse their traditional religious beliefs into the Christianity introduced by Western missionaries, the Yorùbá in South America found ways to introduce some traditional elements into their Catholicism. *Santería* developed as a form of Yorùbá Christian spirituality that is sustained into modern time.

In cultural solidarity with their kin in Southwest Nigeria, the Yorùbá in diaspora consider Ilé-Ifè their traditional home and the ruler, or *Ọ̀ṣoni*, as the head of the Yorùbá people.<sup>9</sup> Whereas certain traditional practices are still common among the people around

---

<sup>6</sup> Ennis B. Edmonds and Michelle A. Gonzalez remark: "These slaves were primarily from Congo, Dahomey, and Nigeria. These groups' religious traditions (Fon, Yoruba, and Congo) intermingled and became the foundation of a new, African-derived religion, namely *Voudu*, which also draws on Catholicism and indigenous religion" (*Caribbean Religious History: An Introduction* [New York: New York University Press, 2010], 58).

<sup>7</sup> Michael A. Mason, *Living Santeria: Rituals and Experiences in an Afro-Cuban Religion* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 8.

<sup>8</sup> According to Edmonds and Gonzalez, "Santeria's cosmology, adopted from the Yoruba religion, is an integrated system of beliefs concerning the constituent elements of the world and their interlocking and dynamic relationship" (*Religious History*, 94); see also, Miguel de La Torre, *Santeria: The Beliefs and Rituals of a Growing Religion in America* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, MI, 2004), 164.

<sup>9</sup> See E. Bolaji Idowu, *Olódùmarè: God in Yoruba Belief* (London: Longman, 1962), 15.



the world who call themselves the “Yorùbá,” this dissertation is more specifically concerned with the religious beliefs and practices of both the traditional and the Christian Yorùbá people who reside in the southwestern part of modern Nigeria.

### 3.1.2 Yorùbá Traditional Cosmology

Certain attributes characterize the traditional Yorùbá cosmology. First, like many ethnic communities in Africa, the Yorùbá have a vivid impression of a universe filled with intelligent human and non-human spirit beings who exert considerable influence on one another and on every other living and non-living thing in creation.<sup>10</sup> The Yorùbá universe is a continuum where the activities in the spirit realm frequently manifest in the physical world. This is so because the spirit beings in the cosmos have unfettered access to every aspect of the physical world; spirit beings are as much legitimate members of the universe as are human beings.

Second, and closely related to the first attribute, is the Yorùbá impression that the non-human spirit beings exert both positive and negative influences on human beings. While some spirits are benevolent (e.g., ancestors and clan deities), others are malevolent (e.g., demons and some nature spirits). The onus is on human beings to curry the favor of the good spirits and assuage the wrath of the evil forces for there to be peace in the society. Stated differently, harmony in the human world rests on the cooperation which human beings must maintain with one another and with the spirit beings with which they share the world. The cosmos, then, is a community of intelligent human and superhuman beings where the common good of society is more important than individual ambitions.

---

<sup>10</sup> See “Appendix B: Circles of Influence” for a schematic diagram of the influences which the members of the traditional Yorùbá community have on one another depending on their proximity to the Supreme Being.

Moreover, the rites and myths of the people are the means through which human beings achieve cosmic and communal harmony.

Third, to the Yorùbá, every aspect of life has a spiritual interpretation and every event connotes a religious meaning. In this regard, the Yorùbá typify the African community referred to in John Mbiti's well-quoted remark: "Africans are notoriously religious, and each people has its own religious system with a set of beliefs and practices. Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it."<sup>11</sup> The Yorùbá interpret every event in religious terms. In the traditional life, there is no firm demarcation between the spiritual and the secular. This is why, for example, the ancestors are invited to participate in every important event in the community.

In the Yorùbá world, religion binds society together; every event in society must have a spiritual connotation. Therefore, it is not unusual for a Yorùbá man or woman to immediately proffer a religious explanation for an outcome that can easily be verified through rational or scientific means. Particularly, when things go wrong or life's expectations are frustrated, the usual impression is that some diabolical forces are at work to cause mystery in the community. Both the human and the nonhuman inhabitants of society are suspects; some human beings could also be perceived to work in collusion with superhuman entities to cause affliction in society. For example, it would not be unusual for a man who just lost his job to trace his woes to the malice of a living or a dead member of his family. Spiritual reasons may also be adduced to explain an

---

<sup>11</sup> John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York, NY: Anchor Books Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970), 1.

unexpected failure in an economic venture, or a decline in health. Any unforeseeable or undesirable event in a human life can be interpreted as a spiritual attack instigated by a cohort of malicious human and non-human spirit beings. It is through the lens of spirituality that the Yorùbá see the world and interpret the events of life. In the traditional Yorùbá world, the fears and anxieties of life are inevitably related to the interdependent relationship between human beings and the superhuman beings with which they share the world.

### 3.1.3 Role of Religion in the Yorùbá Culture

Religion helps the Yorùbá interpret the mysteries in their world especially when life events do not turn out as expected. Traditional religious worshipers rely on the priests, or *Babaláwo* (*Ifá* priests) to make predictions about the future and to inquire into the possible reasons for the unforeseeable events in society. Furthermore, religion provides the avenue through which the living members of the human society communicate with God and possibly with the other members of the community, such as the ancestors, who are now believed to be alive in the spirit world. The traditional religious worshiper learns from the priest, or *Babaláwo*, whatever information the ancestors would want to communicate to their living kin. Religious piety serves a variety of functions in the Yorùbá society.

First, religion helps the traditional Yorùbá to navigate the difficult courses of life. Hardly would the traditional religious worshiper embark on a major project without first seeking to know the possible outcome of such a venture from a traditional priest, or *Babaláwo*. The attitude of the deities to the project must be ascertained from the onset, and where necessary, the consent of the ancestors must be obtained if the project would

be beneficial to the individual or the community. For, in the traditional Yorùbá world, it is when human beings are at peace with the Supreme Being, *Olódùmarè*, with fellow human beings and with the spirit beings in the community that harmony is maintained in society and human beings thrive on whichever life project they embark.

Second, religion is the means through which human desires are expressed to the Supreme Being. In the Yorùbá world, the most valuable things in life revolve around human fecundity, good health, and wealth. Whenever any of these is lacking, people turn to *Olódùmarè* for comfort and resolution. Worship provides the Yorùbá with the means of reaching out to God for the good things of life. Prayer, then, is the means by which human beings make their desires known to *Olódùmarè*.

Third, religion helps human beings defeat the spiritual foes of life and to overcome imminent danger. The traditional religious rites and the offerings are the means by which human beings summon the greater powers in the spiritual realm needed to confront the evil superhuman beings that oppose their progress in life. It is noteworthy, however, that the Yorùbá maintain ambivalent attitudes towards the superhuman spirit beings through which they communicate their needs to the Supreme Being. On the one hand, they curry the favors of the benevolent spirits, such as ancestors and the clan gods, to ensure the assistance of these deities in times of need. On the other hand, traditional worshipers form very cautious relationships with the superhuman spirits with the hope that these spirits, especially the evil ones, will be lenient to them in their vindictive moments. It is within this interplay of conviviality and antagonism that traditional religious worship is developed.

Finally, religion provides the Yorùbá with the means of interpreting the troubling experiences of life. Herbert Klem puts it well in his observation: “If a Yoruba man gets a cold he is very likely to have a theological experience before he goes to the aspirin bottle. He will be concerned about the moral or spiritual causes for this weakening of his health.”<sup>12</sup> When the events of life defy logical explanations, especially, religion widens the scope of investigation into the realm of the spirit. A serious health concern, for example, or a sudden death in the family, may create an occasion to visit the traditional priest for treatment or for direction on how to receive healing. Even when there are alternative means of resolving life’s challenges (such as a visit to the hospital or to the professional counselor), many traditional Yorùbá still seek spiritual help from the priest or from the superhuman spirit beings in the society.

### 3.2 Role of Superhuman Spirits in Yorùbá Society

The Yorùbá are not much different from the West African cultures where superhuman spirit beings are considered bona fide members of the clan who have earned the right to participate in events in the community. The Yorùbá could be substituted for the Akan of Ghana, about whom Kwame Gyekye remarks: “The Akan universe is a spiritual universe, one in which supernatural beings play significant roles in the thought and action of people. What is primarily real is spiritual.”<sup>13</sup> Like the Akan, the Yorùbá world is a spiritual reality where the unseen things are as real as those things that are visible. Moreover, the invisible spirits are perceived to have more powerful capabilities

---

<sup>12</sup> Herbert Klem, “Yoruba Theology and Christian Evangelism,” *Missiology* 3, no. 1 (1975): 54.

<sup>13</sup> Kwame Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme, Revised Edition* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1987), 69.

than the visible beings. The ancestors particularly are believed to exert significant influence over affairs of their living kin.

The Yorùbá interpret many unexpected or baffling events of life in terms that include the supernatural activities of the entities in the spirit realm.<sup>14</sup> It is assumed that the spirit beings hold court in heaven and frequently decide what happens in the realm of the living. That the superhuman spirit beings in the universe exert influence over human beings does not mean they themselves are not under some greater spiritual authority. In the Yorùbá world, all living and non-living things in creation are under the absolute control of *Olódùmarè*, the Supreme Being.

### 3.2.1 The Supreme Being, *Olódùmarè*

Bolaji Idowu, in his book, *Olódùmarè: God in Yorùbá Belief*, provides a well-researched treatise on the traditional monotheistic Yorùbá beliefs concerning *Olódùmarè*, the Supreme Being and the emissaries or *Orisa*, that serve God. The name, *Olódùmarè* connotes in the Yorùbá mind a deity with the ultimate imaginable powers and abilities. According to Idowu, “The name *Olódùmarè* has always carried with it the idea of One with Whom man may enter into covenant or communion in any place and at any time, one who is supreme, superlatively great, incomparable and unsurpassable in majesty, excellent in attributes, stable, unchanging, constant, reliable.”<sup>15</sup> *Olódùmarè*, because of his unequalled knowledge and power, holds the universe and everything in it under his

---

<sup>14</sup> In this regard, the Yorùbá are like the Akan of Ghana who, according to Gyeke, believe that “the activities of the inhabitants of the spiritual world extend to, and are ‘felt’ in, the physical world,” (*African Philosophical Thought*, 69).

<sup>15</sup> Idowu, *Olódùmarè*, 36.

absolute control.<sup>16</sup> Every human and non-human creature in both the physical and the spiritual realms is accountable to *Olódùmarè*. The Supreme Being is ultimately responsible for everything in creation.<sup>17</sup> *Olódùmarè* is also called *Ọlórún* (the owner of the heavens) because he is the Maker and Sustainer, not only of the physical world but also of the spirit realm.

The attributes of *Olódùmarè* are strikingly similar to those of the biblical God. According to Idowu: “In His capacity as Creator, He is known as Eleda – ‘the Creator’, ‘the Maker.’ He is the Origin and Giver of Life, and in that capacity He is called Elemi – ‘the Owner of Spirit,’ or ‘the Owner of Life.’”<sup>18</sup> *Olódùmarè*’s attributes in the traditional religion cause Bewaji to remark: “Some of these attributes have been similar to those projected in the Christian religious understandings of the Supreme Being – omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, benevolence, divinity, creator, etc.” Like Bewaji, Herbert Klem commends Christianity for accommodating the term “*Olódùmarè*” in its theology: “The use of the term ‘*Olódùmarè*’ in Yorubaland may not call to mind all the correct concepts of the God of Scripture, but it is not a bad starting point. There is immense value in using this existing concept in evangelism and worship because it builds from a

---

<sup>16</sup> J. Akinyele Omoyajowo, e.g., remarks: “The Deity is in control of every circumstance of life—joys, troubles, changes, et cetera. At every stage of life (birth, puberty, betrothal, marriage, careering, building a home, going on a journey, and in fact in all things which make up human existence here on earth) man is in the hands of the Deity.” (“Human Destiny, Personal Rites and Sacrifices in African Traditional Religion,” *Journal of Religious Thought* 30, no. 1 [1973]: 5).

<sup>17</sup> See Molefi K. Asante, and Ama Mazama, eds, *Encyclopedia of African Religion, Volume 1* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2009), s.v. “Divinities,” 211, where the authors write: “Yorùbá oral tradition puts the census of divinities at varying numbers from 201, 401, 600, to 1,700. This pluralism of divinities probably results from the fact of a plural society, but in this diversity of many divinities, there is unity under one Supreme Being.”

<sup>18</sup> Idowu, *Olódùmarè*, 39.

basic recognition of God's existence as creator, his sovereignty over man and the rest of creation."<sup>19</sup>

### 3.2.2 The Divine Economy

The Supreme Being, *Olódùmarè*, may have attributes in the traditional religion that are identical to those in Christianity, yet there are sharp differences in how these two religions perceive God's relationship with human beings. There is also a remarkable departure in how the Bible describes God's overall plan for creation and the traditional religious beliefs regarding God's dealings with the world he has made. In Christian theology, for example, discussions regarding God's relationship with human beings and his control over creation often revolve around such themes as the Trinity, Atonement, Sanctification, and Glorification. These biblical concepts have no parallels in traditional religion.

In the traditional religion, *Olódùmarè* runs his world through the lesser deities (or *Òrìṣà*) who reside in the heavens (*Òrun*) with him.<sup>20</sup> Far beyond the immediate reach of human beings, the Great Deity conveys his will to human beings through the lesser deities. The *Òrìṣà* also supervise human conduct and administer rewards and punishment to human beings. The proper channel for communicating with God is through the emissaries or *Òrìṣà*, even though human beings are not prohibited from directly communicating with *Olódùmarè*. The process of communicating with the *Ọba*, or king, which requires going through a chief or a highly-placed clan elder, underscores the high regard which the Yorùbá have for the deities or *Òrìṣà* as *Olódùmarè's* emissaries. The

---

<sup>19</sup> Klem, "Yoruba Theology," 48.

<sup>20</sup> See 'Wande Abimbola, "The Yoruba Concept of Human Personality," in *Notion de Personne en Afrique Noire*, 73–89 (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1973): 74.



protocol is for human beings to go through intermediaries, often the priests or *Babaláwo*, who in turn take their petitions to the deities or *Òrìṣà*. Often, the requests end with the *Òrìṣà* but on rare occasions, an *Òrìṣà* may take human petitions directly to *Olódùmarè*.<sup>21</sup>

The *Òrìṣà*, demi-gods or divinities, because of their unique proximity to God, have resources that human beings can draw upon in their times of crisis. This is why human beings make the *Òrìṣà* the necessary connection to *Olódùmarè*. According to Abimbola, “The *Orisa* are generally believed to be helpers of human beings against the forces of evil known collectively as *ajogun* (literally meaning ‘warriors against man’). They play the role of intermediaries between human beings and *Olódùmarè*.”<sup>22</sup> A vital aspect of an *Òrìṣà*’s job is to protect human beings from malevolent spirits: “The *Orisa*, however, will protect only those who lead moral and just lives. They punish evil practices on the side of human beings.”<sup>23</sup> In the traditional Yorùbá cosmology, the entities in the spirit world are conscious of everything that happens in the physical world, and very frequently also participate in the events in the human world.

The *Òrìṣà*, particularly, are loved and venerated because of their closeness to the Supreme Being, *Olódùmarè*. Not only do they intercede before *Olódùmarè* on behalf of human beings, it is also through them that *Olódùmarè* apportions rewards and punishments to the living and the dead. The traditional Yorùbá make sacrifices to the *Òrìṣà* both as petitions to *Olódùmarè* and to curry the favors of the good deities. Yorùbá traditional spirituality is devoted to seeking the goodwill of these heavenly emissaries whose assistance will be needed in the times of trouble or difficulty. Whereas everything

---

<sup>21</sup> See Idowu, *Olódùmarè*, 141.

<sup>22</sup> Abimbola, “Yoruba Concept of Human Personality,” 75.

<sup>23</sup> Abimbola, “Yoruba Concept of Human Personality,” 74.

exists to serve *Olódùmarè*, the deities or *Òrìṣà* exist to maintain harmony in the human society. The Yorùbá, like many other traditional African societies, do not separate individual well-being from societal harmony.

### 3.2.3 Ancestors as Intermediaries

The Yorùbá family epitomizes the African community which John Taylor, in his well-quoted study of the impact of Christianity on the traditional religions of Africa, describes as “a single, continuing unit, conscious of no radical distinction of being between the living and the dead.”<sup>24</sup> Taylor’s remark is an obvious exaggeration but his essential point is remarkably true: the Yorùbá do assume that the dead, at least some of them, continue to exert substantial influence in the society just as their living kin do. The superhuman members of the clan, who now reside in the spirit realm, have direct access to the physical world because there is no firm demarcation between the two spheres of existence. Some dead human beings, especially those who have distinguished themselves while they were alive, and are received into the spirit world as ancestors, still continue to maintain keen interests in the affairs of their living kin. These superhuman spirit beings are believed to be closer to *Olódùmarè* and the deities now that they are in the realm of the dead than when they were alive.

The belief that the dead are alive and active in the community creates the obligation within traditional Yorùbá families to venerate the ancestors. According to Awolalu: “the Yorùbá remember and invoke only good ancestors; that is, ancestors who lived a good life on earth and had a peaceful death. Bad ones are never called upon.”<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> John Taylor, *The Primal Vision*, (London: SCM Press, 1963), 147.

<sup>25</sup> J. Omisade Awolalu, “The Yoruba Philosophy of Life,” *Presence Africaine. Nouvelle Serie*, no. 73 (1er Trimestre 1970): 25.

Ancestral veneration, it has already been pointed out, is a means by which the Yorùbá keep the memories of their departed loved ones alive in the community. Bolaji Idowu adequately describes the role of the Yorùbá ancestors:

[Ancestors] are closely related to this world; but are no longer ordinary mortals. Because they have crossed the borderland between this world and the supersensible world, entering and living in the latter, they have become freed from the restrictions imposed by the physical world. They can now come to abide with their folk on earth invisibly, to aid or hinder them, to promote prosperity or cause adversity. To some extent, they are intermediaries between Deity or the divinities and their own children: this is a continuation of their earthly function whereby they combined the headships of the families or communities with the office of family or community priests or priestesses.<sup>26</sup>

Yorùbá ancestors ensure harmony in the community by overseeing the social, economic, and spiritual well-being of their living kin and ensuring the victory of the clan over physical and spiritual enemies. It is through their heroic commitments to the welfare of the society that the ancestors are recognized and promoted to the level of the deities, or *Òrìṣà*, in the spirit realm.<sup>27</sup> Some *Òrìṣà* who previously were ancestors may acquire greater responsibilities as they show commitment to the well-being of their kin. For example, *Sango*, a former respected member of the Yorùbá clan, now resides in the spirit world as the guardian of thunder and lightning. Likewise, *Òrìṣà-Oko*, the deity overseeing farming, and *Ayéḷala*, the deity who administers punishment for human wrongdoing, were once members of the Yorùbá society.<sup>28</sup> Because of their beneficial

---

<sup>26</sup> Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1973), 184.

<sup>27</sup> Because of the dignity that the ancestors have among the Yorùbá, some scholars, such as 'Wande Abimbola, have suggested that the Yorùbá ancestors should be regarded as *Òrìṣà* in their own right (See Abimbola, "Yoruba Concept of Human Personality," 74).

<sup>28</sup> See Thomas Lawson, *Religions of Africa: Traditions in Transformation* (San Diego: Harper & Row, 1984), 69.

contributions to society, the ancestors and the *Òrìṣà* are venerated and given special honors in the traditional Yorùbá society.

Caleb Oladipo, in distinguishing the ancestors from the deities, classifies the Yorùbá divinities into “family ancestors” and “deified ancestors.”<sup>29</sup> The important qualifications of becoming a family ancestor in Yorùbáland, according to Oladipo, is to have lived a good life and to have attained the stage of old age, indications that one has fulfilled life’s destiny as preordained by the Supreme Being.<sup>30</sup> The “deified ancestors,” or *Òrìṣà*, who “are tied not to particular families but to the history of the cities or to important factors in the development of Yorùbá culture,”<sup>31</sup> have wider recognition and greater honor than the “family ancestors.” Unlike the family ancestors whose shrines are located within the family compounds, the shrines of the deified ancestors are often located throughout the major Yorùbá cities.<sup>32</sup> The patriarchal nature of the Yorùbá family setup, which ordinarily makes the oldest male the head of the family, makes it unlikely but not impossible for a woman to attain the ancestral status when she dies.

The Yorùbá locate the ancestors close to *Olódùmarè* on the Ladder of Being (see “Appendix C: Ladder of Being”). The main duties of the ancestors are to protect human

---

<sup>29</sup> Caleb Oladipo, *The Development of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Yoruba (African) Indigenous Christian movement* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 75; cf. Lawson, *Religions of Africa*, 69.

<sup>30</sup> Olusegun Oladosu remarks that in the Yorùbá culture, “the male elders who must have lived a good life, had offspring while on earth and as well as contributed to the progress of his people would definitely become an ancestor” (“Ancestral Veneration in the Religious Expression of the Indigenous Aladura Churches,” *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 17, no. 2 [January 1, 2012]: 161); like Oladosu, Afeosemime Adogame maintains that Only those who have lived a good life, lived up to a ripe age, died a good death, and are accorded with befitting burial can qualify for the status of an *Egungun* [ancestor]” (*Celestial Church of Christ: The Politics of Cultural Identity in a West African Prophetic Charismatic Movement* [Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1998], 121).

<sup>31</sup> Oladipo, *Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 76.

<sup>32</sup> See Lawson, *Religions of Africa*, 69.

beings from evil spirits (or *Ajogún*) and to help human beings achieve their life destinies. Both the ancestors and the deities intercede for human beings before *Olódùmarè*.<sup>33</sup> These superhuman spirit beings also protect the Yorùbá clan from external aggression from local and foreign tribal enemies. Adogame observes:

The real function of the ancestors is that of being the guardians and custodians of moral and religious values of Yorùbá society. They preserve the solidarity between the living and the dead. In other words, the cult of the ancestors maintains communion with the dead, and also reinforces social ties among the living. Harmony with ancestors, is the only source of communal well-being and prosperity.<sup>34</sup>

The distinction between the spirit realm and the physical world, then, is not just in the visibility or invisibility of the elements in those worlds but, more importantly, in the level of influence which the members in the spirit realm have over those in the physical world.<sup>35</sup> Life is assessed, always, in human terms and with respect to human well-being. While the benevolent spirit beings are believed to be responsible for the fortunes of life, the evil spirits are perceived to be responsible for the adversities of life. Furthermore, the closer a being is to God, the more power the being is able to apply to influence the lower creatures on the “Ladder of Being.”

#### 3.2.4 Quasi-human Spirit Beings

Invisible spirit beings are not the only entities that exert spiritual influences on human beings. Ajibade Olusola, in his study of the epistemology of Yorùbá beliefs, remarks that the Yorùbá regard some animals as sacred: “These include the vulture and

---

<sup>33</sup> See Abimbola, "Yoruba Concept of Human Personality" 75.

<sup>34</sup> Adogame, *Celestial Church*, 122.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Abimbola, "Yoruba Concept of Human Personality," 76.

ground hornbill. The parrot is also regarded as a sacred bird among the Yorùbá; they do not kill it but try to domesticate it.”<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, “the Yorùbá believe that animals like humans are able to feel pain, pleasure, joy, fear, and so on.”<sup>37</sup> Even though animals are generally regarded as inferior to human beings, some animals – such as black cats, owls, and vultures – are regarded with suspicion because some of these animals are believed to exhibit malicious intent towards human beings by cooperating with witches and the demonic spirits to cause affliction in the community.

Some human beings are also believed to have somehow acquired supernatural abilities that enable them to harm their victims or cause affliction in the society. The Yorùbá generally refer to such people, or quasi-human spirit beings, as *Àjé* (or witches). Perhaps, more than any other spiritual entity, the *Àjé* cause more serious harm or affliction in the Yorùbá society. The witch is the first suspect when life events do not turn out as expected. As Abimbọla rightly notes, in the Yorùbá mind witches are “the intractable enemies of man. Indeed, their main function on earth is believed to be the spoliation of man's handiwork.”<sup>38</sup> Most “strange” or “unexpected” situations in the community – such as a sudden death in the family, barrenness in women, impotence in

---

<sup>36</sup> Ajibade G. Olusola, “Animals in Traditional Worldview of the Yoruba,” *Electronic Journal of Folklore* 30 (2005): 157; available from <https://www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol30/olusala.pdf>; accessed November 13, 2015.

<sup>37</sup> Olusola, “Animals,” 157.

<sup>38</sup> Wande Abimbọla, “Yoruba Concept of Human Personality,” 75; elsewhere, Abimbọla remarks: “The *Aje* ... suck human blood, eat human flesh, and afflict human beings with diseases like impotence, stomach disorders, blood and liver diseases” (“Gods versus Anti-Gods: Conflict and Resolution in the Yoruba Cosmos,” in *Evil and the Response of World Religion*, ed. William Cenkner [St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 1997], 173).

men, failure in crops, or other similar occurrences – are interpreted as the manifestations of the activities of the evil spirit beings or witches.<sup>39</sup>

Some of the quasi-human spirit beings who move freely between the physical and the spirit realms are the *Oṣó* and *Àjé* (wizards and witches), the *Àbíkú* (“born-to-die” children), and the *Emèrè* (people possessed with evil spirits). These seemingly human beings are actually spiritual entities who enjoy the privileges of being members of both the physical and the spirit realms. While in the physical world, these spirits take on human flesh and move about freely to participate in regular human activities. Because they have superhuman abilities, these spirit beings infuse their negative energies into the people and the circumstances they encounter. Quasi-human spirits are generally feared by the Yorùbá and are considered grievous “enemies” of the human society. The goal of human life, therefore, is to identify the situations that are under the manipulative influence of the evil spirit beings, including the quasi-humans, and to overcome or at least resist such influences.

Three spirit beings are particularly feared in the society: *Àbíkú* (lit., the one who was born to die), *Emèrè* (the spirit-child), or *Yemoja* or *Mami Wata* (the water spirit). Individuals who are possessed by these spirits cause enormous pain and anxiety in society. An *Àbíkú* is a child who dies prematurely, usually before his or her second birthday. Awolalu remarks that, “The *Àbíkú* is believed to belong to a company of young demons roaming about, capable of entering into women’s wombs to be born, and also capable of dying and returning to their invisible company any time they choose to,

---

<sup>39</sup> Adogame, *Celestial Church*, 123.

according to the covenant made with their company.”<sup>40</sup> An *Àbíku* undergoes several consecutive life-cycles with one mother before moving on to another and often finds its way into the human community through the fetus of a pregnant woman by taking over the lifeform of the fetus.<sup>41</sup> The possessed woman then gives birth to a child who dies at birth or lives only for a few days or month. This process is repeated a few more times and can only be broken through vigorous spiritual interventions. An *Àbíku* takes delight in making its parents as miserable as possible. It is not uncommon for the mother who repeatedly gives birth to children who die to end up not having any living offspring to succeed her.<sup>42</sup>

In the traditional Yorùbá setting, *Àbíku* children are given special names that reflect the anguish they cause their parents. Some of such names are *Rótìmì* (“stay with me”), *Dúrósinmí* (“stay and bury me”), *Kokúmó* (“this one will not die again”), *Malomó* (“Don’t go again) and *Dúrójayé* (“stay to enjoy life”). Other *Àbíku* names are *Kosókó* (“there is no hoe,” i.e. to bury this one), *Igbókoyí* (“the bush has rejected this one”), *Kúyè* (“this one has dodged death”), *Kilanko* (“What are we celebrating?”) and *Jokotimi* (“sit with me”). Often, some of these names are pleas by the parents for the child to reconsider and stay. At other times, the names are derogatory, to give the spirits the false impression

---

<sup>40</sup> Awolalu, J. Omisade. “The Concept of Death and Hereafter in Yoruba Traditional Religion.” *West African Religion* 18 (1979): 60; cf. Timothy Mobolade’s statement: “It is believed that *Abiku* spirits are fairly common inside trees, especially large and deified trees like the iroko, baobab and silk-cotton; they also congregate in ant-hills and are believed to loiter about on dung hills as well,” (“The Concept of Abiku.” *African Arts*, 7, No. 1 [Autumn, 1973]: 62).

<sup>41</sup> See Mobolade, “Concept of Abiku, 62

<sup>42</sup> Mobolade opines: “If the Abiku child is a mother's first-born, it is not impossible-nor is it uncommon-that she eventually becomes childless in life should the Abiku prove implacable, as is common among this peculiar class of children” (“Concept of Abiku,” 62).



that the child does not mean much to them. In both cases, the parents' hope that the playmates in the spirit world will move on, thereby, allowing the *Àbíkú* to live.

Most Yorùbá in recent times, no longer believe in the *Àbíkú* phenomenon due to better education and progress in medical research. This is why Yorùbá Christians, in modern time, no longer give *Àbíkú* names to their children. Moreover, diseases, such as sickle cell anemia, and rhesus incompatibility in couples, previously unknown in the traditional Yorùbá setting are now recognized to present a high risk to mothers and their children. Poor hygiene and lack of adequate medical care have also been blamed for the repeat deaths of new born babies and young children.

Whereas most Yorùbá Christians no longer believe that *Àbíkú* spirits roam the streets looking for pregnant women to possess, many continue to assume that *Emèrè* spirits are alive and active in today's world.<sup>43</sup> An *Emèrè*, like an *Àbíkú*, is a non-human spirit that has taken on flesh to live among human beings for a period. An *Emèrè* dies prematurely, often at the peak of its parents' joy. Unlike the *Àbíkú* who seldom lives beyond the second birthday, an *Emèrè* may live long enough to get married and have children of her own. Eventually, the *Emèrè* dies at a relatively young age. An *Emèrè*, who most of the time is assumed to be female but may occasionally be male, works with other demonic beings in the spirit world to cause disruption within family settings. An *Emèrè*, for example, may already have a spouse in the spirit world (*Ọkọ Ọrun*) with which she maintains conjugal relationships. Any marriage she contracts on earth is not

---

<sup>43</sup> In Elisha Renee's view, "Actually *abiku* are no longer common except for *abiku* born to young women. This type of *abiku* is caused by aborting pregnancies," ("Fundamentals of Fertility: Cosmology and Conversion in a Southwestern Nigerian Town," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 8, no. 3 [September, 2002]: 556).

expected to produce viable offspring. Yorùbá churches enjoy high patronage because of the members' desire to protect their families from attacks from both the *Emèrè* and the *Àbíku* spirits.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to *Àbíku* and *Emèrè*, many Yorùbá believe that the ocean or any free flowing river can harbor malicious “water spirits,” or *Mami Wata* (Pidgin English way of saying, “Water Mummy”). In his study of the traditional life of the Bunu-Yoruba of Central Nigeria, for example, Elisha Renee describes a cult of women, “who have had trouble conceiving children, who had children who died young, or who themselves were born after several previous siblings died.” The Bunu-Yorùbá women, believed their problems were caused by the *Ejинуwon spirits* or *children of water*: “They are believed to have spirit doubles who live under water (or at other natural sites) who routinely trouble them. These spirits may cause them to cry uncontrollably, to quarrel with their neighbours, and to die unexpectedly.”<sup>45</sup>

### 3.2.5 Death as Transition

The Yorùbá world is inundated with superhuman spirit beings whose activities have serious consequences on the well-being of the living. The concept of death is another aspect of Yorùbá traditional worldview which allows us to see the impact of superhuman spirit beings on individuals and society. Perceptions regarding the whereabouts of the dead and their involvements in the affairs of their living kin are fully

---

<sup>44</sup> See, David Ogungbile, “Meeting Point of Culture and Health: The Case of the Aladura Churches in Nigeria,” *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 6, no 1 (1997): 100.

<sup>45</sup> Elisha Renne, “Water, Spirits, and Plain White Cloth: The Ambiguity of Things in Bunu Social Life,” *Man. New Series*. 26, no. 4 (Dec., 1991): 712.

developed in the traditional Yorùbá culture. Death is merely a transition from the physical world to the realm of the spirits.

Joseph Omoyajowo remarks that, in the Yorùbá world, death is not the end of human existence but a change in phase which allows for the dead to continue to relate with the living.<sup>46</sup> Death, not only makes it possible for human beings to leave the physical world for the spirit realm, it also provides the occasion for some members of the African clan to continue to serve the interest of their kin. In death, the role of prominent members of the community is enhanced.<sup>47</sup> If they were accorded some level of power in life when they were alive, they are believed to wield a much higher level of influence on society at death. Death provides the avenue for community elders to ascend the Ladder of Being to become ancestors. And if they execute their role well in the spirit world, ancestors, as has already been pointed out, may even be deified.

The traditional Yorùbá believes that those who have departed this world, “have been released from all the restraints imposed by this earth; thus they are possessors of limitless potentialities which they can exploit for the benefit or to the detriment of those who still live on earth.”<sup>48</sup> Because they are still considered to be members of the clan, the dead are believed to be capable of exerting some level of influence on members of their clan because of their changed status. Awolalu explains the main difference between

---

<sup>46</sup> See Joseph A. Omoyajowo, “The Concept of Man in Africa,” in *Religion, Morality, and Population Dynamics*, (Legon, Ghana: Population Dynamics Programme, University of Ghana, 1977), 71, where Omoyajowo remarks: “African man has never considered man as mere matter limited to earthly life, but recognizes in him the presence and power of another spiritual element in virtue of which human life is always related to the after-life.”

<sup>47</sup> According to Oladosu, “The ancestors, having considered as invisible, have acquired more power which they can use to influence the general well-being of their descendant,” (“Ancestral Veneration,” 161).

<sup>48</sup> Idowu, *Olódùmarè*, 192.

status of the living and that of the dead: “The main difference is that the departed attain greater power than they have hitherto had, and they have the ability to see their descendants at will, to bless them (or curse them if they do the wrong things) efficaciously; they are also not restricted in their movements; they can appear to anybody at will.”<sup>49</sup>

Human temperaments and abilities are also significantly enhanced when a person crosses over from the world of the living to the realm of the dead. Malicious people do not stop being spiteful when they die. Rather, the spirits of such people become even more vindictive toward the living members of their clan. Conversely, benevolent elders in the community become more benevolent towards their kin when they die. The general impression is that people are intrinsically good or evil; personal attitudes or character traits do not change at death; they only become more enhanced either for good or for evil.

In the Yorùbá mind, people do not cease to exist when they die. They also do not cease to be members of the community because they are dead. Rather, the dead are believed to be as alive now in the spirit world as they were when they had lived in the physical world. Moreover, because they have now discarded the physical bodies which had kept them secured to only one place at a time, the dead are able to roam from place to place in the spirit world exhibiting characteristics that are outside the ability of mere mortal beings. Idowu summarizes effectively the Yorùbá impression of the transformation which takes place at death:

The deceased are truly members of the families on earth; but they are no longer of the same fleshly order as those who are still actually living in the flesh on earth.

---

<sup>49</sup> J. Omosade Awolalu, “The Concept of Death and Hereafter in Yoruba Traditional Religion,” *West African Religion* 18 (1979): 64.

They are closely related to this world; but are no longer mortals. Because they have crossed the borderland between this world and the supersensible world, entering and living in the latter, they have become freed from the restrictions imposed by the physical world.”<sup>50</sup>

In life, as in death, all activities in the cosmos revolve around the human ability to influence society. Death is the medium through which human beings continue to exert their influence on society from the spirit world. At death, the physical body decays and is totally destroyed; the spiritual aspect of a person, however, being indestructible, continues to live on. The human spirit, now freed from the encumbrances imposed by the body, departs into the spiritual realm where it freely interacts with the other spirit beings that have preceded it. It is in this state of bodiless existence that the dead continue to participate in the affairs of their living kin. The traditional Yorùbá do not consider it strange that the dead, at least some of them, involve themselves in activities that take place in the mundane world. The afterlife, after all, is not a different spatial location; it is only a different state of existence in this same universal space.

The afterlife is not merely a different kind of life but also a much more glorious extension of present reality. According to Idowu, “If a person was genuinely prosperous and happy on earth, the life in heaven will be for him an enlarged copy of his former happy one. In fact, life in Orun is the larger and freer copy of this one, minus all the earthly sorrows and toils, with amenities for peaceful enjoyment considerably enhanced.”<sup>51</sup> Whatever we do in this world will be continued in a more fulfilling way in

---

<sup>50</sup> Idowu, *African Traditional Religion*, 184.

<sup>51</sup> Idowu, *Olódùmarè*, 200; cf. Awolalu’s remarks: “Even though life continues after death in the spirit world, there is no indication that life is more enjoyable than or regarded as preferable to the life here” (“Concept of Death,” 64).

the afterlife. The Yorùbá, in the precolonial era, were recorded to have buried dead kings and important chiefs with living slaves and wives – in the anticipation these loyal subjects would continue to provide services to the dead leaders in the next world.<sup>52</sup> Ojo remarks that, “The number, sex and age of slaves killed at the funerals of slaveholders depended on the wealth, influence and instructions of the deceased, their relations and social expectations.”<sup>53</sup> Appropriate care was taken by the rulers to prepare for their transition from the physical world to realm of the spirits. Idowu remarks that for the Yorùbá, “Whatever is done in the present life, therefore, must be done with due regard to this great future: *Nitori Ehin-Iwa l’a se nse oni l’ore* – ‘It is on account of After-Life that we treat Today hospitably.’”<sup>54</sup>

The Yorùbá do not believe that the dead are oblivious to the affairs of the living. In traditional Yorùbá settings, people still tell stories of how some dead family members have appeared to them in dreams or visions. Several people have reported how their dead loved ones returned to instruct them on how to conduct certain family businesses. The dead have also been reported to have appeared to family members to inform them about the causes of their death. The apparitions or *Òjìjì* (shadows) of dead family members have been seen in dreams or visions shortly after their death.<sup>55</sup> Some, who have been

---

<sup>52</sup> See, Omisade Awolalu, “Yoruba Sacrificial Practice, *Journal of Religion in Africa* 5, no. 2 (1972): 89; Olatunji Ojo, “Slavery and Human Sacrifice in Yorubaland: Ondo, c. 1870-94.” *The Journal of African History* 46, no. 3 (2009): esp. 387; for Robin Law, human sacrifice of various forms in pre-colonial West Africa provided excuses or justifications for Europe to further exploit Africa through slave trade (“Human Sacrifice in Pre-Colonial West Africa,” *African Affairs* 84, no. 334 [January, 1985]: 54).

<sup>53</sup> Ojo, “Slavery,” 386.

<sup>54</sup> Idowu, *Olódùmarè*, 189.

<sup>55</sup> Like the Yorùbá, the Akan of Ghana, according to Anthony Ephirim-Donkor, believe that the spirits of the dead, or *asaman*, “reveal themselves for many reasons, e.g., to show or tell them about hidden treasures, bid final farewell to or visit with other relatives who may not be aware of their deaths” (*African Spirituality: On Becoming Ancestors* [Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 1997], 61).

sighted in physical human forms, have been reported to have disappeared when people tried to touch them. The *Òjìjì* may linger in the community for a while or until the cause of death is determined. Some people believe that the *Òjìjì* appears to help family members cope with the grief of death in the community.

In modern times, some traditional Yorùbá still claim they see the apparitions of dead members of their community. Sometimes, these ghosts are sighted in towns different from where they had lived or were buried. The deceased are said to live in cities where they assume normal life in order to complete their destinies on earth.<sup>56</sup> Even though such sightings are becoming rarer, they persist. The dead, now alive, are believed to have simply begun life all over again in a town where they “may get married and have children, build houses, start a business and carry on a new, but normal, existence until he either dies again or moves because his whereabouts have been discovered by people who knew him in his former life.”<sup>57</sup> One such instance, recorded by Awolalu, concerned teenage students in a boarding school who reported seeing their dead parents in bodily forms a few days after the parents had died.<sup>58</sup> Perceptions regarding the dead depend on the kind of life they lived when they were alive. Whereas good people often return to help their loved ones overcome some life obstacles, evil people return to the community to cause harm to their kin. Wicked people, or those who have not yet fulfilled their days

---

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Ephirim-Donkor, *African Spirituality*, 61.

<sup>57</sup> Idowu, *Olódùmarè*, 196.

<sup>58</sup> See Awolalu, “Concept of Death,” 65.

on earth, are believed to continue to roam in the earth as spirits because they have either not yet been received into the spirit world or fulfilled their earthly purpose.<sup>59</sup>

Death also connotes a sense of final judgement for human beings. At death, each individual appears before the Supreme Being, *Olódùmarè*, in the heavenly court (*Òrun*) to give an account of how he or she has performed in the world.<sup>60</sup> After all the deeds are evaluated, *Olódùmarè* pronounces the appropriate judgement that fits the gravity of the crime that the individual may have committed while in the flesh.<sup>61</sup> Those who lived responsibly are allocated a place in *Òrun Rere* (the “Good Heaven”), while wicked people end up in *Òrun Buburu* (or “Bad Heaven”). *Òrun*, the dwelling place of the spirits, may either be a place of blissful existence or a place of eternal torment.

The Yorùbá believe that good people will be rewarded and evil people punished when they die. Because life’s ultimate goal is to fulfill God’s good intention for creation through the human community, good people end up promoting communal well-being in the spirit realm while those who were evil when they were alive continue their evil deeds in the spirit realm. Some of the evil spirits in the community are believed to be the spirits of those who exhibited malicious attitudes toward individuals or the society when they were alive. Death provides the occasion for *Olódùmarè*, the Supreme Being, to execute judgment over human actions. God does not interfere in whatever someone does in the

---

<sup>59</sup> See Idowu, *Olódùmarè*, 196.

<sup>60</sup> See Idowu, *Olódùmarè*, 197. Cf. Tokunboh Adeyemo, *Salvation in African Tradition* (Nairobi, Kenya: Evangel Publishing House, 1979), 68.

<sup>61</sup> Idowu, *Olódùmarè*, 192.



physical world; he waits until the day of reckoning, after death, to assign reward or punishment to human beings according to their deeds while they lived.<sup>62</sup>

### 3.3 Summary

Yorùbá Christianity evolved within a cultural context that had fully-developed notions of human relationships with God and with the superhuman spirit beings with which human beings share the world. Ingrained in the Yorùbá consciousness is the communal idea of being; individual human existence is intricately linked with activities of the human and non-human intelligent beings in the universe. In the Yorùbá monotheistic world, the Supreme Being, *Olodumare*, governs the world with absolute power over everything in creation. However, *Olodumare* allows the divinities, or *Orisa*, to have access to human destinies and fortunes. Furthermore, *Olodumare* allows the ancestors and some other superhuman spirit beings to maintain relationship with human beings.

Christian theology has one of three options to choose from with respect to the Yorùbá notion of human relationship with God and with the superhuman spirit beings: a) ignore these ideas, as early Western missionaries did, presume them as superstitious beliefs that have no place whatsoever in Christianity; b) accept these ideas as necessary foundations upon which Christian theology must be built; or c) cautiously examine these notions to distinguish ideas that could be used for redemptive purposes from those that must altogether be discarded.

---

<sup>62</sup> Adeyemo remarks that, “The judgment [the Yoruba] fear most is the one which awaits every person first at the end of life on earth, in involving the agony of dying, and then in the Afterlife when the final verdict of *Olodumare* (God) will be known ... When the person reaches the Afterlife, he faces the final judgment. He is asked to give an account of how he has spent his earthly life, particularly with reference to his character” (*Salvation in African Tradition*, 69–70).

## CHAPTER 4

### YORÙBÁ CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO TRADITIONAL NOTIONS REGARDING SUPERHUMAN SPIRIT BEINGS

It has been established in prior chapters that in the Yorùbá culture human beings live in community with one another and with superhuman spirit beings, some of whom are benevolent while others delight in doing evil. This traditional religious idea persists among Yorùbá Christians despite efforts by early missionaries to dissuade converts from the traditional religion from paying attention to ancestors and witches. It must be stated that Yorùbá Christians' reluctance to give up basic traditional notions regarding the existence and operations of superhuman entities in society cannot be properly understood outside the historical context within which indigenous Yorùbá churches emerged. For, it is through the determination of the ethnic church leaders to distinguish themselves from the mission churches that their own theology developed. As such, Chapter 4 begins with an overview of factors which led to the establishment of Yorùbá Indigenous Churches (YIC). Chapter 4 also relates the traditional notions in Yorùbá Christian spirituality to how leaders in the YIC interpret human relationships with the superhuman beings to the members.

#### 4.1 Aspirations of Yorùbá Christian Leaders

Kofi Johnson, in his historical account of the circumstances that led to the emergence of the *Aladura* Church Movement, remarks: "The movement came into existence in the 1920s as a response to a society gripped in crisis, afflicted by epidemics

(influenza, small pox and plague) famine, and world depression.”<sup>1</sup> In Johnson’s view, some Yorùbá Christian leaders decided to break rank with the mission churches in their quest to develop a Christian spirituality that would address the practical concerns and threats to their very existence. In more recent time, the quest for autonomy has been further strengthened in the early 1960s when many African countries gained independence from Great Britain and France. Freedom meant for many Africans the ability to self-govern, self-determine, and by implication the possibility of enjoying individual and communal fortunes.

Other accounts have linked the beginning of African Indigenous Churches (AIC) to the determination of African Christian leaders to infuse their cultural identity into the expression of their Christian faith. Ogbu Kalu, for example, maintains that the main African Indigenous Churches in the early 1960s emerged in reaction to various aspects of colonialism: “the monopoly of power in the church; the strangeness of the polity, ethics, and doctrine; the dullness of liturgy and modes of expressing the spirituality; and as a quest for a place of belonging in the midst of political oppression and marginalization.”<sup>2</sup> Many African Christian leaders were emboldened to start indigenous church movements shortly after independence in the early nineteen sixties to achieve three core objectives: first, the leaders were determined to assert their own spiritual and administrative authority on church affairs; second, the leaders wanted Christianity to address the salient

---

<sup>1</sup> Kofi Johnson, “Aladura: The Search for Authenticity, an Impetus for African Christianity,” *AJPS* 14, no. 1 (2011): 150.

<sup>2</sup> Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 69.

social, economic and spiritual fears in the African world; finally, the leaders wanted to make Christianity the more viable alternative to the traditional religion.

#### 4.1.1 Quest for Autonomy and Identity

Two purposes, in Kalu's view, have been achieved by recent studies in African religion and church history. First is "the religious tools in the recovery of lost voice, identity, and power" it has provided.<sup>3</sup> By this, Kalu implies that African historians are emboldened to salvage from humiliation their battered self-image and distorted cultural identity which their continent has endured through contacts with the Western world. In Kalu's opinion, indigenous churches evolved, in part, in response to the yearning of Christian leaders to liberate the African church from foreign ecclesiastical, colonial, social, cultural, and administrative controls.<sup>4</sup>

The evolution of African indigenous churches in the 1970s also coincided with the rebirth of cultural interest in colleges and universities. As universities in tropical Africa developed courses in humanities, they accentuated the cultural richness of traditional African society. Christians on their part began to see how culture can be a positive tool in promoting religion and spirituality. In the words of Larry D. Fehl, "The new cultural revival *is* subtly teaching that traditional religions can coexist with Christianity. The impression young people are getting is that it is patriotic to be involved in cultural dances which come directly from traditional religions."<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 4.

<sup>4</sup> See Akintunde E Akinade, "A Place to Feel at Home: Aladura Christianity in Yorubaland," in *The Agitated Mind of God: The Theology of Kosuke Koyama*, ed. Dale T Irvin, and Akintunde E. Akinade (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996): 190.

<sup>5</sup> Larry Fehl is quoted in Tokunboh Adeyemo, *Salvation in African Tradition* (Nairobi, Kenya: Evangel Publishing House, 1979), 85.

The euphoria of liberation which several African countries experienced shortly after the wave of independence in the late 1950s and early 1960s continues to reverberate in modern times. As Tite Tienou rightly observes,

The paradoxical situation in Africa is that the struggle for identity is now more acute than ever before. As long as Europe and the West continue to dominate the economy and educational systems of Africa, the quest for the right of difference will remain. That is why the question of identity is a central aspect of all types of reflection in Africa.<sup>6</sup>

In line with the optimism experienced in many parts of Africa, Nigerian leaders resolved to restore precolonial pride by encouraging traditional solidarity in the social, political and religious lives in Nigeria. At the national level, indigenous church leaders were emboldened to infuse the traditional religious ideas into their interpretation and expression of the gospel.

#### 4.1.2 Desire for Religious Relevance

The renaissance of the 1960s, which brought independence to many African countries, also emboldened African Christian leaders to insert their own interpretative judgment into Christian spirituality. Yorùbá Christians, on their part, infused their traditional ideas into their understanding of life – vis-à-vis human dealings with the spiritual forces responsible for the good and evil events in life. In the Yorùbá mind, a viable Christian theology must proffer solutions to the spiritual as well as the social and economic needs of human beings. In their desire to let Christianity address the perceived needs of African Christians, leaders in the YIC utilize the traditional notions that are very real in the lives of their members. To Yorùbá Christians, as well as the traditional

---

<sup>6</sup> Tite Tienou, "The Common Roots of African Theology and African Philosophy," in *Issues in African Christian Theology*, ed. Samuel Ngewa, Mark Shaw, and Tite Tienou, (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1998), 46.

religious worshipers, human beings coexist in a world filled with superhuman spirit beings who are as keen as human beings in participating in the activities in the physical world.

Shortly after independence, many African Christians left the mission-established churches to join the *Aladura* Churches when they saw in the indigenous churches better opportunities for them to freely express their ideas of God and humanity. Unlike in the mission-established churches where traditional religious ideas, such as witchcraft notions, and ancestral beliefs, were discouraged, leaders in the YIC accepted these fears as real to their members and took the time to address them. Whereas Yorùbá Christians saw the mission churches as powerless to the social and economic challenges in Africa, they received the *Aladura* Church Movement as the more competent Christian spirituality to confront the dire situations in the African culture.<sup>7</sup>

Deji Ayegboyin and Ademola Ishola, in their historic overview of the indigenous churches in Africa, assert that a primary reason several indigenous African churches began may be attributable to the desire of African Christian leaders to indigenize Christianity as it was presented to Africans.<sup>8</sup> African Christians found solace in the indigenous churches where their fears and aspirations were met. Where mission-established churches, for example, dismissed as superstitions stories related to witchcraft and influences of ancestral spirits, leaders in the YIC take such reports very seriously. Not only that, leaders in the YIC engage in fervent prayer and prescribe rituals to allay

---

<sup>7</sup> See J. D. Y. Peel, *Aladura: A Religious Movement among the Yoruba* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 205; cf. Afeosemimo Adogame, "Engaging the Rhetoric of Spiritual Warfare: The Public Face of Aladura in Diaspora," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 34, no. 4 (January 1, 2004): 495.

<sup>8</sup> Deji Ayegboyin and Ademola Ishola, *African Indigenous Churches: An Historical Perspective*, (Lagos: Greater Heights Publication, 1997), 24–26.

the fears of church members. In so doing, YIC leaders gain the trust of many Christians who realize that their ideas of the world and the gamut of spiritual entities in it were not unwarranted after all.

Independent churches developed in Nigeria in response to the failure of the mission churches to respond to the reality of the powers of evil in the African world. In Afolabi's view, the indigenous churches "fulfill that which is lacking in the European-American missionary pioneered churches by applying Christianity to every area of human life and need."<sup>9</sup> Determined to allow Christianity to meet the spiritual aspirations of their members, African Christian leaders sought ways to accommodate traditional notions in Christian spirituality. They also found it necessary to dissociate themselves from the mission churches which disallowed culture in the expression of Christian spirituality.<sup>10</sup> Cox sums up the traditional ethos behind AIC development:

African independent Christians seem proud they have not forsaken the spiritual customs their ancestors passed on to them before the whites came, even though the first missionaries urged them to abandon these 'remnants of superstition.' They believe that God was already present in Africa before the Europeans arrived and that many of the ways Africans worshipped then are better than the ways the missionaries taught them. The result is a thoroughly 'Africanized' version of Christianity.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Afolabi, "Yoruba Cultural Reflections in the Christ Apostolic Church," *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 17, no. 2 (January 1, 2012): 147; cf. Robert Michell's remark that, to many Africans, "Christianity was too Western on the whole, too rationalistic and other-worldly to gain the confidence of its adherents at their deepest levels of experience" ("Christian Healing," in *African Independent Church Movement*, ed. Victor E. W. Hayward [London: Edinburgh House Press, 1963], 50).

<sup>10</sup> Odejobi Omobola, e.g., remarks that some of the attractions for the Yorùbá were the traditional elements – such as local dressing, music, musical instruments dance, and poetry – which the mission churches rejected but were reintroduced into Christian worship by indigenous churches ("Influence of Yoruba Culture in Christian Religion," *International Journal of Social Sciences & Education* 4, no. 3 [2014]: 588–591).

<sup>11</sup> Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1995), 247.

#### 4.1.3 Spiritual and Communal Growth

In modern time, the indigenous African churches are experiencing rapid numerical growth. Yorùbá churches are among the largest and fastest growing African churches in the world. The Deeper Life Bible Church (DLBC), for example, which began in 1973 through the inspiration of Yorùbá mathematics lecturer, W. F. Kumuyi, claimed to have at its Lagos headquarters, “about 150,000 members in 2004, and has planted more than 6,000 branches across Nigeria.”<sup>12</sup> Another YIC, the Mountain of Fire and Miracles (MFM) which was started in 1994 by a Yorùbá molecular biologist, Daniel Olukoya today boasts to be “the largest single Christian congregation in Africa, with attendance of over 200,000 in single meetings.”<sup>13</sup>

Topping the long list of Yorùbá mega churches is the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG). On its official website, RCCG claims to have “about 2000 parishes of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria.”<sup>14</sup> If the sheer number is an indicator of the success of Christianity among the Yorùbá, then, one must not forget to mention the 50,400 seat Faith Tabernacle auditorium inspired by David Oyedepo, a former architect and founder of the Living Faith Church (also known as “Winners Chapel”). According to Oyedepo, “Living Faith Church Worldwide Inc. (LFCWW), started off in Kaduna, northern Nigeria in December 1983 and has to date, a network of churches in over 300

---

<sup>12</sup> Richard Burgess, *Nigeria's Christian Revolution: The Civil War Revival and Its Pentecostal Progeny [1967–2006]* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), 2; cf. C. Peter Wagner and Joseph Thompson, *Out of Africa* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2004), 10.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel Olukoya, *Praying by the Blood of Jesus* (Lagos: Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministry, 2010), 25.

<sup>14</sup> See Redeemed Christian Church of God, Our History, <https://trccg.org/rccg/who-we-are/history/>, accessed on November 26, 2015.



cities and towns in Nigeria spread across the 36 states and the Federal Capital territory.”<sup>15</sup> Yorùbá church leaders claim to make Christianity accessible to Africans in ways that resonate with African spiritual and cultural experiences.

The *Aladura* Movement, which began in Southwest Nigeria, has spread all over Africa and into Europe, Asia, and the Americas. Oshun claims that outside Nigeria, the largest concentration of *Aladura* Christians appears to be in Great Britain where membership runs into millions.<sup>16</sup> Although the Yorùbá still account for the largest portion of the *Aladura* movement, the group of churches which associate themselves with the *Aladura* Movement is becoming increasingly multi-ethnic and multi-racial.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps, more than the *Aladura* churches, Yorùbá Pentecostal pastors have asserted their presence beyond the shores of Africa. The Redeemed Christian Church of God, for example, boasts to have established over 700 branches in the U.S. and over 6,000 churches in more than fifty nations.<sup>18</sup> Two churches founded by Yorùbá leaders – Kingsway International Christian Center (KICC) with its over 8,000 members in Great Britain, and the Embassy of God with over 25,000 members in Kiev, Ukraine, and more than 600 daughter churches in 45 countries – are among the largest Pentecostal churches in modern Europe.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, most of the churches referred to in Burgess’s remark that,

---

<sup>15</sup> See Living Faith Church Worldwide Inc., “About Us,” <http://faithtabernacle.org.ng/aboutus/lfcww/>, accessed on August 24, 2016.

<sup>16</sup> C. O. Oshun, “Healing Practices among Aladura Pentecostals: An Intercultural Study,” *Missionalia* 28, nos. 2-3 (August/November, 2000): 242.

<sup>17</sup> Adogame, “Engaging the Rhetoric,” 494.

<sup>18</sup> See Burgess, *Nigeria’s Christian Revolution*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Booth, “Richer than St. Paul’s: Church that attracts 8,000 Congregation to a Disused Cinema,” *The Guardian News*, April 10, 2009, accessed November 18, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/apr/11/kingsway-international-christian-centre>, KICC and the

“the largest churches in Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana, Zimbabwe and Jamaica are led by Nigerians,”<sup>20</sup> are those established by Yorùbá Christian leaders. The influence of Yorùbá Christianity reverberates, not only across Nigeria, but across the globe.

The evolution of Yorùbá Christianity is not without controversy. On the one hand are those who see the development as a positive sign that the gospel is having greater appeal and becoming more relevant in the African context. “These churches” according to Akinade, “are not embarrassed for using African cultural values. If they did not utilize the African traditional heritage, on what basis would they stand as African churches originating in Africa, catering to African Christians, and concerned with African problems and anxieties?”<sup>21</sup> Moreover, interest in Christianity spiked as new converts understood they could use the traditional paradigms to express their Christian spirituality. Regarding the rapid numerical growth in the Cherubim and Seraphim church, Omoyajowo remarks: “Whatever the portion of the individual, the cause is to be found in religion. Thus, we can see that conversion to the Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S) religion from the traditional religion is made easier because members of both groups share a common vocabulary and a common outlook.”<sup>22</sup>

The popular saying that Christianity in Africa was a “mile wide and an inch deep” was for a long time true concerning the impact of Christianity among the Yorùbá. It took the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century for Yorùbá Christians to see Jesus Christ, not as the

---

Embassy of God were founded and are currently led by Yorùbá pastors, Matthew Ashimolowo and Sunday Adelaja respectively.

<sup>20</sup> Burgess, *Nigeria's Christian Revolution*, 2.

<sup>21</sup> Akinade, “Place to Feel at Home,” 190.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph A. Omoyajowo, *Cherubim and Seraphim: The History of an African Independent Church* (New York: NOK Publishers, 1982), 110.

deity the Europeans imposed on them through colonialism, but as a member of their local clan. The person and purpose of Christ suddenly became more meaningful to Yorùbá Christians as they understood that their real human identity is rooted in their relationship to Christ. Regardless, Christianity must assert its superiority over the traditional religions if it would be relevant to the indigenous peoples. For example, as Willem Berends rightly remarks: “A Christian healing ministry in Africa must try to meet the same needs as were being met in the traditional healing services. This means that the question about the ultimate cause of a sickness must be answered. It also requires that people’s personal misfortunes must be brought out into the open, where they can be dealt with on a communal level.”<sup>23</sup>

The Christian priest or pastor may not only preach that Christ heals the sick, he must more importantly demonstrate that Christ is more competent to heal the sick than the traditional priest, or *Babaláwo*. Ayegboyin underscores this expectation in his remark: “As in the African Traditional Religion where the *Babaláwo* (*Ifá* priest) and *Adahunse* (herbalist) practice divination to explain, predict and control complex diseases, in the Aladura Churches, it is the responsibility of the prophet to discover the cause(s) of the demonic oppression.”<sup>24</sup> In essence, the continuity which Christianity maintains with the Yorùbá tradition was intended by the Christian leaders to make Christianity the more viable religion than the traditional African religions to Africans.

---

<sup>23</sup> Willem Berends, “African Traditional Healing Practices and the Christian Community,” *Missiology: An International Review* 21, no. 3 (July 1993): 285.

<sup>24</sup> Deji Ayegboyin, “‘Heal the Sick and Cast Out Demons’: The Response of the Aladura,” *Studies in World Christianity* 10, no. 2 (2004): 236.

On the other hand, scholars like Agazue assert that the rapid growth of Nigerian Pentecostalism is due to the manner in which indigenous pastors exploit the poor economic situation in Africa, and more importantly, the superstitious beliefs that form the fabric of society: “Whilst the role of poverty is acknowledged, the role of a culture of superstition in any given society cannot be underestimated when it comes to seeking explanations. Even though the people are poor, one may be tempted to argue that if superstition is not rife in the society, then the people may not consider supernatural solutions to problems which would otherwise require practical efforts.”<sup>25</sup>

New economic and political realities are emerging in many parts of Africa. Political, administrative, educational and medical systems are constantly being restructured in ways that provide more opportunities for Africans to thrive on their own continent. The slow, but certainly positive progress in many African countries is encouraging Africans in general to assert themselves and seek ways to improve their circumstances. Many Africans are also aware of the enormous opportunities that formal education has made possible for them to attain.<sup>26</sup> Indigenous Christian organizations are seizing on these new opportunities to promote self-development programs in their churches. Within this framework, the power of Christ is not merely an ideological or moral concept, but more importantly, Christ is the Savior who rescues Africans from *all* their perceived social and economic woes.

---

<sup>25</sup> Chima Agazue, *The Role of a Culture of Superstition in the Proliferation of Religio-Commercial Pastors in Nigeria* (Bloomington, IN: AnthorHouse, 2013), 36; Agazue further remarks: “while poverty and hardship may in part be responsible for the rise of religio-commercial churches, the culture of superstition itself and the ubiquity of competing prayer houses with their repeated emphasis on evil spirits, cannot be underestimated,” 39.

<sup>26</sup> See Aylward Shorter, *African Culture and the Christian Church* (New York: Orbis Books, 1974), 22.

#### 4.2 Traditional Ideas in Yorùbá Christianity

Christianity began to make sense to Africans when they could relate the content of Scriptures to their social, economic and spiritual experiences. Bediako sums it up well: “In this setting of ubiquitous forces and mysterious powers, the Christian who has understood that Jesus Christ is a living reality, can be at home, assured in the faith that Jesus alone is Lord, Protector, Provider and Enabler.”<sup>27</sup> Perhaps Christianity finds easy expression in the African society because its teachings on God, humanity and the spirit world are not entirely alien to ideas found in the traditional religions of Africa (ATR) and Christianity:

The recognition of God as Creator and Sustainer of all things; the acknowledgement of spiritual realities which exist side by side with physical or material realities – such as divinities, spirits and mystical powers; the centrality of man in the world, viewed as the bridge between God and nature; moral and ethical values by which society regulates its life; the continuation of life beyond physical death; the observation of religious practices like prayers, sacrifices, ceremonies, rituals and festivals; and the religious persons like priests, medicine men, mediums, and traditional rulers.<sup>28</sup>

As Christianity took root among the Yoruba, traditional ideas inevitably became entrenched in the theology and faith of Christian converts. In their determination to present the gospel to Africans using familiar ideas and idioms, the leaders in the YIC imbibe pre-Christian thoughts in at least four major aspects of the doctrines of the church: first, and perhaps foundational to the rest, is in the anthropocentric worldview that locates

---

<sup>27</sup> Kwame Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa: History and Experience* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 9.

<sup>28</sup> John Mbiti, "A Change of the African Concept of Man through Christian Influence," in *For the Sake of the Gospel: Essays in Honour of Samuel Amirtham*, ed. Gnana Robinson (Madurai, India: T. T. S. Publications, 1980), 54.

human beings as the very purpose for which everything else exists. Like in traditional religions, Yoruba Christian leaders assert that God's intension is for human beings to flourish on earth. As such, anything that blocks life progress or impedes human happiness is an unnecessary nuisance that must be removed.

Second, like in traditional worship, members of the YIC are convinced that because the spirit realm is as real as the physical world, the beings in the former play very active roles in the events in the latter. As such, most of the activities in the human world are open to the influences of the spirit beings in the cosmos. Life is a preset course that every human being must run. Destiny, is that which may be attained if every force in the universe cooperates with humans. The goal of Christian spirituality, therefore, is to enable each individual to attain life's destiny. Any force, human or nonhuman, that stands in the way of that destiny must be confronted and defeated.

Third, not unlike in traditional religion, many Christians in the YIC believe that some individuals have spiritual abilities to cause affliction in the society. Women, particularly, are frequently viewed with suspicion whenever things do not turn out as expected in society. Moreover, Christian leaders do not hesitate to pronounce some women as witches whenever conflicts within polygynous families are presented to them. Christians in the YIC are unapologetic in integrating traditional notions into Christian spirituality, especially when things go wrong in society. In fact, they cherish the opportunities to use Scripture to affirm existing traditional notions. With respect to human relationships to the superhuman spirit beings in the universe, Yorùbá Christian leaders have found it expedient to appeal to traditional ideas when interpreting the

communal nature of existence, the human place in the universe and the spiritual threats which confront every individual in life.

#### 4.2.1 Human Relationship with Spirit Beings

Theo Sundermeier is right in his assertion that many traditional Africans perceive every object in the universe as capable of exerting some influence over the human well-being: “The relationship of the human being to the community goes further than community life. It involves interdependence: people, animals and environment exchange their strength and are in a relationship of osmosis.”<sup>29</sup> As such, the fortunes and misfortunes of individuals have serious consequences on the well-being of others and on the productivity of the land. For example, a discord among clan members may be judged as the reason for the famine in the land. There is the general notion that the energies or forces emanating from every living and non-living thing in the universe somehow have positive or negative effects on human well-being. Natural disasters and the events that are deemed to be beyond human control, especially, find satisfactory interpretation in the activities of the superhuman spirit beings.

The traditional Yorùbá world fits perfectly into the mold of the traditional African setting where the mysteries of life are conceived as manifestations of God or activities of superhuman spirit beings. Such a view finds parallel in the “God of the Gaps” theory where God is identified as the only possible explanation when no other causative agent can be discerned. In the traditional Yorùbá world, every event must be attributed to God or to superhuman spirits whenever logical or scientific explanations do not suffice.

---

<sup>29</sup> Theo Sundermeier, *The Individual and Community in African Traditional Religions* (Hamburg: Die Deutsche Bibliothek – CIP Einheitsaufnahme, 1998), 18.

Moreover, because non-human spirit beings are assumed to constantly participate in human affairs, these entities are easily suspected to be responsible for life outcomes that are not immediately obvious to the spiritually inept.

The interdependence of life makes it mandatory for every human being to contribute to the general well-being of the greater society. In the Yorùbá world, as Gbadegesin rightly observes, “A person whose existence and personality is dependent on the community is expected in turn to contribute his own quota to the continued existence of the community, which nurtures him and partakes in his destiny. This is the ultimate meaning of human existence.”<sup>30</sup> Whereas individual existence is valued, the expectation is that individual goals and desires will not conflict with the well-being of the community.

In the same vein, the spirit beings in the community also contribute to the welfare of the community. In the traditional society, sacrifices are made to the ancestors and the deities to ensure their cooperation so there may be peace in the community. Individual or communal setbacks are interpreted as the manifestations of the deities’ disapproval of some human attitude or action in the community. For example, when there is an epidemic or plague in the community, it is not unusual for the traditional priests to announce that an offense has been committed by an individual or a group of people against the deities. Members of the clan are obligated to perform some religious rites to assuage the deities. Such sacrifices, in some cases, may not guarantee the restoration of life because some

---

<sup>30</sup> Olusegun Gbadegesin, "Destiny, Personality and the Ultimate Reality of Human Existence: A Yoruba Perspective." *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 7, no. 3 (September 1, 1984): 184.



rampaging spirits or quasi-human beings are extremely wicked and cannot be pacified by sacrifices,

Witches are wicked individuals who collude with superhuman spirit beings to cause affliction in society. These individuals do not need any reason to express their destructive abilities in the community. Witchcraft is perceived to occur whenever a major unexplainable disaster occurs. This is why the Yorùbá say:

<i>Àjé ke l'ana,</i>	-	The witch shrieked out yesterday,
<i>Omọ kú l'oni;</i>	-	A child dies today;
<i>tani ko mọ pe Àjé àná</i>	-	Who does not know that it is yesterday's witch
<i>l'ó p'omọ jẹ</i>	-	that has devoured the child? <sup>31</sup>

Sometimes, the challenges of life are linked to retributive actions of the deities; on other occasions, the setbacks in the individual or communal life are traced to the wanton acts of evil performed by human or nonhuman spirit beings.

Almost any calamity in society can be linked to the activities of an evil spirit or a witch. Chris Oshun, for example, interprets Nigeria's economic and political woes as manifestations caused by the wicked evil spirits in the country. In Oshun's opinion, "Nigeria is in bondage to these evil powers, a bondage that is evidenced by a series of spiritual, personal, moral, domestic socio-economic, political, religious and judicial dysfunctionalities. To reverse this trend, therefore, this bondage must be broken."<sup>32</sup> For Oshun, there is no moving forward for Nigeria until these spiritual beings are confronted and defeated. Oshun's stance would resonate with the teachings in the Yorùbá churches that point to evil spirit beings whenever an individual or a community is in crisis.

---

<sup>31</sup> For a variant of this syllogism, see Marc Schiltz, "A Yoruba Tale of Marriage, Magic, Misogyny and Love," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 32, no. 3 (Aug., 2002): 337.

<sup>32</sup> C. O. Oshun, "Spirits and Healing in a Depressed Economy: The Case of Nigeria," *Mission Studies* 15-1, no.29 (1998): 32.

In the Yorùbá world, individual existence makes little sense outside the rapport which human beings have with another and with the superhuman spirit beings in their world. Here, Mbiti's much quoted statement "basic philosophy" of African communality is true, at least for the Yorùbá: "I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am.' Man is in relationship with God, the spiritual realm of nature and other human beings. Man is in community with God, nature and other people."<sup>33</sup> Individual existence must contribute to communal growth and well-being. Since the ancestors and the *Òrìṣà* are also members of the human community, their desires are met through social taboos and mores. The connectivity of life provides individual members of the society with the rationale for the responsibility they must have toward the other members of the clan. Because no individual exists alone, society develops as people build relationships through social interaction and interdependency. Communal bond is so vital to the Yorùbá way of life that some people join religious organizations, cultic groups or secret societies to foster familial relationships.

#### 4.2.2 Humanism in Religious Spirituality

Theologians have identified humanistic concerns in African Christian spirituality. Mbiti, for example points out that in many African societies, people worship God simply because of what they hope to receive from him: "Man's acts of worship and turning to God are pragmatic and utilitarian rather than spiritual or mystical,"<sup>34</sup> Mbiti's point is that

---

<sup>33</sup> Mbiti, "African Concept of Man," 56; cf. B. Nussbaum, "African Culture and Ubuntu: Reflections of a South African in America," *Perspectives* 17, 1 (2003); *Ubuntu*, according to Nussbaum, expresses "our interconnectedness, our common humanity and the responsibility to each other that deeply flows from our felt connection," 2.

<sup>34</sup> John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York, NY: Anchor Books Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970), 5.

religious spirituality in the traditional African society is intended, not for the sake of the Deity but essentially to benefit a human cause or resolve a human concern. Mbiti's view is echoed by Ferdinando, who remarks that, "African traditional religion is essentially utilitarian – people come before spiritual beings in order to secure some practical benefit."<sup>35</sup> Apparently, the entities in the spirit world are potential sources of power and help for human beings in their times of need.

Richard Gehman remarks that the gods or deities in the traditional African settings make the human well-being their primary preoccupation because, "African Traditional Religion centres on man. The whole emphasis is upon gaining the power needed to live a good life. Life revolves around man and his interests and needs."<sup>36</sup> Like Gehman, Dominique Zahan points out that, "It is not to 'please' God or out of love for God that the African 'prays,' implores, or makes sacrifices, but rather to become himself and to realize the order in which he finds himself implicated ... When man venerates the divinity, it is not for the glory of God but for his own personal development."<sup>37</sup>

Mbiti asserts that the rites and celebrations performed by African traditional religious worshipers are intended, not for the sake of the deities, but to help human beings achieve their quests for power, prosperity, and good health. Sacrifices and rituals are made to advance human interest. According to Mbiti: "African peoples do not 'thirst after God' for his own sake. They seek to obtain what he gives. They do not seem to

---

<sup>35</sup> Keith Ferdinando, *The Triumph of Christ in African Perspective: A Study of Demonology and Redemption in the African Context* (Cumbria, UK: Paternoster Press, 1999), 13.

<sup>36</sup> Richard J. Gehman, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspectives* (Kijabe, Kenya: Kesho Publications, 1989), 50.

<sup>37</sup> Dominique Zahan, *The Religion, Spirituality, and Thought of Traditional Africa*, trans. K. Ezra and L. Martin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 5–6.

search for him as the final reward or satisfaction of the human soul or spirit.”<sup>38</sup> Nyamiti reiterates Mbiti’s sentiment in his remark that, “African religious behavior is centered mainly on man’s life in this world, with the consequence that religion is chiefly *functional*, or a means to serve people to acquire earthly goods (life, health, fecundity, wealth, power and the like) and to maintain social cohesion and order.”<sup>39</sup> In the African culture, worship brings human beings in close proximity to the deities where they present their life’s concerns to God. Through sacrifices and prayers, traditional worshipers placate the higher spirits or curry the favor of the deities so human beings have a peaceful existence. Society flourishes when human beings are at peace with one another and more importantly, when human beings are at peace with the superior spirit beings with which they share the world.

That the traditional Africans have a humanistic view of the world does diminish the high regard they have for God. Cyril Okorochoa remarks concerning the Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria: “The Igbo, like other African peoples, are not ashamed of this “humanistic” view of religion and life. From their point of view if life is the *summum bonum* then people, not abstract ideas, constitute the focal point of the religiousness of *homo Africans*.”<sup>40</sup> Okorochoa’s view is consistent with Chukwuelobe’s remark:

---

<sup>38</sup> John Mbiti is quoted by Tokunboh Adeyemo et. al., eds., *African Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), 251.

<sup>39</sup> Charles Nyamiti, “The Doctrine of God,” in *A Reader in African Christian Theology*, ed. J. Parratt (London: SPCK, 1987), 60; cf., Jacob M. Agoussou’s remark that, in the African world, “Anything encouraging birth, development and fruitfulness in life is deemed to be ‘good,’ while anything damaging to life is declared as ‘evil’” (“Demands of the Gospel and African Anthropology,” in *The Churches of Africa: Future Prospects*, ed. Claude Geffre and Bertrand Luneau (New York, NY: The Seabury Press, 1977), 43.

<sup>40</sup> Cyril Okorochoa, “The Meaning of Salvation: An African Perspective,” in *Emerging Voices in Global Christian Theology*, ed. William Dyrness (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 80; cf. M. C. Chukwuelobe, “Death and the Question of Ultimate Reality and Meaning in the Thought of

The Igbo world centers on man, from whom it derives its meaning. Only then does the world become his own. The Igbo, therefore, cannot conceive of a world which is not grounded in the self (*onwe m*). However this self-experience of the world does not imply an extreme individuality. To the degree that there is no isolation in the Igbo experience of the world, every experience entails sharing.”<sup>41</sup>

With human needs placed at the center of worship, the goal of life to ensure societal harmony is attainable. All the elements in the cosmos become the tools at human disposal to make the universe a place for them to thrive. The inferior elements, living and nonliving things, below humans on the Ladder of Being exist to serve human needs while the intelligent beings or superior divine forces are there to help and protect human beings from life’s adversities.<sup>42</sup> Human beings may not be the strongest, or even the most important life force in the universe; they are nonetheless at the very center of all spiritual activities. The views of Gehman, Zahan, Mbiti and the other scholars who have described the anthropocentric nature of the traditional African religions are consistent with the general notion in the Yorùbá tradition that everything in the universe is intended by *Olódùmarè*, the Supreme Being, for the general well-being of the human inhabitants of the world. No wonder they see religion as the means of obtaining power or favor from the deities for the sole purpose of making life comfortable for human beings.

---

the Igbo of Nigeria and of M. Heidegger: A Further Contribution to Uram Igbo studies,” *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 21, no. 1 (1998): 5

<sup>41</sup> Chuckwuelobe, “Death and the Question of Ultimate Reality,” 5.

<sup>42</sup> Africans, according to Emefie Ikenga-Metuh believe that, “Man looks to the superior divine forces for help and protection against evil spirits and the forces of evil, while he harnesses the lower forces in nature for his own fulfilment and the achievement of his goals in life” (*God and Man in African Religion* [Melbourne, Australia: Geoffrey Chapman Ltd, 1981], 103); cf., C. K. Anyanwu’s view of the Igbo: “The world is centered on the self and is inseparable from it. As a result, the self fuses life into the world so that the soul or spirit of man becomes the soul or the spirit of the world” (“The Meaning of Ultimate Reality in Igbo Cultural Experience,” *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 7 [1984], 89).

Like their kin in the traditional religions, Yorùbá Christians believe that the angels and some ancestors occasionally help human beings overcome their life difficulties. Ayegboyin points out that some Yorùbá Christians believe that the good spirits in the world can be “consulted and invoked to guide and bestow blessings on people and the society.”<sup>43</sup> Like in the traditional Yorùbá religion where the worshipers curry the favor of the territorial or the ancestral spirits, *Aladura* Christians also invite the angels and some ancestors to help them overcome some difficult physical or spiritual problems.

It is not unusual for the Aladura Christians to invite some benevolent spirits to participate in their worship services. According to Ogungbile, “In Aladura Churches, invocation of angels who are addressed as *maleka* (angels), *ogun Òrun* (heavenly hosts) and *onida ode-Òrun* (heavenly sword bearers) is a commonplace phenomenon. For instance, in the Cherubim and Seraphim Church movement, Holy Michael is believed to be the defender of saints from problems, enemies, oppressions and evils.”<sup>44</sup> In the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC) and the Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S) church, Ayegboyin remarks that there are at least four angels in charge of various tasks in the world:

Holy Michael, who is believed to be the plenipotentiary guardian, protector of saints and upholder of the cause of the righteous; Holy Gabriel, who has jurisdiction over the western hemisphere and is also the transmitter of good news; Holy Uriel, the guide and collaborator with the saints, who is in control of the northern regions of the earth; Holy Raphael, who is in charge of the southern

---

<sup>43</sup> Deji Ayegboyin, “Ota Ile, Ota Ode: Reflections on the Yoruba Obsession with the Enemy and the Use of Imprecatory Prayers in the Aladura Church Movements,” *Journal of African Christian Thought* 12, no. 1 (June 2009): 35.

<sup>44</sup> David Ogungbile, “Meeting Point of Culture and Health: The Case of the Aladura Churches in Nigeria,” *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 6, no 1 (1997): 100.

hemisphere, and facilitates healing of all types of diseases. In addition, there are personal angels who guide and protect individuals from falling into the traps of the enemy. These give individual members assistance and protection from evil.<sup>45</sup>

The good spirit beings, such as *Màlékà* (angels) and *Ogun Òrun* (heavenly hosts), assist Christians in their life struggles; they also help believers overcome attacks from the evil spirits. To *Aladura* leaders, life is a battlefield where only the spiritually alert succeed and the spiritually careless easily succumb to the afflictions caused by evil spirit beings.

Leaders in the indigenous African churches sought ways to respond to the menace of the spirit beings in ways that resonate with the traditional religious beliefs of their members and at the same time show the superiority of Christ over the spirits. As such, indigenous Pentecostalism, especially, presents a front of spiritual power dynamics that pitches Jesus Christ in perpetual battle against evil spirit beings. Power gives the leaders the ability to control or subjugate the spiritual forces that so miserably threaten life in Africa. Asamoah-Gyadu opines that, “Fear of supernatural evil and desire for protection from witchcraft are the reasons why many people constantly seek power that will effectively protect them.”<sup>46</sup>

For many Africans, human beings are caught in the midst of cosmic spiritual relations where the strong subjugate the weak through diabolic means. Survival depends, then, on tilting the balance of power in favor of human beings. In bringing these two socio-religious realities together – vis-à-vis the desire to extricate Africa from Western

---

<sup>45</sup> Ayegboyin, “Ota Ile,” 35; Afeosemime Adogame includes two other angels *Aladura* Christians pray to: “Jimata, the angel of the water and of all within the waters, and Jerimo Yamah, who contemplates the light and the brightness of God” (“Aiyé Loja, Orun Nile: The Appropriation of Ritual Space-Time in the Cosmology of the Celestial Church of Christ,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 30, no. 1 [February, 2000], 13.)

<sup>46</sup> J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, “Witchcraft Accusations and Christianity in Africa,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 39, no. 1 (January, 2015): 26.

domination and the stronger need to acquire sufficient power to confront the spiritual antagonists of life – the leaders in the Yorùbá churches made the Christian community the venue where spiritual adversaries of life are confronted and defeated.

### 4.3 Spirituality of Power in Yorùbá Churches

#### 4.3.1 Power and Religious Piety

Ikenga-Metuh identifies the goal of religious spirituality in African Christianity as human acquisition of the right kind of power to live the triumphant life: “The mission of humanity is to ensure the victory of life over death by enlisting the support of the good spirits – God, the deities and ancestors – to overcome the powers of darkness – evil spirits, witches and sorcerers.”<sup>47</sup> Ikenga-Metuh may have had the *Aladura* in mind because *Aladura* Christians do not hesitate to call on the angels and the saints of the church when they perceive imminent danger. Toward this end, *Aladura* Christians, as Ogungbile rightly remarks, often invite their dead or living spiritual leaders to help them overcome life’s problems:

For instance, C.A.C. members often pray in the name of *Olorun Josefu Babalola* (the God of Joseph Babalola) and *Olorun Danieli Orekoya* (the God of Daniel Orekoya); The Cherubim and Seraphim members pray in the name of *Olorun Mose Orimolade*, (the God of Moses Orimolade); the Church of the Lord (*Aladura*) members pray in the name of *Olorun Josaya Ositelu* (the God of Josiah Ositelu), and the Celestial Church members pray in the name of *Olorun Osofa* (the God of Oschoffa).<sup>48</sup>

Scholars have related the power emphasis in Yorùbá Christianity to the general notion in the Yorùbá culture that human existence is predicated on human ability to

---

<sup>47</sup> Emefie Ikenga-Metuh, “The Revival of African Christian Spirituality: The Experience of African Independent Churches,” *Mission Studies* 7, no. 2 (January 1, 1990): 164.

<sup>48</sup> Ogungbile, “Meeting Point,” 101.



obtain power. Omoyajowo, for example, opines that in the Yorùbá world, “Man on earth beneath the sky sees himself as a force, a power capable of many things – he must be fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth.”<sup>49</sup> This is the destiny to which each human being has been called: to contribute to the fruitfulness of the earth. To achieve this good purpose, human beings must acquire the positive power that would propel them along life’s journey and at the same time repel the negative energies that would prevent them from fulfilling their destinies.<sup>50</sup> The pleasant things of life are the signs that one is truly alive and in control of the powers needed for success: “Goodness is power; health and strength represent power at work. Evil is therefore a contrary, foreign and hostile power which detracts from the natural power with which man is endowed.”<sup>51</sup>

Power in the YIC is the sign a pastor has been called to lead the congregation. Very frequently, these leaders demonstrate publicly that they have the divine power to prophesy, cast out demons, or make the problems of their members go away. Because the pastors are familiar with the social, economic and spiritual problems in the society, they constantly assure their members that all their anxieties will be resolved in the church:

---

<sup>49</sup> J. Akinyele Omoyajowo, “Human Destiny, Personal Rites and Sacrifices in African Traditional Religion,” *Journal of Religious Thought* 30, no. 1 (1973): 7; cf., Bolaji Idowu’s statement: “To the Yoruba, the end for which a person is made is inextricably bound up with his destiny. They believe that man’s doings on earth have been predestined by *Olódùmarè*” (*Olódùmarè: God in Yoruba Belief* [London: Longman, 1962], 173).

<sup>50</sup> Elias Bongmba, e.g., remarks: “The Yoruba begin by inquiring, ‘What is the nature of reality?’ and conclude ‘Whatever has power is real’ ... The second question is, ‘What is important?’ They believe that discovering one’s destiny and living according to that destiny is important. One discovers that destiny through divination. Third, they ask, ‘What is a person?’ They believe ‘a person is a living being with a destiny determined in heaven.’ An individual can be balanced, meaning he or she feeds his or her head and uses his or her power to fulfil obligations to the *orishas* and ancestors. An unbalanced individual ignores these things (“Rethinking Power in Africa: Theological Perspectives,” *Religion & Theology* 11, no. 2 [2004]: 113).

<sup>51</sup> Adeyemo, *Salvation in African Tradition*, 33

“These clerics tell their congregation that their God is not a poor God, a cliché that has earned them the name ‘prosperity preachers.’ Some have gone a step further to seek and acquire fetish power so as to be able to tell their followers certain secrets and to make predictions for them.”<sup>52</sup>

Nigerian Pentecostalism is built around the “power” and prestige of the charismatic leader of the church. Magbadelo is right in his remark:

The power of evangelisation in Pentecostal outreaches has often hinged on the demonstration effect of miracles which were claimed to have been wrought by some ‘powerful men of God.’ The attribution of the miraculous to some soon began to create an aura of omnipotence and supremacy around the personality of these men.<sup>53</sup>

Next to God, the “Man of God,” as many leaders in the Nigerian churches are called, uses every opportunity he finds to display the enormous spiritual “power” with which he is endowed. An obsession with power, however, does not always portray in a positive light the mission of the church. Chiquette warns:

To exercise a ministry is to exercise power. The problem is not power as such, but the purposes and relations it serves and the motives that lie behind the way it is wielded. If power in the church is not the power of service and self-giving “Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant” Mk 10:43) it is in danger of becoming power that is destructive of life.<sup>54</sup>

A church obsessed with power expresses the self-centered notion that worship is all about fulfilling personal goals in the minds of church members. Jesus, then, becomes the means of obtaining earthly comfort instead of the Giver of eternal life. Furthermore, a church

---

<sup>52</sup> Adetutu A. Adenugba and Samuel A. Omolawal, “Religious Values and Corruption in Nigeria: A Dislocated Relationship,” *Journal of Educational and Social Research* 4, no. 3 (May, 2014): 524.

<sup>53</sup> John Magbadelo, “Pentecostalism in Nigeria: Exploiting or Edifying the Masses? *African Sociological Review/Review Africaine de Sociologie* 8, no. 2 [2004]: 16.

<sup>54</sup> Daniel Chiquette, “Healing, Salvation, and Mission: The Ministry of Healing in Latin American Pentecostalism,” *International Review of Mission* 95, nos. 370/371 (October, 2004): 484.

preoccupied with power creates a utilitarian spirituality; or as Klem warns, “There is the danger of Christianity being understood as a superior way for a man to manipulate God, to get a better life or a better after-life.”<sup>55</sup>

#### 4.3.2 Church as Arena of Power

The acquisition of power is central to the spirituality in the Yorùbá churches. Life flourishes when power tilts in favor of the human inhabitants of the world. Paradoxically, as the quest for power draws human beings toward the good things of life, it at the same time deepens the antagonism which the evil forces in the universe express toward human beings. Spiritual antagonisms manifest in poor health, poverty, and general lack of progress in life’s endeavors. Leaders in the YIC perceive it their duty to rectify these defects through the demonstration of power. The opening statement of the mission of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles, for example, reads: “MFM Ministries is a full gospel ministry devoted to the Revival of Apostolic Signs, Holy Ghost fireworks and the unlimited demonstration of the power of God to deliver to the uttermost.”<sup>56</sup>

Harold Turner, in pointing out the contribution of the indigenous African churches to global Christianity, remarks:

It is the independents who help us to see the overriding African concern for spiritual power from a mighty God to overcome all enemies and evils that threaten human life and vitality, hence their extensive ministry of mental and physical healing. This is rather different from the Western preoccupation with atonement for sin and forgiveness of guilt.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> Herbert Klem, “Yoruba Theology and Christian Evangelism,” *Missiology* 3, no. 1 (1975): 58.

<sup>56</sup> Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, “About MFM,” <http://www.mountainoffire.org/about> (accessed on June 22, 2016).

<sup>57</sup> Harold Turner, “The Contribution of Studies on Religion in Africa to Western Religious Studies.” In *New Testament Christianity for Africa and the World: Essays in Honour of Harry Sawyerr*, (London: SPCK, 1974), 174.

The body of literature on the new Christian religious movements of Africa describe many of them in terms of the power encounters between Jesus Christ and the spirits or traditional religious deities: “Whichever spirits are indicated as being more powerful, more able to help in crisis situations, are very likely to be recognized as the spirits that must be followed.”<sup>58</sup>

The quest for power motivates Yorùbá Christians to invest enormous time and energy into prayer. Ikenga-Metuh observes that, in the *Aladura* churches, “Prayers are the surest way of obtaining from God *Agbara* [power] to meet different human needs. Besides God, the *Alagbara* (all powerful) can endow anybody with special spiritual powers for various purposes, healing, prophecy, even praying.”<sup>59</sup> On a continent with huge deficits on economic and political power, Yorùbá Christians perceive God’s Spirit, not as a mere intellectual proposition, but a living power that is able to defeat all other powers.

Christians in the YIC do not just want to learn about the Spirit, they want to feel him: “They are not so much worried about theories of the doctrine of the spirits. They know the spirits as powers, not doctrines. They are facing urgent daily problems, and have been culturally prepared to seek practical help from spirit powers.”<sup>60</sup> The gospel is the liberator of Africans from all the physical and spiritual oppressions that pervade their world. Christ, as the Lord of the gospel, is the Supreme Power who defeats all other powers: “The power of God (*agbara*) can be tapped through prayer and other techniques

---

<sup>58</sup> Klem, “Yoruba Theology,” 51.

<sup>59</sup> Ikenga-Metuh, “Revival of African Christian Spirituality,” 155.

<sup>60</sup> Klem, “Yoruba Theology,” 52.

by members of the Aladura churches to remedy the ills of individuals and society.”<sup>61</sup>

Moreover, power in the church is the means by which Christians defend themselves from demonic oppressions.

#### 4.3.3 Church as Refuge from Adversities

John Magbadelo, in his critical assessment of the impact of Pentecostalism on the Nigerian society, asserts that Pentecostalism expanded in Nigeria in the 1980s as “the pool of frustrated and marginalised people of the larger Nigerian society, responded to the economic and political crises of the time.”<sup>62</sup> In Magbadelo’s view, the Pentecostal pastors exploited the vulnerable members of society by suggesting to them that they could find relief from their economic and political problems in the church: “Pentecostal churches in the country have continued to feast on the psychology of the masses who genuinely are desirous of relief from their sordid existential realities.”<sup>63</sup>

Magbadelo may have identified an aspect of the evangelistic methods in the YIC that has been abused by unscrupulous individuals over the years; he has, however, ignored the general evangelistic strategy in Nigerian Pentecostalism that presents the church as the refuge to the frustrated and the marginalized members of society. Even though some business minded people have found ways to turn the fears of Christians into profitable ventures, this does not detract from the goal of the indigenous churches to allow the gospel to meet the social and economic needs of Christians.

---

<sup>61</sup> Ikenga-Metuh, “Revival of African Christian Spirituality,” 155.

<sup>62</sup> Magbadelo, “Pentecostalism,” 15.

<sup>63</sup> Magbadelo, “Pentecostalism,” 15.

Today, the indigenous churches continue to flourish in many parts of Africa as local Christian leaders present the gospel to Africans as the cure-all for any problem in the human life.<sup>64</sup> Some Pentecostal church leaders have also helped their members overcome the economic hardship in the country by setting up businesses and skill development centers. Burgess observes that, “Several Pentecostal churches have started NGOs aimed at community transformation. These are partly a response to the failure of state interventions.”<sup>65</sup> While the sermons in these churches are predictably on health, prosperity and salvation from the demonic forces, the leaders encourage their members to seek wealth through hard work.

The messages from the pulpit in the YIC are also frequently on the healing ministry of Jesus, Christ’s determination to bless his followers with abundant wealth, or Christ’s ability to deliver the afflicted from the demonic forces which plague them.

Daniel Smith sums up the appeal in Nigerian Pentecostalism:

It offers a new and ritually dense system of social organization and cultural meaning for the urban poor as well as other populations who feel increasingly frustrated by the failures of the state, or alienated by the demands and obligations of traditional kin and community groups; that it promises hope and eternal rewards for people whose lives are marked by poverty, inequality, and injustice.<sup>66</sup>

The sermons in the YIC frequently revolve around themes that depict Christ as the Victor over the demonic forces that are responsible for the social and economic

---

<sup>64</sup> See e.g., Lovemore Togarasei, "The Pentecostal Gospel of Prosperity in African Contexts of Poverty: An Appraisal," *Exchange* 40, no. 4 (January 1, 2011): 336-350; cf., Paul Gifford, "Expecting Miracles: The Prosperity Gospel in Africa." *Christian Century* 124, no. 14 (July 10, 2007): 20-24.

<sup>65</sup> Richard Burgess, “Nigerian Pentecostalism and Civic Engagement: Mission in the Midst of Poverty and Violence. A paper presented at the Theological Education in Africa (TEA) conference, Theological College of Northern Nigeria, Jos, Nigeria on May 16, 2012, 22-42.

<sup>66</sup> Daniel J. Smith, *A Culture of Corruption: Everyday Deception and Popular Discontent in Nigeria*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 209–210.

adversities in the world.<sup>67</sup> Every imaginable setback in the human life can be interpreted as a spiritual problem that must be overcome before an individual can achieve any significant progress in life. Prosperity and good health are presented as the desirable things of life that are not beyond the reach of Christians.

Yorùbá Christians do not respond differently than their non-Christian kin to the activities of the evil spirit beings who operate through human agencies. Dr. Olukoya, for example, claims that water spirits may be contracted through a variety of means including, polygamy, ancestral and parental pollution, initiation by friends, going to herbalists, native doctors or consulting oracles, and listening to satanically inspired music.<sup>68</sup> Like in all other spirit possessions, women in general and men who have multiple partners are believed to be susceptible to attacks by water spirits. In Olukoya's opinion: "There is no way a man would marry many wives and some of them would not be possessed with marine spirit"<sup>69</sup>

Water spirits, according to Olukoya, are "wicked water powers that can exchange body and spirits with human beings."<sup>70</sup> The main objective of these dangerous and wicked spirit beings is "to maintain and exercise dominion over their victims" for the sole purpose of changing their life destinies.<sup>71</sup> Olukoya warns Christians to be spiritually alert so as not to allow these dangerous and wicked entities to destroy them: "There is already

---

<sup>67</sup> See e.g., Dr. D. K. Olukoya, "Power Must Change Hands Messages, Jan-Dec. 2010," MP3 Messages produced by The Battle Cry Christian Tape Ministry, 2010.

<sup>68</sup> D. K. Olukoya, *Disgracing Water Spirits* (Lagos: Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, 2012), Kindle Locations 316-339.

<sup>69</sup> Olukoya, *Disgracing Water Spirits*, Amazon Kindle Location 316.

<sup>70</sup> Olukoya, *Disgracing Water Spirits*, Kindle location 64.

<sup>71</sup> D. K. Olukoya, *Your Foundation and Your Destiny* (Lagos: Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, 2011), 176.

an increase of this type of entity moving among men. Therefore, people must be very careful about the way they operate their career, business, etc. these powers have already been loosed; their duty is to cage men and women.”<sup>72</sup> In Olukoya’s view, Christians can deliver themselves from water spirits by invoking the blood of Jesus into possessed waters: “Speak to the waters: You can speak to the waters even in your room and command them to receive the blood of Jesus. You can send confusion into their camp.”<sup>73</sup>

Because malicious spirits often operate in already disgruntled human beings, Yorùbá Christians do not make serious efforts to separate human “enemies” from malicious spirit beings when they pray for the destructions of their foes. As Ayegboyin rightly remarks:

The description of the enemy, the violence of the prayer, and the kinds of words used in *Aladura* prayers or songs derive from the fact that in the traditional society in which these literary forms originated, enemies were often held to be irretrievably wicked ... Thus, the victims are encouraged to shout and so turn the evil back upon its perpetrators.”<sup>74</sup>

The ubiquity of spirits in the Yorùbá world makes it inevitable that these entities will be blamed for many of the irrational setbacks in society. In as much as non-human spirits are part of the human community, they also contribute to the progress and adversities in society. “Enemies” represent for the Yorùbá any human or non-human being who may be perceived to be responsible for causing adversity in a community. Witches are “enemies” because they generally hinder human beings from achieving happiness or attaining their life destinies. Even though an “enemy” may be a male or a female member of society, most “enemies” in the Yorùbá world are women.

---

<sup>72</sup> Olukoya, *Disgracing Water Spirits*, Kindle locations 54-55.

<sup>73</sup> Olukoya, *Disgracing Water Spirits*, Kindle Location 414-422.

<sup>74</sup> Ayegboyin, “Ota Ile,” 33-34.



Indigenous Yorùbá churches continue to experience rapid numerical growth in modern times as Christian leaders use business models to inspire hope in the community and draw members to church. Danny McCain observes: “Advertisements for crusades began to stress the possibility of ‘financial breakthroughs’ and ‘fulfilling your destiny,’ and the faithful were encouraged to demand the ‘blessings’ that were their divine right.”<sup>75</sup> Leaders in the YIC do not see themselves as mere expositors of Scripture but also as active contributors to the tangible ways society can overcome its socio-economic woes. As such, some YIC leaders use the skills they have acquired in their prior vocations – e.g., business management, accounting, architecture, law, and other fields – to equip their members to be better at what they do. Furthermore, the Nigerian Pentecostal pastors interpret the Bible in ways that promote the practical programs of the church. Community development ventures, such as poverty alleviation, economic empowerment, and national transformation projects are given biblical bases.<sup>76</sup> Undeterred by the failure of the political system in the larger society, indigenous churches see the church as relevant in resolving some of the social and economic anxieties in many African societies.

#### 4.4 Summary

In summing up the two waves of “emergence in the 1920s” and “strengthening in the 1960s” of the *Aladura* Church Movement, three broad factors can be adduced for the growth in modern time: first is the general air of national solidarity engendered by

---

<sup>75</sup> Danny McCain, “The Metamorphosis of Nigerian Pentecostalism: From Signs and Wonders in the Church to Service and Influence in Society,” in *Spirit and Power: The Growth and Global Impact of Pentecostalism*, ed. Donald E. Miller, Kimon H Sergeant, and Richard Flory, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 164.

<sup>76</sup> McCain, “Metamorphosis of Nigerian Pentecostalism,” 164.

an independent Nigeria which made traditional identity and assertiveness desirable qualities in every facet – secular and religious – of the Nigerian society. Second is the pre-independence desire by Yorùbá Christian leaders to accommodate traditional religious ideas in communicating the gospel to Christians. These leaders were also determined to allow the gospel to address the concerns and threats in the African world. They reasoned that Christianity would not be relevant in the African culture unless it has direct impact on the social, economic spiritual realities in the African society. Finally, Yorùbá Christianity became further strengthened in the early 1970s when Nigerian Pentecostalism emerged with its theology of power which, among other things, presented the gospel as the antidote to poverty and the deep fear that many Africans had for the superhuman spirit beings in their world. In all these, the indigenous churches found strength in associating with, instead of distancing themselves from, the traditional religious beliefs that existed among the Yorùbá.



## CHAPTER 5

### DELINEATING BOUNDARIES BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND CHRISTIAN IDEAS OF EVIL AND SALVATION

So far it has been shown that Christianity flourished among the Yorùbá as indigenous Christian leaders began to communicate the gospel in traditional language and idioms familiar to their members. The sudden numerical growth in modern time can easily be linked to the continuity which the leaders in the YIC are determined to allow Christianity to maintain with the traditional Yorùbá religion. Herein lies the dilemma facing Yorùbá Christian theology: can traditional religious ideas be safely used to communicate the gospel without infringing on biblical integrity? Put differently, but with specific reference to the Yorùbá Christian notion of spiritual influences over human well-being, can the notions in the YIC regarding evil, salvation and fear of the evil spirits be presented in ways that accurately depict the redemptive work of Christ?

Chapter 5 discusses the Yorùbá Christian idea of evil and the culpability of superhuman spirit beings in the performance of evil in the human world. Yorùbá Christians, like other Christians around the world, are baffled by the existence of evil in creation. For how could a universe made by an infinitely wise and good God be filled with so much wickedness and unpleasant experiences for its human inhabitants? Clearly, evil must be an anomaly; an undesirable incursion into God's perfect universe. In resolving the problem of evil, Yorùbá Christians, like their non-Christian kin, attribute

much of the undesirable events in life to the activities of evil ancestors, witches and demons.

## 5.1 Evil in the Yorùbá Culture

Human beings have an insatiable need to explain the existence of evil. It baffles the mind to conceive that a universe, created by an infinitely wise and good God who must have anticipated and taken care of every contingent situation, would at the same time be threatened by seemingly unforeseeable catastrophic events. Evil, many people believe, must be an aberration in a universe that should otherwise be good and orderly. Carlos Steel sums up the rationale behind the apparent contradiction that has come to be known as the “problem of evil” in theological circles: “God, who is entirely good, can only be the cause of well-being. If this answer sets God free of all responsibility for evil, it seems to be at the cost of limiting God’s power: for God is no longer responsible for ‘most things in human life,’ since most of them are evil. What, then, may be the cause or causes of evil?”<sup>1</sup> Theologians and philosophers have struggled to answer this difficult question. The problem of evil presupposes the unlikelihood that God would be responsible for the origin of evil in the world; for evil is inconsistent with the attributes of God.

### 5.1.1 Evil as Abnormality

The copious volume of essays written by theologians and philosophers on the “problem of evil” elucidate the human concern for the inexplicable existence of evil in an

---

<sup>1</sup> Carlos Steel, “Does Evil Have a Cause? Augustine's Perplexity and Thomas's Answer,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 48, no. 2 (December 1994): 251.

otherwise complex and orderly world. In Cantani's words: "Our desire to make the world intelligible is reflected in our moral expectation that virtue and happiness should be systematically connected, that is, good *ought* to be rewarded and evil punished."<sup>2</sup> Evil is an apparent contradiction to theism: "It is logically impossible for an omniscient, omnipotent being to have a reason compatible with perfect goodness for permitting (bringing about) evils."<sup>3</sup>

Evil defies simple definitions because it encompasses a variety of unpleasant experiences: "Antagonism, destruction, deformation, disease, accident, death, affliction, suffering, and such come under the title 'evil.'"<sup>4</sup> Roy Baumeister, on his part, defines evil in terms that link a human action to the victimization of a fellow human being: "Evil requires the deliberate actions of one person, the suffering of another, and the perception or judgment of either the second person or an observer ... Victimization is generally essential to evil. Victims are the first persons to spot evil."<sup>5</sup> For Baumeister, evil is dependent "on the perceptions of the victim (along with those of observers who identify with the victim)."<sup>6</sup>

Like Baumeister, Jeffery Russell and John Kekes associate evil with human conduct. For Russell, evil is "a direct, immediate experience of something done to an

---

<sup>2</sup> Darmian Catani "Notions of Evil in Baudelaire," *The Modern Language Review* 102, no. 4 (Oct., 2007): 990; elsewhere, Catani states: "Evil was now a problem which threatened our moral assumptions and thus our ability to understand the world," (*Evil: A History in Modern French Literature and Thought* [New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013], 15).

<sup>3</sup> Edward Craig, ed. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), s.v., "Evil, Problem of," 467.

<sup>4</sup> John Pobee, *Toward an African Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 99.

<sup>5</sup> Roy Baumeister, *Evil: Inside Human Cruelty and Violence* (New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1997), 375.

<sup>6</sup> Baumeister, *Evil*, 375.

individual. You experience immediately evil done to you; by empathy you experience directly evil done to those you love, to your friends and neighbors, or even to those you do not know personally at all.”<sup>7</sup> While Keke recognizes two types of evil which may befall humankind, the “‘natural evil,’ which is the product of nonhuman agency, and ‘moral evil,’ which is the product of human agency,”<sup>8</sup> he defines evil as a “serious unjustified harm inflicted on sentient beings.”<sup>9</sup> Keke does not think that any injurious act that is performed “to maintain the moral equilibrium” in the society should be considered “evil.” In this regard, a punishment for a crime committed may be injurious to the one receiving the punishment but since it is justified, it may not be considered “evil.” Evil for Keke must always involve both an injustice and a disturbance of moral equilibrium.<sup>10</sup>

#### 5.1.2 Evil in Christian Theism

Two issues are often at the forefront in Western Christian theology regarding the problem of evil. First is the extent to which God, who alone is responsible for everything that exists, may also be implicated for life outcomes that do not seem right. The second involves divinely ordered human freedom to choose whichever way between good and evil; and human responsibility to deal with the consequences of whatever choice is made.

Medieval Jewish thinkers recognized evil as an act that involved both human and divine inputs. Whereas evil is ordinarily attributed to human action, God occasionally

---

<sup>7</sup> Jeffery Russell, *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity* (London: Cornell University Press, 1977), 19.

<sup>8</sup> John Keke, “Evil,” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 463.

<sup>9</sup> Keke, “Evil,” 463.

<sup>10</sup> Keke, “Evil,” Keke stresses that, evil must involve unjustified harm to the victim: “In general terms, harms that tend to maintain the moral equilibrium are justified, while those that tend to produce a disequilibrium are unjustified,” 463.

uses unpleasant experiences as retributive actions against human disobedience or sin. The Jewish Scripture, as Blumberg points out, is replete with examples of situations where God used the unpleasant events of life to discipline his people:

In certain historical books and prophetic writings, the power to create evil seems to have been ascribed to the Deity, particularly the evil spirit that was visited upon certain individuals from time to time. Thus in Judges 9:23, God is depicted as sending an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and in I Samuel 18:10, we read: "And it came to pass on the morrow that an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul and he raved in the midst of the house."<sup>11</sup>

God's complicity in the evil in the world also caught the interest of the Church Fathers. Burns, for example, remarks: "Augustine argued that true evil cannot be found within the material world taken as a whole. Each thing acts and is acted upon, corrupts and is corrupted, according to its proper nature and its role within the universal order."<sup>12</sup> Augustine acknowledged the existence of evil, but not as a tangible aspect of a universal order made by a good God. For Augustine, "In a spiritual creature, evil is the absence of the perfection or fullness of goodness and reality which nature itself and the divine order demand. Thus it might be the loss of some quality once possessed or the failure to acquire, through negligence or refusal, some due and available attribute."<sup>13</sup> In Burn's assessment, Augustine did not see God as the source of unjust evil because, for Augustine, "All spiritual evil is ... either voluntary self-corruption or divinely inflicted

---

<sup>11</sup> Harry Blumberg, "Theories of Evil in Medieval Jewish Philosophy," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 43 (1972): 149.

<sup>12</sup> J. Patout Burns, "Augustine on the Origin and Progress of Evil," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 16, no. 1 (Spring, 1988): 12.

<sup>13</sup> Burns, "Augustine," 12.



punishment of such evil.”<sup>14</sup> An unpleasant event in the human life, therefore, may not be necessarily be “evil” if it is intended by God as a means of punishing an evil doer.

Augustine, determined to absolve God from evil, declared: “To thee there is no such thing as evil, and even in thy whole creation taken as a whole, there is not; because there is nothing from beyond it that can burst in and destroy the order which thou has appointed for it.”<sup>15</sup> For Augustine, what human beings call “evil” is simply a state of corruption that may be found in God’s good created order: “When, however, a thing is corrupted, its corruption is an evil because it is, by just so much, a privation of the good. Where there is no privation of the good, there is no evil.”<sup>16</sup> Real evil, in Augustine’s opinion, is human love for self, rather than for God:

The creature fails in its love of the highest good and prefers its own goodness; the spirit loves its own power to understand and to rule; it seeks fulfillment and happiness through its own resources rather than by adhering to the divine gifts of truth and love ... The creature, however, is responsible for the failure. As a nondivine being, every creature is capable of change and of decline in being. In the created spirit, freedom means that the individual can maintain the fullness of love given by God or initiate its own corruption.”<sup>17</sup>

Like Augustine before him, Thomas rejected the Manichean thesis that evil effects can only be caused by evil principles and the good ones by good principles: “It would seem that good cannot be the cause of evil. For it is said (Mat. 7:18): ‘A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit.’”<sup>18</sup> For Thomas, “Only good can be a cause; because nothing

---

<sup>14</sup> Burns, “Augustine,” 13

<sup>15</sup> Augustine of Hippo, “Confessions,” in *Confessions and Enchiridion*, trans. and ed. Albert C. Outler (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), 252.

<sup>16</sup> Augustine, “Confessions,” 253.

<sup>17</sup> Burns, “Augustine,” 15. Burns references *De Gen. c. Man.* 2.14.20-2.15.22.

<sup>18</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ed. Petri Carmello (Rome: Marietti, 1952), I-I, q. 49, a. 1.

can be a cause except inasmuch as it is a being, and every being, as such, is good: ‘*esse causam non potest convenire nisi bono, quia nihil potest esse causa, nisi in quantum est ens; omne autem ens, in quantum huiusmodi, bonum est.*’<sup>19</sup> Thomas argued that the existence of evil in the world may be used as an argument for the very existence of God.<sup>20</sup> For it is only an infinitely omnipotent being who will allow mere creatures to act according to their free nature.

In his *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Thomas introduces a philosopher, Boethius, who asks the question: “‘If there is a God, how comes evil?’ The argument should be turned the other way: ‘If there is evil, there is a God.’ For there would be no evil, if the order of goodness were taken away, the privation of which is evil; and this order would not be, if God were not.”<sup>21</sup> Thomas’ arguments, in Dodd’s view, do not resolve the problem of God and suffering, “They do, however, have the merit of denying neither the being of God nor the reality of evil. At the same time, they point us toward God’s own providential answer to evil, revealed in the cross of Christ.”<sup>22</sup> The implication is that even though evil remains a momentary problem, and we do know that evil has met its ultimate defeat in Christ’s atonement, we still face the reality of evil in our everyday lives.

Thomas Aquinas was aware that human inquisitiveness to trace the cause of evil was a legitimate one. For every human being can perceive when something deviates from

---

<sup>19</sup> Thomas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-I, q. 49, a. 1.

<sup>20</sup>See Michael Dodds, "Providence, Prayer, and Miracles," in *Unlocking Divine Action* (Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 243.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Rickaby, *Of God and His Creatures: An Annotated Translation of the Summa Contra Gentiles of St Thomas Aquinas* (Electronic version: The Catholic Primer, 2015), SCG III, 71, no. 10.

<sup>22</sup> Dodds, "Providence," 243.

its natural state of being.<sup>23</sup> The cause of evil for Thomas, as Steel opines, is the human will: “According to Thomas, all moral evil originates from a deficient act of the will whereby it chooses a particular good and so defects from a higher good which it ought to pursue.”<sup>24</sup> The quandary, however, remains: how could the human will, created originally good by a good God, suddenly become defective? Steel points out the difficulty in resolving this dilemma: “We will thus be constrained to look for a cause of this perversion, which can only be a preceding defect of the will. And so our investigation will never come to an end, as Augustine rightly observed.”<sup>25</sup> Augustine and Thomas may have drawn our attention to the illogicality of evil, but these sages did not proffer convincing solutions to the “problem of evil.”

Perhaps, the problem of evil persists because Western theologians have refused to give substantive recognition to evil and to the spirit beings that are responsible for some evil occurrences in creation. Karl Barth, in depicting evil as *das Nichtige* (“the nothingness” in his *Church Dogmatics*), aptly states the perception that Christian theism may be threatened if evil were given a substantive recognition:

We stray on the one side if we argue that this element of nothingness derives from the positive will and work of God as if it too were a creature, and that the Creator Himself and His lordship are responsible for its nothingness, the creature being exonerated from all responsibility for its existence, presence and activity. But we go astray on the other side if we maintain that it derives solely from the activity of the creature, in relation to which the lordship of God can only be a passive

---

<sup>23</sup> Carlos Steel, “Does Evil Have a Cause? Augustine's Perplexity and Thomas's Answer,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 48, no. 2 (December 1994): 258, according to Steel: “Thomas insists that the fact that something has deviated from its natural state and is deprived of a perfection it ought to have must itself be explained by a cause. Evil is not ‘nothing,’ so it must have a cause.”

<sup>24</sup> Steel, “Does Evil Have a Cause?” 260.

<sup>25</sup> Steel, “Does Evil Have a Cause?” 260.

permission and observation, an ineffectual foreknowledge and a subsequent attitude.<sup>26</sup>

### 5.1.3 Yorùbá Idea of Evil

Yorùbá Christians give substantive recognition to evil by attributing much of the unpleasant experiences of life to the activities of the evil spirit beings with which human beings share the world. This assumption is not without its problems; it also must reconcile the existence of evil with the idea that a good God created everything that exists. For, if God were the source of everything that exists in creation, as Christian theism claims, how could he take the credit for the good and not also accept the blame for the evil?

Debates on the problem of evil, as Babajide Dasaolu and Demilade Oyelakun have rightly remarked, are scant in African philosophical and theological scholarship: “Thus far in the literature on the African perspectives on the problem of evil, little is known on the real and possible similarities and dissimilarities on the notion of evil in African cultures and whether or not such an understanding allows for a solution of the philosophical problem of evil either in the popularly known sense or in a new form.”<sup>27</sup> Dasaolu and Oyelakun assert: “In the Yoruba-African context, evil is a matter of morality and has little or nothing to do with religion. Therefore, the argument that heaps the blame of evil on God does not hold water with Africans.”<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics (Volume III): The Doctrine of Creation, Part 3*, ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 292.

<sup>27</sup> Babajide Dasaolu and Demilade Oyelakun “The Concept of Evil in Yoruba and Igbo Thoughts: Some Comparisons,” *Philosophia: E-Journal of Philosophy and Culture* (October 2015): 1.

<sup>28</sup> Dasaolu and Oyelakun, “Concept of Evil,” 1.

The problem of evil, for the Yorùbá, is not substantively about God's complicity in the wickedness that exists in creation; rather, it is about the purpose that evil fulfills in the world. Divinely ordained evil may achieve good results in the world while the evil caused by witches, for example, cannot lead to any beneficial result. In their monistic vision of a world created and governed by a good God, the Yorùbá assume that everything, whether good or evil, must have a purpose in life. Jegede puts this notion well in his remark concerning the theory of evil depicted in the Yorùbá traditional corpus, *Ifá*:

The theocentric model of the origin of evil is to some extent in tune with monism in that it claims that evil originated from one source, Olodumare, and is therefore necessary in an active and dynamic universe. Olodumare is the Supreme Being and Olodumare is neither good nor evil. Both good and evil are in Olodumare and when the earth was created by Olodumare, both good and evil were created also. In this regard, good and evil are either antecedent (cosmogony) to creation or coincident with finite existence.<sup>29</sup>

In the traditional Yorùbá world, no created being, human or non-human, may exist outside the active will or empowerment of *Olódùmarè*, the Supreme Being. As Jegede posits, "good and evil must exist, as humanity, divinities, animals, and all that is must coexist."<sup>30</sup> Evil then, at least some aspects of it, is the means by which God governs the world. This is why the Yorùbá say, "*T'ibi t'ire lo nrin papo ni'ile aye*" (lit. "Good and evil coexist in the world"). Moreover, evil is necessary if human beings would really be free to make their own decisions and be responsible for their actions.<sup>31</sup> *Olódùmarè*, in

---

<sup>29</sup> Charles Jegede, "An Exploration into Soteriology of Ifa: 'Oral and Intangible Heritage for Humanity,'" *Black Theology* 11, no. 2 (2013): 208.

<sup>30</sup> Jegede, "Soteriology of Ifa," 209.

<sup>31</sup> Kenneth Himma, "Plantinga's Version of the Free-Will Argument: The Good and Evil that Free Beings Do," *Religious Studies* 16, no. 1 (March, 2010), the free will argument, according to Himma, "attempts to show the claim that (1) an all-perfect God exists is consistent with the claim that (2) evil exists, by showing that the claim that (3) the existence of free beings, by itself, is a moral good outweighing the evil that cannot be achieved without allowing such evil," 39.

John Bewaji's view, displays his omnipotence by using both "good" and "evil" to govern his world: "He created both the good and the bad, the well-formed and the deformed, the rainy season and the drought. Through Him must be sought the cause of all things."<sup>32</sup> In Bewaji's opinion, if indeed *Olódùmarè* has all the superlative attributes the Yorùbá accord him, it is redundant to say that God is incapable of doing evil:

He is the most Powerful Being, the Creator, the Wise and Impartial Judge who exercises inexorable control over all in the universe. The problem of evil fails to arise within the context of Yoruba belief in Olodumare because a being with all the attributes stated above is conceivable as capable of both good and bad. He uses both for the ultimate good governance of the universe. In fact, to say that God does not and cannot do evil is to unnecessarily circumscribe His power."<sup>33</sup>

Bewaji is right; in the Yorùbá world, the existence of evil does not in any way diminish the power of God over any living or non-living thing; in his almightiness, God does and can do anything, including good and evil, to achieve whatever he desires. That we do not comprehend what he does and why he does them does not negate his control over or his love for creation.

#### 5.1.4 *Èṣù*, the Deity of Evil

Evil has two distinct realities in the Yorùbá world. On the one hand, evil may come directly from God for the express purpose of achieving God's desired purpose in creation. On the other hand, wicked human and nonhuman beings in the universe may cause affliction in the community. In the traditional Yorùbá myth, most evil that occurs in the world occurs with the knowledge and consent of the evil deity, *Èṣù*.

---

<sup>32</sup> John Bewaji, "Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief and the Theistic Problem of Evil," *African Studies Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (1998): 8.

<sup>33</sup> Bewaji, "Olodumare," 11.

Èṣù is responsible for much of the evil deeds in the world. This is why the Yorùbá say, Èṣù, Àse burúkú se rere. (Èṣù the doer of both evil and good).<sup>34</sup> Bolaji Idowu asserts that there is an unmistakable element of evil in Èṣù; this is why the Yorùbá are quick to blame every evil tendency in human beings on his agency:

When a person commits any deed which results in unpleasantness or harm to himself or his neighbour, the Yoruba immediately say, *Esu l'o ti i* – ‘It is *Esu* who stirred him.’ The unruly, the headstrong, the one given to evildoing or wickedness, are all *Omo Esu* in the sense of the Biblical ‘Sons of Belial.’ It is usually said of such, *Esu l'o nse e* – “It is *Esu* who is moving him.”<sup>35</sup>

The Yorùbá do not hesitate to say, “*Iṣé Èṣù ni*” (lit., “It is the devil’s work”), whenever an undesirable event occurs around them: “For instance, when a man slapped his wife, it is the work of *Esu*; when a man got drunk and broke his leg, it is *Esu*; and when a man committed adultery with his brother’s wife – surely it is *Esu*! So all wicked thoughts are given by *Esu*.”<sup>36</sup> Even when a human agent is identified as being responsible for an atrocious act, the bystanders often still insist that the outcome has been influenced directly by Èṣù. Nothing bad happens to human beings without Èṣù playing an active part in it.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> See, Enoch O. Gbadegesin, “Changing Roles of Èṣù: Yorùbá Traditional and Christian Religious Concepts in a Globalized Era,” *Dialogue & Alliance* 21, no. 2 (Fall/Winter, 2007): 34.

<sup>35</sup> E. Bolaji Idowu, *Olódùmarè: God in Yoruba Belief* (London: Longman, 1962), 83.

<sup>36</sup> E. O. Oyelade, “Evil in Yoruba Religion and Culture,” in *Evil and the Response of World Religion*, ed. William Cenkner (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 1997), 158.

<sup>37</sup> Herbert Klem, “Yoruba Theology and Christian Evangelism,” *Missiology* 3, no. 1 (1975), Klem points out that when the Westerner says, “It was the will of God,” or “The Devil made me do it,” they are “externalizing our problems by blaming them on outside forces instead of coming of age to accept our responsibility ... my observations in Nigeria, such statements have a different meaning within an African setting. This is the culturally recognized way of admitting that the particular action was indeed wrong, and that after thinking about it, the person can see that it was not only wrong, but evil ... so this can not only be a confession of sin, but a kind of promise not to do it again,” 55–56.

Although Èṣù dispenses evil in the service to *Olódùmarè*, he often carries out some mischief out of his own wickedness. Oyelade remarks: “It appears that there are two sides to Esu in Yorùbá religious culture. Esu causes evil by giving misleading suggestions which end in sadness or destruction. On the other hand, Esu is a good divinity, very close to Olodumare.”<sup>38</sup> According to Idowu, Èṣù, is occasionally power intoxicated, “just as any person corrupted by power which seems uncontrolled may find sadistic relish in throwing his weight about in unsympathetic, callous ways.”<sup>39</sup> It is the dark side which confounds the Yorùbá that they vehemently reject. Idowu suggests that Èṣù may be likened to the Old Testament Devil or Satan:

He is certainly not the Devil of our New Testament acquaintance, who is an out and out evil power in opposition to the plan of God’s salvation of man. On the whole, it would be near the truth to parallel him with Satan in the Book of Job, where Satan is one of the ministers of God and has the office of trying men’s sincerity and putting their religion to the proof.<sup>40</sup>

Klem, in his comparison of Èṣù to the biblical being, Satan, asserts: “...they both bring evil and death upon men. They are agents of punishment. They both accuse men before God.”<sup>41</sup> This is where the similarities end. In Klem’s view, whereas Èṣù is pictured by the Yorùbá as a good servant of God, such an appellation cannot be used for Satan. Like Klem, Dopamu disagrees with those who equate Èṣù with the Biblical or Islamic Satan: “Èṣù differs from the Biblical or Islamic Satan or the Devil in not having a hell, or not being a fallen angel, in not being directly opposed to God, in not being

---

<sup>38</sup> Oyelade, “Evil in Yoruba Religion,” 159.

<sup>39</sup> Idowu, *Olódùmarè*, 83.

<sup>40</sup> Idowu, *Olódùmarè*, 80.

<sup>41</sup> Klem, “Yoruba Theology,” 50.



responsible for the fall of man, in having some good element in him and in not commanding other divinities to do evil under his tutelage.”<sup>42</sup> Like Dopamu, Oyelade insists that Èṣù should not be characterized as the biblical Satan. Whereas there may be some good left in Èṣù, Yorùbá Christians are reluctant to associate any good deed with Satan. In Gbadegesin’s view: “Both Christians and Muslims in the Yorùbá society ... do not see any good thing that can come from Èṣù just like Satan in the Bible and Shaitan or Iblis in the Qur’an. This is as a result of their identification of Èṣù with Biblical Satan and Qur’an Iblis.”<sup>43</sup>

The traditional Yorùbá see evil a little differently than their Christian kin. For the traditional Yorùbá, evil may be “physical” (i.e., it may come directly from God, in which case, human beings can do nothing about it); or it may be “moral,” (in which case, human beings are induced by Èṣù to cause disharmony in society). Oyelade remarks that, “The most disturbing manifestations of physical evil include the destruction of houses, property or persons by lightning or thunder.”<sup>44</sup> Often, human beings do not understand God’s purpose for bringing about a “physical evil,” nor do they know how to prevent future occurrences. Human beings can only respond in silent acceptance that God is fully in charge of his world and must not be questioned for whatever he does, whether good or

---

<sup>42</sup> Ade P. Dopamu, *Èṣù: The Invisible Foe of Man: A Comparative Study of Satan in Christianity, Islam and Yoruba Religion* (Ijebu Ode: Shebiotimo Press, 2000), 42.

<sup>43</sup> Gbadegesin, “Changing Roles of Èṣù,” 35.

<sup>44</sup> Oyelade, “Evil in Yoruba Religion,” 160.

evil.<sup>45</sup> After all, he is the Supreme King, the *Kabiyesi* (lit. “the one who must not be queried”).

God may cause evil in the world to achieve his known or unknown purpose. For example, God duly uses “evil” to keep human beings within his “approved” moral norms. Or as John Bewaji states: “The Yoruba consider God to be judge over all, and when misfortune befalls a moral offender, people say, ‘He is under the lashes of God.’”<sup>46</sup> God sometimes uses both “good” and “evil” to ensure that justice is carried out in his world. This is why society rewards good people and punishes those they perceive as injurious to societal well-being. Satan and his demonic agents may constantly be seeking ways to cause unhappiness in the world, but this does not detract from the perception that God is fully in charge and may use their activities to achieve his purpose.

Often, whenever evil defies logic, it is believed to be pre-ordained or mere ill-luck, or *Ori burúkú* (lit. “bad head”). Some unfortunate situations may also be self-inflicted, or *Àfowófà* (lit. “caused by one’s own hands”).<sup>47</sup> While some people may have relatively easy lives, others have been pre-ordained to experience more than the usual level of hardship as their life destiny (or *Ayanmo*). Whereas the Yorùbá resist every kind of evil, they react most vigorously against the setbacks of life they perceive are induced by the wicked human and non-human spirit beings in the community.

---

<sup>45</sup> See e.g., Oyelade, “Evil in Yoruba Religion,” 161, where Oyelade opines: “The general moral response of the Yoruba to physical evil is usually that of resignation and acceptance although efforts may later be made to prevent future occurrence.”

<sup>46</sup> Bewaji, “Olodumare,” 11.

<sup>47</sup> See e.g., E. O. Babalola, “Ori: Man's Destiny: An Inescapable Phenomenon in Yoruba Traditional Religion,” *Voices from the Third World* 20, no 1 (1997): 163, where Babalola remarks that no extraneous factor has any significant influence on human destiny because, “If one’s lot is good and if one does not spoil one’s career by one’s activity *Afowofa*, it is definitely going to be good for such a person.”

Like their traditional kin, Yorùbá Christians are convinced that every effort should be made to resist any force that makes life unbearable for human beings. Moreover, decades of prosperity gospel have gradually instilled in the Yorùbá Christian mind the notion that all unpleasant experiences in life are brought about by Satan, the prince of darkness. Satan is never far from an evil act. Even when a human culprit is identified as the perpetrator of an evil deed, somewhere behind the offender's act lurks the Devil, a demon or a witch.<sup>48</sup>

## 5.2 Manifestations of Evil in the YIC

J. P. Kiernan, in his examination of the concept of evil in the traditional African culture, asserts that “The categories ‘good’ and ‘evil’ supply the basis of a folk-model of society as a moral system, and African ancestral spirits emerge as major focal points in the articulation of such a system.”<sup>49</sup> In Kiernan's opinion, many traditional Africans believe that “lineal ancestors are an undisguised source of human suffering or that they entertain evil forces, collaborating with and employing evil agents to do their work for

---

<sup>48</sup> J. Omisade Awolalu, “The Yoruba Philosophy of Life,” *Presence Africaine. Nouvelle Serie*, no. 73 (1er Trimestre 1970): 29, according to Awolalu, “Witchcraft is considered the greatest factor that causes the abnormal to happen and brings about disruption in harmony”; cf. Etim Okon, “African World-View and the Challenge of Witchcraft,” *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* 2, no. 10 (2012), 68, where Okon remarks: “Africans of all classes, poor and rich, illiterates and the educated classes all have one or two bad experiences to say about witchcraft as a nefarious and destructive spirit that is hindering human and social development on the continent”; cf. Matsobane Manala, “Witchcraft and Its Impact on Black African Christians: A Lacuna in the Ministry of the Hervormde Kerk in Suidelike Africa,” *HTS* 60, no. 4 (2004): 1499, where according to Manala, “Despite current levels of Western education and technological advances among black Africans, the belief in witchcraft persists.”

<sup>49</sup> J. P. Kiernan, “The ‘Problem of Evil’ in the Context of Ancestral Intervention in the Affairs of the Living in Africa,” *Man New Series* 17, no. 2 (Jun., 1982): 295.

them, while in their other capacity as affinal ancestors, their more blatant and deliberate infliction of suffering on the living is openly recognized.”<sup>50</sup>

“The existence of evil in the world,” according to Father G. H. Joyce, “must at all times be the greatest of all problems which the mind encounters when it reflects on God and His relation to the world.”<sup>51</sup> In the Yorùbá world, evil has a very intimidating presence. Both forms of evil – physical and moral – exist in their most daunting forms. Physical evil, in the form of natural disasters and occasional epidemics, for example, and the moral evil perpetrated by human beings are all somehow also linked to the activities of the superhuman spirit beings in the community. Very frequently, these spirit beings are engaged in spiritual battles in the YIC as the means of resolving the evil created in the community. The redemptive work of Christ, therefore, is very often promoted in the YIC as Christ’s means of confronting and subsequent defeating the evil spirit beings of this world. In the traditional life, God oversees human existence and ensures human well-being through the ancestors and the deities. The implication is that no ‘good’ or ‘evil’ thing may happen to human beings without the direct involvement of the ancestors or the deities.

### 5.2.1 Evil as Antithesis of Life

It has already been pointed out that the Yorùbá believe that *Èṣù*, the deity for evil, is in charge of every disaster that occurs in the world. The misfortunes of life, such as barrenness, joblessness, mental problems, drug addiction, or general lack of progress in

---

<sup>50</sup> Kiernan, “Problem of Evil,” 295.

<sup>51</sup> Father G. H. Joyce is quoted in H. J. McCloskey, “God and Evil,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 10, no. 39 (Apr., 1960): 98.

life are interpreted in the YIC as symptoms of lives afflicted by Satan or any of his human or non-human agents.<sup>52</sup> Evil spiritual forces are perceived to be at work, especially, in three prominent situations: first, when there is little or no noticeable economic progress in the life of an individual; second, when a person has a chronic or incurable disease; and third, when there is a pattern of disasters or setbacks perceived in an individual or in a family.

First, evil in the Yorùbá world, is the antithesis of life. Whereas life represents all that is good and desirable, evil is related to the unpleasant experiences that make life unbearable. Awolalu's remark captures this Yorùbá ethos:

To the Yoruba ... life means not merely existence of physical life, gifted with breath like any other creature; when the Yoruba think or speak of life with reference to a person or society the meanings they attach to it embrace good health, prosperity, longevity, peace and happiness. In life, the Yoruba expect to have felicity, well-being and good fortune. But the prerequisite to these blessings, they believe, is peace. This is what they call *Alafia*. It is the sum total of all that is good that man may desire – an undisturbed harmonious life.<sup>53</sup>

In the traditional setting, as well as in the Christian community, the Yorùbá assume that those who experience persistent difficulties in life are under some evil spiritual attacks.

Such individuals may not enjoy the good things of life until they are delivered from their

---

<sup>52</sup> See Ezekiel Ajani, “‘Enemies of My Father’s House Die by Fire’ Reflections on the Response of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries to African Cosmology of Evil,” *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 17, no. 3 (2012): 36-37; see also D. K. Olukoya, *Dealing with Unprofitable Roots* (Lagos: TBCCM, 1999), 7; cf., Samson Fatokun, “Water and Its Cultic Use in African Initiated Churches in Yoruba-land of South-western Nigeria: An Issue in African Development Discourse,” *Swedish Missiological Themes* 96, no. 4 (2008), where Fatokun remarks: “An average African believes that most problems encountered in life (for example barrenness, protracted illness, joblessness and even a common headache) have spiritual roots and can be better solved through spiritual measures,” 355; cf., Peter Sarpong’s remark: “Like its chief vehicle, disease, death never appears to be natural. The African attributes death (and disease) to every conceivable cause – witches, magicians, destiny, the divinities, the ancestors, God – which would not be operative or effective if either the victim were not wicked or had not offended in some way. Sudden death, especially through some tragic accident, are considered the worst” (“Aspects of an African World-view,” in *Religion, Morality, and Population Dynamics*, ed. John S. Pobee [Legon, Ghana: University of Ghana Population Dynamics Programme, 1974], 64).

<sup>53</sup> Awolalu, “Yoruba Philosophy,” 21.

spiritual enemies. The leaders in the YIC prescribe series of prayer and deliverance sessions to set the “victims” free from bondage.

Second, a chronic sickness is often perceived as a symptom of a life afflicted by witchcraft. Yorùbá churches are concerned that illness is a tool that witches use to oppress their victims. According to Pobe: “In Africa, witchcraft beliefs continue to hold their ground and to some extent account for the popularity of the ‘spiritual’ churches, which are sometimes also called ‘witchcraft eradication movements’ because that appears to be a major concern and preoccupation.”<sup>54</sup> William Reyburn, in his comparison of the perceptions of sickness, sin and the curse in the modern-day African Church to the notions held within the Old Testament Jewish community, asserts that in both cultures, “Sickness ... is the result of evil doing, be it one’s own failure to measure up or the curses of one’s enemies or others seeking to destroy him. Health is considered evidence of one’s power of soul to ward off evil influences or of one’s personal integrity and living in the community.”<sup>55</sup> Like Reyburn, Borokini describes the perception among the Yorùbá that, “all sicknesses are caused by evil supernatural forces. Such forces include familiar spirits, sorcerers, witches/wizards, oriental spirits, spirit gulch and religious spirits, who are considered enemies.”<sup>56</sup>

Third, Yorùbá Christians believe that some problems in the human life are consequences of some generational curses that may have been pronounced by the clan

---

<sup>54</sup> Pobe, *Toward an African Theology*, 118.

<sup>55</sup> William Reyburn, "Sickness, Sin, and the Curse: The Old Testament and the African Church," *Practical Anthropology* 7, no. 5 (1960): 217.

<sup>56</sup> Temitope Borokini, “Traditional Medicine Practice among the Yoruba People of Nigeria: A Historical Perspective,” *Journal of Medicinal Plants Studies* 2, no. 6 (2014): 22.

ancestors when they were alive. A generational curse, according to Marilyn Hickey, is “an un-cleansed iniquity that increases in strength from generation to generation affecting the members of that family and all who come into relationship with that family.”<sup>57</sup>

Whereas Christians in the *Aladura* churches, like the traditional religious worshippers, still have high regards for some ancestors and treat them with respect,<sup>58</sup> Christians in the Pentecostal circles generally include the ancestors on the list of the possible suspects who may make life miserable for their family members through generational curses.<sup>59</sup>

Olukoya identifies some evil that irked ancestors unleash on society:

Marital problems could also develop as a result of these pointers to ancestral foundational bondage. Violent death and strange accidents are also possibilities. Abnormal or aberrant behavioral patterns could also come-up. Other indexes of foundational or generational problems include continuous business failures, abnormal sexual urges, addiction to drugs prescribed by medical doctors, self-inflicted injuries, feeling of being caged and other mysterious problems.<sup>60</sup>

Some “foundational problems,” Olukoya asserts, are caused by ancestors: “Problems like failure, marital instability, demotion, destiny destruction, failure, career stagnation and the like are part of the problems issuing from the foundation of many people.”<sup>61</sup>

Furthermore, some of the difficulties that people are experiencing in life are, according to

---

<sup>57</sup> Marilyn Hickey, *Breaking Generational Curses: Overcoming the Legacy of Sin in your Family* (Tulsa, Oklahoma, Harrison House, 2000), 13.

<sup>58</sup> See e.g., Olusegun Oladosu, “Ancestral Veneration in the Religious Expression of the Indigenous *Aladura* Churches,” *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 17, no. 2 (January 1, 2012): 166.

<sup>59</sup> See e.g., D. K. Olukoya, *Dealing with Evil Powers of Your Father’s House* (Lagos: The Battle Cry Christian Ministries, 2002), according to Olukoya: “There is a very strong umbilical cord attaching every living being to his ancestors. Although you may have your own mind, you are a product of your ancestors. They have such a strong hold on you. Either you know it or not, the *powers of your father’s house* have continued to exercise a very strong influence on your life and destiny” Kindle Location 72.

<sup>60</sup> D. K. Olukoya, *Your Foundation and Your Destiny* (Lagos: Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, 2011), 51–52.

<sup>61</sup> Olukoya, *Dealing with Evil Powers*, Kindle Location 174.

Olukoya, brought about through the cultic covenants which the victims' ancestors made with the diviners: "Many people enter bondage as a result of rites of protection performed for their well-being and security by their parents."<sup>62</sup> Christian leaders in the YIC speak authoritatively about the ancestors and the other spirit beings based on the existing knowledge of these entities in the traditional setting.

### 5.2.2 Malice from "Enemies"

In the traditional Yorùbá setting, evil occurs when a wicked person inflicts harm on another member in the society. Often, the affliction caused may defy simple or logical explanation, in which case, the offender is perceived to be a witch, someone with the supernatural ability to inflict harm on individuals or on the larger society. It is not unusual for Yorùbá "witches" to be known to their victims; many domestic quibbles in the Yorùbá extended families potentially lead to witchcraft accusation. In Koster-Oyekan's view, a Yorùbá witch may be, "someone in the family, or from outside, who is jealous of the otherwise good luck of the woman, i.e., her good marriage partner, her success in business, or her material wealth, and is trying to hurt her by preventing her from having (more) children."<sup>63</sup> Witches are ferocious enemies (*Òtá*) who delight in the failures and anxieties in the community.

---

<sup>62</sup> D. K. Olukoya, *Deliverance from Spirit Husband and Spirit Wife* (Lagos: The Battle Cry Christian Ministries, 1999), 24; cf. J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Mission to 'Set the Captives Free,': Healing, Deliverance, and Generational Curses in Ghanaian Pentecostalism," *International Review of Mission* 93, nos. 370/371 (July/October, 2004), 298, where Asamoah-Gyadu remarks: "In the African experience, the effects of generational/ancestral curses, it is believed, are to be seen in the prevalence of chronic and hereditary diseases, emotional excesses and allergies, and frequent miscarriages and deaths, suicidal tendencies, and persistent poverty within one's family."

<sup>63</sup> Winny Koster-Oyekan, "Infertility among Yoruba Women: Perceptions on Causes, Treatments and Consequences," *African Journal of Reproductive Health* 3, no. 1 (May, 1999): 17.



Deji Ayegboyin, in his short but condensed treatise, *Ota Ile, Ota Ode*, identifies two categories of spiritual antagonists or “enemies” which the Yorùbá believe are “poised to hold back and, if possible, destroy people’s *ayanmo* (destiny).” These are *Òtá Ilé* (an enemy from within or domestic enemy) and *Òtá Òde* (an enemy from without or external adversary).<sup>64</sup> An *Òtá* or “enemy” is any wicked human or spirit being who stands in the way of individual or societal progress. Virtually any disastrous event in the human world is attributable to the activities of an *Òtá*. Enemies or *Òtá* are “representatives of all evil forces threatening life and order in the world.”<sup>65</sup> “Enemies” are not spared by Christians who attend the Mountain of Fire and Miracle church; they are to be utterly destroyed through violent prayers.<sup>66</sup> Christians who attend the YIC believe that no tangible progress can be made by human beings until the spiritual antagonists in their lives are incapacitated.

The Yorùbá believe that human beings are most vulnerable to the evil perpetrated by members of the family or very close associates. This is why they say, “*Bi Ikú Ilé kò bá pa ni, t’o òde kò lè pa ni*” (meaning: “If there is no enemy within, the enemy outside can do nothing”).<sup>67</sup> Moreover, it is believed that the external enemy or *Òtá Òde*, would find it difficult to cause affliction in a family without the betrayal of an internal enemy, or an

---

<sup>64</sup> Deji Ayegboyin, “Ota Ile, Ota Ode: Reflections on the Yoruba Obsession with the Enemy and the Use of Imprecatory Prayers in the Aladura Church Movements,” *Journal of African Christian Thought* 12, no. 1 (June 2009): 33.

<sup>65</sup> Ayegboyin, “Ota Ile,” 33.

<sup>66</sup> For samples of MFM prayers against enemies, see esp. Olukoya, *Prayer Rain*; see also D. K. Olukoya, *Violent Prayers to Disgrace Stubborn Problems* (Lagos: The Battle Cry Christian Ministries, 1999); see also, D. K. Olukoya, *Prayer Passport to Crush Oppression* (Lagos: Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, 2006).

<sup>67</sup> See Olatunde Lawuyi and J. K. Olupona, “Metaphoric Associations and the Conception of Death: Analysis of a Yoruba World View,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 18, no. 1 (1988),” 3.

*Òtá Ilé*. Evil spirit beings, after all, collaborate with one another to maximize the impact of their destructive activities in the world.

### 5.2.3 Death as the Ultimate Evil

Death is the ultimate evil in the Yorùbá world because death brings to an end all human plans and aspirations, at least in this physical world. The Yorùbá, in Awolalu's view, see death as a grievous obtrusion to life:

They do not feel death ought to interfere with life because, to them, life is the normal condition and death the abnormal. No matter how long a man lives on earth, the Yoruba still suspect witchcraft or some other evil forces whenever he dies. This suspicion is greater still when a youth dies or when an external influence puts an end to life in a violent manner.<sup>68</sup>

“Sudden” death, especially, evinces the reality of evil in the community. Whereas the death of an aged family member is ordinarily celebrated, a young person who dies in the prime of life is suspected to have been robbed of life through witchcraft.

Death is received as an extreme evil when it is not anticipated or when it is believed to have been caused by witchcraft.<sup>69</sup> Such is the attitude towards, for example, a young vibrant individual who suddenly falls ill and dies without any perceivable cause. The sudden death of a progressive or prosperous individual is always received with suspicion. Often, a witch is blamed for the incidence. Even when there may be no discernible gain for the witch in inflicting such deep pain on the bereaved, the Yorùbá assume that witches derive some pleasure in inflicting pain on society through death.

---

<sup>68</sup> Awolalu, “Yoruba Philosophy,” 34.

<sup>69</sup> See Peter Morton-Williams, “Yoruba Responses to the Fear of Death,” *Journal of the International African Institute* 30, no. 1 (January, 1960), 35. Morton-William asserts that “The Yoruba admit that they fear witchcraft more than anything else. This is because it is believed to be the most frequent cause of death. When witchcraft strikes children, it threatens the parents with ultimate social extinction.”

Society loses when individual destinies are truncated through sudden death. It is not unusual for some bereaved members of the family, in their frustration, to accuse some other members of the society of inducing death on the deceased through witchcraft. Death evokes a particularly deep sense of loss when the deceased is perceived not to have completed the task for which he or she had lived.

The way a person dies also affects how death is received in the community. For example, the death of a person who is killed by lightning is perceived differently than that of someone who dies in a motor accident. Whereas death by a car accident may be received as just an unfortunate incidence (although any form of death for a young person is received with suspicion), the individual who is killed by lightning without much doubt is deemed to have incurred the wrath of the deities. Although some of these perceptions are changing with the influence of education and Christianity, the idea persists in modern times that some natural disasters are caused by some vengeful spirits in the community. An unexpected death in the community is often received with trepidation. Death by suicide, especially, creates anxiety in the community. Anyone who commits suicide is believed to have been driven into such an abominable act by a mental disorder induced by some evil spirits. For no one in their right minds would take their own life unless they were driven into it by some irresistible malevolent forces.

The Yorùbá attitude to suicide provides an intriguing glimpse into the people's perception of what it means to be human. To commit suicide is as grievous as to commit murder; both are seriously frowned upon as serious abominations or offense against society. In both cases, life is terminated before its appointed time. Olufunke Adeboye and Bolatito Lanre-Abass have different interpretations of the rationale behind the popular

Yorùbá saying, *Ikú ya j'èsin* (meaning, “Death is preferable to ignominy”).<sup>70</sup> For Adeboye, the Yorùbá generally consider suicide as an extreme antisocial behavior that is highly discouraged. However, in rare heroic situations, Yorùbá leaders overlook the “sin” of suicide when it is carried out for the general good of society.<sup>71</sup>

Unlike Adeboye, Lanre-Abass maintains that the general Yorùbá antipathy for suicide is set aside when human beings face very serious health conditions that make living undignified. *Ikú yá j'èsín* implies for the Yorùbá the willingness to consider suicide as an honorable exception in the face of ignominy. In Lanre-Abass' opinion, when human dignity is at stake, the Yorùbá may choose to invoke their conception of good health (*Àláfíà*) to opt for physician-assisted suicide as a morally justifiable option to living in an extremely dishonorable state.<sup>72</sup> Such an exception, Lanre-Abass warns, would not make euthanasia a viable option among the Yorùbá.

Death is personified in the Yorùbá world. The causal agent of death (*Ikú*) is God's messenger who visits human beings whenever their times are up. The death-spirit (*Ikú*) takes its victim away at the appointed time. This is why the Yorùbá say concerning a dead person, “*Ikú muu lọ*” (lit: “death has taken him or her away”) or “*Ikú pa á*” (lit: “death has killed him or her”). The general idea is that death is a spirit being who comes at the appointed time to help an individual cross over from the world of the living into the

---

<sup>70</sup> See Bolatito A. Lanre-Abass, “Suicide and Human Dignity: An African Perspective,” *Humanity & Social Sciences Journal* 5, no. 1 (2010): 50–62; cf., Olufunke Adeboye, “Iku Ya J'esin”: Politically Motivated Suicide, Social Honor, and Chieftaincy Politics in Early Colonial Ibadan,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 41, no. 2 (2007): 189–225.

<sup>71</sup> Adeboye, “Iku Ya J'esin,” Adeboye remarks that in the early twentieth century, leaders who committed politically motivated suicides were treated as heroes because they “sacrificed” their lives for the group's goals and survival: “Embattled public figures thus killed themselves as a way of preserving their personal and family honor in the face of impending alienation and ignominy,” 194.

<sup>72</sup> Lanre-Abass, “Suicide,” 50.

abode of the dead. Often, though, death may come prematurely or may be invoked on its victim in an untimely manner. A timely death, one appointed by the Supreme Being, occurs in old age or when an individual is perceived to have achieved substantial success in life. An untimely or sudden death, on the other hand, is believed to be caused by evil spirit beings who prevent their victims from living out the full length of their years or achieving their God-ordained goals in life.

Death unveils the interrelatedness of the physical world and the spirit realm. Whereas the human spirit belongs in both worlds, it is death that provides the avenue for human beings to cross over from the world of the living to that of the spirit beings. The physical body may be destroyed at death but the spirit, being indestructible, lives on in the realm of the spirit. Because life is a temporary place where the spirit beings visit from time to time, it is possible for some dead human beings to return to the physical world or to pay occasional visits to their loved ones on earth. Moreover, the continuity of personal identity in the world of the spirits makes it possible for some members of the deceased's family to recognize when the spirits of their dead loved ones are around. Death allows the Yorùbá to perceive that the spirit world is real and near. It is the bridge that links the world of the living with the abode of the dead.<sup>73</sup>

### 5.3 Salvation as Well-being in the YIC

Rosemary Goring defines salvation as “the deliverance of humankind by religious means from sin or evil, the restoration of human beings to their true state, and the

---

<sup>73</sup> See J. Akinyele Omoyajowo, “Human Destiny, Personal Rites and Sacrifices in African Traditional Religion,” *Journal of Religious Thought* 30, no. 1 (1973): 6.

attainment of eternal blessedness.”<sup>74</sup> Deliverance presupposes the existence of evil or an undesirable condition from which human beings must be rescued if they would attain the purpose for which they exist.<sup>75</sup> The Catholic Church affirms that irrespective of religious leaning, human beings desire to be “saved” from one predicament or another: “The search for salvation is recorded in the very dynamism of the human mind, indeed it appears as the fundamental and universal aspect of it.”<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, the theme of salvation appears to be central in every religion of the world because, as Adedokun rightly remarks, “all religions aim at restoring human beings to their true state. All religions also have a belief that people must be saved from something: it can be salvation from sin, hell, dangers, poverty and anything that is unpalatable within life”<sup>77</sup>

Salvation, in many African societies, is first and foremost about rescuing a human being from difficult or unpleasant life experiences. With specific regards to the Anlo Ewe of West Africa, Gaba observes: “salvation is deliverance and this deliverance is from material ills in all manifestations. Peace, on this score, can be equated with material contentment.”<sup>78</sup> Any situation that prevents human beings from achieving their potentials in life presents a grievous threat from which a human being must be saved. Salvation entails not only returning human beings to the state they were before an affliction

---

<sup>74</sup> Rosemary Goring, ed., “Salvation” in *The Wordsworth Dictionary of Beliefs and Religions*, (Herefordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1995), 455.

<sup>75</sup> See e.g., Jegede, “Soteriology of Ifa,” 201-202.

<sup>76</sup> The Vatican, *Religions: Fundamental Themes for a Dialogic Understanding*, (The Vatican, 1970), 87.

<sup>77</sup> Adedokun, “A Theological Reflection on Mbiti’s Conception of Salvation in African Christianity,” *Nebula* 8, no. 1 (December, 2011): 25; cf., The Vatican, *Religions*, according to the Vatican, “Whatever else religion may not be, it is essentially a reaching forward to the ideal of salvation,” 87, 175.

<sup>78</sup> Christian Gaba, “Man’s Salvation: Its Nature and Meaning in African Traditional Religion,” in *Christianity in Independent Africa*, ed. Edward Fasholé-Luke, Richard Gray, Adrian Hastings and Godwin Tasie (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1978), 399.

occurred, but more importantly, it presupposes a process whereby all the forces that potentially threaten human well-being and destiny are removed. Individual and societal peace can only occur when all “enemies” are vanquished and human beings are free from adverse physical and spiritual conditions. To be “saved” is to be rescued from circumstances that make life unpleasant for human beings. In the Yorùbá world, there are three major circumstances from which human beings must be “saved”: 1) the socio-economic situations which make life unbearable in many African societies; 2) the evil spirit beings whose activities have direct negative impact on human well-being; and 3) the debilitating diseases that prevent human beings from achieving their life goals.

### 5.3.1 Relief from Socio-economic Exigencies

The poor state of the social and economic structures in many parts of Africa have direct impacts on how African Christians perceive “salvation.” Adedokun remarks that African pastors, in desperate response to the dire socio-economic conditions in Africa, downplay the aspect of salvation that speaks to human sinful condition; but instead, these pastors focus more on salvation as a deliverance from physical human afflictions:

Religious programs on the various media houses in the country are embellished with messages on deliverance from problems. Hardly will one hear anything about salvation from sin or salvation of the soul; the overwhelming emphasis now is on salvation or deliverance from problems such as financial problems, joblessness, marital problems, barrenness, spiritual attacks, deliverance from powers of darkness, just to mention a few. Little or no emphasis is laid on salvation of the soul from sin. This is more rampant among the Aladura, Pentecostal and Charismatic movements than in the mainline Protestant churches<sup>79</sup>

Prosperity gospel appeals to African Christians, in part, because such theology provides a pragmatic response to the mismanaged economies in many African countries.

---

<sup>79</sup> Adedokun, “Theological Reflection,” 32.

Christ is the Savior who delivers his followers from immediate dangers, which in the African situation are essentially poverty and lack.<sup>80</sup> No wonder the fastest growing churches on the continent of Africa are those that preach about Christ's determination to make his followers prosperous.<sup>81</sup> Asamoah-Gyadu echoes the thinking of many African Christians in his statement: "Prosperity gospel teaches that God has met all human needs of health and wealth through the suffering and death of Christ. Believers are therefore encouraged to claim these blessings."<sup>82</sup>

Instilled in the Yorùbá Christian spirituality is the persuasion that all human beings are created to prosper and any situation that stands in the way of human happiness or prosperity is a form of spiritual "oppression" that must be redressed through "spiritual" means. Furthermore, Yorùbá Christian leaders, in their determination to present a positive outlook on human existence, cast the superhuman spirit beings as the antithesis to the good that God does in the world; whereas God desires the very best for his creaturely human beings, evil spirit beings are bent on making life miserable for human beings. For Yorùbá Christians, Satan, demons, witches and ancestors are responsible for most problems that confront human beings in life.

---

<sup>80</sup> See Lausanne Theology Working Group Statement on the Prosperity Gospel: From the African Chapter of the Lausanne Theology Working Group at Its Consultation in Akripong, Ghana, 8–9 October, 2008 and 1–4 September 2009, *ERT* 34, no. 2 (2010): 99–102; the group defined "prosperity gospel as the teaching that believers have a right to the blessings of health and wealth and that they can obtain these blessings through positive confessions of faith and the 'sowing of seeds' through the faithful payments of tithes and offerings," 99.

<sup>81</sup> See, e.g., Paul Gifford, "Expecting Miracles: The Prosperity Gospel in Africa." *Christian Century* 124, no. 14 (July 10, 2007): 20.

<sup>82</sup> J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Witchcraft Accusations and Christianity in Africa," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 39, no. 1 (January, 2015): 25; cf., Lovemore Togarasei's remark: "The gospel of prosperity therefore teaches that all resources are there for people to claim them. God provided them for humanity therefore no one should experience poverty. When it is experienced, it is not the will of God but of the devil" ("The Pentecostal Gospel of Prosperity in African Contexts of Poverty: An Appraisal," *Exchange* 40, no. 4 [January 1, 2011]: 344).



### 5.3.2 Protection from Evil Spirits

In contrast to God, Satan, demons and witches are perceived by the Yorùbá as the most potent purveyors of evil in the human world. These spirit beings are the very ones from whom human beings must be delivered if life is to unfold as it should. Satan must be defeated if human beings will succeed at any life endeavor. Problems such as protracted illness, unemployment, poverty, barrenness, and frequent horrifying nightmares are some conditions induced by Satan. The prayer ministries of many Yorùbá churches are arenas where Satan and his evil demonic agents are engaged in spiritual battles. According to Awoniyi:

The various prayers, seminars, night vigils and deliverance services in the movements' practice are manifestations of their belief in the spirit world. These movements demonstrate fear of the evil spirit and they always attack Satan or the devil in most of their prayers. They see him as the head of all evil spirits and the power behind misfortune and bad happenings.<sup>83</sup>

Yorùbá Christians believe that human beings must be saved from the superhuman spirit beings that are responsible for life adversities such as incurable diseases, poverty, infertility, reoccurring loss of employment, and the like. The Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM), perhaps more than any of the other Yorùbá Initiated Churches, epitomizes the traditional ethos in the YIC that human foes are the evil spirit beings with which human beings share their world. Ajani's remark concerning the response of MFM Christians to evil is insightful: "It is obvious that African Cosmology, and in particular Yoruba cosmology on evil coupled with the claims of divine inspiration by the leadership, have largely structured the group's spiritual response to the African

---

<sup>83</sup> Peter R. Awoniyi, "Yoruba Indigenous Spirituality and the Reshaping of New Religious Movements in South-West Nigeria," *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 16, no. 1 (2011): 160.

worldview of evil.”<sup>84</sup> In MFM soteriology, every intimidating situation in the human life is induced by Satan, or any of his demonic agents, including ancestors and witches. Until these intelligent beings are defeated, no progress can be made by those whose lives are in jeopardy from spiritual attacks.

Christians in the YIC believe that life’s adversities occur because of the involvement of evil spirits in human affairs. Consequently, these forces must be resisted and defeated if human beings must be saved. In as much as witches, demons and angry ancestors are responsible for much of the evil in the world, Christians in the YIC see their leaders as the captains through whom their battles for freedom would be fought and won. Leaders in the YIC are necessarily charismatic; they must be to project the image of spiritual competence. Not only will they be expected to communicate the content of Scripture to their followers, but more importantly, their main duty is to lead the spiritual army against the dark forces of life. Revival banners of many indigenous churches demonstrate the reality that many Christians attend the YIC with the expectation that their leaders will confront and conquer the spiritual foes of life for them.

### 5.3.3 Healing from Diseases

Allan Anderson, in his report on the Pentecostal and Protestant dialogues on the health and healing ministry of the global church, remarks: “For Christians in the South, healing is a more central issue than it is for those in the North, where medical facilities are abundant and adequate health care is taken for granted.”<sup>85</sup> While Good health is

---

<sup>84</sup> Ajani, ““Enemies,”” 29; Ajani further remarks that “The MFM believes the group has been divinely called and strategically located by God to wage spiritual warfare against ancestral and inherited household evil in people’s lives, particularly Africans,” 35.

<sup>85</sup> Allan Anderson, “Pentecostals, Healing and Ecumenism,” *International Review of Mission* 93, no. 370-371 (2004): 495.

necessary for human beings to achieve their goals in life, Southern Christians see illness as the antithesis to life. The assumption in the YIC is that all blessings come to human beings as gifts from God while life's setbacks and physical or emotional afflictions are manifestations of demonic or spiritual oppressions.<sup>86</sup> To be saved is to be delivered or rescued from any situation that puts human beings under the tyranny of the devil and the demons. Human health is believed to be the prime target for evil spirits. Many sicknesses are regarded as spiritual attacks in the Yorùbá churches. Many *Aladura* churches have healing houses or *Àgbàla Ìwosàn*, where sick people are treated with herbs and fervent prayers.<sup>87</sup> Leaders in the YIC believe that sickness and diseases are symptoms of spiritual attacks. Subdued by illnesses, victims of demonic attacks are unable to fulfill their God-ordained destiny in life. Chiquette's general remark concerning the Pentecostal

Movements is particularly true for the YIC:

Pentecostals perceive sickness as a direct attack on their condition as children of God. They almost always give a religious dimension to any experience of sickness and healing. Their belief that God cares for all aspects of their lives causes them to look for the divine presence and divine reasons even in cases of sickness.<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup> See e.g., Jose A. Da Silva, "African Independent Churches: Origin and Development," *Anthropos* 4, no. 6 (1993), Da Silva notes: "Among the Akan of Ghana, health is associated with goodness, blessings, and beauty – all that is positively valued in life. Disease, on the other hand, is the breakdown of life and harmony. Diseases can be classified as naturally or spiritually caused. The ones classified as spiritually caused require an additional therapeutic step that must take place at the shrine of a healer," 395; cf. Robert Mitchell, "Christian Healing," in *African Independent Church Movement*, ed. Victor E. W. Hayward (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1963), 48.

<sup>87</sup> See e.g., C. O. Oshun, "Healing Practices among Aladura Pentecostals: An Intercultural Study," *Missionalia* 28, nos. 2-3 (August/November, 2000), 242, where Oshun suggests that healing is the main reason for both the emergence and existence of the Aladura Pentecostal church movement; cf. Willem Berends, "African Traditional Healing Practices and the Christian Community," *Missiology: An International Review* 21, no. 3 (July 1993), 276, where Berends point out that, "One of the main areas in which the [African separatist churches] differ from the mission churches is in the emphasis they put on spiritual healing practices."

<sup>88</sup> Daniel Chiquette, "Healing, Salvation, and Mission: The Ministry of Healing in Latin American Pentecostalism," *International Review of Mission* 95, nos. 370/371 (October, 2004): 475.

Allan Anderson observes that, “Healing and protection from evil are the most prominent practices in the liturgy of many African independent churches and are probably the most important elements in their evangelism and church recruitment.”<sup>89</sup>

Good health is the stepping stone to human joy and prosperity: “When healing and deliverance take place, prosperity, in terms of abundant life in Christ and success in the material world, is what African Pentecostals believe follows the believer.”<sup>90</sup> Or as Asamoah-Gyadu further points out, “‘Healing and deliverance’ thus means being freed from demonic influences and curses, that people may enjoy ‘health and wholeness’ or God’s fullness of life understood to be available in Christ.”<sup>91</sup>

Leaders in the African churches, in their determination to supplant the traditional religious priests, focus on resolving the same concerns that plague most Africans.

Onyinah remarks:

The combating of and protection from these witchcraft and sorcery activities, therefore, have become a common concern. Formerly, these needs were sought from the priests of the gods (shrines), sorcerers or medicine men. Currently, as initiated by the African Initiated Churches (AICs) in the early 20th century, almost all churches include exorcistic activities, referred to as “deliverance” in their programmes ... The main agenda of this sort of Pentecostalisation is deliverance, which is based on the fear of and the dealing with spirit forces, including witchcraft, sorcery and demons.<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>89</sup> Allan H. Anderson, *African Reformation: African Initiated Christianity in the 20th Century*, Trenton, N J, Africa World Press, 2001, p. 35.

<sup>90</sup> Asamoah-Gyadu, “Set the Captives Free,” 393.

<sup>91</sup> Asamoah-Gyadu, “Set the Captives Free,” 394.

<sup>92</sup> Opoku Onyinah, “Contemporary ‘Witchdemonology’ in Africa,” *International Review of Mission* 93, nos. 370/371 (Jul./Oct., 2004): 332.

Like in many African traditional religions where the idea of a forgiving God is vague,<sup>93</sup> Yorùbá church leaders teach their followers to vigorously resist every antagonism of life. Olukoya inspires the members of his church to reclaim whatever evil spirit beings may have taken from them: “You must fight in order to defend your territory. You must fight to retrieve what the enemy has taken.”<sup>94</sup> Unlike in the traditional religions where evil spirits can be appeased, Christians in the YIC do not believe that demonic beings can be persuaded to change their attitude toward their victims. Imprecatory prayers are commonly offered in the Yorùbá churches against the human and non-human antagonists of life.<sup>95</sup>

Yorùbá Christian do not hesitate to invoke curses upon their spiritual enemies. Ayegboyin remarks that “virtually all the *Aladura* patriarchs used imprecatory prayers.”<sup>96</sup> Ogunkunle remarks that, “The main focus of the Mountain of Fire Miracles Ministries under the leadership of Dr. D. O. Olukoya is imprecatory prayer against Satan and his forces,”<sup>97</sup> To Christian leaders, spoken rebukes are the powerful tools with which Christians can free themselves from spiritual bondages:

---

<sup>93</sup> See e.g., Cyril Okorochoa, “The Meaning of Salvation: An African Perspective,” in *Emerging Voices in Global Christian Theology*, ed. William Dyrness (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 78, quoting K. Daniel, Okorochoa maintains that “The African primal concept of salvation does not seem to have a clear concept of a forgiving God. the religious in Africa, ‘are very sincere in observing their religious ceremonies, for they believe that once a member has provoked the wrath of the gods, he may not be forgotten without been punished in one way or another.’”

<sup>94</sup> Olukoya, *Your Foundation and Your Destiny*, 46.

<sup>95</sup> Awoniyi, “Yoruba Indigenous Spirituality,” Awoniyi remarks that, “Dangerous prayers against enemies in Yoruba spirituality have reshaped the beliefs and practices of the new religious movements. Curses are allowed against enemies in Yoruba religious practice, because enemies are not given easy time in Yoruba culture,” 159.

<sup>96</sup> Ayegboyin, “Ota Ile,” 36.

<sup>97</sup> C. O. Ogunkunle, “Imprecation as a Weapon of the Oppressed: A Comparative Study of Selected Individuals in Israel and Churches in Nigeria,” *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies. Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan* 35 (2003): 29.

The *Aladura* use *ogede*, *ayajo*, *orin afose* (which they refer to as Christian incantations) as embellishments in their prayers for clients, in order to command healing and ward off evil spirits, to bewitch and cast spells on enemies. At times, they use holy or sealed words. It is believed that the correct use of definite statements will set in motion the desired comfort and peace for clients.<sup>98</sup>

Pentecostal Christians, on their part, frequently use prayer formulae that include phrases such as “the blood of Jesus,” and “the name of Jesus” to confront spiritual foes.

Salvation, to these Christians, entails invoking the name or blood of Jesus into any intimidating situation in life. The use of a prayer formula, however, may mask the need to seriously address the problem a Christian may be going through. Agazue, for example, warns: “As scores of people are killed due to poor driving skills and poorly maintained roads and vehicles, pastors and evangelists make their own money by covering vehicle tires ‘with the blood of Jesus’ to protect them.”<sup>99</sup>

Most problems in human life are interpreted in the YIC as symptoms of spiritual attacks or possession. People who are prone to frequent physical disasters or unusual life setbacks are perceived to be possessed by evil spirits. In addition, antisocial or abnormal behaviors in human beings are interpreted as manifestations of minds controlled by evil spirits. Where traditional religious worshipers took their spiritual problems to the local priest or *Babaláwo*, *Aladura* Christians, on their part, go to the *Woli*, or prophet, for “deliverance.” Babalola remarks that, “The *modus operandi* of spirit possession in the traditional circle is similar to what obtains among the *Aladura* churches. The only difference might be that instead of the medium mentioning the name of Jesus in the

---

<sup>98</sup> Ayegboyin, “Ota Ile,” 36.

<sup>99</sup> Chima Agazue, *The Role of a Culture of Superstition in the Proliferation of Religio-Commercial Pastors in Nigeria* (Bloomington, IN: AnthonHouse, 2013), 38.

traditional circle, he is found to mention the name of the deity by which he is being possessed.”<sup>100</sup>

Many Christians who attend the YIC relate salvation to the miraculous healing they expect to receive at the churches.<sup>101</sup> Healing is so central to the existence of the *Aladura* church that Ogungbile asserts:

Salvation, to the Aladura, means a state of wholeness in man: spiritual, physical and psychological health. Diseases and illnesses are seen, not necessarily as of a physical, but of a deep spiritual and metaphysical nature and causation. There is a strong awareness of, and consciousness in, evil spiritual forces. These forces which manifest and inhabit in human beings and some natural phenomena, are claimed to be the causes of both natural and non-natural evils and calamities.<sup>102</sup>

Aiyegboyin, shares Ogungbile’s view: “Healing of bodily diseases through prayers, which is otherwise known [as] *ise iwosan (cura divina)* is an integral part of Aladura spirituality. In fact, the healing of sickness and deliverance from oppression through prayers are by far the most common reasons which people give for attending the Aladura Movement”<sup>103</sup>

#### 5.4 Soteriology of Fear in the YIC

The Christian doctrine of salvation has historically focused on Christ, especially with respect to his suffering and death on the cross for human redemption. Central to the Yorùbá Christian idea of salvation, it has been pointed out, is the idea of securing

---

<sup>100</sup> E. O. Babalola, “The Impact of African Traditional Religion and Culture upon the Aladura Churches,” *AJT* 6, no. 1 (1992): 135.

<sup>101</sup> See Kofi Appiah-Kubi, and Sergio Torre, eds., *African Theology en Route*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), Appiah-Kubi observes that, “The most important single reason why people join the Indigenous African Christian Churches is healing,” 121; see also Da Silva, “African Independent Churches,” 393.

<sup>102</sup> David Ogungbile, “Meeting Point of Culture and Health: The Case of the Aladura Churches in Nigeria,” *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 6, no 1 (1997): 98.

<sup>103</sup> Deji Ayegboyin, “Aladura Spirituality: Authentic African Initiative in Christian Missions,” *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 16, no. 1 (2011): 169.

comfort for human beings in this world. Particularly, salvation in the YIC is concerned about protecting human beings from the malicious activities of evil spirit beings. Preoccupied with demonic forces and the impacts on human society, the Yorùbá Christian doctrine of salvation can more appropriately be described as a soteriology of fear because it inevitably presents Christ as the Savior amidst the physical and spiritual circumstances that threaten human comfort or existence. Aylward Shorter, however, warns: “To see all misfortune, especially the more dramatic disasters, as eventually traceable to human causes is intellectually satisfying. It also creates an illusion of control over evil forces, but ultimately it is not credible and, worse than that, it entails unjust judgements and the rendering of real for imagined evil.”<sup>104</sup> The salvation theme in the YIC is built, not essentially around the suffering and death of Christ on the cross, but rather around human suffering and human desire to be free from the social and economic situations that threaten life.

#### 5.4.1 Demonizing Socioeconomic Problems

The poor economic conditions in many parts of Africa may have contributed to the development of a soteriology that induces fear in the minds of Christians. Agazue, for example, asserts that the failure of the Nigerian government to create jobs for the citizens and to protect the people from armed robbers and kidnappers have emboldened dubious Pentecostal pastors to offer their spiritual services that will defeat the spirit beings these pastors present as being responsible for every adversity in the society.<sup>105</sup> Like Agazue,

---

<sup>104</sup> Aylward Shorter, *Jesus and the Witchdoctor: An Approach to Healing and Wholeness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 95.

<sup>105</sup> Agazue, *Culture of Superstition*, Agazue remarks: “As the government fails to create jobs for the citizens, the pastors tell the citizens that their poverty is caused by their enemies and ancestral spirits;



Asamoah-Gyadu points out that in many African societies, “Witchcraft is reinforced in people’s minds both by Christian preaching and by its coverage in the media.”<sup>106</sup> By invoking supernatural agency as the cause of human misfortunes, Asamoah-Gyadu believes that African Christians are ignoring the real problems in their society and at the same time creating another set of problems:

Rather than address the systemic socioeconomic failures brought on African countries and their people by greedy and corrupt leaders, pastors and people alike accept witches and demons as convenient causes of negative life experiences. Explaining poverty in terms of witch activities has led to a situation in which Pentecostal/charismatic healing camps receive not only people accused of witchcraft but also perceived victims looking for divine intervention in their plight. The accusers and the accused turn to the same well in seeking help.<sup>107</sup>

Agazue and others have remarked that Nigerian Pentecostalism, in its bid to present Christianity as the panacea for every imaginable social and economic challenge in the community, is exploiting the superstitious beliefs which Africans have regarding the spirit beings and at the same time pitting family members against one another:

Christianity is thus turned into a religion promoting mistrust, hatred, enmity, disputes, altercations, ostracism, and even murders, as the number of prophets geometrically increase. Every imaginable undesirable condition or negative experience, which might realistically be the result of biological, environmental or adverse socioeconomic factors, is said to be caused by evil spirits which can be in the form of fellow human beings, the *Ogbanje* spirit, the *Mamiwater* spirit or even ancestral spirits.<sup>108</sup>

---

therefore, all they need to do in order to become rich is to purchase exorcisms, to pay all their tithes and to sow seeds. As the government’s inability to provide the masses with security enables armed robbers, kidnappers, terrorists and ritual killers to rule the streets, the pastors tell them, as a matter of divine revelation, that these criminals are sent by evil spirits and that by paying homage to them (the pastors) they can ensure that they are not affected.”<sup>38</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Asamoah-Gyadu, “Witchcraft Accusations,” 25

<sup>107</sup> Asamoah-Gyadu, “Witchcraft Accusations,” 25

<sup>108</sup> Agazue, *Culture of Superstition*, 21.

Agazue has reasons to be upset with the Nigerian pastors who turn the people's superstitious beliefs into prolific religious ventures for themselves: "Believers are brought together and then transformed into a collective money-making-machine for their religious leaders ... In many communities, as we have seen, people are attacked, dehumanized and branded as witches with the encouragement of their religious leaders."<sup>109</sup> Christianity has finally become, not merely a competing force against the traditional religions but an ally in reinforcing the fears that Africans have concerning the superhuman spirits in their world. Rather than debunk the myths surrounding the spirits, the Yorùbá Christian leaders exacerbate the superstitions to their benefit.

Some leaders in the YIC are not much different from the traditional religious priests who offer spiritual interpretations for every possible problem that human beings may endure in life. Matters relating to physical or emotional problems that may be properly diagnosed by competent medical doctors, are also given spiritual interpretations in the indigenous churches: "All supposedly psychological or psychiatric conditions, including those which are likely to meet the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) of mental disorders are declared evidence of evil spirit possession by prophets, through 'divine revelation.'"<sup>110</sup> Yorùbá Christian theology errs in building the teachings and spirituality of the church around human fear or more precisely, around the perception that the superhuman spirit beings in the community are responsible for the problems that human beings encounter in the course of life.

---

<sup>109</sup> Agazue, *Culture of Superstition*, 87.

<sup>110</sup> Agazue, *Culture of Superstition*, 21.

#### 5.4.2 Overcoming Evil

Protestant theologians, like Stuart Clark, have pointed out a major problem in anthropologies that blame the problem in the human world on spiritual agencies such as demons or witches. In Clark's view, such an approach presents two problems: first, it "undervalued the spiritual function of misfortune as a retribution for sin and a test of faith, and questioned God's providential control over affairs; it even implied Manicheism, since it suggested a source of evil independent of God."<sup>111</sup> The second problem, according to Clark is that it "ignored the need for repentance or the benefits of 'bearing the cross,' and attributed specious powers to the supposedly protective or curative properties of persons, places, times, and things."<sup>112</sup> Clark rightly suggests that the focus should be on God and not on the devil; not on the witch but on the victim.

Whereas there is an urgency whenever "salvation" is in view, William Barclay reminds us that the word "salvation" actually entails patience: "*Soteria* involves 'endurance'. It is he who endures to the end who will find *soteria* (Matt. 10.22; 24.13). The man who is daunted neither by opposition from without nor discouragement from within will in the end find salvation."<sup>113</sup>

The stories of Joseph in the Old Testament (Gen. 37-50) and of Paul in the New Testament (e.g., 2 Cor. 12:7ff.), depict the possible redemptive purposes that suffering may have in the believer's life. Jesus also exemplifies the pain and suffering that God

---

<sup>111</sup> Stuart Clark, "Protestant Demonology: Sin, Superstition, and Society (c. 1520-c.1630) in *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 45-81); 59-60.

<sup>112</sup> Clark, "Protestant Demonology, 60.

<sup>113</sup> William Barclay, *New Testament Words: Combining a New Testament Wordbook and More New Testament Words* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1964), s.v. "Soteria and Sozein," 273.

sometimes uses to achieve his ultimate intention for creation. In his post-resurrection walk with two disciples on the way to Emmaus, Jesus asked: “Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” (Luke 24:26). In Jesus’s view, his agonizing death on the cross was the climax of God’s masterplan to reconcile human beings to himself. Christ’s humiliation and eventual death was part of God’s design to bring Satan’s grip over human beings to an end. Joseph Weber states it well in his remark:

The cross defines both the life of Jesus and the life of the post-resurrection community. In Mark 14:62 the Son of Man is exalted, but it is the same Son of Man who suffered. The cross is not just a way station to the exaltation, but remains the sign of exaltation in the world. It is the place where the demonic is being defeated. Suffering love is the way of the people who confess Jesus as Lord (Mk 8:34).<sup>114</sup>

Wright points out that through Christ’s suffering, “God himself enters history, takes upon himself our cares and concerns and temptations and sins, suffers with us as a member of our race, and so from within acts to transform the failure of the world into triumph.”<sup>115</sup>,

Yorùbá Christians, in their persistent denouncement of evil, ignore the encouragement from Paul that pain, suffering, and death may be the destiny of those who serve God and are willing to forsake the comforts of this world for the sake of the gospel. In Paul’s theodicy, believers are experiencing pain to show God’s “all-surpassing power” which transforms our earthy suffering into eternal glory: “We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that his life may

---

<sup>114</sup> Joseph Weber, “Christ’s Victory over the Powers,” in *Above Every Name: The Lordship of Christ and Social Systems*, (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1980), 80.

<sup>115</sup> John H. Wright, “Problem of Evil, Mystery of Sin and Suffering,” *Communio* 6, (1979): 145.

also be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you” (2 Cor. 4:10-12).

In its current form, Yorùbá Christian leaders are so concerned with helping their members overcome the challenges of life that they ignore the possibilities that those challenges might be the necessary steps to their redemption. The writer of the First Letter of Peter encourages that his audience not be distracted by the temporary sufferings of this world; rather, they should rejoice that they are able to experience pain for the sake of the gospel: “But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you” (1 Pet. 4:13-14). A human-centered Christianity, according to Adenugba and Omolawal, “does not seem to have a place for the notion of the cross, suffering and sacrifice which constitute the centre of traditional Christian doctrine and life.”<sup>116</sup> At least in this instance, Yorùbá Christianity, in its determination to make religion address the socio-economic concerns of Africa, has failed woefully to project the biblical teachings of suffering in the lives of Christians.

A Christian theology that fails to acknowledge the possibility that God sometimes uses the set-backs of life to bring about an eventual good will also fall short in providing the needed comfort to those who are experiencing life’s difficult moments. Cobb, advises that Christian power may not be used to control every situation, but should always be available to provide comfort and blessings to others: “Instead of thinking of divine power as an infinite form of the human ability to control and manipulate, we can

---

<sup>116</sup> Adetutu A. Adenugba and Samuel A. Omolawal, “Religious Values and Corruption in Nigeria: A Dislocated Relationship,” *Journal of Educational and Social Research* 4, no 3 (May, 2014): 526.

think of the power that is truly divine as the power that empowers and frees others, the power that calls others to the highest possibilities available in the ever changing circumstances, the power that receives and empathizes.”<sup>117</sup> Indeed, evil is very real to the Yorùbá who almost perpetually experience shattered dreams through poor governance, disease, poverty, and devastating wars. Christianity cannot ignore the perceived needs of the people without losing its spiritual relevance in the African culture. The challenge for Yorùbá Christianity, therefore, is to maintain fidelity to the biblical teachings on the human status in a world where Satan and his demonic agents have been vanquished by Jesus Christ.

There is, however, a danger in equating salvation solely with human comfort in this life as Yorùbá Christian leaders stress Christianity’s ability to meet the social and economic needs of church goers. Werner Foerster and Georg Fohrer, in their definition of σωτηρία (salvation) point out the problem of over-focusing on human well-being at the expense of developing close human relationships with God:

NT σωτηρία does not refer to earthly relationships. Its content is not, as in the Greek understanding, well-being, health of body and soul. Nor is it the earthly liberation of the people of God from the heathen yoke, as in Judaism. It does not relate to any circumstances as such. It denotes neither healing in a religious sense, nor life, nor liberation from satanic or demonic power. It has to do solely with man’s relationship to God.<sup>118</sup>

Yorùbá Christians miss the relational aspect of salvation as they are conditioned by their leaders to focus essentially on their personal comfort in this life. Indeed, God is quite

---

<sup>117</sup> John B. Cobb, Jr., “Theodicy and Divine Omnipotence,” in *Philosophy and Theological Discourse*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, (New York: Macmillan Press, 1997), 203.

<sup>118</sup> Werner Foerster and Georg Fohrer, “Σώζω, Σωτηρία, Σωτήρ, Σωτήριος,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, Vol. VII, (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans, 1971), 1002.

interested in human wellbeing in this world but more importantly, he is interested in mending the broken relation that exists between him and human beings. Salvation loses its import when it is perceived as a good to be possessed rather than a relationship that needs to be rectified. Christ's role in achieving human salvation is underscored by his victory over evil for the very purpose of bringing human beings into close relationship with God.<sup>119</sup>

### 5.5 Summary

Evil, in the Yorùbá world, is neither a *privatio boni* (privation of the good) as suggested by Augustine and Thomas, nor *das Nichtige* (the nothingness) that Barth assumed it to be. To the Yorùbá, evil is an intimidating substantive presence that takes its energy from an actual being *Èṣù*, known also as Satan in some circles. The traditional Yorùbá perceive *Èṣù* as the emissary God uses to administer justice on earth. Yorùbá Christians side with their traditional religious kin in identifying Satan and his host of demons as culprits whenever evil occurs in human society. In the Yorùbá world, even though God fully controls everything in creation, he, for his mysteriously divine purpose, allows some superhuman beings to continue to perform evil acts in human society. That evil exists in God's world does not in any way diminish divine sovereignty. Or as Hans Weber reminds us: "Paul leaves us in no doubt about the fact that the Satanic powers

---

<sup>119</sup> Goring, "Salvation," 455, where Goring points out that the main emphasis in both the Catholic and Protestant theology of salvation is on Jesus' atoning work intended by God to overcome the alienation created between God and humankind by sin; cf., Foerster and Fohrer's warning that salvation "denotes neither healing in a religious sense, nor life, nor liberation from satanic or demonic power. It has to do solely with man's relationship to God" (Foerster and Fohrer, "Σώζω," 1002).

were also originally creatures of God. They were part of God's good creation, and despite their present revolt they still play a role in God's providence."<sup>120</sup>

While Western Christian theologians debated the problem of evil and up till now have found no consensual explanation for the existence of evil in God's good world, Yorùbá Christians are convinced evil has both a desirable and an undesirable presence in human society. On the one hand, God uses evil to govern his world. In which case, whatever happens to human beings is *amuwa Olorun* (divinely ordained). On the other hand, evil may be manifestations of rebellious acts of God's creatures, including the evil deity, Èṣù, and his host of demonic angels. Affirming traditional religious notions in their society, Yorùbá Christians are also convinced that some evil ancestors and witches may on their own accord, inflict evil on human beings.

In interpreting the operation of Satan and his demonic forces in the world, Yorùbá Christians conceive several levels of alliances between human beings and the evil spirits: first is the perception that some human beings are naturally inclined to perpetrate evil in society. Second is the notion that women, more likely than men, are involved in the activities that potentially cause harm in society. Third is the idea reinforced in the Yorùbá churches that much of the social, economic and political problems in the African society are consequences of the activities of the evil spiritual entities in society. Finally, Yorùbá Christians see evil as any undesirable physical and spiritual condition from which human beings must be saved.

---

<sup>120</sup> Hans Ruedi Weber, "Christ's Victory over the Satanic Powers," *Study Encounter* 2, no. 3: (1966): 164.



Clearly, Yorùbá Christianity has found meeting points between traditional notions of evil and the biblical idea of God's supremacy over creation, including evil. There are blurred lines, no doubt. For example, some basic traditional notions which demonize women or attribute witchcraft to deviant older members of the community, must be scrutinized against biblical teachings on love and tolerance. Also, some Yorùbá Christian leaders have found ways to commercialize religion by exploiting the fear which the Yorùbá have for the evil spirit beings in their community. As such, doctrines regarding Christ's atonement and Christ's once-and-for-all victory over evil are not sufficiently taught in the YIC. Instead, Christ's victory over evil is frequently represented in prayer formulae that promise instant relief from sickness or instant success over every life problem.

## CHAPTER 6

### REDEEMING TRADITIONAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL NOTIONS IN THE YORÙBÁ CULTURE

The Yorùbá Christian understanding of human existence, it has been shown in previous chapters, emerged out of the traditional religious notions regarding human interaction with both the visible and the invincible intelligent spirit beings with which they share their world. The superhuman spirit beings, such as ancestors and witches, participate in communal life and maintain a keen interest in the social, economic and spiritual well-being of individual members of society. In the traditional Yorùbá world, while the ancestors and the clan deities are perceived to be generally good, witches on the other hand are regarded as evil beings that are bent on thwarting God's purpose for individuals and society. Yorùbá Christians and non-Christians alike often interpret the unpleasant experiences in their lives as the wrathful actions of witches and demonic beings. The dramatic surge in numerical growth of Yorùbá churches in recent time, suggests that these churches may have found ways to effectively communicate the gospel to their members in ways that resonate with their cultural and spiritual identities. With specific reference to the anthropological notions in the Yorùbá culture, Chapter 6 identifies the traditional ideas that prevail in Yorùbá Christianity. In view here is the goal of examining how these beliefs may more appropriately fit into existing Christian doctrines in the global church.

## 6.1 Destiny as Mere Potentiality

The Yorùbá have a tripartite notion of human nature; a human being is made up of body (*Ara*), spirit (*Èmí*) and destiny (*Orí*). In conceptualizing the relationship between human beings and superhuman spirit beings, the Yorùbá presume that human destiny is the primary target of evil spirits. Life events do not turn out as expected whenever *Orí* or destiny is tampered with. What is “destiny” and how may the traditional notions of destiny be appropriated in Yorùbá Christian theology?

### 6.1.1 Human Nature and Destiny

In the traditional Yorùbá world, each individual acquires a destiny in heaven before arriving on earth: “The destiny, so chosen or so ascribed or imposed, encapsulates the successes and failures which the human being is meant to unravel during his or her course of existence in this world.”<sup>1</sup> Human destiny is stored up in the head (or *Orí*) of each individual. According to Salami: “*Orí* ... is the Yorùbá concept of pre-destination and consequently a form of determinism. Among the Yorùbá, the *Orí* of an individual is the bearer of his destiny.”<sup>2</sup> Destiny connotes in the Yorùbá mind, the notion that certain events have been pre-ordained by God, whether for good or evil, in the life of each human being.

The Yorùbá are not alone in their perception of “destiny” as an essential aspect of human nature or existence. The word “destiny” connotes for many Africans the general idea that individual human lives have been pre-arranged by the Supreme Being, or God,

---

<sup>1</sup> Y. K. Salami, “Predestination and the Metaphysics of Identity: A Yoruba (African) Case Study,” *África: Revista do Centro de Estudos Africanos* 24–26 (2002-2005): 211.

<sup>2</sup> Y. K. Salami, “Pre-destination, Freedom and Responsibility: A Case in Yoruba Moral Philosophy,” *Research in Yoruba Language and Literatures* 7 (1996): 7.

but may also be altered by some deities or superhuman spirit beings. This, however, does not mean that all Africans have the same understanding of “destiny.” Kiernan, for example, points out that the Tallensi of Ghana distinguish good destiny from evil destiny: “Evil Destiny ‘serves to identify the fact of irremediable failure in the development of the individual to full social capacity’; ‘The notion of Good Destiny, on the other hand, symbolically identifies the fact of successful individual development along the road to full incorporation in society.’”<sup>3</sup> In the Tallensi culture, ancestors play a significant role in human destiny: “A man's Destiny, then, consists of a unique configuration of ancestors who have of their own accord elected to exercise specific surveillance over his life-cycle and to whom he is personally accountable.”<sup>4</sup> Because ancestors’ general intentions are good towards their kin, “a man’s Destiny is supposed to preserve his health, his life, and the wellbeing of his family, to bring him good fortune in his economic activities and social aspirations.”<sup>5</sup> Fortes points out that for the Tallensi, human destiny can easily turn bad if a person fails to fulfill his or her obligations to the ancestors.<sup>6</sup>

#### 6.1.2 Destiny and Preordination

The closest doctrine in Christian theology to the Yorùbá idea of “destiny” is “predestination.” Dopamu defines predestination as the belief that “anything that happens to man on earth has been predestined even before he comes into the world. The Supreme

---

<sup>3</sup> J. P. Kiernan, “The ‘Problem of Evil’ in the Context of Ancestral Intervention in the Affairs of the Living in Africa,” *Man New Series* 17, no. 2 (Jun., 1982): 287.

<sup>4</sup> Meyer Fortes, *Oedipus and Job in West African Religion*, reprinted in *Anthropology of Folk Religion*, ed. Charles Leslie (New York: Vintage, 1960), 28.

<sup>5</sup> Fortes, *Oedipus and Job*, 28.

<sup>6</sup> Fortes, *Oedipus and Job*, 33.

Deity, Olodumare, is believed to be the determiner of destiny.”<sup>7</sup> In Dopamu’s view, “while destiny is where a person is heading for, and most especially affected by the time, place, and date of birth (environment); predestination on the other hand, is what a person is inescapably bound to go through.”<sup>8</sup> Dopamu suggests a level of flexibility in “destiny” that is missing in “predestination”: “E.g., a person is destined for destruction, but he/she changes direction through his/her conduct, behavior and attitude,”<sup>9</sup>

Like Dopamu, Balogun relates the Yorùbá idea of destiny to the Christian doctrine of predestination. In both tenets, there is a sense of absoluteness that affirms God’s control over certain significant events in the human life:

Human destiny is the mysterious power believed to control human events. Destiny or predestination is the belief that whatever happens or that will happen in the future has been preordained and happened according to an earlier master plan. It is the belief that every person has his biography written before coming to the world which consequently implies that anything one does is not something done out of free will but something done in fulfillment of preordained history.<sup>10</sup>

While Dopamu and Balogun have rightly pointed out the similarities between “destiny” and “predestination” both scholars have omitted a vital element in the differences between these two concepts. In the Christian doctrine of predestination, the priority is on God and not on human beings.

---

<sup>7</sup> Abiola Dopamu, “Predestination, Destiny and Faith in Yorubaland: Any Meeting Point?” *Global Journal of Humanities* 7, nos. 1&2 (2008): 35.

<sup>8</sup> Dopamu, “Predestination,” 29.

<sup>9</sup> Dopamu, “Predestination,” 29.

<sup>10</sup> Oladele Balogun, “The Concepts of Ori and Human Destiny in Traditional Yoruba Thought: A Soft-Deterministic Interpretation,” *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 16, no. 1 (2007): 119.

### 6.1.3 Destiny and Potentiality

*Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* defines "Predestination" as "the biblical teaching that declares the sovereignty of God over human beings in such a way that the freedom of the human will is also preserved."<sup>11</sup> The goal of "predestination" is to showcase the sovereignty of God over everything else that exists in creation: "If He were not in complete control of human events, He would not be sovereign and, thus, would not be God."<sup>12</sup> God is God because he has not only foreknown the end from the beginning but he has also predetermined how certain aspects of life will turn out for his creaturely beings.

At the core of the Yorùbá notion of destiny, on the other hand, is the concern for human well-being. Therefore, the destiny of each person is embedded in the head or *Ori*, as Balogun himself has remarked:

Ori is the element responsible for a person's personality and represents human destiny. Ori, an immaterial entity, otherwise called 'inner-head' is intractably connected with human destiny. It is responsible for the actuality and worth of man in the material world. For the Yoruba, Ori is believed to be not only the bearer of destiny but also to be the essence of human personality which rules, controls and guides the life and activities of the person.<sup>13</sup>

The most important task for everyone in life is to discover his or her destiny and to attain it. The priority for the traditional Yorùbá, therefore, is not on the divine sovereignty in bringing about that which has been ordained; rather, it is on the human ability to acquire sufficient power or competence to bring life's destiny to reality. Human life endeavors

---

<sup>11</sup> Ronald F. Youngblood, F. F. Bruce, and R. K. Harrison, Thomas Nelson Publishers, eds., *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1995), s.v. "Predestination," 927.

<sup>12</sup> Youngblood, *Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Predestination," 927.

<sup>13</sup> Balogun, "Concepts of Ori," 118.

must include such religious spirituality that will help a person overcome any obstacle that may stand in the way of a good destiny. This humanism is reflected in Gbadegesin's definition:

Destiny refers to the pre-ordained portion of life wound and sealed up in an *Ori*. Human beings have an allotment of this destiny which then determines what they will be in life – whether a success or a failure. Destiny determines the general course of life, and since *Ori* is the receptacle and bearer of destiny it is also regarded as its controller.<sup>14</sup>

Boris Nieswand, describes as an “enacted destiny,” the notion among the charismatic Christians of West African origin in Berlin, Germany that destiny is that which human beings can act out by faith:

Activities are known to be destiny only when it is reflected in their outcomes. But if individuals do not believe in the possibility of their divine empowerment they will not be courageous enough to enact them. In this sense the notion of enacted destiny combines two temporally distinct aspects: individuals' empowerment before and during the action, and the post hoc fixing of meaning.<sup>15</sup>

According to Nieswand, the West Africans of Yorùbá, Akan or Talensi descents living in Berlin hold a notion of predetermination that is to be understood as a “symbolic language in which often-ambiguous experiences of everyday life can be interpreted in the face of concrete situations.”<sup>16</sup> Nieswand's observation is consistent with the general belief in the YIC that human destiny is not fixed or static but is rather a framework within which the divine agency converges with human desires to achieve whatever human beings perceive to be in their best interest.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Segun Gbadegesin, *African Philosophy: Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary African Realities* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1991), 47.

<sup>15</sup> Boris Nieswand, “Enacted Destiny: West African Charismatic Christians in Berlin and the Immanence of God,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 40 (2010): 50.

<sup>16</sup> Nieswand, “Enacted Destiny,” 41.

<sup>17</sup> Nieswand, “Enacted Destiny,” 55.

Yorùbá Christians often talk about destiny because such a concept, unlike predestination, allows them to make human needs of paramount importance in Christian religious spirituality. Like their traditional kin, Yorùbá Christians perceive human destiny as a mere potentiality, a parameter within which human beings may explore their full capabilities in life. Keeping the focus on human needs and abilities, Yorùbá Christians allow their religion to fulfill the same role it does in the traditional setting: provide human beings with the hope that destiny could be at its best when every spiritual opposition to human comfort is removed.

## 6.2 Human Influences on Destiny

Yorùbá philosophical scholarship is replete with discussions on the possible roles that human beings play in bringing life destiny to pass or in changing destiny altogether. Dopamu, for example, asserts that in the Yorùbá world, “Man’s destiny is believed to be sealed and therefore unalterable. God is the determiner of destiny and so, everything that happens to a person on earth has been predestined by the deity even before man comes into the world.”<sup>18</sup> At the same time, Dopamu acknowledges that in certain situations, the human destiny can be changed: “In Yoruba Traditional Religion, man’s freewill can alter destiny. Other factors which alter man’s destiny are the divinities, if disobeyed, man’s double, counterpart, or guardian (ori), and the evil ones of the world.”<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Dopamu, “Predestination,” 28.

<sup>19</sup> Dopamu, “Predestination,” 29.



### 6.2.1 Changeability of Destiny

In line with Dopamu's assessment, Abimbola suggests that the Yorùbá believe that "once a person has chosen his destiny in heaven it becomes almost impossible to alter it on earth. Indeed, the gods themselves are not in a position to change a man's destiny."<sup>20</sup> However, Abimbola concedes that with appropriate *Ebò* (sacrifice), *Esè* (strife or hard work) and *Ìwá* (character), a person may be able to alter the course of certain life events or "make good the defects in their bad heads."<sup>21</sup> Human destiny may have been set in heaven, but it appears that each individual has the responsibility to enact a favorable course of life on earth: "Therefore, even if a bad destiny has been imposed on one, one has a responsibility to try to change it for the better."<sup>22</sup>

Gbadegesin suggests that the opportunity to change one's destiny may have presented the Yorùbá with the positive attitude toward life: "A typical Yoruba has an optimistic attitude toward life. He or she is born into a family that is loving and caring. He or she also knows that the gods are there for the protection and prosperity of the

---

<sup>20</sup> Wande Abimbola, *Ifá: An Exposition of Ifá Literary Corpus* (Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1976), 145; cf., Adebola Ekanola, "A Naturalistic Interpretation of the Yoruba Concepts of *Ori*," *Philosophia Africana* 9, no. 1 (March, 2006), 43, where Ekanola writes: "The claim that destiny can be altered seems inconsistent with the Yoruba idea of predestination, as consisting of the belief that a prenatal choice of *Ori* determines, finally and irreversibly, the destiny and personality of each human person."

<sup>21</sup> Abimbola, *Ifá: An Exposition*, 151; cf. Dopamu, "Predestination," 30. Dopamu asserts that, "In Yoruba Traditional Religion, man's freewill can alter destiny. Other factors which alter man's destiny are the divinities, if disobeyed, man's double, counterpart, or guardian (*ori*), and the evil ones of the world. Man's actions and practices show that destiny can be modified in some ways." Cf. E. Bolaji Idowu, *Olódùmarè: God in Yoruba Belief* (London: Longman, 1962), Idowu's view, "An unhappy destiny may be rectified if it can be ascertained what it is," 181.

<sup>22</sup> Segun Gbadegesin, "Toward a Theory of Destiny," in *A Companion to African Philosophy*, ed. Kwasi Wiredu (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004), 316.

individual.”<sup>23</sup> It is possible, therefore, with the appropriate propitiation to the deities and to the *Orí*, to modify a bad destiny into a good one.

The traditional Yorùbá idea of “destiny” is comparable to the Confucian idea of “ming” (destiny), which according to Cui Dahua and Huang Deyuan, “holds that in the course and culmination of human life, there exists some objective certainty that is both transcendent and beyond human control.”<sup>24</sup> Dahua and Deyuan assert that “Destiny” in Confucianism, has a humanist interpretation: “the transcendence of ‘destiny’ lies inherently within the *qi* endowment and virtues of human beings ... and that to live in light of ethics and physical rules – having a ‘commitment to human affairs’ – means putting ‘destiny’ into practice.”<sup>25</sup> Moreover, as for the Yorùbá, “destiny” in Confucianism lies in the human nature: “The Confucian theory of transcendence holds that ‘destiny’ rests in man himself, the *xingli* (human nature) and the *qi* disposition of human beings.”<sup>26</sup>

Like in Confucianism, destiny, for the traditional Yorùbá, is the path that each person would follow in life if everything works out as ordained by God. It includes the ethical norms and societal values that constitute the ideal human life. It entails the very purpose for which every individual exists and is expected to fulfill in life. Whereas destiny cannot easily be discerned, part of life’s goal is to discover it and thereafter pursue it. Although destiny is fixed in heaven before a person comes into the world, it may be thwarted through one’s carelessness or through the machination of evil spirit

---

<sup>23</sup> Gbadegesin, “Theory of Destiny,” 317.

<sup>24</sup> Cui Dahua and Huang Deyuan. “Rational Awareness of the Ultimate in Human Life – The Confucian Concept of ‘Destiny.’” *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 4, no. 3 (Sept., 2009): 309.

<sup>25</sup> Dahua and Deyuan, “Rational Awareness,” 309.

<sup>26</sup> Dahua and Deyuan, “Rational Awareness,” 315.

beings. Destiny is not that which must occur by all means; it is the very best which can be attained if everything is done appropriately. Makinde describes the traditional Yorùbá idea of “destiny” as a mere potentiality:

While it represents human destiny, it does not do so unconditionally. As a mere potentiality, it means that certain things have to be done along with the choice of a good *ori* in order to bring such a potentially good choice into fruition. Among the things to be done, therefore, would be the effective use of one’s *ese*, *owo*, *opolo* and, finally, sacrifice to one’s *ori* whenever such sacrifice is deemed necessary.”<sup>27</sup>

The Yorùbá idea of destiny is a paradox: on the one hand, human destiny is believed to have been predetermined in heaven according to God’s divine plan for each individual. On the other hand, life outcomes can, to a great extent, be influenced by human effort. This is why the Yorùbá say, “*Owó ẹni la fi ntún ’wà ẹni sẹ*” (meaning, “With one’s hand, one mend’s one’s way”). The anonymous quote: “Life is like a game of cards. The hand you are dealt is determinism; the way you play it is free will,”<sup>28</sup> adequately captures the Yorùbá view of determinism. The paths that would lead to success are concealed within a series of options that present themselves daily to each individual. Destiny is not just an event to be lived out, it is a vocation that must be discovered and fulfilled. Human beings have vital roles to play in bringing destiny to pass.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, destiny, once discovered, must be protected from the human and non-

---

<sup>27</sup> M. Akin Makinde, “An African Concept of Human Personality: The Yoruba Example,” *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 7, no. 3 (September 1, 1984): 198.

<sup>28</sup> John E. Knight, *The Mystic* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2009), Chapter 39. Knight, among others, attribute the quote to Jawaharlal Nehru, although some authors have disputed that Nehru is the original source.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Nieswand, “Enacted Destiny,” 41, where Niewand remarks that the Akan, Yoruba and Talensi of West Africa accommodate individual freedom in their interpretation of destiny. In all three cultures, “the Christian as well as the non-Christian, presume an unequal power relation between human beings and their divine/spiritual counterpart(s). It is noteworthy that West African religious ideas of destiny in particular do not presume a complete predetermination but leave much space for human agency.”

human spirits that are determined to scuttle it. One must also be careful not to destroy the path to achieving destiny by one's own laziness or carelessness.

### 6.2.2 Role of Character in Human Destiny

The head, or *Orí*, may be the bearer of human destiny but it is the human character, or *Iwa*, that brings destiny to reality. Olusegun Oladosu opines that, "The Yorùbá people believe that a person's act can be spoiled by his/her action, rashness, restlessness, impatience, disobedience, and evil deeds. At the same time, the action or conduct can affect members of the community for good or evil."<sup>30</sup> A good destiny is useless to an individual with bad manners or character. Oladosu underscores the importance of character in the Yorùbá adage: "*Eni l'orí rere ti o niwa, Iwa lo maa b'ori re je* (i.e., however happy a person's destiny may be, if he/she has no character, it is lack of character that will ruin his or her destiny)."<sup>31</sup>

Destiny does not just happen; even though it is preordained by God, its final actualization depends, at least to some extent, on human decisions and actions. Whatever happens to an individual in life is not presumed to be solely influenced by the activities of superhuman spirit beings. Human beings have significant roles to play in enacting their own destinies. This synergism is underscored in Balogun's statement: "The Yoruba trace the cause of some events to the individual person who performs the action and not any supernatural force outside of man. Such actions are in the realm of the natural and are empirically observable. It is for this reason that people are punished for wrongdoing

---

<sup>30</sup> Olusegun Oladosu, "Ethics and Judgement: A Panacea for Human Transformation in Yoruba Multireligious Society," *Asia Journal of Theology* 26, no. 1 (April, 2012): 91.

<sup>31</sup> Oladosu, "Ethics and Judgement," 92.

because they are believed to be responsible for their actions.”<sup>32</sup> It is because of this freedom that society rewards human beings for good behaviors and punishes them for poor judgements.

A person is “good” or “bad” depending on how their actions affect society. People whose characters and actions bless society are “good” while those whose behaviors or actions fall outside the boundaries of acceptable social norms are inhumane or “bad.”<sup>33</sup> Good character is a huge asset to individuals and community. Fayemi further explains that, “it is man’s character that aids man’s destiny. Therefore, in knowing one’s personality, whether of repute or disrepute, and the ‘how’ factors that are quintessential to developing human personality, the elements of good character are imperative.”<sup>34</sup> Fayemi’s sentiment is shared by Idowu in his remark that, “A person’s destiny can be affected for the worse by his character. The Yorùbá believe that a good destiny unsupported by character is worthless.”<sup>35</sup> Whereas people with good characters have positive effects on the world around them, evil people bring society down.

### 6.2.3 Enhancers of Destiny

In the traditional Yorùbá setting, some aspects of the human body are believed to aid human personality and destiny. The leg (*Èsẹ̀*), for example, is the aspect of the human

---

<sup>32</sup> Balogun, “Concepts of Ori,” 126.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Barry Hallen, “Yoruba Moral Epistemology as the Basis for a Cross-Cultural Ethics,” in *Orisa Devotion as World Religion: The Globalization of Yoruba Religious Culture*, ed. Jacob K. Olupona and Terry Ray (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), Hallen remarks: “The Yoruba term most frequently rendered into English as “handsome” or as “beauty” is *ewa*. Its most common usage is with regard to persons, to human beings. However, *ewa* or beauty as purely physical is rated superficial and relatively unimportant by comparison with *ewa* as good character, as *moral* beauty,” 227,

<sup>34</sup> Ademola Fayemi, “Human Personality and the Yoruba Worldview: An Ethico-Sociological Interpretation,” *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 2, no.9, (March 2009): 170

<sup>35</sup> Idowu, *Olódùmarè*, 179-180.

body that is often associated with decisive struggle or hard work. According to Abimbola,

*Ese* (leg) is regarded by the Yorùbá as a vital part of human personality make-up both in a physical and spiritual sense. *Ese*, for the Yorùbá, is the symbol of power and activity. It is therefore the element which enables a man to struggle and function adequately in life so that he may bring to realization whatever has been marked out for him by the choice of *Orí*.<sup>36</sup>

The hand, or *Qwó*, is another aspect of the human anatomy that is believed to have spiritual attributes. Moral blame is ascribed to individuals who fail to achieve life potentials through bad behavior or lack of self-control. The Yorùbá believe in “*Àfowofà* (self-inflicted problem) as a consequence for lack of self-discipline.<sup>37</sup> The implication is that one should not blame other people for problems that could have been avoided through good behavior or self-discipline.

Human beings are not locked into permanent life courses that cannot be altered. As Abimbola points out, the individual who has chosen a good *Orí* in heaven will not automatically become successful in life unless such a person actively engages in acts that will bring such good fortunes into reality: “If such a person works hard, he will invariably make considerable gain and he will be able to use the gain for his own welfare.”<sup>38</sup> This is why the Yorùbá say, “*Qwó ẹni ni a fi ntunwà ẹni se*” (lit. “It is with one’s hand, that one mends one’s way”). Persistent failure in life, may be interpreted as spiritual attacks through witchcraft or other diabolic means. It may also be an indicator that the “victim” is just lazy or is not making sufficient effort to succeed.

---

<sup>36</sup> Wande Abimbola, “The Yoruba Concept of Human Personality,” in *Notion de Personne en Afrique Noire*, 73–89 (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1973): 85.

<sup>37</sup> Balogun, “Concepts of Ori,” 126.

<sup>38</sup> Abimbola, *Ifá: An Exposition*, 117.

The heart, or *Okàn*, is an organ in the human body that also has very vital spiritual qualities. Traits that show love for others and respect for elders are cherished by the Yorùbá and are believed to emanate from the heart. In the same vein, negative traits, such as selfishness, self-centeredness and disrespectful behaviors to fellow human beings, are believed to also emanate from the heart.<sup>39</sup> Whereas human beings with “good” hearts are loved and cherished, those with “bad” hearts are abhorred. Attitudes that show little or no regard for people or society are interpreted as forms of witchcraft or demonic possession. This is because normal human beings are not expected to have “evil” or “bad” hearts.

The human heart (*Okàn*) is “the seat of the emotion and psychic energy.”<sup>40</sup> *Okàn* keeps the body alive by pumping the blood around the body. At the same time, it is also the location of human emotion and compassion. The Yorùbá use several idioms to show that the heart is the human aspect that is responsible for emotion and passion. They encourage those who are weak by “strengthening their hearts” (*Kii wòn l’ókàn*). A sad individual has a “damaged heart” (*Okàn bíbàjé*). Meanwhile, the individual who is timid or afraid has “no heart” (*Kò l’ókàn*).<sup>41</sup>

Some other aspects of the human anatomy are perceived to play specific roles in human nature. The intestine (*Ifun*), for example, is believed to be responsible for the

---

<sup>39</sup> Olusegun Gbadegesin, “Eniyan: The Yoruba concept of a Person,” in *The African Philosophy Reader*, second edition, ed. P. H. Coetzee and A. P. J. Roux (London: Routledge, 2002), Gbadegesin remarks: “*Imotara-eni-nikan* is the Yoruba word for selfishness. The idea is that a selfish person is concerned with the well-being of his/her body only (as opposed to the spirit). This suggests that if human beings were to be concerned with their spirits, they would not be selfish,” 175.

<sup>40</sup> Idowu, *Olódùmarè*, 170.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Gbadegesin, “Eniyan,” 176, according to Gbadegesin: “To encourage a person, one is asked to *Kii lokan* (strengthen his/her heart). A person who is easily upset is described as having no *okan*; and when a person is sad, it is said that his/her *okan* is disrupted. In this usage, then, it appears that the emotional states of persons are taken as functions of the state of their *okan*.”

physical strength in a person: “A weak person is described as having only one *ifun* (intestine) or none at all. This is on the basis that the intestine has an important role in building strength through its part in the metabolic activity of the body. A weak person is thus one whose intestine is not functioning well or who has none.”<sup>42</sup> The human body, with all its various aspects, is the indicator of human well-being, emotion, personality and character.

The course of human life may have been preordained by God, nonetheless, every person has the responsibility to bring his or her destiny to its logical fulfillment. Human beings are different from the other animals in the universe because they are imbued with the ability to differentiate evil from good. The truly human individual is the one who chooses good over evil. In Awolalu’s words:

Besides ritual devotion, the Yoruba attach great importance to *iwa* (character). They know it is the one thing which distinguishes a person from an animal. When the Yoruba say of someone *o se'nia* (He acts the person; he behaves as a person should), they mean that he shows in his life and personal relations with others the right qualities of a person.<sup>43</sup>

To be human is to act in a dignified manner. This implies having respect for elders and being courteous to others. “A person of good character is called *omoluwabi* (*omo-on'-iwa - ibii*) or one who behaves as a well-born; and a person of bad character is *enia-k'enia*, a mere caricature of a person, a reprobate.”<sup>44</sup>

Yorùbá Christians, aware of all the interpretations given to destiny in the traditional setting, reflect in their spirituality the notion that destiny is not something that

---

<sup>42</sup> Gbadegesin, “Eniyan,” 176.

<sup>43</sup> J. Omisade Awolalu, “The Yoruba Philosophy of Life,” *Presence Africaine. Nouvelle Serie*, no. 73 (1er Trimestre 1970): 24.

<sup>44</sup> Awolalu, “Yoruba Philosophy,” 24.



is bound to happen no matter what, but something that potentially will happen if human beings do their best to bring it to reality. An infinitely good God must certainly intend the very best for each of his creaturely beings. When things go wrong in individual or societal life, they must be the consequences of the antagonism between the human beings and the superhuman spirits with which they share the world, on the one hand, or through human self-inflicted wounds, on the other. Destiny will not come to pass unless human beings resist the antagonists of life or exert personal efforts to improve their lot in life. Human beings are active participants in whatever happens to them in life. Everyone is presented with the means to improve his or her lot in life through hard work, good morality and the ability to choose good over evil. In this regard, human beings are to a large extent responsible for their own destinies.

#### 6.2.4 Notions of Destiny in the YIC

The traditional concept of destiny is ingrained in Yorùbá Christian spirituality. Dr. Olukoya, the General Overseer of Mountain of Fire and Miracles church, for example, asserts that human beings have the responsibility to , “Your destiny is God’s purpose for your life/Your destiny is your appointed or ordained future/Your destiny is what your God has pre-determined you to be before you were born/Your destiny is the reason why you were born/Your destiny is the expectation heaven has for your life/Your destiny is what is written in heavenly records concerning you.”<sup>45</sup> Olukoya urges members of his congregation to strive to discover their destiny in order to succeed in that which God has predetermined for them in life:

---

<sup>45</sup> D. K. Olukoya, *Your Foundation and Your Destiny* (Lagos: Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, 2011), 31.

Nobody on earth is an accident. God has created you and given you unique qualities and talents so that you might fulfill his divine purpose ... It is impossible to follow a wrong path to succeed. Even if success is experienced, it will amount to monumental failure. The earlier you discover your destiny, the better for you. When you run a race of life on the right path of destiny, you will emerge a winner. Following the wrong track will leave you frustrated and confused.<sup>46</sup>

In Olukoya's view, destiny is not something that is inevitable; rather it is something that would happen if God's purpose for an individual is not tampered with by supernatural means. It is because human beings recognize that the future can be changed that they wage spiritual warfare against "destiny-changers." To Yorùbá Christians, the church is the place where life destiny is protected from the evil forces that exist to prevent human beings from achieving their life goals or destinies.

A major indicator that one's destiny is under siege is when things go wrong or when things do not occur at the expected time. A married woman who does not conceive after a period of time, for example, may be worried that some evil spirits have "sealed up" her womb or have tampered with her uterus to keep her from having children. The predictable response of the YIC to such a predicament is to immediately subject her to series of "deliverance ministrations" so as to break the hold which demonic spirits may have on her and on her ability to have children.

Gifford correctly points out that the indigenous Pentecostal churches in Africa motivate their members to expect that God would grant them the good things of life only if they would ask him: "They stress that success is your right and inheritance; it's what you should expect and can demand. The emphasis is on individual self-esteem, ambition,

---

<sup>46</sup> D. K. Olukoya, *Seventy Sermons to Preach to Your Destiny* (Lagos: Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, 2010), 14.

confidence.”<sup>47</sup> In these churches, destiny implies God’s desire to give the good things of life to those who worship him. Satan, on the other hand, is the contrary force that prevents human beings from attaining their destiny. Satan’s primary role, according to Olukoya, is to prevent human beings from achieving their life goals, or God-ordained destinies: “Satan hates your destiny because its fulfillment glorifies God. If you know your destiny and you’re pursuing it with all your energy, the devil will attack you with everything he can because your destiny fulfillment enforces the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven.”<sup>48</sup>

Christians in the YIC believe that a happy destiny must be preserved while all efforts must be made to rectify an unhappy one. Thus, an enormous amount of time is committed to praying for God to release his blessings on members (destiny is presumed to always be in terms of prosperity and good health). The assumption is that the evil spirits and wicked human beings delight in seeing human beings suffer. Because of this Yorùbá Christians pray vigorously for protection against the “destiny killers” of life.<sup>49</sup>

A prominent teaching in the YIC is for Christians to do all they can to contribute to the realization of God’s intended purpose on destiny. Even though life is ordered to unfold according to divine plans, each individual is encouraged to exert maximum diligence in every life endeavor. Diligence entails following through to logical conclusion that which one has begun. Hard work involves committing one’s full attention to the task at hand. An *Alaṣeti* (the one who begins but fails to complete a task) is never rewarded

---

<sup>47</sup> Paul Gifford, "Expecting Miracles: The Prosperity Gospel in Africa." *Christian Century* 124, no. 14 (July 10, 2007): 22.

<sup>48</sup> Shade Olukoya, *When Your Destiny is Under Attack*, (Lagos: Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, 2005), 63.

<sup>49</sup> See e.g., Olukoya, *Under Attack*; Olukoya, *Your Foundation*.

but an *Alaṣeyọri* (the one who completes a task) is praised. Because leaders in YIC are aware of this Yorùbá concept, they place a high premium on the importance of diligence and hard work as the means of achieving success in life. Olukoya advises:

To succeed in life, you must cultivate abilities that would make you to succeed rather than wait for a chance to make things happen in your life ... You are the sole captain of your destiny. Do not blame your non-performance on chance. There is really nothing like good luck. What we have are good opportunities. When your abilities are in good shape, you will surely get to the top ... Work on your ability and you will see opportunities everywhere.”<sup>50</sup>

Yorùbá Christians may blame the ancestors and the witches in the community for the unpleasant “surprises” in their lives, but they know that their life progress and successes depend on destiny brought into fruition by hard work. Leaders in the YIC assert that success will not come to those who do not apply their best efforts to what they do. This is one of the reasons Nigerian Pentecostal churches are well known for promoting self-development projects. Olukoya maintains that,

The shortest shortcut to the goal post of failure is to refuse to do what will make you achieve greatness in life. Those who are shoddy and haphazard are busy preparing platforms for failure. So, if you want to embrace failure, it has been made very easy. All you need to do is to keep on avoiding doing your best, then failure will be inevitable.<sup>51</sup>

Hard work in and of itself will not guarantee success. Sometimes, an individual may commit all his or her resources and efforts to a project that still ends up in utter failure. In such an instance, the belief in destiny kicks in. For no individual can achieve any meaningful success in life unless it has been granted by God beforehand. Put differently, that which has not been sanctioned by God will never come to pass no matter how hard one tries. Yorùbá Christians do not reject the notion that the nature of an

---

<sup>50</sup> Olukoya, *Seventy Sermons*, 38

<sup>51</sup> Olukoya, *Seventy Sermons*, 103.

individual's *Orí* (head or destiny) has a significant role to play in life outcomes. A common prayer among the Yorùbá, Christians and non-Christians, is that, "*Ibi tí Orí ngbè ni lọ, kí Èsè má sai sini lọ*" (lit. "Wherever the head is leading, may one's feet follow"). The general idea is that for *Orí* or destiny to come to pass, it must be accompanied by hard work. The concept of *Orí* or destiny provides the Yorùbá with the means of accounting for both predictable and random life outcomes. That which has been preordained will come to pass, but not without diligence and hard work.

### 6.3 Divine Determinism and Human Freedom

Two terms, "divine determinism" and "human freedom," must be defined to put the Yorùbá Christian perception of human identity and responsibility in a world filled with meddlesome superhuman spirit beings in its proper perspective. Broadly defined, "determinism" is "the view that all events (including human actions) are somehow inevitable or necessitated."<sup>52</sup> In its more specific use, divine determinism or theological determinism is the thesis that "everything that comes to pass is determined by God .... Furthermore, in conserving the world, as in creating it, God is the total and exclusive cause not only of every object's existence, but also of every property instantiation or change any object undergoes."<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), s.v. "Determinism," 475.

<sup>53</sup> Neal Judisch, "Theological Determinism and the Problem of Evil," *Religious Studies* 44, no. 2 (Jun., 2008): 167.

### 6.3.1 God, the Great Determinist

“Freewill” has been defined as the “freedom of humans to make choices that are not determined by prior causes or by divine intervention.” (Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary). Thomas Ekenberg explains the notion of “freewill”: “To say that a person does something freely is to say that she does it without being compelled and that there is no alien force or external constraint involved significantly in bringing forth the action.”<sup>54</sup> Herbert McCabe, however, suggests that God must be excluded from the list of the “external forces” that may not influence human action: “A free action is one which *I* cause and which is not caused by anything else. It is caused by God.”<sup>55</sup> In his omnipotence, God has complete control over human beings without infringing on their freewill. For McCabe, and others, divine determinism is compatible with human freedom.<sup>56</sup> Kathryn Tanner asserts: “If it makes sense to say that God can call forth a nondivine being with an integrity of existence of its own, then it makes sense to say that God can call forth nondivine beings with real powers of their own to influence other creatures.”<sup>57</sup>

In the Yorùbá world, God has total control over everything that exists without infringing on human freewill. In the traditional setting, especially, the Supreme Being, or *Olódùmarè*, directs the human destiny through the destiny-spirit, or *Orí*, in everyone; yet

---

<sup>54</sup> Thomas Ekenberg, “Free Will and Free Action in Anselm of Canterbury,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (Oct., 2005): 305.

<sup>55</sup> Herbert McCabe, *Freedom: God Matters* (New York: Continuum, 1987), 13.

<sup>56</sup> See, Leigh Vicens, “Divine Determinism, Human Freedom, and the Consequence Argument,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 71, no. 2 (April, 2021): esp. 145–7.

<sup>57</sup> Kathryn Tanner, “Human Freedom, Human Sin, and God the Creator,” in *The God Who Acts: Philosophical and Theological Explorations*, ed. T. Tracy, (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 117.

each person is responsible for his or her actions in life. On the one hand, the Yorùbá insist that everything that happens in life is being guided by God. On the other hand, they do not hesitate to say that human beings are responsible for whatever happens to them in life. Even when an individual's destiny is ordained by God, he or she still has the opportunity to rectify such unpleasant destiny in the course of life. In Makinde's view, "an individual has the freedom to put an effort to modify a bad *Ori* whose choice, in the Yorùbá conception is that of one's destiny on earth."<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, human beings have the freedom to appeal to the deities to change a bad destiny: "An element of freedom is involved in the making of sacrifice or propitiation to one's *ori* as a way of shaping one's destiny."<sup>59</sup> Regardless, God is the Ultimate Being who alone overrides the will and action of any human or non-human being in creation.

### 6.3.2 Compatibility of Divine Action with Human Freedom

David Hume, in his attempt to reconcile human "liberty" with "necessity," remarks that human beings are always free or 'liberated' to make choices if they are not under some physical restraints: "By liberty, then, we can only mean *a power of acting or not acting, according to the determinations of the will*; that is, if we choose to remain at rest, we may; if we choose to move, we also may. Now this hypothetical liberty is universally allowed to belong to everyone who is not a prisoner and in chains."<sup>60</sup> The implication of Hume's statement, as Smith has rightly pointed out, is that human beings

---

<sup>58</sup> Akin M. Makinde, "A Philosophical Analysis of the Yoruba Concept of Ori and Human Destiny," *International Studies in Philosophy* 17, no. 1 (1985): 57.

<sup>59</sup> Makinde, "Concept of Human Personality," 198.

<sup>60</sup> David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, Second Edition*, (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), 63. Italics is author's.

are free agents, “if there is no obvious duress operating. The absence of freedom would be total enslavement, whereby all possibilities are externally necessitated.”<sup>61</sup> If every human action that we cannot account for is blamed on the manipulative influence of the superhuman spirit beings, then, human beings would not be truly free. In this regard, McCabe’s idea of freedom is insightful:

Free actions, ... are *uncaused* though they are *motivated* and done for reasons; and these motives and reasons do not take away from freedom but rather are essential to it ... a free action is one which *I* cause and which is not caused by anything else. It is caused by God ... God is not a separate and rival agent within the universe. The creative causal power of God does not operate on me from outside, as an alternative to me; it is the creative causal power of God that makes me *me*.<sup>62</sup>

Hume’s and McCabe’s view about the absolute freedom which must exist in an unrestrained human being had been pointed out centuries earlier by Anselm of Canterbury:

A human being may be tied up against his will (*invitus*), since he may be tied up unwillingly (*nolens*); he may be tortured against his will, since he may be tortured unwillingly; he may even be killed against his will, since he may be killed unwillingly, but he cannot will against his will, since he cannot will unwillingly.”<sup>63</sup>

Anselm’s remark prompts Ekenberg to declare that, “A person may also be constrained and restricted in various ways so that she is unable to do what she wants - or unable to do whatever she (thinks she) would do if she weren't under constraint.”<sup>64</sup> The implication is that human freedom is not threatened by the presence of coercion or force: “There is no

---

<sup>61</sup> Gerald Smith, “Determinism, Freedom and Responsibility,” *Issues in Criminology* 3, no. 2 (1968): 189.

<sup>62</sup> McCabe, *Freedom*, 13.

<sup>63</sup> Ekenberg, “Free Will,” 302; Ekenberg quotes Ansel’s statement in *De libertate arbitrii*.

<sup>64</sup> Ekenberg, “Free Will,” 302.



such thing as willing unwillingly, at least not in the sense that would threaten a person's freedom of the will ... not even God can make a person succumb to temptation ... since nothing is more powerful than God who can't overcome the will of a righteous human being, nothing can do so, and hence the will is absolutely free.”<sup>65</sup>

### 6.3.3 Predestination and Demonic Influences

Y. K. Salami, in his assessment of the Yorùbá concepts of predestination, freedom and human responsibility, asserts that “despite all the analyses and attempts to reconcile the Yorùbá concept of predestination with freedom, the problem of irreconcilability still persists.”<sup>66</sup> Salami bases his assessment on the Yorùbá notion that the human destiny or life fortune is entirely dependent on the nature of one’s *Orí*, “the inner head ... the bearer of the destiny of its owner.”<sup>67</sup> This assumption, in Salami’s view, makes *Orí* the antecedent cause of all the other possible causes. The tension in the Yorùbá notion of destiny is not that *Orí* is perceived as being the sole determinant of every possible cause in the human life; rather, it is the need to balance the impression that God controls everything in the human life with the anticipation that human beings make vital contributions to life outcomes. As Salami acknowledges: “Yorùbá cosmology appears to favour the changeability of one’s destiny. Thus, notwithstanding the fact that what one comes to do here is determined by the kind of *Orí* chosen earlier, in Yorùbá cosmology, a

---

<sup>65</sup> Ekenberg, “Free Will,” 306.

<sup>66</sup> Salami, “Pre-destination, Freedom and Responsibility,” 5; cf., Salami, “Predestination and the Metaphysics of Identity,” where Salami argues that since the personal identity “between the person who chose a destiny in heaven and the one who is assumed to be unraveling it in the world” cannot be established, “the notion of predestination, with special focus on the Yoruba account, cannot stand rational scrutiny,” 211.

<sup>67</sup> Salami, “Pre-destination, Freedom and Responsibility,” 5.

good *Orí* can be changed by the *ajogun* (the evil ones of the world)."<sup>68</sup> The apparent “irreconcilability” rests in the impression among the Yorùbá that even though God is fully responsible for every force in the universe, he at the same time allows human beings and the superhuman spirit beings in the world to exert appreciable influence on life events.

The Yorùbá do not see any contradiction in believing that human beings are free, yet susceptible to the manipulative actions of the superhuman spirit beings in the universe. In the Yorùbá mind, human freedom is not abrogated even when external influences bear on the human action. A deviant or abnormal behavior in a human being may be a form of demonic possession or human deliberate decision to do evil. Apostle Paul’s anxiety in Romans 7 would be interpreted in the YIC as a good example of the internal struggle which human beings often have when mediating between the impulses to do good or evil:

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. (Rom. 7:15-20).

Jegede identifies in the Yorùbá traditional corpus, *Ifá*, the human propensity for good and evil, occasioned by freedom: “Humans, as distinguished from other animals, are characterized by intellect. Humanity, therefore, chooses either good or evil and by implication is responsible for evil. Evil came as a result of the misuse of human freewill,

---

<sup>68</sup> Salami, “Pre-destination, Freedom and Responsibility,” 7.

which Olodumare gave to humans.”<sup>69</sup> Freedom, therefore, is not without its demands. In Miryam Brand’s view, “the human capability to sin is the strongest declaration of freedom of action within a religious system. As such, however, it presents a theological problem ... By portraying sin as completely determined by God, freedom of action is denied to the human being, while the weight of responsibility for sin remains with the Deity.”<sup>70</sup>

#### 6.4 Sin, Character and Moral Responsibility

Samuel Kunyihop, among others, has warned that the sudden numerical surge in church attendance in many parts of African Church in modern time, should not be used as the yardstick for measuring growth. According to Kunyihop:

This new allegiance in the lives of the new believers was really what signified real change. Sometimes I suspect that an overemphasis on this paradigm shift is a red herring. Yes, we should rejoice in the fact that many are becoming identified with the Christian religion, but the issues are deeper and more complex ... The question is *what kind of Christianity is lived out and experienced in by those who attend these churches?* ... What kind of Christian morality is emerging or evolving in this statistically Christian continent?<sup>71</sup>

The appeal of Pentecostal Christianity to many Nigerians, Daniel Smith has rightly pointed out, is in its indifference to immorality and corruption in Nigeria, which “has meant that Pentecostal churches are also the object of corruption allegations and the subject of corruption scandals. Even as Nigerians join new-breed churches in droves, they

---

<sup>69</sup> Charles Jegede, “An Exploration into Soteriology of Ifa: ‘Oral and Intangible Heritage for Humanity,’” *Black Theology* 11, no. 2 (2013): 206.

<sup>70</sup> Miryam T. Brand, *Evil Within and Without: The Source of Sin and Its Nature as Portrayed in Second Temple Literature [Journal of Ancient Judaism: Supplements]* (Bristol, CT: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht LLC, 2013), 26.

<sup>71</sup> Samuel W. Kunhiyop, “The Challenge of African Christian Morality,” *Conspectus (South African Theological Seminary)* 7 (2009): 64.

widely suspect that many of these churches are money making enterprises for their founders and leaders.”<sup>72</sup> As many Yorùbá Christian leaders focus more on making the gospel resolve the social and economic problems on the continent of Africa, one wonders if such anthropocentric spirituality promotes or hinders good morality among Yorùbá Christians.

#### 6.4.1 Role of Religion in Yorùbá Ethics

Scholars, such as Idowu and Gbadegesin, have assessed the role of religion in Yorùbá ethics. Idowu opines that,

With the Yoruba, morality is certainly the fruit of religion. They do not make any attempt to separate the two; and it is impossible for them to do so without disastrous consequences. What have been named *tabu* took their origin from the fact that people discerned that there were certain things which were morally approved or disapproved by the Deity.”<sup>73</sup>

Gbadegesin, on his part, insists that pragmatic human needs, rather than religion, provide the Yorùbá with the incentive to formulate their ethics. According to Gbadegesin, “... the Yoruba are very pragmatic in their approach to morality, and though religion may serve them as a motivating force, it is not the ultimate appeal in moral matters.”<sup>74</sup> Both Idowu and Gbadegesin have identified the two major themes that guide Yorùbá ethics: religion and pragmatism. In both the traditional and Christian religions, the will of God and the well-being of human beings are given serious consideration. As has already been stated in

---

<sup>72</sup> Daniel J. Smith, *A Culture of Corruption: Everyday Deception and Popular Discontent in Nigeria*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 218.

<sup>73</sup> Idowu, *Olódùmarè*, 146.

<sup>74</sup> Segun Gbadegesin, “Individuality, Community and the Moral Order,” in *Philosophy from Africa*, ed. P. H. Coetzee and A. P. J. Roux, 292-305 (Halfway House: International Thompson Publishing (SA), 1998), 302; cf. Wiredu’s remark: “Among the Akan people of Ghana, morality is not founded on religion but on rational reflection as to what is conducive to human welfare ... The Akan had no belief in a revealed religion hence doing good is not dependent on God’s directive” (“Morality and Religion in Akan Thought, in *Philosophy and Culture*, ed. O. Odera and D. A. Wasola [Kenya: Bookwise, 1983], 7).

the earlier sections of this chapter, any human endeavor must conform to the destiny that God has already earmarked for the individual. Indeed, the Yorùbá do subsume morality in religious spirituality because they realize that human freedom must be reconciled with divine determinism.

Makinde suggests that human beings are responsible for their actions because “the choice of *ori* [inner head or destiny] is more important to character formation than the combination of *emi* [soul] and *ara* [body] which make up the living body known as a person. This is to say that a good choice of *ori* in heaven would, when superimposed on *emi* and *ara*, bring out the qualities that make up a good or bad personality.”<sup>75</sup> In the Yorùbá world, even though the individual life course has been pre-arranged by God through the agency of the *Orí*, every human being is still expected to make the decisive efforts that would bring about his or her destiny.<sup>76</sup>

Scholars have identified three strong, non-mutually exclusive influences on African ethics: community, religion, and humanistic considerations. Kwame Gyekye, G.A. Bennaars, Kwesi Wiredu, and M. Motlhabi, among others, have traced the sense of morality in several African communities to the responsibility which each individual has towards the general well-being of the larger society.<sup>77</sup> These scholars assert that Africans,

---

<sup>75</sup> Makinde, “Concept of Human Personality,” 198.

<sup>76</sup> Salami, “Pre-destination, Freedom and Responsibility,” 9.

<sup>77</sup> See e.g., G. A. Bennaars’ statement: “In traditional Africa morality was always intrinsically linked to the community ... the sole criterion of goodness was the welfare, the well-being of the community” (*Ethics, Education and Development* [Nairobi: East African Publishers, 1993], 23); for Kwame Gyekye, “African morality and ethics ... cannot be conceived outside of the community” (“Person and Community in African Thought,” in *Philosophy from Africa*, ed. P. H. Coetzee and A. P. J. Roux [Halfway House: International Thompson Publishing, SA, 1998], 318); cf., Kwesi Wiredu, “The Moral Foundations of African Culture,” in *Philosophy from Africa*, ed. P. H. Coetzee and A. P. J. Roux, 306-316 (Halfway House: International Thompson Publishing (SA), 1998), 312; M. Motlhabi, on his part, opines that for Africans, “the central moral norms were the maintenance of harmonious relationships within the community” (“The Concept of Morality in African Tradition,” in *Hammering Swords into Ploughshares*:

in general, determine an action to be right or wrong depending on the effect such action has on the overall wellbeing of the community. Wiredu sums up this view: “The communalistic orientation means that an individual’s image will depend rather crucially upon the extent to which his/her actions benefit others rather than him/herself.”<sup>78</sup>

While Mbiti, Idowu, Dopamu, Makinde, and others, assert that the traditional religions have provided Africans with the parameters to formulate their ethics,<sup>79</sup> John Bewaji, Sophie Oluwole, Omoregbe, Kwasi Wiredu, and Oyeshile, maintain that morality in the African culture is mostly motivated by humanistic considerations.<sup>80</sup> In Makinde’s view, “an African system of morality, based on African cultural beliefs, must have a religious foundation. This claim is perfectly consistent with the idea of an African religious universe.”<sup>81</sup> Bewaji, on his part, believes that religion only shrouds the deeper humanistic concerns for maintaining harmony in the community:

The invocation of the Supreme Being, the divinities, the ancestors, and other forces in moral matters is mainly intended to lend legitimacy, through an already available reinforcement mechanism, to what is often taken for granted as morally

---

*Essays in Honour of Archbishop M. D. Tutu*, ed. B. Tlhagale and I. Mosala [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986], 95); cf., Emmanuel Udokang, “Traditional Ethics and Social Order: A Study in African Philosophy, *Cross-Cultural Communication* 10, no. 6 (2014), 268, where Udokang asserts: “The African man’s concern for the well-being of his brother and neighbor is at the heart of ethics and morality.”

<sup>78</sup> Wiredu, “Moral Foundations,” 312; cf. Motlhabi’s observation that, for Africans, “the central moral norms were the maintenance of harmonious relationships within the community” (“Concept of Morality,” 95).

<sup>79</sup> John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York, NY: Anchor Books Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970); Idowu, *Olódùmarè*, J. O. Awolalu and P. A. Dopamu, *West African Traditional Religion* (Ibadan: Onibonoje Press and Book Industries Ltd, 1979); Akin Makinde, “African Culture and Moral Systems: A Philosophical Study,” *Second Order* 1, no. 2 (1988): 1-27.

<sup>80</sup> John A. Bewaji, “Ethics and Morality in Yoruba Culture,” in *Companion to African Philosophy*, ed. Kwesi Wiredu (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006): 396-403; cf., Sophie Oluwole, “The Rational Basis of Yoruba Ethical Thinking,” *The Nigerian Journal of Philosophy* 4-5, nos. 1&2 (1984-1985): 14-25; Wiredu, “Moral Foundations”; Olatunji Oyeshile, “Morality and Its Rationale: The Yoruba Example,” *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies* 11 & 12 (2002): 90-98.

<sup>81</sup> Makinde, “African Culture,” 2.

obligatory in humanistic sense. Being morally upright is not a matter of pleasing the supernatural forces as it is of promoting human welfare.<sup>82</sup>

#### 6.4.2 Determinism and Moral Responsibility

For the Yorùbá, divine determinism presents a serious problem of reconcilability, not only for human freedom but also for human responsibility.<sup>83</sup> The argument, according to Adegoke is that, “If man is not the author of his actions and if these actions are imposed on him by God who was said to have created such actions, how can man be held responsible for the actions beyond his capability and still deserve punishment for such actions?”<sup>84</sup> A puzzling question for Salami is, “whether we can hold someone morally responsible for an action if it is impossible for that person to have acted otherwise ... However, what is puzzling is that despite the fact that the Yorùbá (at least the majority of them) largely accept pre-destination, they also indulge in judgement of moral responsibility.”<sup>85</sup> Notwithstanding their deterministic propensity, the Yorùbá still

---

<sup>82</sup> Bewaji, “Ethics,” 399; cf. Oyeshile’s remark: “We can say that people obey moral laws to enjoy the benefits of morality on the one hand and to avoid sanctions that accompany the violation of such moral rules, on the other hand. In talking about benefits, the individual tries to be prudent in his actions. He also takes actions on an expeditious basis depending on the situation he finds himself in. what all this points to is that human well-being in the form of individual interest and societal interest, constitutes the main rationale for being moral” (“Morality and Its Rationale,” 95).

<sup>83</sup> Gbadegesin, e.g., agrees with Barry Hallen that in the Yorùbá world, “it is possible to ‘miss’ the destiny one has been apportioned, in the sense of becoming confused and lost during one’s lifetime and doing things for which one is not at all suited. Or an external force can interfere with one’s destiny. Neither of these is entirely consistent with the belief that once destiny is fixed, it is unalterable and must take place” (“Theory of Destiny,” 64); cf., Balogun, “Concepts of Ori,” 120.

<sup>84</sup> Kazeem Adegoke, “The Theory of Evil among the Theologians in Islam and Yoruba Traditional Religion,” *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* 43, no. 1 (June, 2011): 160.

<sup>85</sup> Salami, “Pre-destination, Freedom and Responsibility,” 8; cf. A. J. Ayer’s remark: Ayer remarks: “When I am said to have done something of my own free will it is implied that I could have acted otherwise; and it is only when it is believed that I could have acted otherwise that I am held to be morally responsible for what I have done. For a man is not thought to be morally responsible for an action that it was not in his power to avoid” (“Freedom and Necessity,” in *Philosophical Essays*, ed. A. J. Ayer [Bedford: St. Martin’s Press, 1969], 271).

maintain that each individual has some level of morally responsibility for the way his or her life unfolds. Thus, anyone who fails to do everything necessary to ensure that a good destiny is realized and a bad one rectified, only has himself or herself to blame.

American criminologist, Gerald Smith, describes the implication for moral responsibility if human beings claimed their actions were externally coerced by forces beyond their control: “If a choice is one we could not have avoided making, then it is one for which we are not morally responsible.”<sup>86</sup> Smith argues that a person can only be held morally responsible for an action or the neglect of an action if it can be proved that such an individual could have avoided performing the action: “ Thus, if a person could not have avoided an action or neglected an action, then, by definition, he is not morally responsible. The inversion of the statement, that a person is morally responsible if he could have avoided the action or neglected action, is also true by definition.”<sup>87</sup> The underlying principle of the freewill argument is that every human being is endowed with the ability to choose either good or evil, with or without external coercion. By implication, an individual is morally liable if there are means through which he or she may avoid performing an evil act whether or not there is an external coercion.

#### 6.4.3 Sole Responsibility vs. Full Responsibility

In light of the Yorùbá perception of the superhuman spirit beings as members of the community, who not only participate in the celebrations of the clan but also contribute to its sorrows, it is necessary to address the complicity of these spirit beings in

---

<sup>86</sup> Smith, “Determinism,” 184.

<sup>87</sup> Smith, “Determinism,” 185.



the moral evils that occur in the community. Here, Frankfurt's distinction between full responsibility and sole responsibility is helpful:

It is possible that a person should be morally responsible for what he does of his own free will and that some other person should also be morally responsible for his having done it ... There is a difference between being fully responsible and being solely responsible. Suppose that the willing addict has been made an addict by the deliberate and calculated work of another. Then it may be that both the addict and this other person are fully responsible for the addict's taking the drug, while neither of them is solely responsible for it.<sup>88</sup>

In Frankfurt's view, a person may still be fully responsible for an act without being solely responsible: "A certain light can be turned on or off by flicking either of two switches, and each of these switches is simultaneously flicked to the "on" position by a different person, neither of whom is aware of the other. Neither person is solely responsible for the light's going on, nor do they share the responsibility ..."<sup>89</sup> Frankfurt may not have had witches, ancestors or demons in mind, but his logic can be applied to these spirit beings insofar as they are regarded as real entities with the abilities to change the course of human life.

At least two evils occurred simultaneously in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3): first is the evil performed by the serpent when it suggested to Eve that the forbidden fruit was good to eat. Another evil is in Eve's willful disobedience of God's express instruction that the couple may not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden. When Adam and Eve sinned by eating the forbidden fruit, they were not solely responsible for the sin – the serpent did instigate the offence – however, Adam and Eve were fully responsible for their actions. Because Adam and Eve cooperated with the Serpent to

---

<sup>88</sup> Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," *The Journal of Philosophy* 68, no. 1 (Jan. 14, 1971): 20.

<sup>89</sup> Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will," 20.

disobey God's express instruction not to eat the fruit from the tree of life, both Adam and Eve, together with the Serpent were duly punished for their errors (Gen. 3:14-19).

Witchcraft belief presents Yorùbá Christians with the opportunity to identify Satan, the demons, and the witches as possible co-conspirators with human beings whenever evil occurs in the human world. To the extent that these disobedient spirits perpetrate evil acts in the world, they will receive their due punishment from God for their disobedience. In the same vein, human beings are morally responsible for their sinful acts whether performed with or without the collaborative help of the evil spirits with which they share the universe.

#### 6.4.4 Communal Nature of Sin

John Mbiti and Swailem Sidhom, are among the scholars who have observed the communal nature of sin.<sup>90</sup> While Mbiti and Sidhom assert that many African societies do not have words for "sin," at least not in the same sense that the word connotes for Western Christians, these theologians agree that Africans in general believe that the deities, and more importantly the Supreme Being, are concerned about the effect of individual human action on the general well-being of the larger society. For Mbiti, sin in the African setting is a communal phenomenon: "An act of disobedience is anything that tends to weaken, destroy, damage or eclipse that healthy relation of the society in which a person lives. Therefore, a person does not sin alone, since his action (or lack of it) is good

---

<sup>90</sup> John Mbiti asserts that "Many, if not all, African languages have no word for Sin" ("African Concept of Sin," *Frontier* 7, no. 3 [1961]: 182); cf., Swailem Sidhom's remark that in most African societies, "It is very difficult to find in vernaculars a word corresponding to the term 'sin'" ("The Concept of Sin in the African Context and its Application to the Theme 'Justice and Christian Responsibility based on Incarnation,'" *Communi Viatorum* 9, no. 4 [1966]: 243).

or bad only in relation to the harmonious life of the whole society.”<sup>91</sup> In Sidhom’s view, “Sin does not exist, to the African, until something has gone wrong. What is perceived is the immediate consequences of the action that calls for a series of other actions so as to ensure the well-being of the extended community, its life, fertility and prosperity.”<sup>92</sup>

Osotsi Mojola asserts that, in many African societies, “An act is right if and only if it also conforms to the rules and regulations established by the community.”<sup>93</sup> In this regard, Mojola rightly describes the ethics in many Yorùbá churches where the rightness or wrongness of an action is often decided by the community. The community also decides the punishment that may be applied to an offense. It is not unusual in the YIC for church leaders to ask members of the congregation to pray for the immediate punishment (or even death) of an evildoer in the community. The spiritual power of the leader has earned him or her the right to judge morality and to prescribe the appropriate punishment for evil doing.

Like Mbiti, Sidhom, and Mojola, Tempels and Turaki have also observed the communal interpretation that many African communities give to the idea of sin. In

Tempels opinion:

Africans have traditionally been very conscious of the social dimension of morality. Morality is always seen in the social context. Hence any serious violation of the moral order has a social aspect which involves serious social consequences. The whole society is affected, for every evil act is an anti-social act which has adverse effects on the whole community.<sup>94</sup>

---

<sup>91</sup> Mbiti, “Concept of Sin,” 182.

<sup>92</sup> Sidhom, “Concept of Sin,” 243

<sup>93</sup> Osotsi Mojola, *Introductory Ethics for College Students and Teachers* (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1988), 31; B.J. van der Walt, however, warns that, “A communalistic ethics or morality does not only imply that all human behaviour should be to the benefit of society” (“Morality in Africa: Yesterday and Today: The Reasons for the Contemporary Crisis,” *In Die Skriflig* 37, no. 1 [2003]: 55).

<sup>94</sup> Placide Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy* (Orlando, FL: HBC Publishing, 1959), 45.

Turaki, on his part, suggests that many Africans perceive sin as a communal transgression because it is, indeed, the harmony of the community that is disrupted whenever a sinful act occurs: “Personal sense of sin, shame and guilt are always interpreted in terms of the ingroup and blood community. It is the ingroup that is wronged or sinned against ... One sins only against kinsfolk, and feels ashamed or guilty because of them.”<sup>95</sup> Not only do Africans believe that sin is a collaborative venture, they also consider sin a social problem because the entire community is hurt whenever a sinful act occurs. This is why it is the obligation of the larger society to identify and punish sinners.

Kunyahop explains why many Africans perceive individual morality as a societal concern:

Given the holistic thinking in many African societies, morality is communal and relational, and existence is interpreted in terms of relationships and society ... In such contexts, the concepts of shame and honor become critical. An individual’s conduct will either let down their family or bring it honor. Shame means a sense of personal shortcoming or betrayal of oneself and the community. A shameful act not only brings shame to the individuals but also disgraces their relations and community because it was seen as a communal failure ... Honor, on the other hand, means respect, dignity, and pride, bringing about a communal sense of accomplishment because of the exemplary conduct of a member of the community.<sup>96</sup>

The Yorùbá typify the African societies where individual morality is accessed in light of the general benefits or loss derived by the larger community from it. Harmony is assured when individuals behave in ways that benefit the other members in the clan. This causes

---

<sup>95</sup> Y. Turaki, *Tribal Gods of Africa: Ethnicity, Racism, Tribalism and the Gospel of Christ* (Jos, Nigeria: Crossroads Media Services, 1997), 71.

<sup>96</sup> Samuel Kunyahop, “Towards a Christian Communal Ethics: The African Contribution,” *Cultural Encounters* 6, no. 2 (2010): 15.

Oyeshile to say: “Morality is therefore concerned with human conduct. In other words, it is concerned with right and wrong actions; judgments and beliefs about what is good and bad, without which the society (any human society) cannot develop.”<sup>97</sup>

That the Yorùbá perceive sin in light of its effects on the larger society does not mean they are not cognizant of the responsibility which each individual has in maintaining right conduct in the society. Much has been written about the vital role of individual human character, or *Ìwà*, in the Yorùbá understanding of what it means to be human. The consensus among scholars is that the Yorùbá consider the character (*Ìwà*) one of the most important attributes of a human being. In Idowu’s view,

To the Yorùbá, man’s character is of supreme importance and it is this which Olódùmarè judges. Thus the demands which Olódùmarè lays upon man are purely ethical. Man’s well-being here on earth depends upon his character; his place in the After-Life is determined by Olódùmarè according to his deserts ... It is therefore stressed that good character must be a dominant feature of a person’s life. In fact, it is the one thing which distinguishes a person from a brute.<sup>98</sup>

In the Yorùbá world, character defines a human being. A person who displays bad character traits is not much different from an animal. Adeyemi Fayemi puts this notion well: “The point here is that the absence of proper culture, moral probity, and integrity devalues the personhood of a person to the level of just ordinary things – *eniyàn lasan*, *lasan*, or animal – *eranko*. Thus, such a being or an individual loses the personhood of being a member of society which being a human being demands.”<sup>99</sup>

Many leaders in the YIC are aware of the biblical view of sin as an offense against God but they also accommodate the traditional notion that the elders in the

---

<sup>97</sup> Olatunji Oyeshile, “Religious and Secular Origins of Morality within the Yoruba Framework: Implication for Man and Society,” *Prajñā Vihāra* 8, no. 1 (January-June 2007): 84.

<sup>98</sup> Idowu, *Olódùmarè*, 154

<sup>99</sup> Fayemi, “Human Personality,” 170.

community, including those who are dead, moderate ethics in the community and may also be “sinned” against. Whichever way, sin is often presented in the YIC as an act that has a negative impact on an individual or on the larger society.

In many traditional African settings, proper care is taken to include the ancestors in the prayers that are offered at the beginning of important community events. Ronald Green remarks: “The importance of the ancestor spirits in defending group values is further underscored by the role these spirits play in morally significant ceremonies and rituals.”<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, just as human beings can offend one another through inappropriate behaviors, they can also offend the non-human spirits and can be offended by the spirits: “African beliefs thus preserve the idea of reciprocity between the living and the dead. Dependence is two-way: the dead need continued respect from and support by the living and the living need at least benign neutrality on the part of the dead.”<sup>101</sup> In some traditional African settings, the ancestors are included among the elders who enforce morality in the community. Sidhom, for example, asserts that the Dinka of the Nile river look up to their ancestors to punish the evil doers in their society: “These are all part of the community, and they function as guardians whose vision and sphere of influence stretch much farther than that of the ‘living.’ It is, thus, their duty to find out the offender whom they would never let go unpunished.”<sup>102</sup> The prevailing assumption in many African traditional settings that the ancestors exert moral and spiritual authority over their living kin has influenced the teachings in many indigenous African churches

---

<sup>100</sup> Ronald Green, “Religion and Morality in the African Traditional Setting,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 14, no. 1 (1983), 10.

<sup>101</sup> Green, “Religion and Morality,” 8.

<sup>102</sup> Sidhom, “Concept of Sin,” 245.

who regard God as the ultimate Rewarder of good behavior and the Punisher of evil actions. God's ability to reward and punish has also instilled in the minds of Yorùbá Christians, the idea that the human character is perhaps the most desirable quality in a human being.

#### 6.4.5 Character as a Defining Human Trait

Gbadegesin rightly observes that to the Yorùbá, "Character is by far the most important of one's earthly possessions; and an otherwise good destiny may be spoilt by a person's bad character."<sup>103</sup> Character is within human control and significantly contributes to life outcomes. In fact, life destiny or goals may be unattainable for individuals who habitually make wrong choices or engage in sinful behaviors.<sup>104</sup> People who desire to fulfill their goals in life must be self-disciplined. Or as Balogun rightly remarks: "One's act of rashness or impulse behavior can affect one's destiny for the worse. While an impatient person will run at a faster pace than his *Orí*, thereby losing its support, an idle mind will spoil an otherwise prosperous destiny."<sup>105</sup>

Adeolu Adegbola asserts that Africans, in general, determine that an act is sinful by the result it produces in society: "Sin is that which produces evil as its consequence."<sup>106</sup> The consequential nature of sin is echoed by David Bosch in his

---

<sup>103</sup> Olusegun Gbadegesin, "Destiny, Personality and the Ultimate Reality of Human Existence: A Yoruba Perspective." *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 7, no. 3 (September 1, 1984): 182.

<sup>104</sup> Olukoya, e.g., asserts that sin is as good a destiny-destroyer as any other factor: "The tragedy of the modern man is that many have allowed sin to destroy their destiny. Sin can be likened to a dangerous cancer. Just a little of it will spread and kill the sinner sooner or later. You must, therefore, destroy sin or it will destroy you. If you play with sin, it will swallow your destiny" (*Seventy Sermons*, 122–23).

<sup>105</sup> Balogun, "Concepts of Ori," 126.

<sup>106</sup> Adeolu Adegbola, "The Theological Basis of Ethics," in *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs*, ed. K. A. Dickson and P. Ellingworth, (London: Lutterworth, 1970), 133.

generalization that “The word used for ‘sin’ in several African languages essentially means ‘to spoil’, particularly to spoil or harm human relationships. The witch is sinner par excellence, not primarily because of his or her deeds, but because of the evil consequences of those deeds: illness, barrenness, catastrophe, misfortune, disruption of relationships in the community, poverty, and so on.”<sup>107</sup> A closer look at the Yorùbá interest in the human character as the primary determinant of morality reveals that, in the Yorùbá mind, every action is assessed as “good” or “evil” rather than the end result that the act produces.

Babalola Balogun is right in his remark that the Yorùbá are non-consequentialists; they “do not differentiate between the ‘means’ and the ‘end’, especially when these two categories are taken to be causally related. In the Yoruba belief-system, the means is the end in process, so that when the means is wrong, the end cannot be right”<sup>108</sup> Every act is assessed for its moral value irrespective of the goal its performer intends it to fulfill in the community. This, perhaps, explains why the concept of the Original Sin is conspicuously missing in the teachings in the YIC. In their preoccupation with the prosperity gospel, Yorùbá Christians often define sin in terms that reflect its destructive effect on individuals and society. Moreover, they struggle with the idea that a human being who had been created to thrive in this world would, *ceteris paribus* (all

---

<sup>107</sup> David Bosch, “The Problem of Evil in Africa: A Survey of African Views on Witchcraft and of the Response of the Christian Church,” in *Like a Roaring Lion: Essays on the Bible, the Church and Demonic Powers*, ed. Pieter G. R. de Villiers (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1987), 51.

<sup>108</sup> Babalola Balogun, “The Consequentialist Foundations of Traditional Yoruba Ethics: An Exposition,” *Thought and Practice: Journal of the Philosophical Association of Kenya* 5, no. 2 (Dec., 2013): 116; in Balogun’s view, consequentialism “refers to those moral theories that hold that the outcome of a particular action forms the basis of any valid moral judgement about it. Thus on a consequentialist account, a morally right action is one which produces desirable results. In other words, consequentialism embodies the practice of considering the end product of actions to determine the moral worth of the said actions,” 116.



things being equal), also have the propensity to sin without some external coercion. A theology of an Original Sin would negate the notion in the YIC that superhuman spirits are the primary sources of every evil in the world.

In deemphasizing the idea that human beings may have the natural propensity to perform evil acts, leaders in the YIC stress the importance of good character for those who aim to fulfill their life goals. Olukoya, for example, asserts that, “The greatest asset in life is your character. Character is of greater value than talent. No matter how talented you are, if your character leaves more to be desired, you are far from fulfilling your destiny.”<sup>109</sup> A person who lacks moral integrity will fall short of achieving life’s purpose: “Integrity will take you to your high places. Moral bankruptcy on the other hand will derail your destiny. Without character your destiny will crash.”<sup>110</sup> Many Yorùbá Christians, it has already been pointed out, assume that human beings play vital roles in the enactment of their life destinies. This humanistic interpretation of life may have contributed to the lack of interest in the YIC on the biblical presentation of sin as primarily an offense against God. When sin is perceived as an offense against God, it may or may not have an effect on society.

## 6.5 Communion of Saints

Christian theologians have considered the possibility of incorporating ideas regarding ancestors into African Christian theology. Fasholé-Luke, for example, suggests that “... if Christian theologians in Africa give the doctrine of the Communion of Saints

---

<sup>109</sup> Olukoya, *Seventy Sermons*, 38.

<sup>110</sup> Olukoya, *Seventy Sermons*, 44

the centrality which it deserves, it could provide a framework for incorporating African ideas about ancestors into Christian theology.”<sup>111</sup> Edison Kalengyo, writing with the Ganda Christians in mind, asserts that “the principle of ancestorship in Christian theology does not contradict Jesus Christ – the Messiah. African Christians need not be ashamed of themselves for it is impossible (at least in the case of the Ganda) to disassociate ourselves from our roots – the ancestors.”<sup>112</sup> In Kalengyo’s view, ancestor belief is an integral part of the Ganda identity: “the Ganda are so inextricable linked with the ancestors that any attempt to deny them a relationship with the ancestors is tantamount to denying them life itself.”<sup>113</sup>

#### 6.5.1 Christology of the Ancestors

An African Christology of the ancestors, it has been stressed, must begin with the recognition of the supremacy of Christ over every created being, including the ancestors. Magesa maintains that “Jesus Christ is not contradicted by this principle of Ancestorship in Christian theology, but is rather vividly expressed in and by the category. As an ancestor, the Christian vocation toward life in God cannot be conceived apart from Jesus.”<sup>114</sup> The basic assumption of an African Christology of ancestors is that Jesus Christ himself is the Great Ancestor who stands far above the other ancestors. In Charles

---

<sup>111</sup> Edward Fasholé-Luke, “Ancestor Veneration and the Communion of Saints,” in *New Testament Christianity for Africa and the World: Essays in Honor of Harry Sawyerr*, ed. Mark E. Glasswell, and Edward Fasholé-Luke (London: SPCK, 1974), 214.

<sup>112</sup> Edison Kalengyo, “‘Cloud of Witnesses’ in Hebrews 12:1 and Ganda Ancestors: An Incarnational Reflection,” *Neotestamentica* 43, no. 1 (2009): 50.

<sup>113</sup> Kalengyo, “Cloud of Witnesses,” 60.

<sup>114</sup> Laurenti Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 112.

Nyamiti's words, "the Redeemer shines forth as THE Brother-Ancestor par excellence, of whom the African ancestors are but faint and poor images."<sup>115</sup>

The scope of this dissertation does not allow an excursion into the various arguments concerning the advantages and disadvantages of presenting Christ to African Christians as an ancestor, howbeit as an Ancestor par excellence.<sup>116</sup> What is helpful, however, is the perception by many African scholars that an effective Africanized Christology must accommodate the high regard that many Africans have for their ancestors in its formation. Magesa maintains ancestral belief cannot be ignored in an African Christian theology because, "Ancestors in Africa are the 'principle' or 'source' of personal, family and community life."<sup>117</sup> Like Magesa, Kalengyo points out that because of the indispensable role of ancestors in the traditional life in Africa, some churches have already successfully incorporated these sages into their church liturgies: "The Holy Communion liturgy for the Church of the Province of Kenya has also acknowledged and made provision for the ancestors."<sup>118</sup>

Catholic theologians, especially, have led the clamor for the consideration of the African ancestors among the saints of the Christian faith. Aihikhai, for example,

---

<sup>115</sup> Charles Nyamiti, *Christ as Our Ancestor: Christianity from an African Perspective* (Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1984), 70.

<sup>116</sup> J. Beyers and Dora N. Mphahlele, in their summary of Kuster's view of Jesus as the Great Ancestor remark: "Jesus can be Ancestor because he mediates life, because he is present among the living, because he is simultaneously the eldest and because he is the mediator between God and human beings" ("Jesus Christ as Ancestor: An African Christian Understanding," *HTS Theological Studies* 65, no. 1 [Jan., 2009], 40); cf., Francois K. Lumbala's view: "First, Jesus Christ is the ancestor because he mediates life. second, Jesus Christ is the ancestor because he is present among the living. Third, Jesus Christ, the ancestor, is at the same time the eldest. Fourth, Jesus Christ is the ancestor because he is the mediator between God and human beings and within human community" (*Celebrating Jesus in Africa: Liturgy and Inculturation* [Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998], 44).

<sup>117</sup> Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation*, 112.

<sup>118</sup> Kalengyo, "Cloud of Witnesses," 63.

suggests that the ancestorhood in the Yorùbá traditional religion can be safely incorporated into Christianity because, “Both Yoruba religionists and Christians have rituals that commemorate the lives of men and women who are considered ancestors or saints.”<sup>119</sup> For Aihokhai, the creedal statement on the communion of saints in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC, no. 946), which stresses the vital connection of humanity to the saints, is also nuanced in the Yorùbá traditional religion. In differentiating the “fellowship” which the ancestors in the traditional life may have with their living kin from the Christian communion, Catholic theologians maintain that the Church is the place where *sanctorum communio* is enacted. For J.N.D. Kelly, the phrase *sanctorum communio* stands “for that ultimate fellowship with the holy persons in all ages, as well as with the whole company of heaven, which is anticipated and partly realized in the fellowship of the Catholic Church on earth.”<sup>120</sup>

Kwame Bediako suggests that a doctrine of the communion of saints for African Christians may set as its theological datum a Christology of the ancestors.<sup>121</sup> However, ancestors in the Christian religion must be those who had already indicated their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ while they were alive. Bediako explains that a theology of ancestors does not have to include the fate of the unbelieving ancestors or those who had no relationship with the church. Commenting on Bediako, Afeke and Verster remark:

A theology of ancestors is not necessitated because many African Christians have ancestors who were not Christian. Rather, a theology of ancestors is about the

---

<sup>119</sup> Simon-Mary Aihokhai, “Ancestorhood in Yoruba Religion and Sainthood in Christianity: Envisioning an Ecological Awareness and Responsibility,” *International Journal of African Catholicism* 1 <http://www.saintleo.edu/media/131009/aihiokhai-ancestors-saint.pdf>, (downloaded August 17, 2016): 12.

<sup>120</sup> J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London, 1950), 392.

<sup>121</sup> Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa* (Milton Keynes, U.K.: Regnum Books, 1999), 224.

interpretation of the past in a way that shows that the present experience and knowledge of the grace of God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ have been truly anticipated and pre-figured in the quest for and the response to the transcendent in former times as these have been reflected in the lives of African people.<sup>122</sup>

Glenday, in his study of the Acholi people of Northern Uganda, remarks that the veneration of the ancestors among the Acholi is comparable to the honor accorded to the Christian saints, and particularly to Jesus Christ. Just like Christians who, through Christ, have communion with the heavenly Father and receive abundant blessings from the Father through Christ, “the Acholi did look to their ancestors to give them particular benefits, such as success in the hunt, good crops and healthy children.”<sup>123</sup> The goal in each case is to strengthen the bond of relationship within the group and to have relationship with God through an intermediary. In Glenday’s conclusion: “The similarity of approach at this point is unmistakable and should only mean that the link between ancestor-veneration and the Communion of Saints may the more readily and fruitfully be made.”<sup>124</sup>

#### 6.5.2 Christian Communion and the Eucharist

The *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* identifies three meanings which may be given the *Communio Sanctorum* used in the ninth article of the Apostles’ Creed:

(1) The spiritual union existing between each Christian and Christ, and so between each and every Christian, whether in Heaven (the ‘Church Triumphant’), in Purgatory (the ‘Church Expectant’), or on earth (the ‘Church Militant’) ... (2)

---

<sup>122</sup> B. Afeke, and P. Verster, “Christianisation of Ancestor Veneration within African Traditional Religions: An Evaluation,” *In die Skriflig* 38, no. 1 (2004): 51.

<sup>123</sup> David Glenday, “Acholi Ancestor-Veneration and the Communion of Saints,” *Afer* 18, no. 4 (1976): 228.

<sup>124</sup> Glenday, “Acholi Ancestor-Veneration,” 229.

The fellowship of Christians upon earth only. (3) The sharing of holy *things*, i.e. the share which all Christians have in the Sacraments, esp. the Eucharist.”<sup>125</sup>

Christian communion has also been likened to the “fellowship” which Paul insists exists in the Church. Barclay points out that the *koinonia* described in Acts 2:42 and II Corinthians 6:14 is “a sharing of friendship and an abiding in the company of others.”<sup>126</sup> Believers enjoy *koinonia* with one another (Acts 2.42; II Cor. 6.14), with the Holy Spirit, (II Cor. 13.14; Phil. 2.1), and with Jesus Christ (I Cor. 1.9). Christian “fellowship” or *koinonia* is celebrated through the “breaking of bread” together:

The cup and the bread are supremely the *koinonia* of the body and the blood of Christ. In the sacrament above all Christians find Christ and find each other. Further, that fellowship with Christ is fellowship with his sufferings (Phil. 3.10). When the Christian suffers he has, amidst the pain, the joy of knowing that he is sharing things with Christ... The Christian *koinonia* is that bond which binds Christians to each other, to Christ and to God.<sup>127</sup>

The central place of the Eucharist in the *sanctorum communio* is not lost on the proponents of the theology of ancestors. Mosothoane suggests that the Eucharist can serve as a rite into which ancestor veneration may be incorporated.<sup>128</sup> In agreement with Mosothoane, Afeke and Verster remark: “The Eucharist does not only imply fellowship with Christ, but with all Christians, living and dead. African Christians should be encouraged to communicate with their ancestors within the context of the Eucharist.

Provision can be made for prayers for ancestors in the Eucharist by mentioning them by

---

<sup>125</sup> F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), s.v., “Communion of Saints,” 390.

<sup>126</sup> William Barclay, *New Testament Words: Combining a New Testament Wordbook and More New Testament Words* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1964), s.v., “*koinonia*, *Koinonein* and *Koinonos*, the Christian fellowship,” 173.

<sup>127</sup> Barclay, *New Testament Words*, s.v., “*koinonia*, *Koinonein* and *Koinonos*, the Christian fellowship,” 174.

<sup>128</sup> E. K. Mosothoane, “*Communio Sanctorum* in Africa,” *Missionalia* 1, no. 2 (1973): 87.

name.”<sup>129</sup> Kalengyo maintains that “it is at the celebration of the eucharist that the faithful ancestors ought to be acknowledged.”<sup>130</sup>

### 6.5.3 Christ, the Great Ancestor

Christ is the reason and purpose of the *Communio Sanctorum*. It is through Christ that Christians have communion with one another and with God: “If we are to speak of Communion of Saints, we must begin from what God has accomplished in his Son. The first and fundamental “communion” for a Christian is sharing in the life of Christ ... The Christian, then, begins with Christ and Christ leads him to the Father, to fellowship with the Father.”<sup>131</sup> In essence, the Christian life revolves around faith in Jesus Christ because the very life the church derives from God is obtained through Jesus Christ. Moreover, Christians derive their joy and life purpose through worship and other celebrative communal acts such as the observance of the Eucharist and the rites of the Christian community.

Advocates of the ancestor Christology have been criticized for ignoring the main differences between Christ and the ancestors. Wanamaker, for example, points out that “From an African point of view it is also not the nature of Jesus’ death which is important. What matters is the fact of his death since from the African perspective, Jesus’ death leads to his life as an ancestor.”<sup>132</sup> From the Christian point of view, the manner of Christ’s death is central to his glorification. Christ is unique, in part, because he fulfills

---

<sup>129</sup> Afeke and Verster, “Christianisation,” 52.

<sup>130</sup> Kalengyo, “Cloud of Witnesses,” 50.

<sup>131</sup> Glenday, “Acholi Ancestor-Veneration,” 227.

<sup>132</sup> Charles Wanamaker, “Jesus the Ancestor: Reading the Story of Jesus from an African Christian Perspective,” *Scriptura* 63 (1997): 293.

the prophetic expectations that he would die for his clan on the cruel cross. Furthermore, Wanamaker points out that Christ's resurrection does not appear to fit into an African Christology of the ancestors because, "His afterlife is assumed to be of the same character as all other ancestors."<sup>133</sup> Unlike the African ancestor, whose major role is "opposite to that of bringing about misfortune to maintain good behavior and the social order," Christ, in addition to performing these roles "is also a source of benefit, a giver and sustainer of the life of his descendants. Jesus after his death performs this task continuously for his living family, the church."<sup>134</sup>

A Christology of the ancestors has also been criticized for creating the notion that other intermediaries may exist between God and human beings apart from Jesus Christ. The Scripture is unequivocal in its assertion that Christ is the only intermediary in the Christian faith who is competent to accept prayers and petitions and present them to God on behalf of human beings.<sup>135</sup> "If ancestors function as intermediaries in that they receive prayers, libation, or invocation, then dealing with them becomes idolatry as they take the place of Christ who is the only mediator between God and man."<sup>136</sup>

A third challenge for an ancestor Christology is in reconciling the meaning of kinship in the African culture with that in Christianity. Afeke and Verster had this problem in mind when they opined that the idea of sainthood, in both the Old and New Testaments, is based not primarily on a biological inheritance, but strictly on a rebirth

---

<sup>133</sup> Wanamaker, "Jesus the Ancestor," 293.

<sup>134</sup> Wanamaker, "Jesus the Ancestor," 294.

<sup>135</sup> Yusufu Turaki, *Christianity and the Gods: A Method in Theology* (South Africa: Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir CHO, 1999), 254.

<sup>136</sup> Afeke and Verster, "Christianisation," 56



through the Abrahamic faith.<sup>137</sup> For the Apostle Paul: “A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person’s praise is not from other people, but from God (Rom. 8:28-29). Kinship is assigned by God, not as a birth right, but on the basis of a person’s spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ.

The African ancestors’ relationship with Christ is central to their admission into the “Communion of Saints.” Fasholé-Luke points out that because many African Christians have ancestors who were not Christians, “we cannot simply say that African ancestors can be embraced within the framework of the universal Church and included in the Communion of Saints.”<sup>138</sup> For Fasholé-Luke,

We need a more profound appraisal of the situation and a deeper theological interpretation of the beliefs about the fate of the departed, and we would suggest that the interpretation of the phrase *sanctorum communio* to mean fellowship with holy people of all ages and the whole company of heaven through participation in the holy sacraments, gives us a sign-post to the road on which our theologizing should travel.<sup>139</sup>

The Christian “fellowship” revolves around public worship and the celebration of the sacraments. “By participation in the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist Christians are linked with Christ and so are linked with others not only in different parts of the world, but also with the departed.”<sup>140</sup> A theologically viable Christian theology on the ancestors must identify, not only the points of contact between African and Christian

---

<sup>137</sup> Afeke and Verster, “Christianisation,” 56.

<sup>138</sup> Fasholé-Luke, “Ancestor Veneration,” 216.

<sup>139</sup> Fasholé-Luke, “Ancestor Veneration,” 216.

<sup>140</sup> Fasholé-Luke, “Ancestor Veneration,” 220.

ideas on ancestors, but also the aspects of African traditional beliefs that are incompatible with the Christian faith.<sup>141</sup>

## 6.6 Summary

Whatever criticism may be leveled against the theology or spirituality in the YIC, one cannot deny the fact that these churches are at least effective in proclaiming the gospel to their members in ways that resonate with the cultural and spiritual aspirations of African Christians. With regards to the pervasive African belief in the activities of ancestors and witches in human society, Yorùbá Christian leaders have identified themes – such as destiny, determinism, and communal nature of sin – that include supernatural agencies in human affairs and life activities. In formulating their theologies of “destiny,” “determinism,” and “theodicy,” therefore, Yorùbá church leaders have found ways to accommodate traditional idioms in their expression of basic biblical doctrines without compromising the sovereignty of God. The Supreme Being, or *Olódùmarè*, must remain in full control of creation even though other human and nonhuman spirit beings constantly interfere with God’s good decrees.

In its simplistic form, God is responsible for everything in life. God customarily desires the good things for human beings but he sometimes permits evil to occur in human society as his means of governing creation. Meanwhile, evil may also manifest itself in society through the activities of wicked human and nonhuman beings. Occasionally, witches, demons, even some ancestors may disrupt divine purpose (or destiny) for individuals or societies by derailing God’s plan for them. Yorùbá Christianity

---

<sup>141</sup> Fasholé-Luke, “Ancestor Veneration,” 214.

does not disregard traditional ideas regarding their human destiny and the possibility that such destiny may be thwarted by the activities of the superhuman spirit beings in the world.

The continuity which Yorùbá Christian anthropology maintains with the traditional religious beliefs may have achieved pragmatic intentions but has still not resolved significant theological issues. In the first place, Yorùbá Christians, like their non-Christian kin, in attributing much of the unpleasant experiences in life to the activities of evil spirit beings underrepresent the biblical presentation of sin as human willful disobedience to a divine command or law (see e.g. 1 Jn 3:4). Human moral responsibility, key to doctrines of sin, salvation and divine judgement, for example, has been compromised in the desperate attempts by the leaders in the YIC to provide comfort amid the social economic and political hardships in many parts of modern Africa.

## CHAPTER 7

### THEOLOGICAL CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The sudden surge in church attendance in many African Indigenous Churches (AIC) can be traced to the teachings and spiritual practices made popular by the *Aladura* Church Movement and more recently by the Nigerian Pentecostal Churches. Yorùbá Indigenous Churches (YIC), perhaps more than all the other African Indigenous Churches (AIC), have demonstrated that the gospel can indeed be communicated to Africans in traditional idioms familiar to the pre-Christian experiences of church members. With specific regard to the traditional ideas regarding the human relationship with the superhuman spirit beings in the world, Yorùbá Christians, especially, epitomize the Africans who hold the spirit beings responsible for much of the woes in the human world.

The discussions in this dissertation revolved around the persuasion in the YIC that the superhuman spirit beings in the universe participate in the events of life in ways that have significant, often adverse, impacts on human well-being. The implication is that leaders in the YIC do not hesitate to blame the ancestors, witches, and demons whenever life events do not turn out as expected. Yorùbá Christian theology, in its current form, is founded on three basic assumptions:

- a) first, traditional religious determinism that assumes that even though the human life course has been pre-ordained by God, it may easily be altered by the evil superhuman spirit beings with which human beings share their world.

- b) second, the perception in the YIC that whereas God allows some disastrous events to occur as his means of governing the world, much of the evils in the world are manifestations of the activities of malicious ancestors, witches and demons.
- c) finally, evolving from the two assumptions above, is the notion that human comfort and well-being is the goal of one's life-destiny. Yorùbá Christians, like their non-Christian kin, perceive any physical or spiritual barrier in life as an undesirable obstacle that must be removed through spiritual means.

Few observers would deny the spiritual vitality the indigenous Christian leaders have introduced into Yorùbá Christianity. Where the mission churches failed to make Christianity relevant to the social and spiritual needs of Nigerians, the YIC have succeeded in relating the gospel to the perceived fears and anxieties of church members. However, the goal of Christian theology is not merely to communicate the gospel in ways that resonate with the perceived needs of Christians but to, more importantly, do so in ways that adhere and conform to the tenets of Scripture.

This concluding chapter identifies three major areas in the Yorùbá Christian interpretation of human existence amid other influential spirit beings that must be resolved if the gospel will attain enduring presence among the Yorùbá. In the first instance, an effective Christian mission to the Yorùbá must provide a theological framework for interpreting the role of the gospel in addressing the social, economic, and political problems in the Yorùbá world. In doing so, Christian missions must be cognizant of traditional Yorùbá notions regarding how the interactions between God, human beings and the superhuman spirit beings in the universe affect human wellbeing.

Also, vital to the success of Christian missions is the need for the gospel to provide a viable response to the problem of evil in the Yorùbá world.

Second, key pastoral issues regarding the spiritual benefits of the beliefs and practices in the Yorùbá churches must be resolved. As it has already been pointed out, many Yorùbá churches are identified by their penchant to dwell on the demonic; worship services are often conducted with the goal of casting out demons or rebuking witches or ancestors. Three major problems arise from such a demon-centered view of community: first is the escalation of fear which Yorùbá Christians have for the ancestors, witches and demons in their world; second is a deliberate shift from God-centered to human-centered worship in the Christian community; and finally, human relationships are strained when family members, especially women, are accused of perpetrating evil in society by means of witchcraft.

Finally, leaders in the YIC must be encouraged to teach doctrines that have erstwhile been ignored in their sermons and Christian education. Biblical themes regarding the human condition at creation, circumstances leading to human bondage to sin, and God's means of salvation centered around Christ's atonement must be systematically taught in churches. Other themes that have been ignored in Yorùbá churches include biblical ideas related to the human condition in the afterlife and the work of the Holy Spirit in a believer.

### 7.1 Missiological Concerns

African Christian theologians, like Musopole and Bediako, are right in their assessment that an effective African Christian doctrine of humanity cannot ignore the

practical spiritual, and socio-economic issues in the African world. An African doctrine of humanity, in Musopole's view, cannot be merely speculative:

Such a doctrine concerning humanness must be intentionally both pragmatic and programmatic, not abstract. It must be pragmatic in order to deal with our historical and cultural existence as the concrete expression of our essential Africanness. It must be programmatic so as to set forth a style of life that has human well being (salvation/liberation) as its major concern, otherwise the doctrine will lack existential meaning and relevance.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps, one of the most significant contributions of the indigenous African churches to global Christianity is the insistence in these churches that the gospel can, indeed, address the real and imagined fears in the African society. A viable religion, in the African world, must be pragmatic rather than theoretical; or as Okorocho aptly puts it: "African piety is more of a lived religion than a fideistic set of dogma and philosophical romanticism."<sup>2</sup> Yorùbá indigenous church leaders are more determined to demonstrate the competence of Christianity in meeting the perceived needs of members than in teaching intellectual doctrines. Arguably, the indigenous churches have filled in a major gap that the mission-established churches may have for long ignored; vis-à-vis the role of Christ in a world filled with chronic social, economic, and spiritual problems.

---

<sup>1</sup> Augustine Musopole, *Being Human in Africa: Toward African Christian Anthropology* (New York: P. Lang, 1994), 176; for Kwame Bediako: "Accepting Jesus Christ as 'our savior' always involves making him at home in our spiritual universe in terms of our religious needs and longings. So an understanding of Christ in relation to the spirit-power in the African context is not necessarily less accurate than any other perception of Jesus. The question is whether such an understanding faithfully reflects biblical revelation and is rooted in true Christian experience" (*Jesus and the Gospel in Africa: History and Experience* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008], 22).

<sup>2</sup> Cyril Okorocho, "The Meaning of Salvation: An African Perspective," in *Emerging Voices in Global Christian Theology*, ed. William Dyrness (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 80.

### 7.1.1 Role of Christianity in Yorùbá Culture

The Yorùbá have a pragmatic place for religion in individual and communal lives. The worship of God is intended first and foremost to fulfill some perceived human need. Just as traditional worshipers offer sacrifices to the deities to gain one favor or another from them, many Yorùbá Christians assume the primary reason they belong to the Christian community is because of the protection or favor they receive from God. That Christians go to church to find solutions to their problems is not in itself a bad thing. In fact, theologians like Asamoah-Gyadu have pointed out how the indigenous churches are filling much-needed voids in the African society: “The greatest contribution of the AICs to African Christianity was the challenge they posed to existing historic mission denominations to integrate charismatic phenomena, particularly healing and prophecy, into Christian ministry.”<sup>3</sup> The poor conditions of the healthcare system in many parts of Africa has contributed to the proliferation of church-organized healing houses. As Anderson has rightly noted: “For Christians in the South, healing is a more central issue than it is for those in the North, where medical facilities are abundant and adequate health care is taken for granted.”<sup>4</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that healing has become a major preoccupation of Yorùbá churches. Religious organizations are assuming the responsibilities that the government has failed to provide its citizenry.

From the time of Christ until the present day, the church has been holistic in its missional approach to meet the emotional, spiritual and physical needs of human beings.

---

<sup>3</sup> J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, “Mission to ‘Set the Captives Free,’: Healing, Deliverance, and Generational Curses in Ghanaian Pentecostalism,” *International Review of Mission* 93, nos. 370/371 (July/October, 2004), 392.

<sup>4</sup> Allan Anderson, “Pentecostals, Healing and Ecumenism,” *International Review of Mission* 93, no. 370-371 (2004): 494.



The problem, however, in the case of Yorùbá Christianity is the central place which human concerns take in religious spirituality. In fashioning the activities of the church after human comfort and domination, indigenous church leaders have developed their teachings around power themes. Almost every human problem is interpreted in the YIC in language that suggests perpetual human encounters with the dark forces of life. The gospel, in effect, is God's means of confronting and defeating the spiritual foes arrayed against human comfort or success in this world.

Many Yorùbá Christians are quite like their traditional religious kin in their perception that religion succeeds when it fulfills some perceived human needs. The drift from mission-established churches to the indigenous churches is, in part, due to the anticipation that the local churches would more effectively provide practical solutions to the problems of life. The poor social, economic and political structures in many parts of Africa have further compounded the desperation of Christians for spiritual interventions. There is the danger for the gospel to be received by new converts as the panacea to human problems rather than the means through which human beings are reconciled to God through Christ.

While Christianity, indeed, cannot be immune to the social and economic problems in Africa, it also must not make these problems the central reason Christians worship God. As Abraham Akrong has pointed out: "In recent times, the charismatic and Pentecostal churches are attracting large crowds because many people want to be told the specific causes of their problems."<sup>5</sup> Christian leaders would not be different from produce

---

<sup>5</sup> Abraham Akrong, "Towards a Theology of Evil Spirits and Witches," *Journal of African Christian Thought* 4, no. 1 (June 2001): 22.

merchants if their messages are packaged essentially to help members resolve life problems or to attract large followership. A church would also not be much different from a traditional shrine if the incentive to choose one over the other depends on how easily human problems are resolved in these places.<sup>6</sup>

Indigenous Yorùbá churches must be commended for making Christianity relevant amid the depressed social and economic realities in Africa. More people have come to know Christ through the activities of the church and the concerns that local church leaders are showing in the spiritual as well as physical well-being of members. However, church leaders must be careful not to allow their concerns for human physical well-being to outweigh the more important care for the eternal destiny of souls. After all, “What good is it if someone gains the whole world but loses their soul?” (Mk. 8: 36).

#### 7.1.2 Impact of Yorùbá Culture on Christianity

Perhaps, the most valuable contribution Yorùbá churches have made to Christianity is their openness to redeem as many traditional ideas as possible in communicating the gospel in the African culture. In addressing the real concerns in the Yorùbá cultures, leaders in the YIC have taken Christianity out of the domain of abstract intellectualism into which the mission-established churches had erstwhile located it; and brought it into the field of spiritual power and cultural relevance.

---

<sup>6</sup> See e.g., David Bosch, “The Problem of Evil in Africa: A Survey of African Views on Witchcraft and of the Response of the Christian Church,” in *Like a Roaring Lion: Essays on the Bible, the Church and Demonic Powers*, ed. Pieter G. R. de Villiers (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1987), 53, where Nxumalo is quoted as saying that some South African Christians traded their church leaders for the traditional priests (the *sangomas*) when they perceive that their needs were not met in the church: “As soon as the minister neglects to help his people with his blessings, the faithful become desperate and are tempted to have recourse to the sangomas.”

Religion, by its very purpose, facilitates human endeavor to reach out to God for whatever spiritual or physical need is present in life. In the Yorùbá world, major concerns revolve around human perception of the disruptive activities of superhuman beings in human society. Particularly worrisome is the notion that human destiny or good fortune may be thwarted through the malicious acts of demons, witches and the ancestors. While mission churches have typically ignored or in many instances dismissed these concerns, Yorùbá churches have taken them seriously.

The proclamation of the gospel of Christ in an African society must address the practical concerns of the people. In this regard, Andrew Walls, Kwame Bediako, John Mbiti and the other theologians who have pointed out the futility of engaging Africans with a Christian religion draped in Western attire are right: the gospel must be communicated using ideas and idioms that resonate with the spiritual experiences of Africans. With specific regard to the Yorùbá of Southwestern Nigeria, Christianity only began to make sense when church leaders began to relate the message of Scripture to the reality of evil and the prospect that evil can be defeated through the power of Christ.

The good news is that much of the message concerning the human struggle against evil and the spiritual forces behind evil can be found in Scripture. Paul's letter to the Ephesians, for example, is replete with references to the determination of the dark forces of life to disrupt God's plan for human beings: "Our fight is not against human beings. It is against the rulers, the authorities and the powers of this dark world. It is against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly world" (Eph. 6:12). Yorùbá churches must be commended for relating the fear of evil in the Yorùbá culture to the promises of victory found in Jesus Christ.

The bad news, however, is that Yorùbá churches do not always relate the fear of evil in the Yorùbá culture to the promises of victory found in Jesus Christ. In their determination to maintain continuity with the traditional religion, many church leaders promote beliefs that are popular among unbelievers. Spirit determinism, the idea that the superhuman spirit beings with which human beings share their world are very eager to thwart God's plan for human beings, has generated as much dread among Christians as it has among non-Christians. Yorùbá church leaders have not done much to allay the fear the Yorùbá have for their vindictive dead sages and even their vengeful living family members. Culture can be a veritable tool for Christian mission but only in so far as it maintains discernible distance from beliefs and practices that do not conform with sound biblical teachings. Furthermore, a redemptive use of culture must offer Christ's joy and hope in the place of anxiety and fear.

### 7.1.3 Resolving the Problem of Evil

If the goal of missions is to offer hope and joy to Christians in the face of fear and anxiety, then, the gospel has only achieved partial success in modern times. On the one hand, the rapid numerical growth recorded in contemporary Yorùbá churches reflects the appropriation of the right kind of power to confront the evil spiritual forces in the Yorùbá world. Tormod Engelsviken has rightly identified three important dimensions that the African church achieves in confronting evil: "the christological as it proclaims and realizes the victory, power, and lordship of the living Christ; the diaconal as it helps people suffering under the attack and influence of evil spiritual forces and fights structural evil in the world; and the missiological as it draws people to Christ in faith, sets

captives free, and gives a foretaste of the coming Kingdom.”<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, there is a concern that the dramatic surge in membership in the indigenous Yorùbá churches has not translated into an attendant improvement in the moral standards of Nigerians.

Corruption continues to increase at all levels of society. Yoruba Christians have not in any way distinguished themselves from unbelievers in their attitude and response to evil in society.

The proper identification of evil and how evil may be stamped out of the human world remains elusive to Yorùbá Christians. A major hindrance to the proper interpretation of evil in the YIC can be linked to the assumption that the evil is that action which is primarily performed by the superhuman spirit beings in the human world. Like in the traditional religion, the idea of evil is perceived in the church as the unpleasant events of life induced by ancestors, witches or demons. Even though human culpability in evil is often hinted at when life outcomes do not turn out as expected, human sin is usually not the central focus when the idea of evil is raised in the YIC. Invariably, evil is frequently confronted, not by rebuking sin but by engaging superhuman spirit beings in fierce spiritual battles.

The missional concern is not that a Christian community identifies demonic activities in human life and confronts the agents responsible for human oppression. Jesus, during his earthly ministry, frequently encountered and defeated Satan and his demonic agents. Christ’s mission, indeed, included the goal of setting human beings free from bondage to Satan (see e.g., Lk.4:18; cf. 13:16). Problems arise, however, when a

---

<sup>7</sup> Tormod Engelsviken, “Spiritual Conflict: A Challenge for the Church in the West with a View to the Future,” in *Paradigm Shifts in Christian Witness: Insights from Anthropology, Communication, and Spiritual Power: Essays in Honor of Charles H Kraft*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 125.

Christian community is so preoccupied with evil that a majority of its activities are developed around casting out and binding Satan and his hosts of demons. True, evil is real in the Yorùbá world. Also vivid in the Yorùbá imagination is the reality of ancestors, witches and demons. The church must address these difficult issues. The church, however, must not forsake its primary duty of proclaiming the good news of God's eternal Kingdom, and everything that this vital task entails, in its preoccupation with evil and the agents of evil in human society.

## 7.2 Pastoral Concerns

In addition to issues pertaining to establishing effective means of communicating the gospel to the Yorùbá, other problems relating to worship and pastoral ministries of the church must be resolved. A major pastoral concern raised by scholars like Adetutu Adenugba, Samuel Omolawal, and Chima Agazue, relate to the atmosphere of fear engendered by the persistent reference to evil and the spiritual forces behind evil in the Yorùbá churches. Again, Yorùbá churches are known more for their developing their church worship activities around how human beings can overcome life's challenges than on worshiping God simply for God's own sake. Finally, the traditional assumptions regarding evil, especially those perceived to have occurred through witchcraft, inevitably affect the attitudes of Christians to women and other weak or marginalized members of society.

### 7.2.1 Pneumatology of Fear

Scholars and missionaries who had predicted decades ago that an enlightened Africa will abandon its belief in witchcraft would be disappointed by the widespread

belief in witchcraft in modern Africa.<sup>8</sup> Despite the much higher level of literacy in many parts of Africa, there is no evidence that belief in witchcraft has reduced. On the contrary, the numerical surge in church attendance among Africans can be linked to teachings by indigenous Christian leaders acknowledging the existence and activities of ancestors, witches and demons. Yorùbá Initiated Churches, especially, develop the spirituality of the Christian community around themes that depict the vulnerability of Christians to the destructive influences of evil spirit beings. Klem is right in his remark regarding the impetus behind Yorùbá Christian theology: “It is in the context of fear of the Devil and the fear of evil spirits that Christian missions has some of its greatest success.”<sup>9</sup>

The spirituality of Yorùbá churches is developed around the premise that the human life or destiny precariously hangs within the striking range of manipulative spirit beings. Whereas pneumatology in Western Christianity has essentially focused on the person and activities of the Holy Spirit, more teachings are being devoted to the person of Satan and the activities of his demonic agents in Yorùbá Christianity. Even though the Holy Spirit is given significant attention in the YIC, he almost always takes lead roles in worship activities that involve casting out demons or resisting witchcraft activities.

The pneumatology of fear in the YIC also has significant effects on the perception of salvation in these churches. Because evil is frequently taught to manifest in the guise of spiritual attacks by witches and demons, salvation becomes the means through which

---

<sup>8</sup> See e.g., George Parrinder’s prediction that “An enlightened religion, education, medicine and better social and racial conditions will help to dispel witchcraft beliefs” (*Witchcraft: A Critical Study of the Belief in Witchcraft from the Records of Witch Hunting in Europe Yesterday and Africa Today*, [Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1958], 202-03); in Opoku Onyinah’s opinion, “Parrinder lives to become ‘a false prophet’ in the sense that, although an enlightened religion, viz. Christianity, has grown in Africa, belief in witchcraft has survived and even been revived” (“Contemporary ‘Witchdemonology’ in Africa,” *International Review of Mission* 93, nos. 370/371 [Jul./Oct., 2004]: 331–2).

<sup>9</sup> Herbert Klem, “Yoruba Theology and Christian Evangelism,” *Missiology* 3, no. 1 (1975): 50.

human beings are delivered from dark satanic forces. Adeyemo sums it up well: “Salvation in the thought of traditional African peoples therefore implies acceptance in the community of the living and the living-dead, deliverance from the power of the evil spirits, and a possession of life force. Only in limited cases are the people really searching and seeking after God, or to fill a perceived gap.”<sup>10</sup> In this regard, Yorùbá Christianity is not much different than the traditional religion where deities are worshiped for the protection they give to human beings.

Persistent teachings on evil and about evil spirit beings in the YIC may also have lasting effects on how Christians approach the challenges of life. When life events do not turn out as expected, the tendency is higher for Yorùbá Christians to cower in fear, intimidated by the prospect that their life destinies are under spiritual attack. In the rare cases where God may be identified as breaking out in retributive evil against a believer, fear remains a crippling factor in how Yorùbá Christians receive discipline from God. Evil is always rejected as an undesirable aspect of human condition. Every life adversity motivates Yorùbá Christians to look for some evil spiritual forces to blame. Thus, spiritual battles with Satan and his demonic cohorts has gradually become the hallmark of the Yorùbá churches that want to be taken seriously.

### 7.2.2 Human-centered Worship

Preoccupied with efforts to defeat the numerous evil spirits arrayed against human beings, the YIC have redefined for their members the primary purpose Christians attend church. Corporate worship in many indigenous Yorùbá churches YIC is predictably about

---

<sup>10</sup> Tokunboh Adeyemo, *Salvation in African Tradition* (Nairobi, Kenya: Evangel Publishing House, 1979), 94.



how worshipers may find healing from various illnesses or receive deliverance from oppressive manipulation of evil spirits. While the notion that human beings may approach God to receive comfort from life problems or anxieties does not conflict with the biblical understanding of God's graciousness, it does raise the question of what a Christian should see as the central goal of worship: do Christians gather primarily to worship God for God's own sake or do they worship God essentially because of the material and spiritual blessings they receive from him?

The fear of Satan and his demonic agents may have emboldened Yorùbá church leaders to shift the focus of Christian worship from God-centeredness to human-centeredness. The greater motivation, however, is the desire by these leaders to fashion Christian worship after the worship practices found in the traditional religion. As it has already been pointed out, the traditional Yorùbá assigns to every deity a duty intended to make life pleasant and comfortable for the human inhabitants of the earth. This notion is carried over into indigenous Christianity. No wonder that the prosperity gospel, introduced into Africa by Western Pentecostal preachers, has found fertile ground among the Yorùbá. For in the mind of Yorùbá worshipers, Christian and traditional religious alike, a good God would surely ensure the wealth and prosperity of those who diligently serve him.

The humanistic spirituality in the YIC desperately competes with what may be found among traditional religious worshipers in Yorùbáland. In both systems, religious leaders perceive it their duty to present God as a Deity whose primary interest is to eradicate any force that may make life miserable for diligent worshipers. In many instances, the methods used by church leaders are not much different from the techniques

employed by traditional religious priests, or *Babaláwo*. Some rites performed during Christian worship— such as denouncing wicked ancestors to nullify their curses or rebuking witches to render their powers impotent – are familiar to church members because these are the very rituals that traditional worshipers are known to perform in their shrines. Christian spirituality in the YIC is often measured by affluence, good health and success in family and business fronts.

The human-centered spirituality in the Yorùbá churches may also have contributed to the ease with which many church leaders are turning Christianity into a viable money-making business in Nigeria. According to Adenugba and Omolawal:

Christianity has been bastardized and commercialized to the extent that it is losing its appeal as a promoter of right values and spiritual standing as a result of factors such as quest for prosperity/materialism by adherents and religious leaders, quest for power, victory over perceived enemies; selfish interests, sycophancy and the like, all at the expense of the virtues and moral standards emphasized in the Bible.<sup>11</sup>

In imitating the skills of the traditional priests who locate every problem in human life in the activities of witches, ancestors or demons, many leaders in the Yorùbá churches do not hesitate to link the problems in the lives of their members to these spirit beings. Desperate for solutions, which predictably can only be provided by the priest or prophet, the worshiper is willing to pay whatever amount of money is suggested. Furthermore, worshipers, in both the Christian and traditional religions, have the mindset that they are attending the place of worship primarily to have their life problems resolved by the spiritual leader. No wonder the proliferation of prosperity-preaching churches in Nigeria has not significantly dented the high immorality and corruption that exists in modern

---

<sup>11</sup> Adetutu A. Adenugba and Samuel A. Omolawal, “Religious Values and Corruption in Nigeria: A Dislocated Relationship,” *Journal of Educational and Social Research* 4, no 3 (May, 2014): 522.

Nigeria. Agazue is right: “When one considers the geometric increase in vices in present-day Nigerian society, one can easily see that miracle marketing and prosperity preaching do not contribute much to upholding morality and virtue.”<sup>12</sup>

Human-centered worship in the YIC reinforces the idealism that the human life is intended to be lived out without problems or difficulties. Nigerian pastors, Ojo has rightly pointed out, create the impression that appropriate Christian spirituality would eradicate all the problems of life: “Their sermons centering on healing and miracles, breakthrough programs, Holy Ghost Night services, and advertisements of conventions and special programs provide a utopian escape from deteriorating socio-economic and political conditions.”<sup>13</sup> Emboldened by the desperate desires of their members for immediate solutions to the everyday problems of life, unscrupulous church leaders turn away from teaching sound Christian doctrines to saying only what their church members expect them to say. The apostle Paul may have anticipated the danger of human-centered worship when he admonished the young pastor, Timothy, not to yield to the longing of those who in latter times would not endure sound biblical doctrine: “Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths (2 Tim. 4: 3-4).

---

<sup>12</sup> Chima Agazue, *The Role of a Culture of Superstition in the Proliferation of Religio-Commercial Pastors in Nigeria* (Bloomington, IN: AnthonHouse, 2013), 181.

<sup>13</sup> Ojo is quoted in Adewale Adedokun, “A Theological Reflection on Mbiti’s Conception of Salvation in African Christian,” *Nebula* 8, no. 1 (December, 2011): 32.

### 7.2.3 Superficial Spirituality

It is not everyone that is impressed with the rapid numerical growth recorded in many indigenous African churches in recent times. English missiologist, John Stott, for example, has frequently been quoted for comparing the spirituality in the well-attended African church to a river that is a mile wide but only an inch deep.<sup>14</sup> More recently, Yorùbá sociologists, A. A Adenugba and S. A. Omolawal are convinced that the dramatic surge in church attendance in contemporary Nigeria should not be taken seriously:

In the face of the contradiction and the embarrassment of a booming Christianity in the midst of an environment that stinks with corruption and indiscipline, the conclusion seems to be that what is spreading like wild fire in contemporary Nigeria is not genuine Christianity at all, but a mass movement of some sort with Christian elements of ritualism; one that is largely shallow, superficial, noisy and devoid of substance and depth. Popular Christianity in Nigeria appears to be largely materialistic, unspiritual and with emphasis on prosperity, success, healing and with little attention on social morality and spirituality of the believers.<sup>15</sup>

There are serious concerns among scholars that the heightened interest in Christian spirituality in modern Nigeria may have developed more out of the commercial interest of the church leaders than their pastoral passion to truly equip members for the Christian life. Superficial spirituality, for example, has no place for suffering or pain. Many leaders in the YIC are more eager to preach about the values of immediate prosperity and success than on the benefits of endurance or self-sacrifice.

The teachings in many indigenous Yorùbá churches regarding the influence of superhuman spirit beings on human life, particularly, have contributed to the declining empathy Christians feel for the marginalized members of society. Such is the notion

---

<sup>14</sup> See e.g., Editorial, “Make Disciples, Not Just Convert,” *Christianity Today* 43, no. 12 (October 25, 1999): 28. In the same article, Yorùbá theologian, Tokunboh Adeyemo, also describes the church in Africa as “one mile long, but only one inch deep.”

<sup>15</sup> Adenugba and Omolawal, “Religious Values,” 526.

concerning witches and people believed to be possessed by demons. Women and elderly family members are especially prone to witchcraft accusation and the stigmas that subsequently follow. The prayer life of the church, depicted by the abundant imprecatory prayers against human and spiritual “enemies,” reflect the total disregard many indigenous church leaders have for Christ’s admonition for his followers to love and pray for their enemies (Matt. 5:43-48; cf. Lk. 6:27-36).

The “deliverance ministry” of the YIC may be serving the emotional and spiritual interest of only a segment of the church. On the one hand, the church provides comfort to the sick and economically challenged. On the other hand, the church, through the same “deliverance ministry,” verbally attacks and chastises members of society who are perceived to be witches or demon-possessed. Furthermore, people who are frequently sick or barren, for example, are frequently singled out for special “deliverance” during worship. Some Christians are known to have left the church altogether when they became overwhelmed by the attitude in their churches to their life challenges or failures.

Christian spirituality in the YIC will continue its downward spiral unless church leaders rectify two errors that guide their principles of Christian ministry. First is the temptation to use miracles as the attraction that draws people to church. The other is the more urgent determination to destroy “witches” and “demons” than to show the compassion of Christ to those who are hurting. In Anderson’s view, “Christian experience must not be limited to seeking a ‘miracle.’ Our churches must develop and become holistic healing communities that spread Christ’s compassion to those who need it, and do so without expecting them to come to church. Healing is not to be seen merely

as a means to evangelism but as something motivated by compassion.”<sup>16</sup> This does not mean that healing or deliverance do not have their place in the Christian community. Rather, they should be presented in balanced teachings alongside other means of grace available to the church. Yorùbá Pentecostal Christians should take heed to Chiquette’s suggestion on the role of healing in the church:

It is of the utmost importance that Pentecostalism should base its ministry of healing on a “holistic” understanding of mission, in which healing is also the proclamation and the experience of salvation in Christ - the eschatological perspective providing the hermeneutical key to understanding through which other Christian values such as justification, forgiveness, love, hope, communion, worship, mission, life can be given their proper place.<sup>17</sup>

The Christian community must show compassion to those who are hurting.

Yorùbá churches must be commended for the fervency with which they pray against the physical and spiritual enemies in the lives of Christians. The vindictive attitude such obsessive loathing of “enemies” develops in the hearts of Christians, however, does not foster true Christian spirituality. Yorùbá Christians can benefit from teachings that reflect more compassion and love for those who are perceived to be antagonistic towards individual or societal harmony.

### 7.3 Biblical Concerns

Finally, it must be stressed that Christianity is a religion of the Spirit and the Book; its veracity depends both on human subjective interpretation of God’s actions in the world and at the same time on the Bible’s objective declaration of God and his relationship with human beings. Christian theology would be inadequate if either aspect

---

<sup>16</sup> Anderson, “Pentecostals,” 496.

<sup>17</sup> Daniel Chiquette, “Healing, Salvation, and Mission: The Ministry of Healing in Latin American Pentecostalism,” *International Review of Mission* 95, nos. 370/371 (October, 2004): 483–484.

is ignored. In their attempt to present the Bible as the *only* authority on the Christian faith and spiritual practice to Africans, early Western missionaries failed to adequately relate the gospel to the subjective reality in the African world. In modern times, African indigenous churches are determined to rectify what they perceive to be the errors of early Christian propagation by presenting the gospel on terms that rely more on human feelings and emotions than on Scripture.

Abraham Akrong has rightly remarked that the ubiquity of the evil spirits in the African world has presented the indigenous churches with opportunities to formulate Bible-based Christian theology: “There is the need to formulate biblically-based theological principles that should regulate the way we deal with the phenomena of evil in general, and evil spirits and witches in particular.”<sup>18</sup> Such a theology, in Akrong’s view, must address not only the reality of evil in the African world, but also how human beings can overcome these forces that so intimidatingly threaten existence:

When African Christians try to analyze daily life, they postulate spiritual agency in almost everything they do. Therefore, religion is supposed to provide ways by which one can live in harmony with the spiritual, in order to be protected by its power against evil forces. Religion is meant to provide a means by which to deal with these threats that Africans experience.<sup>19</sup>

The urgent need to respond to the perceived threats of evil spirits has shaped the “spirit-centered” theology that currently guides faith and practice in the Yorùbá churches. Moreover, in their determination to use familiar traditional language to communicate the gospel to many Yorùbá church leaders are hesitant to introduce theological doctrines that do not already form part of the spiritual experiences of their church members.

---

<sup>18</sup> Abraham Akrong, “Towards a Theology of Evil Spirits and Witches,” *Journal of African Christian Thought* 4, no. 1 (June 2001): 20.

<sup>19</sup> Akrong, “Theology of Evil spirits,” 20.

Unfortunately, some biblical themes are so germane to the Christian understanding of God, humanity, the spirit world and salvation that they cannot be ignored.

### 7.3.1 Original Sin

Christian theology would be incomplete if it fails to give a biblical account of how human beings got into their present predicament. Irrespective of other non-Christian explanations for the existence of evil in the world, the Bible is very clear that, with respect to human beings, evil originated when the first couple, Adam and Eve, willfully disobeyed the clear command that God gave them (Gen. 3). Even though there was one other evil spirit being (the Serpent) in the Garden of Eden when the first human beings sinned against God, the divine rebuke and retribution that followed show that Adam and Eve (as well as the Serpent) were fully responsible for their actions.

The doctrine of original sin is rarely given an in-depth treatment in major Yorùbá Initiated Churches (YIC) because the premise that the entire universe became tainted with evil on account of human sin is foreign to traditional Yorùbá cosmology. Moreover, as indigenous preachers search for familiar language to communicate the gospel, they avoid notions they consider would not resonate with the traditional spiritual experiences of their church members. The doctrine of original sin is one of such notions. In this regard, Yorùbá Christians, in their quest to maintain continuity with the traditional religion, have ignored a fundamental doctrine that sets Christianity apart from other world religions.

The doctrine of Original Sin has also not garnered much interest in the YIC because its central theme conflicts with the traditional religious idea that superhuman spirit beings, and not human beings, are primarily responsible for every calamity that befalls individuals and societies. Whereas, the Bible acknowledges the role of evil



demonic forces when things go wrong in the world (see e.g., Matt. 12:22; Lk. 13:11, 16), Scripture is also replete with the accounts of the disastrous consequences of human rebellious attitudes to divine commands on creation and on human well-being (see e.g., Gen. 3:1-19).

A Christian way of thinking about the existence of evil in the world must not gloss over human responsibility. A major dysfunction in the human world, according to Alvin Plantinga, can be traced to human sin: “Sin is perhaps primarily an affective disorder or malfunction. Our affections are skewed, directed to the wrong objects; we love and hate the wrong things. Instead of seeking first the kingdom of God, I am inclined to seek first my own personal glorification and aggrandizement, bending all my efforts toward making myself look good.”<sup>20</sup> Human self-centeredness and craving for immediate gratification aggravate evil in the world. Ebrahim Azadegan sums up Plantinga’s view: “we have framed our lives in a self-centered manner rather than a God-centered one. We ignore the fact that all creatures are dependent on God and reflect His glory. Self-centeredness blinds us to such an extent that we ignore everything that does not bear on immediate self-interest.”<sup>21</sup>

Yorùbá Christians would benefit from Calvin’s conviction that, “There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity. This we take to be beyond controversy. To prevent anyone from taking refuge in the pretense of

---

<sup>20</sup> Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 208.

<sup>21</sup> Ebrahim Azadegan, “Divine Hiddenness and Human Sin: The Noetic Effect of Sin,” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 7 (2013): 82; Azadegan further remark: “Beings that are created in the image of God, who have autonomy and free will, perhaps will also want to – and do – see themselves as the *center* of the universe. They have enormous desires and a powerful tendency to occupy such a position themselves,” 83.

ignorance, God himself has implanted in all men a certain understanding of his majesty.”<sup>22</sup> This *sensus divinitatis*, in Calvin’s view, triggers beliefs and feelings of awe, respect, gratitude, and obligation to God. The human mind, when rightly ordered, is able to distinguish between good and evil.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, human beings are unable to adequately respond to God and to distinguish between good and evil on account of sin: “The idea is that our sins that ensued upon the original sin of the first humans (puts us in a sinful condition that) perverted the *sensus* to the extent that any of us now are ignorant about God’s existence.”<sup>24</sup> Instead of doing good at all times, sinful human beings by nature have acquired the propensity to do evil (Gen. 6:5). Human beings are frequently prone to wrongdoing and perversion, not necessarily because they are compelled by some superhuman spirit beings to act contrary to their nature, as thought by many leaders in the YIC, but because they, in the fallen state, are unwilling and unable to do good without the special grace from God.

Yorùbá Christians will continue to have an incomplete understanding of the origin or purpose of evil in the world until local church leaders begin to teach sound doctrines on the human condition occasioned by sin and rebellion. Rather than try to supplant the traditional priests, or *Babaláwo*, church leaders should see it as their duty to teach the full doctrines of Scripture and allow the Holy Spirit to transform the minds of those who hear. Rather than blame some evil spirits whenever things do not go our way, inward reflection causes us to look up to God for strength in our time of failure. Here, Jocz’s remark is

---

<sup>22</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. F. L. Battles (London: S.C.M. Press, 1960), 44.

<sup>23</sup> Azadegan, “Divine Hiddenness,” 79.

<sup>24</sup> Azadegan, “Divine Hiddenness,” 80.

insightful: “Sin, suffering, and death are interrelated causes. The real nature of sin remains hidden from us until we see it in the light of the Cross of the Son of God. Viewed within the context of the Cross it assumes terrifying proportions. The Cross, therefore, reveals man for what he is, namely a godless rebel.”<sup>25</sup> Instead of attributing every evil in the world to the activities of the demonic agents, Christians ought to reflect on the implications of human willful disobedience to the will of God. It is when sin is seen primarily as human separation from God that the severity of its debilitating effect on creation is appreciated. Furthermore, the doctrine of original sin is foundational to a proper interpretation of the doctrine of Christ’s atonement, another biblical tenet that is conspicuously absent in current Yorùbá Christian theology.

### 7.3.2 Christ’s Atonement

American theologian, Jeremy Treat, in assessing the variety of meanings adduced Christ’s death on the cross by atonement theorists, opines that Christ’s “gloriously multifaceted work” is too vast to be adequately captured by either reductionism or relativism: “Reductionism focuses on one aspect of the atonement to the exclusion of the others, whereas relativism upholds all aspects, often at the expense of order and integration.”<sup>26</sup> Although a thorough assessment of Christ’s atonement is beyond the scope of this dissertation, the reductionism in Yorùbá Christianity is obvious; Christ died so that his followers may be rescued from the present or immediate dangers of life.

---

<sup>25</sup> Jakób Jocz, *The Covenant: A Theology of Human Destiny*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 166.

<sup>26</sup> Jeremy Treat, *The Crucified King: Atonement and Kingdom in Biblical and Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 49.

Yorùbá Christian leaders impress it in the minds of their church members that the primary reason Christ died is to make this world a comfortable place for believers. As such, any situation that portends discomfort or failure is perceived as a manifestation of evil that must be vehemently resisted. Imprecatory prayers prescribed by the General Overseer of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles, Dr. D. K. Olukoya, it has already been pointed out in this dissertation, is replete with phrases like “blood of Jesus,” or “name of Jesus.”<sup>27</sup> These prayer formulae are designed to immediately protect victims of demonic or witchcraft oppression from harm. Christ forcefully breaks into every troubling situation to defeat antagonistic spirits or at least suppress the influence of their destructive powers on believers.

The doctrine of Christ’s atonement is hardly taught in detail in the YIC. To Yorùbá Christians, Christ is the Victor who delivers human beings from their social, economic, political, and spiritual fears. Indeed, Jesus Christ is the valiant Victor who forcefully breaks into every human situation to assert himself as King or Deliverer but he is also the Lamb whose sacrificial death on the cross takes away human sins. The point here is not to balance the *Christus Victor* theory with Penal Substitution but to show that there is a wide range of meanings concerning Christ’s atonement that can be developed for the spiritual edification of the Christian community. Like the doctrine of original sin, biblical notions regarding Christ’s atonement are not well-developed in the YIC because of the reductionistic tendency of the leaders to weave their teachings around themes that relate to traditional religious ideas of evil and salvation. The leaders are also determined

---

<sup>27</sup> See esp., Daniel Olukoya, *Praying by the Blood of Jesus* (Lagos: Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministry, 2010).

to develop ideas that promote the physical and emotional well-being of their church members to attract and sustain large church membership.

Many Yorùbá churches are theologically malnourished because church leaders are not motivated to avail themselves of rigorous theological trainings that would equip them to teach sound biblical doctrines to their church members. Rather, many of them peddle a theology of fear that reduces Christ's atonement to magical formulae that can readily be invoked whenever a believer is in an immediate danger. Like the traditional religious priests, many church leaders are too busy fighting ancestors, witches, and demons to pay sufficient attention to teaching Scriptural doctrines.

### 7.3.3 Eschatological Hope

Conspicuously absent in the teachings of many Yorùbá churches are issues relating to the final fate of human beings at the end of life. In the first place, matters regarding the end times do not support the goal of making human beings comfortable in this life. Again, eschatological discourses from Scripture, which affirm human inability beyond the grave, at least not until the resurrection, conflict with the traditional view of life after death. As long as Yorùbá Christians have a weak understanding of the divine plan for the afterlife, they will continue to believe in superstitious notions regarding the dead and their influence on the living.

Leaders in the YIC could learn from Wolfhart Pannenberg's view of the benefits of the doctrine of the end times for Christians. For Pannenberg, the question around which any serious discussion on the nature and purpose of the human destiny should revolve somewhat must be connected to Christ and his eschatological goal of conforming human beings to the image of God. Pannenberg points out that through Jesus' life, death

and resurrection, “The image of this second Adam that all are meant to bear (1 Cor. 15:49) is that of the Creator in the sense of Gen. 1:26f., after which we are now to be renewed or refashioned (Col. 3:10).”<sup>28</sup> The human aspiration to be conformed to the divine image assumes a significant aspect that has already been fulfilled in Jesus Christ:

Here an eschatological turn is given to the fellowship with God that Jewish wisdom viewed as the deeper meaning of the divine image and likeness of Adam before the fall. It is reinterpreted as our final destiny, which is manifested already in Jesus Christ and in which believers share already through the power of the Spirit, who is already effecting the eschatological reality of the new man in them.”<sup>29</sup>

Pannenberg, however, warns, that “The tendency to direct attention solely to our earthly or moral destiny went hand in hand with the viewing of personality as a finished product.”<sup>30</sup> The goal toward which every human destiny moves finds its ultimate fulfillment in the future. For, “Only in the eschatological consummation will reconciliation be complete.”<sup>31</sup> In Pannenberg’s view, “The question is then precisely whether our destiny relates primarily to a future life or is to be regarded primarily as the destiny for a moral life in the present world.”<sup>32</sup>

Yorùbá Christian perception of the goal or destiny for which human beings are created revolves around the here and now. No wonder Christian spirituality in the YIC is built around human comfort and well-being. Even in death, the concerns for the ancestors are not about the salvation of the human soul but rather about the possible influence that

---

<sup>28</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology, Volume 2* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 220.

<sup>29</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology 2*, 220.

<sup>30</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology 2*, 223.

<sup>31</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology, Volume 3* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 641.

<sup>32</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology 2*, 222.

the dead have on the general well-being of those who are still alive. It is quite unfortunate that many Yorùbá Christian leaders, in their determination to relate the gospel to the traditional religious beliefs, perpetuate myths and anxieties regarding the possible negative influence which ancestors, witches and demons may exert on human beings. The goal here is not to disregard the havoc that evil spirits wreak in the human world but to more importantly stress the victory that Christians have over evil spirits in this world and in the world to come. As such, Christians in the YIC would benefit from biblical themes – such as the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15:52; Rev. 20:12-13), eternal life for believers (Rom. 6:23); the glory in God’s presence (Rev. 21:23). – that depict the human condition in the afterlife. A robust Christian anthropology must underscore the fact that human beings can experience joy and fulfilment in this world, but it must also not ignore the expectation that our resurrected state will be more glorious than our present condition (1 Cor. 15:33-44; Rev. 21:4).

#### 7.3.4 Work of the Holy Spirit

In dealing with the evil spirits in the Yorùbá world, indigenous Christian leaders have paid more attention to the nature and attributes of God that show God’s concerns for human well-being in this world. Particularly missing in the teachings of the church is the Trinitarian idea of God. Ikenga-Metuh sums it up well in his remark concerning the *Aladura* church: “The Trinitarian dimension of the God-head is not so clear. The *Aladura* evidently are more concerned with its practical application than its theoretical definition.”<sup>33</sup> God is Creator and Father, Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior, but who exactly

---

<sup>33</sup> Emeffie Ikenga-Metuh, “The Revival of African Christian Spirituality: The Experience of African Independent Churches,” *Mission Studies* 7, no. 2 (January 1, 1990): 155.

is the Holy Spirit? It is strange that even though the Yorùbá have a vivid notion of a spiritual world inundated by spiritual beings, the indigenous churches are reluctant to relate the work of the Holy Spirit to spiritual needs of Christians. Instead, Christian leaders are more concerned with casting out demons and combating witches in worship services. F. S. Leahy's strong admonition helps in developing the right priority: "Mere exorcism finds no support in Scripture and stands condemned by it. Nothing less than actual salvation can meet the need of any sinner. Nothing less than the preached Word will, in normal circumstances, effect deliverance and renewal."<sup>34</sup>

Indigenous church leaders are more preoccupied with combating demonic spirits and relating the activities of the evil spirits to every conceivable human plight than with teaching sound doctrines relating to the Holy Spirit and his work in believers. As it has already been mentioned above, Christianity has become a thriving commercial enterprise in Nigeria. Unscrupulous indigenous church leaders make more money peddling fear than promoting comfort. Little wonders many local church leaders are more devoted to teaching their members about the evil activities of the superhuman spirit beings than the comfort that God gives through the Holy Spirit.

Christ is primarily conceived in the indigenous Yorùbá churches as the powerful force who rescues human beings from physical and spiritual afflictions. This is due to the efforts of the indigenous Christian leaders who relate biblical ideas to the traditional religious experiences of their church members. Because of the great concern which the ubiquity of evil spirit beings has given Yorùbá Christians, much of the resources of the

---

<sup>34</sup> F. S. Leahy, *Satan Cast Out – A Study in Biblical Demonology*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 137.



YIC are devoted to casting out demons and rebuking witches. Jesus Christ, however, is far more than just a “force” that delivers human beings from demonic afflictions; he is the Redeemer who seeks a personal relationship with human beings as the means of reconciling them to God. Christ’s work in the believer is primarily carried out through the Holy Spirit. A well-developed doctrine of the Holy Spirit would help the church appreciate the person of Christ and the victory believers have in Christ’s atonement.

In allowing traditional religious beliefs to guide Christian pneumatology, Yorùbá leaders are allowing the fear of evil spirits to obscure the comfort God gives through the Holy Spirit. It is through the Holy Spirit that Christians learn about Christ (Jn. 14:26), and the “deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:10). Empowered by the Spirit’s presence, believers are enlightened to “know the things that are freely given to us of God (2 Cor. 2:12). A thorough doctrine on the Holy Spirit does not undermine the reality of evil in the world; rather, it sensitizes believers to the enormous power that has been deposited in us through Christ. Indeed, the church must confront demonic forces wherever they present themselves. However, no serious victory can be achieved over evil spirits in Yorùbá churches until the leaders devote ample efforts to teaching about the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

#### 7.4 Conclusion

Yorùbá Christianity is at a crossroad. The more inviting path would allow the traditional religious beliefs to guide the doctrines of the church in the hope that the gospel would connect with the spiritual experiences of Yorùbá Christians. This is the path many indigenous churches have chosen because it has helped in drawing more people to church. The alternative would insist that Scripture and not culture must guide the beliefs

and practices of the church. In the past, mission-established churches have tread this path with little success because they failed to connect the message of Scripture to the traditional notions in the Yorùbá world. The proposal in this dissertation is that there is a third way; one that insists that Scripture must provide the framework for Christian theology, but necessary attention must be devoted to relating the message of Scripture to the reality of the spiritual entities in the traditional Yorùbá world. For Christianity to have an enduring presence among the Yorùbá, Christian leaders must not just focus on the physical and emotional needs of church members but must, more importantly, relate the entire doctrines of Scripture to the physical and spiritual realities in the human world.



## APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Definitions or explanations of frequently used words, phrases and terms:

<i>Àbíkú</i>	Literally, “Born-to-Die Child.” An <i>Àbíkú</i> spirit displaces a real child in the mother’s womb during pregnancy. The child dies young, but returns to the family as another child. The cycle is repeated several times.
<i>African Initiated Churches (AIC)</i>	Churches founded by African Christian leaders that have no affiliation with mission-established churches. Also: African Instituted Churches, African Independent Churches, and African Indigenous Churches.
<i>Àjé</i>	Witchcraft/Witch: “witchcraft” is the belief that an affliction or distress has been caused through the use of supernatural powers. The “Witch” is the superhuman being believed to have used diabolic means to inflict pain or affliction on others.
<i>Aladura Christians</i>	Literally, “the one(s) who pray.” Aladura Christians believe in confronting every life crisis with fervent prayers and rituals. Their worship services are characterized by healing, prophecy and exorcism.
<i>Àláfíà</i>	A state of physical and spiritual well-being. It is also a state of tranquility, peace, harmony and social order.
<i>Ancestor (Òkú-Òrun)</i>	Dead human beings who are believed to be alive in the spirit realm where they continue to participate in the activities in the physical world.
<i>Ara</i>	Human body. <i>Ara</i> comprises of every tangible aspect of the human anatomy both internal and external.

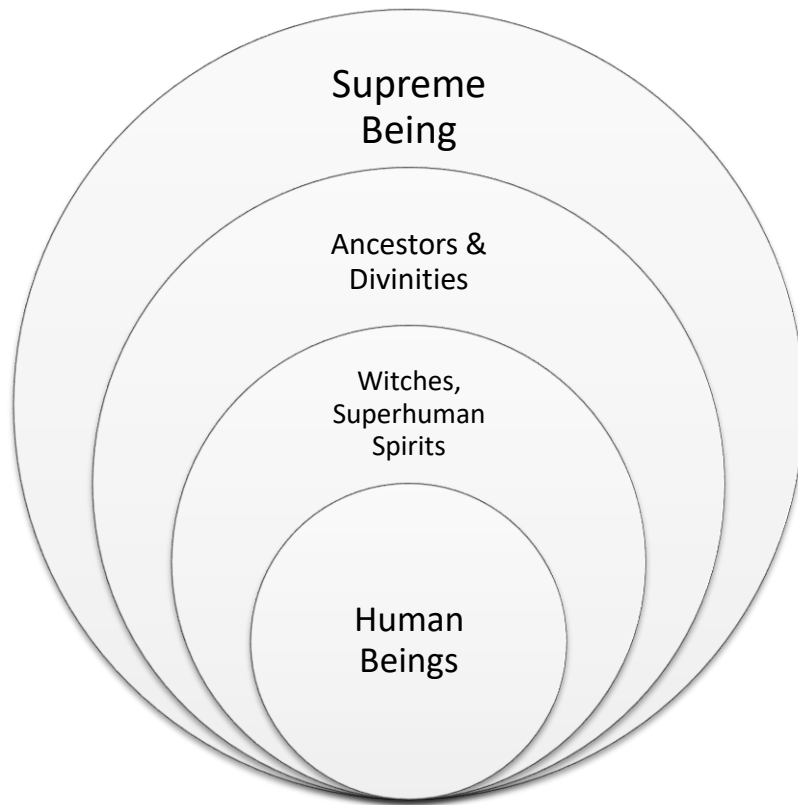
<i>Àwùjọ</i>	Any assembly of humans. Community. The family is the primary human community. Other communities include: church, clan, social clubs, and secret societies.
<i>Àyànmó</i>	Destiny; life course that has been ordained by God for each individual to follow. Destiny includes the events, fortunes and adversities of life that God allows.
<i>Babaláwo</i>	<i>Ifá</i> priest; literally, “Father of mysteries.” Traditional religious diviner who serves as priest, counselor, healer.
<i>Destiny</i>	See <i>Àyànmó</i>
<i>Determinism</i>	The thesis that human action and life events are ultimately decided by causes external to the human will.
<i>Emèrè</i>	A spirit-possessed child who can travel between the spirit realm and the physical world at will.
<i>Èmí</i>	Life, breath, spirit, life-force. It is the presence of <i>Èmí</i> in a human being (or animals or insects) that makes them living things.
<i>Ètò</i>	Ritual preparation or consecrated provision offered to God or a deity to restore a broken relationship between human beings and the divinity.
<i>Fatalism</i>	The thesis that what will happen has already been predetermined and is therefore inevitable: “What will be will be.”
<i>Freewill</i>	The power or ability to act out of one’s own volition out without constraint or coercion.
<i>General Overseer</i>	The spiritual and administrative leader of the church.
<i>Ifá</i>	The basic system of divination in Yorùbá traditional religion. The <i>Ifá</i> priest is known as the <i>Babaláwo</i> .

<i>Ikú</i>	Death.
<i>Ilé-Ifè</i>	The traditional home town of the <i>Yorùbá</i> .
<i>Ìwá</i>	Character, behavior, morality.
<i>Lucumí</i>	The people, religion or language of Afro-Cubans of <i>Yorùbá</i> ethnic decent.
<i>Nigerian Pentecostals</i>	Charismatic churches, most of which emerged from the <i>Aladura</i> Church Movement, came into prominence in the 1970s. Church leaders are characterized by the gifts of healing, speaking in tongues and prophetic utterances.
<i>Olódùmarè</i> or <i>Olórun</i>	The Supreme Being.
<i>Orí</i>	The human head. Also “Destiny-Spirit.” The spiritual aspect of a human being that is responsible for guiding the outcome of events in human life.
<i>Òrìṣà</i>	Clan deities or divinities. <i>Òrìṣà</i> are generally benevolent but occasionally express their wrath against people who ignore ethical taboos, fail to fulfill their obligations to the gods, or act wickedly against fellow human beings.
<i>Òkú-Òrun</i>	See <i>Ancestor</i> .
<i>Ọọni</i>	Paramount ruler of <i>Ilé-Ifè</i> , the traditional home of the <i>Yorùbá</i> .
<i>Òrun</i>	Heaven. Abode of God, the spirit beings and the dead.
<i>Òtá</i>	Enemy. Any human or non-human being that presents himself or herself as an antagonist to life progress or well-being.
<i>Òtá Ilé</i>	Literally, “household enemy.” Close family members or friends who may secretly be working against their kin’s well-being.

<i>Òtá Òde</i>	Literally, “external enemy.” Strangers who may secretly be working against individual or societal well-being.
<i>Partial Reincarnation</i>	The belief that certain aspects or attributes of the dead are reborn in babies within the family of the deceased.
<i>Predestination</i>	The thesis that God has a purpose for everything that happens in life and that he is working all things out according to his own will and purpose.
<i>Quasi-human Spirit</i>	Human beings who have superhuman abilities to cause afflictions in the human world. Examples include witches, “Born-to-die” children ( <i>Àbíkú</i> ) and “Demon-possessed” children ( <i>Emèrè</i> ).
<i>Santería</i>	Literally, “Way of the saints.” An Afro-Caribbean religion based on Yorùbá traditional religious belief and some elements of Roman Catholicism.
<i>Spirit Determinism</i>	The thesis that the personal forces in the world – such as witches, ancestors, and demons – being more powerful than human beings, subordinate the human will and actions to theirs, and exert their supernatural influences in ways that reverse human destiny and alter individual and societal well-being.
<i>Traditional Yorùbá</i>	The non-Christian Yorùbá individual who still engages in traditional religious practices.
<i>Yorùbá Christians /Christianity</i>	Christians who regularly attend Yorùbá Indigenous Churches (YIC). Yorùbá Christianity is the theology and spirituality in the YIC.
<i>Yorùbá Initiated Churches (YIC)</i>	Churches founded by Yorùbá Christian leaders that have no affiliation with mission-established churches.

## APPENDIX B: CIRCLES OF INFLUENCE

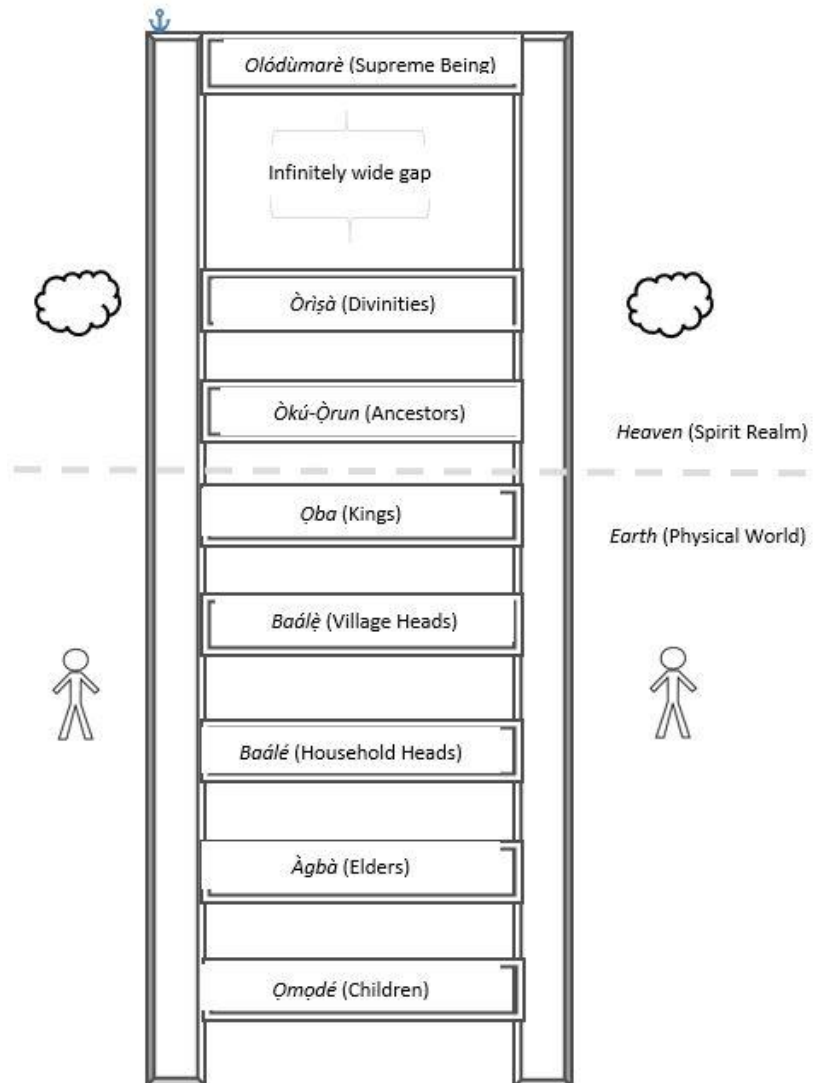
Traditional Yorùbá notion of the spiritual influences which spirit beings have over one another and over human beings.





## APPENDIX C: LADDER OF BEING

Yorùbá Traditional Notion of Human Existence in Relation to the Spirit Beings in the Universe



## APPENDIX D: YORÙBÁ PEOPLES AND CITIES

Most Yorùbá people inhabit the southwestern part of Nigeria, but some dwell in southeastern Benin Republic and Togo.<sup>631</sup>



<sup>631</sup> *Yoruba Peoples* [map], 2008, Permission is granted to copy, distribute and/or modify this document under the terms of the GNU Free Documentation License, Version 1.2 or any later version published by the Free Software Foundation; with no Invariant Sections, no Front-Cover Texts, and no Back-Cover Texts. A copy of the license is included in the section entitled GNU Free Documentation License, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Commons:GNU\\_Free\\_Documentation\\_License,\\_version\\_1.2](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Commons:GNU_Free_Documentation_License,_version_1.2), downloaded from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoruba\\_people#/media/File:HistoYoruba.jpeg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoruba_people#/media/File:HistoYoruba.jpeg) (January 2, 2016).

## APPENDIX E: THESES

1. Many Yorùbá – regardless of religious, social, economic or educational background – relate their personal well-being to the activities of spiritual entities (such as ancestors, witches, and demons) in their community.
2. An authentic Christian notion of human identity should not be formed on traditional assumptions or socio-economic exigencies, but on the biblical template that identifies the Triune God as the only Determinant and Influencer of human life and destiny.
3. Because the Yorùbá consider the dead to be bona fide members of human society, good rapport with superhuman spirit beings is essential for harmony in the living human community.
4. Interdependency is ingrained in the Yorùbá mind. To be human is to contribute to the overall harmony of society.
5. Witchcraft belief provides the Yorùbá with the means of explaining the existence of evil in the world. Witchcraft accusation is used to maintain social control (by internalizing norms and sanctions), to exert economic or political influence over competitors, or to simply suppress the activities of wicked people in society.
6. Yorùbá Christianity, in its current form, affirms the traditional belief that human beings can easily be possessed by demons, and that the human destiny or life-purpose can be changed by the evil spirit beings in the community.
7. *Goal of Theology:* Theology is transformative. The study of God’s character, his work in creation, and his love for human beings should invoke the reflective heart to worship and glorify God.
8. *Priority of Faith:* Without a prior act of revelation on God’s part, the whole Christian mission would collapse. Converts are won, not through rational or wise

arguments but through the inner conviction (faith) which can only be imparted directly by God through the Holy Spirit.

9. *Concern for Truth:* The task of theology is not only to investigate the origin and the original content of the Christian faith and of the doctrine of the church, or the changes that it underwent in the course of history, but more importantly to determine the truth which is contained in the Christian tradition.
10. *Remedy for Sin:* The image of God may have been distorted by sin but it is not totally obliterated. Jesus Christ is the antidote for sin.
11. *Human Destiny:* Jesus Christ revealed the destiny of humanity in his distinction from, yet unity with the Father.
12. *Human Freedom:* Human beings are not robots that can be manipulated by external forces outside their control. They are persons made in the image of God who make decisions, set goals, and subsequently receive rewards or punishments for their actions.
13. *Bí a ti ñṣe níbì kan èèwọ ibòmíràn ni /What is customary in one society is an abomination in another (Yorùbá adage).*
14. *Ti ibi ti ire la wá s'áyé/We encounter both good and evil in life (Yorùbá adage). If we do not have problems, we may not know the full depth of God's love.*



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abimbola, 'Wande. "Gods versus Anti-Gods: Conflict and Resolution in the Yoruba Cosmos." In *Evil and the Response of World Religion*. Edited by William Cenkner, 170-179. St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Notion of Sacrifice in the Yoruba Religion." In *Restoring the Kingdom*. Edited by Dean W Ferm, 175–181. New York: Paragon House, 1984.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Yoruba Religion in Brazil: Problems and Prospects." In *Actes du XLVI et Congres Societe des Americanistes*, vol. 6, 619–639. Paris: Societe des Americanistes Musee de l'Homme, 1979.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Ifá: An Exposition of Ifá Literary Corpus*. Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Yoruba Concept of Human Personality." In *Notion de Personne en Afrique Noire*, 73-89. Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1973), 73–89.
- Abraham, Willie. *The Mind of Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1966.
- Adeboye, Olufunke. "Iku Ya J'esin": Politically Motivated Suicide, Social Honor, and Chieftaincy Politics in Early Colonial Ibadan." *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 41, no. 2 (2007): 189–225.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "'Arrowhead' of Nigerian Pentecostalism: The Redeemed Christian Church of God, 1952-2005." *Pneuma* 29 (2007): 24–58.
- Adegbola, Adeolu. "The Theological Basis of Ethics." In *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs*. Edited by K. A. Dickson and P. Ellingworth, 117–136. London: Lutterworth, 1970.
- Adegoke, Kazeem A. "The Theory of Evil among the Theologians in Islam and Yoruba Traditional Religion. *Orita, Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* 43, no. 1 (June, 2011): 152–166.
- Adelakun, Adewale. "A Theological Reflection on Mbiti's Conception of Salvation in African Christian," *Nebula* 8, no. 1 (December, 2011): 25–33.

- Adeney, M. A. "What is 'Natural' about Witchcraft and Sorcery?" *Missiology* 2 (1974), 377–395.
- Adenugba Adetutu A. and Samuel A. Omolawal. "Religious Values and Corruption in Nigeria: A Dislocated Relationship." *Journal of Educational and Social Research* 4, no 3 (May, 2014): 522–528.
- Adeyemo, Tokunboh, Solomon Andria, Issiaka Coulibaly, Tewoldemedhin Habtu, and Samuel Ngewa, eds. *African Bible Commentary*. Nairobi, Kenya: WordAlive Publishers, 2006.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Salvation in African Tradition*. Nairobi, Kenya: Evangel Publishing House, 1979.
- Adogame, Afeosemime U. "Engaging the Rhetoric of Spiritual Warfare: The Public Face of Aladura in Diaspora." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 34, no. 4 (January 1, 2004): 493–522.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Aiye Loja, Orun Nile: The Appropriation of Ritual Space-Time in the Cosmology of the Celestial Church of Christ." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 30, no. 1 (February, 2000): 3–29.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Celestial Church of Christ: The Politics of Cultural Identity in a West African Prophetic Charismatic Movement*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1998.
- Afeke, B. and P. Verster. "Christianisation of Ancestor Veneration within African Traditional Religions: An Evaluation." *In die Skriflig* 38, no. 1 (2004): 47–61.
- Afolabi, Stephen Olurotimi Adeola. "Yoruba Cultural Reflections in the Christ Apostolic Church." *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 17, no. 2 (January 1, 2012): 131–157.
- Agazue, Chima. *The Role of a Culture of Superstition in the Proliferation of Religio-Commercial Pastors in Nigeria*. Bloomington, IN: AnthonHouse, 2013.
- Agoussou, Jacob M. "Demands of the Gospel and African Anthropology." In *The Churches of Africa: Future Prospects*. Edited by Claude Geffre and Bertrand Luneau. New York, NY: The Seabury Press, 1977.
- Aihiokhai, Simon-Mary. "Ancestorhood in Yoruba Religion and Sainthood in Christianity: Envisioning an Ecological Awareness and Responsibility." *International Journal of African Catholicism* 1, from <http://www.saintleo.edu/media/131009/aihiokhai-ancestors-saint.pdf>, (downloaded on August 17, 2016)

- Ajala, Aderemi S. and E. N. Ediomu-ubong. "It's My Stepmother": Witchcraft, Social Relations, and Health Security in Ibibio, South-South Nigeria." *Anthropos* 105, no. 2 (2010): 455–470.
- Ajani, Ezekiel. "'Enemies of My Father's House Die by Fire': Reflections on the Response of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries to African Cosmology of Evil." *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 17, no. 3 (2012): 29–42.
- Ajayi Mary A. and Abiodun O. Olotu. "Violation of Women's Property Rights within the Family." *Empowering Women for Gender Equity* 1, no. 1 (2005), 58–63.
- Akinade, Akintunde E. "Death: An African Perspective." *Living Pulpit* 7, no. 3 (July 1, 1998): 14.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "A Place to Feel at Home." In *The Agitated Mind of God: The Theology of Kosuke Koyama*, edited by Dale T. Irvin and Akintunde E. Akinade, 188–200. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "New Religious Movements in Contemporary Nigeria: Aladura Churches as a Case Study." *Asia Journal of Theology* 10, no. 2 (October 1, 1996): 316–332.
- Akrong, Abraham A. "Towards a Theology of Evil Spirits and Witches." *Journal of African Christian Thought* 4, no. 1 (June 2001): 18–21.
- Alaba, Olugboyega. *Understanding Sexuality in the Yoruba Culture* (No. 1 – Understanding Human Sexuality Seminar Series). Lagos: Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Center, 2004.
- Algra, Keimpe. "Stoics on Souls and Demons: Reconstructing Stoic Demonology." In *Demons and the Devil in Ancient and Medieval Christianity*. Edited by Nienke Vos and Willemien Otten, 71–96. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill NV, 2011.
- Amanze, James N. "Christianity and Ancestor Veneration in Botswana." *Studies in World Christianity* 9, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 43–59.
- Anderson, Allan. "African Independent Churches and Global Pentecostalism: Historical Connections and Common Identities," 63–71. In *African Identities and World Christianity in the Twentieth Century*. Edited by Klaus Koschorke, and Jens H. Schjorring. Gottingen, Germany, 2005.
- Anderson, Allan H. "Pentecostals, Healing and Ecumenism." *International Review of Mission* 93, no. 370–371 (2004): 486–496.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Newer Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches: The Shape of Future Christianity in Africa?" *Pneuma, Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 24, no. 2 (Fall 2002), 167–184.



- \_\_\_\_\_. *African Reformation: African Initiated Christianity in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2001.
- Anderson, Ray S. *On Being Human: Essays in Theological Anthropology*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982.
- Anyanwu, C. K., "The Meaning of Ultimate Reality in Igbo Cultural Experience," *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 7 (1984): 84–101.
- Appiah-Kubi, Kofi and Sergio Torre, eds. *African Theology en Route*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979.
- Apter, Andrew. "The Blood of Mothers: Women, Money, and Markets in Yoruba-Atlantic Perspective." *Journal of African American History* 98, no. 1 (Winter, 2013): 72–98.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Discourse and Its Disclosures: Yoruba Women and the Sanctity of Abuse." *African Journal of the International African Institute* 69, no. 1 (1998): 68–97.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Embodiment of Paradox: Yoruba Kingship and Female Power." *Cultural Anthropology* 6, no. 2 (May, 1991): 221–229.
- Aquinas, St. Thomas. *Summa Theologiae*. Edited by Petri Carmello. Rome: Marietti, 1952.
- Asamoah-Gyadu, J. Kwabena. "Witchcraft Accusations and Christianity in Africa." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 39, no. 1 (January, 2015), 23–27.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Mission to 'Set the Captives Free,': Healing, Deliverance, and Generational Curses in Ghanaian Pentecostalism." *International Review of Mission* 93, nos. 370/371 (July/October, 2004): 389–406.
- Asante, Molefi K. and Ama Mazama, eds. *Encyclopedia of African Religion, Volume 1*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2009.
- Asuquo, Offiong O. "A Rationalization of an African Concept of Life, Death and the Hereafter." *American Journal of Social and Management Sciences* 2, no. 1 (2011): 171–175.
- Augustine of Hippo. "Confessions." In *Confessions and Enchiridion*. Translated and Edited by Albert C. Outler (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955).
- Awolalu, J. Omisade. "The Concept of Death and Hereafter in Yoruba Traditional Religion." *West African Religion* 18 (1979): 57–69.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "Yoruba Sacrificial Practice." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 5, no. 2 (1972): 81–95.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The African Traditional View of Man." *Orita*. VI/2 (Dec. 1972): 101–118.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Yoruba Philosophy of Life." *Presence Africaine. Nouvelle serie*, no. 73 (1er Trimestre 1970): 20–38.
- Awolalu, J. Omisade and P. A. Dopamu. *West African Traditional Religion*. Ibadan: Onibonoje Press and Book Industries Ltd, 1977.
- Awoniyi, Peter R. "Yoruba Indigenous Spirituality and the Reshaping of New Religious Movements in South-West Nigeria." *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 16, no. 1 (2011): 149–164.
- Ayer, A. J. "Freedom and Necessity." In *Philosophical Essays*. Edited by A. J. Ayer, 271–84, Bedford: St. Martin's Press, 1969.
- Ayegboyin, Deji. "Aladura Spirituality: Authentic African Initiative in Christian Missions." *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 16, no. 1 (January 1, 2011): 165–177.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Ota Ile, Ota Ode: Reflections on the Yoruba Obsession with the Enemy and the Use of Imprecatory Prayers in the Aladura Church Movements." *Journal of African Christian Thought* 12, no. 1 (June 2009): 32–40.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "'Heal the Sick and Cast Out Demons': The Response of the Aladura." *Studies in World Christianity* 10, no. 2 (January 1, 2004): 233–249.
- Ayegboyin Deji, and Ademola Ishola, *African Indigenous Churches: An Historical Perspective*. Lagos: Greater Heights Publication, 1997.
- Azadegan, Ebrahim, "Divine Hiddenness and Human Sin: The Noetic Effect of Sin," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 7 (2013): 69–90.
- Babalola, E.G. "The Impact of African Traditional Religion and Culture upon the Aladura Churches. *AJT* 6, no. 1(1992): 130–140.
- Babalola, E. O. "Ori: Man's Destiny: An Inescapable Phenomenon in Yoruba Traditional Religion." *Voices from the Third World* 20, no 1 (1997): 156–165.
- Baeta, C. G., "The Challenge of African Culture to the Church and the Message of the Church to African Culture." *Christianity and African Culture: The Proceedings of a Conference Held at Accra, Gold Coast, May 2-6, 1955*, 51–61. Accra, Ghana: Christian Council of the Gold Coast, 1955.

- Balogun, Babalola J. "The Consequentialist Foundations of Traditional Yoruba Ethics: An Exposition," *Thought and Practice: Journal of the Philosophical Association of Kenya* 5, no. 2 (Dec., 2013): 103–121.
- Balogun, Oladele A. "The Nature of Human Person in Traditional African Thought: Further Reflections on Traditional Philosophies of Mind." *Afroeuropa* 3, 2 (2009): 1–18.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Concepts of Ori and Human Destiny in Traditional Yoruba Thought: A Soft-Deterministic Interpretation." *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 16, no. 1 (2007): 116–130.
- Barclay, William. *New Testament Words: Combining a New Testament Wordbook and More New Testament Words*. London: SCM Press Ltd, 1964.
- Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics (Volume III)*. Edited by G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Church Dogmatics (Volume I)*. Edited by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance. Translated by G. T. Thomson and Harold Knight. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956.
- Bascom, William. *Sixteen Cowries: Yoruba Divination from Africa to the New World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Focus of Cuban Santeria," *Southeastern Journal of Anthropology* 6 (1950): 64–68.
- Bastide, Roger. *The African Religions of Brazil: Towards a Sociology of Interpretations of Civilizations*. Translated by Helen Sebba. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.
- Baumeister, Roy. *Evil: Inside Human Cruelty and Violence*. New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1997.
- Bavinck, J. H. *An Introduction to the Science of Missions*. Translated by David H. Freeman. Philadelphia, PA: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1960.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Problem of Adaptation and Communication." *International Review of Mission* 45, no 179 (Jul 1956): 307–313.
- Bediako, Kwame. *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa: History and Experience*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa*. Milton Keynes, U.K.: Regnum Books, 1999.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995.
- Bennaars, G. A. *Ethics, Education and Development*. Nairobi: East African Publishers, 1993.
- Berends, Willem. "African Traditional Healing Practices and the Christian Community." *Missiology: An International Review* 21, no. 3 (July 1993): 275–288.
- Bever, Edward. "Witchcraft, Female Aggression, and Power in the Early Modern Community." *Journal of Social History* 35, no. 4 (Summer, 2002): 955–988.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Witchcraft Fears and Psychosocial Factors in Disease." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 30, no. 4 (Spring 2000): 573–590.
- Beyers, J., and Dora N. Mphahlele. "Jesus Christ as Ancestor: An African Christian Understanding." *HTS Theological Studies* 65, no. 1 (January 1, 2009): 1–5.
- Bewaji, John A. "Ethics and Morality in Yoruba Culture." In *Companion to African Philosophy*. Edited by Kwesi Wiredu, 396–403. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief and the Theistic Problem of Evil." *African Studies Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (1998): 1–17.
- Blumberg, Harry. "Theories of Evil in Medieval Jewish Philosophy." *Hebrew Union College Annual* 43 (1972): 149–168.
- Bond, George C. and Diane M. Ciekawy, eds., *Witchcraft Dialogues: Anthropological and Philosophical Exchanges*. Athens, OH: Center for International Studies, 2001.
- Bongmba, Elias K. "Rethinking Power in Africa: Theological Perspectives." *Religion & Theology* 11, no. 2 (2004): 103–138.
- Booth, Robert. "Richer than St. Paul's: Church that attracts 8,000 Congregation to a Disused Cinema," *The Guardian News*, April 10, 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/apr/11/kingsway-international-christian-centre>, accessed November 18, 2015.

- Borokini, Temitope. "Traditional Medicine Practice among the Yoruba People of Nigeria: A Historical Perspective." *Journal of Medicinal Plants Studies* 2, no. 6 (2014): 20–33.
- Bosch, David J. "The Problem of Evil in Africa: A Survey of African Views on Witchcraft and of the Response of the Christian Church." In *Like a Roaring Lion: Essays on the Bible, the Church and Demonic Powers*. Edited by Pieter G. R. de Villiers, 38-62. Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1987.
- Brain, James L. "Witchcraft and Development." *African Affairs* 81, no 324 (July, 1982): 371–384.
- Brand, Gerrit. "Witchcraft and Spirit Beliefs in African Christian Theology." *Exchange* 31, no. 1 (January, 2002): 36–50.
- Brand, Miryam T. *Evil Within and Without: The Source of Sin and Its Nature as Portrayed in Second Temple Literature [Journal of Ancient Judaism: Supplements]*. Bristol, CT: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht LLC, 2013.
- Brown, Lee M., ed. "Understanding and Ontology in Traditional African Thought." In *African Philosophy: New and Traditional Perspectives*, edited by Lee M. Brown. Oxford, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Brunner, Emil. *Revelation and Reason*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace," by Professor Emil Brunner and the Reply "No!" by Karl Barth*. Translated by Peter Fraenkel. London: The Centenary Press, 1946.
- Bujo, Bénézet. *Foundations of an African Ethic: Beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality*. Translated by Brian McNeil. New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 2001.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *African Theology in its Social Context*. Translated by John O'Donohue. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992.
- Burgess, Richard, Kim Knibbe, and Anna Quaas, "Nigerian-Initiated Pentecostal Churches as a Social Force in Europe: The Case of the Redeemed Christian Church of God." *PentecoStudies* 9, no. 1 (April 2010): 97–121.
- Burgess, Richard, "Nigerian Pentecostalism and Civic Engagement: Mission in the Midst of Poverty and Violence. A paper presented at the Theological Education in Africa (TEA) conference, Theological College of Northern Nigeria, Jose, Nigeria on May 16, 2012, 22–42.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Nigeria's Christian Revolution: The Civil War Revival and Its Pentecostal Progeny (1967-2006)*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008.
- Burns, J. Patout. "Augustine on the Origin and Progress of Evil," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 16, no. 1 (Spring, 1988): 9–27
- Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Translated by F. L. Battles. London: S.C.M. Press, 1960.
- Capell, Arthur. "'One New Man': Success or Failure of Christian Mission." *International Review of Mission* 50, no. 198 (1961): 149–157.
- Catani, Damian. *Evil: A History in Modern French Literature and Thought*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Notions of Evil in Baudelaire." *The Modern Language Review* 102, no. 4 (Oct., 2007): 990–107.
- Chiquette, Daniel. "Healing, Salvation, and Mission: The Ministry of Healing in Latin American Pentecostalism." *International Review of Mission* 95, nos. 370/371 (October, 2004): 474–485.
- Chuckwuelobe, M. C. "Death and the Question of Ultimate Reality and Meaning in the Thought of the Igbo of Nigeria and of M. Heidegger: A further Contribution to Uram Igbo studies," *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 21, no. 1 (1998): 3–17.
- CIA World Factbook 2014*. New York, NY: Skyhorse Publishing Inc., 2013.
- Clarke, Ian. "Ancestor Worship and Identity: Ritual, Interpretation, and Social Normalization in the Malaysian Chinese Community." *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 15, no. 2 (October, 2000): 273–295.
- Cobb, Jr., John B. "Theodicy and Divine Omnipotence." In *Philosophy and Theological Discourse*. Edited by Stephen T. Davis, 119–203. New York: Macmillan Press, 1997.
- Cohan, John Alan. "The Problem of Witchcraft Violence in Africa." *Suffolk University Law Review* 44, no. 4 (December 2011): 803–872.
- Cole, Victor. "Africanising the Faith: Another Look at the Contextualisation of Theology," In *Issues in African Christian Theology*. Edited by Samuel Ngewa, Mark Shaw, and Tite Tienou, 12-23. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1998.
- Cooper, John W. *Body, Soul and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

- Cox, Harvey. *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1995.
- Craig, Edward, ed. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Cross, F. L. and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Crutchley, David. "Being Fully Human: A Spirituality Out of Africa." *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 45, no. 2 (March 1, 2003): 64–79.
- Dahua, Cui and Huang Deyuan. "Rational Awareness of the Ultimate in Human Life – The Confucian Concept of ‘Destiny.’" *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 4, no. 3 (Sept., 2009): 309–321.
- Danfulani, Umar H. D. "Globalisation, Fundamentalism and Pentecostal/Charismatic Movements in Nigeria." *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 13, no. 2 (2008): 1–40.
- Dasaolu, Babajide and Demilade Oyelakun. *The Concept of Evil in Yoruba and Igbo Thoughts: Some Comparisons, Philosophia: E-Journal of Philosophy and Culture* (October, 2015): 1–7.
- Da Silva, Jose A. "African Independent Churches: Origin and Development." *Anthropos* 4, no. 6 (1993): 393–402.
- De La Torre, Miguel A. *Santeria: The Beliefs and Rituals of a Growing Religion in America*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, MI, 2004.
- Denike, Margaret. "The Devil’s Insatiable Sex: A Genealogy of Evil Incarnate." *Hypatia* 18, no. 1, Feminist Philosophy and the Problem of Evil (Winter, 2003): 10–43.
- Dickson, Kwesi. *Theology in Africa*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1984.
- Dillon-Malone, Clive. "Witchcraft Beliefs as a Pastoral Problem." *Afer* 28, no. 6 (December 1986): 374–380.
- Dodds, Michael J. "Providence, Prayer, and Miracles." In *Unlocking Divine Action*, 229–58. Catholic University of America Press, 2012.
- Dopamu, Abiola, "Predestination, Destiny and Faith in Yorubaland: Any Meeting Point?" *Global Journal of Humanities* 7, nos. 1&2 (2008): 37–39.
- Dopamu, Ade P. *Èṣù: The Invisible Foe of Man: A Comparative Study of Satan in Christianity, Islam and Yoruba Religion*. Ijebu Ode: Shebiotimo Press, 2000.

- Dorman, Benjamin. "Representing Ancestor Worship as 'Non-Religious,': Hosoki Kazuko's Divination in the Post Aum Era," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 10, no. 3 (February, 2007): 32–53.
- Eades, J. S. *Changing Cultures: The Yoruba Today*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- Edmonds, Ennis B. and Michelle A. Gonzalez, *Caribbean Religious History: An Introduction*. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2010.
- Editorial, "Make Disciples, Not Just Convert," *Christianity Today* 43, no. 12 (October 25, 1999): 28.
- Edwards, Paul. "Hard and Soft Determinism." In *Determinism and Freedom in the Age of Modern Science*. Ed., Sidney Hook, 117-125. New York, NY: Collier Books, 1961.
- Engelsviken, Tormod. "Spiritual Conflict: A Challenge for the Church in the West with a View to the Future." In *Paradigm Shifts in Christian Witness: Insights from Anthropology, Communication, and Spiritual Power: Essays in Honor of Charles H Kraft*, 116-125. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008.
- Ephirim-Donkor, Anthony. *African Spirituality: On Becoming Ancestors*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 1997.
- Evans-Pritchard, Edward E. *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande*. Oxford, London: Clarendon Press, 1976.
- Ekanola, Adebola. "A Naturalistic Interpretation of the Yoruba Concepts of *Ori*," *Philosophia Africana* 9, no. 1 (March, 2006): 41–52.
- Ekenberg, Thomas. "Free Will and Free Action in Anselm of Canterbury." *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 12, no. 4 Oct., 2005): 301–318.
- Ekwunife, Anthony. "Integration of Traditional African Values in Priestly Formation." *Afer* 39, no. 4 (1997): 194–213.
- Fasholé-Luke, Edward, "Ancestor Veneration and the Communion of Saints." In *New 3 Sawyerr*. Edited by Mark E. Glasswell, and Edward Fasholé-Luke. London: SPCK, 1974.
- Fatokun, Samson. "The 'Great Move of God' in an African Community: A Retrospect of the 1930s Indigenous Pentecostal Revival in Nigeria and its Impact on Nigerian Pentecostalism." *Exchange* 38, no. 1 (January 1, 2009): 34–57



- \_\_\_\_\_. "Water and Its Cultic Use in African Initiated Churches in Yoruba-land of South-western Nigeria: An Issue in African Development Discourse." *Swedish Missiological Themes* 96, no. 4 (2008): 349–376.
- Fayemi, Ademola K. "Human Personality and the Yoruba Worldview: An Ethico-Sociological Interpretation." *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 2, no.9, (March 2009): 166–176.
- Ferdinando, Keith. *The Triumph of Christ in African Perspective: A Study of Demonology and Redemption in the African Context*. Cumbria, UK: Paternoster Press, 1999.
- Fiawoo, D. K. "Characteristics of Ewe Ancestor Worship." In *Ancestors*. Edited by William H. Newell, 263-281. Chicago, IL: Mouton Publishers, 1976.
- Fleming, Kenneth. *Buddhist-Christian Encounter in Contemporary Thailand*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 2014.
- Foerster, Werner and Georg Fohrer. "Σώζω, Σωτηρία, Σωτήρ, Σωτήριος." In *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Gerhard Friedrich, Vol. VII. Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans, 1971.
- Fortes, Meyer. *Oedipus and Job in West African Religion*. Reprinted in *Anthropology of Folk Religion*. Edited by Charles Leslie (New York: Vintage, 1960),
- Frankfurt, Harry G. "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," *The Journal of Philosophy* 68, no. 1 (Jan. 14, 1971): 5–20.
- Frankfurter, David. "Where the Spirits Dwell: Possession, Christianization, and Saints' Shrines in Late Antiquity." *The Harvard Theological Review*, 103, no. 1 (Jan., 2010): 27–49.
- Freedman, Maurice. *Lineage Organization in Southeastern China*. London: Athlone, 1958.
- Friquegnon, Marie-Louise. "The Paradoxes of Determinism." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 33, 1 (Sep. 1972): 112–116.
- Gaba, Christian. "Man's Salvation: Its Nature and Meaning in African Traditional Religion." In *Christianity in Independent Africa*. Edited by Edward Fasholé-Luke, Richard Gray, Adrian Hastings and Godwin Tasié, 389–401. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1978.
- Gbadegesin, Enoch O. "Changing Roles of Èṣù: Yorùbá Traditional and Christian Religious Concepts in a Globalized Era." *Dialogue & Alliance* 21, no. 2 (Fall/Winter, 2007): 33–53.

- Gbadegesin, Olusegun E. "Toward a Theory of Destiny." In *A Companion to African Philosophy*. Edited by Kwasi Wiredu, 313–323. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Eniyan: The Yoruba Concept of a Person." In *The African Philosophy Reader*. Second Edition. Edited by P. H. Coetzee and A. P. J. Roux, 175–191. London: Routledge, 2002.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Individuality, Community and the Moral Order." In *Philosophy from Africa*. Edited by P. H. Coetzee and A. P. J. Roux, 292–305. Halfway House: International Thompson Publishing (SA), 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *African Philosophy: Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary African Realities*. New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Destiny, Personality and the Ultimate Reality of Human Existence: A Yoruba Perspective." *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 7, no. 3 (September 1, 1984): 173–188.
- Gehman, Richard J. *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspectives*. Kijabe, Kenya: Kesho Publications, 1989.
- Gelfand, Michael. *Witch Doctor*. London: Harvill Press, 1964.
- Gleason, Judith. "Oya in the Company of Saints." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 68, no. 2 (Jun., 2000): 265–291.
- Glenday, David K. "Acholi Ancestor-Veneration and the Communion of Saints." *Afer* 18, no. 4 (1976): 224–232.
- Goodare, Julian. "Women and the Witch-Hunt in Scotland." *Social History* 23, no. 3 (October, 1998): 288–308.
- Goring, Rosemary, ed., "Salvation" in *The Wordsworth Dictionary of Beliefs and Religions*. Herefordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1995.
- Green, Joel. *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008.
- Green, Joel, Stuart L. Palmer, and Kevin Corcoran, Editors. *In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem*. Downers, Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005.
- Green, Ronald. "Religion and Morality in the African Traditional Setting." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 14, no. 1 (1983): 1–23.

- Gifford, Paul. "Expecting Miracles: The Prosperity Gospel in Africa." *Christian Century* 124, no. 14 (July 10, 2007): 20–24.
- Gunda, Masiwa R. "Christianity, Traditional Religion, and Healing in Zimbabwe: Exploring the Dimensions and Dynamics of Healing among the Shona." *Svensk Missionstidskrift* 95, no. 3 (January 1, 2007): 229–246.
- Gyeke, Kwame. *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme, Revised Edition*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Person and Community in African Thought. In *Philosophy from Africa*. Edited by P. H. Coetzee and A. P. J. Roux, 306–316. Halfway House: International Thompson Publishing (SA), 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *African Cultural Values: An Introduction*. Accra: Sankofa Publishing Company, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Akan Concept of a Person." In *African Philosophy: An Introduction*. Edited by Richard Wright. Washington: University Press of America (1979), 199–212.
- Hallen, Barry. Yoruba Moral Epistemology as the Basis for a Cross-Cultural Ethics." In *Orisa Devotion as World Religion: The Globalization of Yoruba Religious Culture*. Edited by Jacob K. Olupona and Terry Ray, 222–229. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2008.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "'Witches' as Superior Intellects: Challenging a Cross-Cultural Superstition." In *Witchcraft Dialogue: Anthropological and Philosophical Exchanges*. Edited by George C Bond and Diane M. Ciekawy, 80–100. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2001.
- Barry Hallen and J. O. Sodipo, *Knowledge, Belief and Witchcraft*. London: Ethnographical, 1986.
- Harris, Marvin. *Cows, Pigs, and Witches: The Riddles of Culture*. New York: Random House, Inc., 1977.
- Hasker, William. "On Behalf of Emergent Dualism." In *In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem*. Edited by Joel B. Green and Stuart L. Palmer. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005.
- Hassan, Tugume L. "Attitudes of Christian Missionaries towards African Traditional Religious Beliefs in East Africa During the British Colonial Rule." *African Journal of History and Culture* 7, no. 10 (October 2015), 193–199.
- Healey, Joseph and Donald Sybertz. *Towards an African Narrative Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996.

- Hickey, Marilyn. *Breaking Generational Curses: Overcoming the Legacy of Sin in your Family*. Tulsa, Oklahoma, Harrison House, 2000.
- Hill, Harriet. "Witchcraft and the Gospel: Insights from Africa." *Missiology: An International Review* 24, no. 3 (July, 1996).
- Himma, Kenneth. "Plantinga's Version of the Free-Will Argument: The Good and Evil that Free Beings Do." *Religious Studies* 16, no. 1 (March, 2010): 21–39.
- Hoch-Smith, Judith. "Radical Yoruba Female Sexuality: The Witch and the Prostitute." In *Women in Ritual and Symbolic Roles*. Edited by Judith Hoch-Smith and Anita Spring, 245-267. New York, NY: Plenum Press, 1978.
- Hocking, William E. *Living Religions and a World Faith*. New York: Macmillan, 1940.
- Hu, Anning. "Ancestor Worship in Contemporary China: An Empirical Investigation," *The China Review* 16, no. 1 (February, 2016): 169–186.
- Hume, David. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, Second Edition*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993.
- Hunt, G. *Oyotunji Village: The Yoruba Movement in America*. Washington: University Press of America, 1979.
- Idowu, E. B. *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*. New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Olódùmarè: God in Yoruba Belief*. London: Longman, 1962.
- Ikenga-Metuh, Emefie. "The Concept of Man in African Traditional Religion: with Particular Reference to the Igbo of Nigeria." In *Readings in African Traditional Religion*, edited by E. M. Uka, 53-68. Bern: Peter Lang, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Revival of African Christian Spirituality: The Experience of African Independent Churches." *Mission Studies* 7, no. 2 (January 1, 1990): 151–171.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *God and Man in African Religion*. Melbourne, Australia: Geoffrey Chapman Ltd, 1981.
- James, William. *The Will to Believe*. New York: Dover Publications, 1956.
- Jebadu, Alexander. "Ancestral Veneration and the Possibility of Its Incorporation into the Christian Faith." *Exchange* 36, no. 3 (January 1, 2007): 246–280.

- Jegede, Charles. "An Exploration into Soteriology of Ifa: 'Oral and Intangible Heritage for Humanity.'" *Black Theology* 11, no. 2 (2013): 201–218.
- Jegede, Gabriel. "The Impact of Cultural Values on Aladura Churches in Ekitiland (South-Western Nigeria)." *Journal of Arts and Contemporary Society* 2 (December 2010): 46–59.
- Ji, Jingyi. *Encounters between Chinese Culture and Christianity: A Hermeneutical Perspective*. Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2007.
- Jocz, Jakób. *The Covenant: A Theology of Human Destiny*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968.
- Johnson, Kofi. "Aladura: The Search for Authenticity, an Impetus for African Christianity." *AJPS* 14, NO. 1 (2011): 149–165.
- Johnson, Samuel. *The History of the Yorubas from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Judisch, Neal. "Theological Determinism and the Problem of Evil." *Religious Studies* 44, no. 2 (Jun., 2008): 165–184.
- Kagan, Shelly. *Death*. Yale, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.
- Kabweza, Makani. "Ancestor Veneration and Christian worship." *Afer* 25, no. 4 (August 1, 1983): 242–243.
- Kalengyo, Edison M. "'Cloud of Witnesses' in Hebrews 12:1 and Ganda Ancestors: An Incarnational Reflection." *Neotestamentica* 43, no. 1 (2009): 49–68.
- Kalilombe, Patrick A. "The Salvific Value of African Religions." In *Readings in African Traditional Religion: Structure, Meaning, Relevance, Future*, 195–210. Bern: Peter Lang, 1991.
- Kalu, Ogbu U. *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction*. Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Ancestral Spirituality and Society in Africa." In *African Spirituality: Forms Meanings, and Expressions*. Edited by Jacob K. Olupona, 54–84. New York, The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Pentecostal and Charismatic Reshaping of the African Religious Landscape in the 1990s." *Mission Studies* 20, nos. 1–39 (2003): 84–111.

- Kaphagawani, Didier N. "Some African Conceptions of Person: A Critique." In *African Philosophy as Cultural Inquiry*, edited by Ivan Karp and D. A. Mosolo, 66-79. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000.
- Keke, John. "Evil." In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edited by Edward Craig, 463-466. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Kelly, J.N.D. *Early Christian Creeds*. London, 1950.
- Kiernan, J. P. "The 'Problem of Evil' in the Context of Ancestral Intervention in the Affairs of the Living in Africa." *Man. New Series* 17, no. 2 (Jun., 1982): 287-301.
- Kimmerle, Heinz. "The Concept of Person in African Thought: A Dialogue between African and Western Philosophies." In *Ontology and Consciousness: Percipient Action*, edited by Helmut Wautischer, 507-524. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008.
- Klaits, Joseph. *Servants of Satan: The Age of the Witch Hunts*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985.
- Klem, Herbert. "Yoruba Theology and Christian Evangelism." *Missiology* 3, no. 1 (1975): 45-63
- Knight, John E. *The Mystic*. Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2009.
- Koster-Oyekan, Winny. "Infertility among Yoruba Women: Perceptions on Causes, Treatments and Consequences." *African Journal of Reproductive Health* 3, no. 1 (May, 1999): 13-26.
- Kraft, Marguerite. "Spiritual Conflict and the Mission of the Church." In *Deliver Us from Evil: An Uneasy Frontier in Christian Mission*. Edited by A. Scott Moreau, Tokunboh Adeyemo, David G. Burnett, Bryant L. Myers and Hwa Yung, 276-289. Monrovia, CA: World Vision Publications, 2002.
- Kramer, Heinrich and James Sprenger. *Malleus Maleficarum: The Hammer of Witchcraft*. Translated by Montague Summers. New York: Dover, 1971.
- Kremser, Manfred. "Visiting Ancestors: St. Lucian Djine in Communion with their African Kin." *Caribbean Quarterly* 39, nos. 3-4 (Sept./Dec., 1993): 82-99.
- Kunhiyop, Samuel W. "Towards a Christian Communal Ethics: The African Contribution," *Cultural Encounters* 6, no. 2 (2010): 7-21.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Challenge of African Christian Morality." *Conspectus (South African Theological Seminary)* 7 (2009): 60-80.

- Lanre-Abass, Bolatito A. "Suicide and Human Dignity: An African Perspective." *Humanity & Social Sciences Journal* 5, no. 1 (2010): 50–62.
- Lausanne Theology Working Group Statement on the Prosperity Gospel: From The African Chapter of the Lausanne Theology Working Group at Its Consultation in Akripong, Ghana, 8–9 October, 2008 and 1–4 September 2009, *ERT* 34, no. 2 (2010): 99–102
- Law, Robin. "Human Sacrifice in Pre-Colonial West Africa." *African Affairs*, 84, no. 334 (January, 1985): 53–87.
- Lawuyi, Olatunde B, and J. K. Olupona, "Metaphoric Associations and the Conception of Death: Analysis of a Yoruba World View." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 18, no. 1 (1988): 2–14.
- Lawson, Thomas. *Religions of Africa: Traditions in Transformation*. San Diego: Harper & Row, 1984.
- Leahy, F. S. *Satan Cast Out – A Study in Biblical Demonology*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975.
- Lee, Jung Young. *Ancestor Worship and Christianity in Korea: Studies in Asian Thought and Religion Volume 8*. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988.
- Levack, Brian P. *Witchcraft, Women and Society*. Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992.
- Living Faith Church Worldwide Inc., "About Us," <http://faithtabernacle.org.ng/aboutus/lfcww/>, accessed on August 24, 2016.
- Lumbala, Francois K. *Celebrating Jesus in Africa: Liturgy and Inculturation*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998.
- Lyons, Diane. "Witchcraft, Gender, Power and Intimate Relations in Dela, Northern Cameroon." *World Archaeology* 29, no. 3 (1998): 344–362.
- Magbadelo, John. "Pentecostalism in Nigeria: Exploiting or Edifying the Masses?" *African Sociological Review/Review Africaine de Sociologie* 8, no. 2 (2004): 15–29.
- Magesa, Laurenti. *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004.
- Makinde, Akin M. "African Culture and Moral Systems: A Philosophical Study." *Second Order* 1, no. 2 (1988): 1–27.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "A Philosophical Analysis of the Yoruba Concept of Ori and Human Destiny." *International Studies in Philosophy* 17, no. 1 (1985): 53–69.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "An African Concept of Human Personality: The Yoruba Example." *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 7, no. 3 (September 1, 1984): 189–200.
- Makinde, Taiwo. "Motherhood as a Source of Empowerment of Women in Yoruba Culture," *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 13, no. 2 (2004): 164–174.
- Manala, Matsobane J. "Witchcraft and Its Impact on Black African Christians: A Lacuna in the Ministry of the Hervormde Kerk in Suidelike Africa." *HTS* 60, no 4 (2004): 1491–1511.
- Mason, Michael A. *Living Santeria: Rituals and Experiences in an Afro-Cuban Religion*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002.
- Maxwell, David. "Witches, Prophets and Avenging Spirits: The Second Christian Movement in North-East Zimbabwe." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 25, no. 3 (August 1, 1995): 309–339.
- Maxwell-Stuart, P. G. *An Abundance of Witches*. Gloucestershire, Great Britain: Tempus Publishing Ltd., 2005.
- Mayer, Philip. "Witches." In *Witchcraft and Sorcery: Selected Readings, Second Edition*. Edited by Max Marwick, 44–65. Suffolk, Great Britain: Penguin Books Ltd, 1982.
- Mbiti, John S. "A Change of the African Concept of Man through Christian Influence." In *For the Sake of the Gospel: Essays in Honor of Samuel Amirtham*, edited by Gnana Robinson, 54–63. Madurai, India: T. T. S. Publications, 1980.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Future of Christianity in Africa". *CrossCurrents* 28, no. 4 (1978): 387–394.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Prayers of African Religion*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *African Religions and Philosophy*. New York, NY: Anchor Books Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "African Concept of Sin," *Frontier* 7, no. 3 (1961): 182–184.
- McCabe, Herbert. *Freedom: God Matters*. New York: Continuum, 1987.
- McCain, Danny. "The Metamorphosis of Nigerian Pentecostalism: From Signs and Wonders in the Church to Service and Influence in Society." In *Spirit and Power: The Growth and Global Impact of Pentecostalism*. Edited by Donald E. Miller,



- Kimon H Sergeant, and Richard Flory, 160-181. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- McCloskey, H. J. "God and Evil," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 10, no. 39 (Apr., 1960): 97–114.
- McKim, Donald K. *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.
- Mesaki, Simon. "The Evolution and Essence of Witchcraft in Pre-colonial African Societies." *Transafrican Journal of History* 24 (1995): 162–177.
- Meyer, Birgit. "If You Are a Devil, You Are a Witch and, If You Are a Witch, You Are a Devil': The Integration of 'Pagan' Ideas into the Conceptual Universe of Ewe Christians in Southeastern Ghana." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 22 (1992): 98–132.
- Mitchell, Robert C. "Christian Healing." In *African Independent Church Movement*. Edited by Victor E. W. Hayward, 47-51. London: Edinburgh House Press, 1963.
- Mobolade, Timothy. "The Concept of Abiku." *African Arts*, 7, No. 1 (Autumn, 1973): 62–64.
- Moila, M Philip. "The Effect of Belief in the Living Dead on the Church's Mission in South Africa." *Africa Theological Journal* 18, no. 2 (January 1, 1989): 140–150.
- Mojola, Osotsi. *Introductory Ethics for College Students and Teachers*. Nairobi: Heinemann, 1988.
- Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, "About MFM," <http://www.mountainoffire.org/about>. Accessed on June 22, 2016.
- Morton-Williams, Peter. "Yoruba Responses to the Fear of Death." *Journal of the International African Institute* 30, no. 1 (January, 1960): 34–40.
- Mosothoane, E. K. "Communio Sanctorum in Africa." *Missionalia* 1, no. 2 (1973): 86–96.
- Motlhabi, M. "The Concept of Morality in African Tradition." In *Hammering Swords into Ploughshares: Essays in Honour of Archbishop M. D. Tutu*. Edited by B. Tlhagale and I. Mosala, 85–99, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986.
- Murphy, Nancey C. *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Murphy, Joseph. *Santeria: An African Religion in America*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1988.

- Murrell, Nathaniel S. *Afro-Caribbean Religions: An Introduction to their Historical, Cultural, and Sacred Traditions*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010.
- Musopole, Augustine, *Being Human in Africa: Toward African Christian Anthropology*. New York: P. Lang, 1994.
- Nadel, Siegfried F. "Witchcraft in Four African Societies: An Essay in Comparison." *American Anthropologist* 54, no. 1 (Jan. – Mar., 1952): 18–29.
- Nathan, Dev, Govind Kelkar, and Yu Xiaogang. "Women as Witches and Keepers of Demons: Cross-cultural Analysis of Struggles to Change Gender Relations." *Economic and Political Weekly* 33, no. 44 (1998): WS58–WS69.
- Niehaus, Isak. "Perversion of Power: Witchcraft and the Sexuality of Evil in the South African Lowveld." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 32, no. 3 (Aug., 2002): 269–299.
- Nieswand, Boris. "Enacted Destiny: West African Charismatic Christians in Berlin and the Immanence of God." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 40 (2010): 33–59.
- Nwosu, L. Ugwuanya. "African Religion in Ecumenical Perspective," *Africa: Rivista Trimestrale di Studi e Documentazione Dell'Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente*, 19, no.2 (June, 1994): 161–179.
- Ntetem, Marc. "Initiation, Traditional and Christian." In *A Reader in African Christian Theology*. Edited by J. Parratt. London: SPCK, 1997.
- Nussbaum, B. "African Culture and Ubuntu: Reflections of a South African in America" *Perspectives* 17, 1 (2003): 1–12.
- Nutrella, Kalya. "Witchcraft and Women: A Historiography of Witchcraft as Gender History." *History Workshop Journal* (n.d.): 1–15.
- Nxumalo, Jabulani Adatum, Abp. "Christ and Ancestors in the African World: A Pastoral Consideration." *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* no. 32 (September 1, 1980): 3–21.
- Nyamiti, Charles, *Studies in African Christian Theology: Jesus Christ, the Ancestor of Humankind: An Essay on African Christology, Volumes 1–2*. (Nairobi, Kenya: Catholic University of East Africa, 2006.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Contemporary African Christologies: Assessment and Practical Suggestions." In *Paths of African Theology*. Edited by Rosino Gibellini, 62–77. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Doctrine of God." In *A Reader in African Christian Theology*. Edited by J. Parratt, 46-57. London: SPCK, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Christ as Our Ancestor: Christianity from an African Perspective*. Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1984.
- Nyende, Peter. "An Aspect of the Character of Christianity in Africa." *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* no. 132 (November 1, 2008): 38–52.
- Odeyemi, John S. "Gender Issues among the Yorubas." *The International Journal of African Catholicism* 4, no. 1 (Winter, 2013): 1–22.
- Ogungbemi, Segun. "The End of Man in Yoruba Thought: Critical Assessment." *Africa Theological Journal* 21, no. 2 (January 1, 1992): 188–200.
- Ogungbile, David O. and Akintunde E. Akinade, *Creativity and Change in Nigerian Christianity*. Lagos: Malthouse Press Limited, 2010.
- Ogungbile, David O. "Meeting Point of Culture and Health: The Case of the Aladura Churches in Nigeria." *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 6, no 1 (1997): 98–111.
- Ogunkunle, C.O. "Commercialization of Religion in Nigeria: The Christian Perspective". *Issues in the Practice of Religion in Nigeria*. Edited by M.T. Yahya et al., 296-305. Ilorin, Nigeria: Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions (NASR), 2006.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Imprecation as a Weapon of the Oppressed: A Comparative Study of Selected Individuals in Israel and Churches in Nigeria". *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies. Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan* 35 (2003): 17–35.
- Ojo, Matthews A. "Pentecostalism, Public Accountability and Governance in Nigeria." *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 13, no. 1 (January 1, 2008): 110–133.
- Ojo, Olatunji. "Slavery and Human Sacrifice in Yorubaland: Ondo, c. 1870–94." *The Journal of African History* 46, no. 3 (2009): 379–404.
- Okolo, Chukwudum. "The Traditional African and Christian Values: Dimensions of Dialogal Encounter." *Afer* 29, no. 2 (1987): 81–93
- Okon, Etim E. "African World-View and the Challenge of Witchcraft." *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* 2, no. 10 (2012), 68–76.
- Okorochoa, Cyril. "The Meaning of Salvation: An African Perspective." In *Emerging Voices in Global Christian Theology*. Edited by William Dyrness, 59–92. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994.

- Olademo, Oyeronke. "Religion and Women's Sexuality in Africa: The Intersection of Power and Vulnerability." In *Women and New and Africana Religions*. Edited by Lillian Ashcraft-Eason, Darnise C. Martin, and Oyeronke Olademo, 191–206. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2010.
- Oladipo, Caleb. *The Development of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Yoruba (African) Indigenous Christian movement*. New York: Peter Lang, 1996.
- Oladosu, Olusegun A. "Ancestral Veneration in the Religious Expression of the Indigenous Aladura Churches." *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 17, no. 2 (January 1, 2012): 159–171.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Ethics and Judgement: A Panacea for Human Transformation in Yoruba Multireligious Society," *Asia Journal of Theology* 26, no. 1 (April, 2012): 88–104.
- Olajubu, Oyeronke. "Seeing through a Woman's Eye: Yoruba Religious Tradition and Gender Relations." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 20, no. 1 (Spring, 2004): 41–60.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003.
- Olarewaju, Samuel. "Efficacy of Prayer in the Blood of Christ in Contemporary African Christianity." *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 22, no. 1 (2003): 31–49.
- Oluwole, Sophie. "The Rational Basis of Yoruba Ethical Thinking." *The Nigerian Journal of Philosophy* 4-5, nos. 1&2 (1984–1985): 14–25.
- Olsen, Jørn Henrik. "Contextualized Christology in Tropical Africa?" *Svensk Missionstidskrift* 85, no. 3-4 (January 1, 1997): 247–267.
- Olukoya, Daniel K. *Disgracing Water Spirits*. Lagos: Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, 2012.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Your Foundation and Your Destiny*. Lagos: Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, 2011.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Seventy Sermons to Preach to Your Destiny*. Lagos: Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, 2010.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Praying by the Blood of Jesus*. Lagos: Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, 2010.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "Power Must Change Hands Messages, Jan-Dec. 2010." MP3 Messages produced by The Battle Cry Christian Tape Ministry, 2010.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Prayer Passport to Crush Oppression*. Lagos: Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, 2006.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Dealing with Evil Powers of Your Father's House*. Lagos: The Battle Cry Christian Ministries, 2002.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Prayer Rain*. Lagos: Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, 1999.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Deliverance from Spirit Husband and Spirit Wife*. Lagos: The Battle Cry Christian Ministries, 1999.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Violent Prayers to Disgrace Stubborn Problems*. Lagos: Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, 1999.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Dealing with Unprofitable Roots*. Lagos: TBCCM, 1999.
- Olukoya, Shade. *When Your Destiny is Under Attack*. Lagos: Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, 2005.
- Olupona, Jacob K. *City of 201 Gods: Ile-Ife in Time, Space and the Imagination*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Study of Yoruba Religious Tradition." *Numen* 40. No. 3 (Sep., 1993): 240–273.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "New Religious Movements in Contemporary Nigeria." *Journal of Religious Thought* 46, no. 1 (June 1, 1989): 53–68.
- Olusola, Ajibade G. "Animals in Traditional Worldview of the Yoruba," *Electronic Journal of Folklore* 30 (2005): 155-172; available from <https://www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol30/olusala.pdf>; accessed November 13, 2015.
- Omobola, Odejobi. "Influence of Yoruba Culture in Christian Religion," *International Journal of Social Sciences & Education* 4, no. 3 (2014): 584–594.
- Omoyajowo, Joseph A. "The Role of Women in African Traditional Religion." In *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society*. Edited by Jacob K Olupona, 73-80. New York: Paragon House, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Cherubim and Seraphim: The History of an African Independent Church*. New York: NOK Publishers, 1982.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Aladura Churches in Nigeria since Independence." In *Christianity in Independent Africa*. Edited by Edward Fasholé-Luke et al., 96-110. London: Indiana University Press, 1978.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Concept of Man in Africa." In *Religion, Morality, and Population Dynamics*, 68-77. Legon, Ghana: Population Dynamics Programme, University of Ghana, 1977.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Human Destiny, Personal Rites and Sacrifices in African Traditional Religion." *Journal of Religious Thought* 30, no. 1 (March 1, 1973): 5-15.
- Onyinah, Opoku. "Contemporary 'Witchdemonology' in Africa." *International Review of Mission* 93, nos. 370/371 (Jul./Oct., 2004): 330-345.
- Opefeyitimi, Ayo. *Women in Yoruba Culture*. Ibadan: Penthouse Publications, 2009.
- Orobator, Agbonkhianmeghe. "Ethics Brewed in an African Pot." *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 31, no. 1 (Spring/Summer, 2011): 3-16.
- Oshun, C. O. "Healing Practices among Aladura Pentecostals: An Intercultural Study." *Missionalia* 28, nos. 2-3 (August/November, 2000): 242-252.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Spirits and Healing in a Depressed Economy: The Case of Nigeria," *Mission Studies* 15-1, no.29 (1998): 32-52.
- Oyelade, E. O. "Evil in Yoruba Religion and Culture." In *Evil and the Response of World Religion*. Edited by William Cenkner, 157-169. St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 1997.
- Oyeshile, Olatunji. "Religious and Secular Origins of Morality within the Yoruba Framework: Implication for Man and Society." *Prajñâ Vihâra* 8, no. 1 (January-June 2007): 82-99.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Morality and Its Rationale: The Yoruba Example." *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies* 11 & 12 (2002): 90-98.
- Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Systematic Theology, Volume 2*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Systematic Theology, Volume 3*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997.
- Parratt, J. *Reinventing Christianity: African Christian Theology Today*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

- Paris, Peter J. *The Spirituality of African Peoples: The Search for a Common Moral Discourse*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995.
- Parrinder, George. *Witchcraft: A Critical Study of the Belief in Witchcraft from the Records of Witch Hunting in Europe Yesterday and Africa Today*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1958.
- Pattison, E. Mansell. "Psychosocial Interpretations of Exorcism." In *Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion: An Anthropological Study of the Supernatural*. Edited by Arthur C. Lehmann and James E. Myers, 200-213. Alto: CA: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1985.
- Pearce, Tola Olu. "She Will Not Be Listened to in Public: Perceptions among the Yoruba of Infertility and Childlessness in Women." *Reproductive Health Matters* 7, no.13 (1999): 69–79.
- Pearson, Jo. "Resisting Rhetorics of Violence: Women, Witches and Wicca." *Feminist Theology* 18, no. 2 (January 2010): 141–159
- Peel, J. D. Y. "Gender in Yoruba Religious Change." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 32, no. 2 (May, 2002): 136–166.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Christianization of African Society: Some Possible Models." In *Christianity in Independent Africa*. Edited by Edward Fasholé-Luke, Richard Gray, Adrian Hastings and Godwin Tasie, 443-454. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1978.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Aladura: A Religious Movement among the Yoruba*. London: Oxford University Press, 1968.
- Phelps, J. "Black Spirituality." In *Spiritual Tradition for the Contemporary Church*. Edited by Robin Mass and Gabriel O'Donnell. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990.
- Plancke, Carine. "The Spirit's Wish: Possession Trance and Female Power among the Punu of Congo-Brazzaville." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 41, no. 4 (January, 2011): 366–395.
- Plantinga, Alvin. *Warranted Christian Belief*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Pobee, John S., and Gabriel Ositelu. *African initiatives in Christianity: The Growth, Gifts and Diversities of Indigenous African Churches: A Challenge to the Ecumenical Movement*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Toward an African Theology*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1979.
- Prince, Raymond. "Yoruba Image of the Witch." *The Journal of Mental Science* 107 (1961): 795–805.
- Quarmyne, Maakor. "Witchcraft: A Human Rights Conflict between Customary/ Traditional Laws and the Legal Protection of Women in Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa." *William & Mary Journal of Women and the Law* 17, no. 2 (2011): 475–507.
- Ray, Benjamin C. "Aladura Christianity: A Yoruba Religion." *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 23, Fasc. 3 (Aug., 1993), pp. 266–291
- Reed, Rodney, and Gift Mtukwa. "Christ Our Ancestor: African Christology and the Danger of Contextualization." *Wesleyan Theological Journal*. Spring (April, 2010): 144–163.
- Redeemed Christian Church of God, Our History, <https://trccg.org/rccg/who-we-are/history/>, accessed on November 26, 2015
- Reid, David. "Japanese Christians and the Ancestors." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 16, no. 1 (Dec. 1989): 259–283.
- Renee, Elisha. "Fundamentals of Fertility: Cosmology and Conversion in a Southwestern Nigerian Town," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 8, no. 3 (September, 2002): 551–569.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Water, Spirits, and Plain White Cloth: The Ambiguity of Things in Bunu Social Life," *Man. New Series*. 26, no. 4 (Dec., 1991): 709–722.
- Reyburn, William D. "Sickness, Sin, and the Curse: The Old Testament and the African Church." *Practical Anthropology* 7, no. 5 (1960): 217–222.
- Rickaby, Joseph. *Of God and His Creatures: An Annotated Translation of the Summa Contra Gentiles of St Thomas Aquinas*. Electronic version: The Catholic Primer, 2015.
- Ro, Young-chan "Ancestor Worship: From the Perspective of Korean Tradition." In *Ancestor Worship and Christianity in Korea: Studies in Asian Thought and Religion Volume 8*. Edited by Jung Young Lee, 7-19. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988.
- Rosen, Barbara. *Witchcraft in England, 1558–1618*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1969.



- Russell, Jeffery. *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (London: Cornell University Press, 1984)
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity*. London: Cornell University Press, 1977.
- Salami, Y. K. "Predestination and the Metaphysics of Identity: A Yoruba (African) Case Study," *África: Revista do Centro de Estudos Africanos* 24-26 (2002-2005): 211–223.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Pre-destination, Freedom and Responsibility: A Case in Yoruba Moral Philosophy." *Research in Yoruba Language and Literatures* 7 (1996): 5–14.
- Sarpong, Peter. "Aspects of an African World-view, in *Religion, Morality, and Population Dynamics*. Edited by John S. Pobee. Legon, 58–67. Ghana: University of Ghana Population Dynamics Programme, 1974.
- Savrants, Demosthenes. *The Satanizing of Woman: Religion Versus Sexuality*. Translated from the German by Martin Ebon. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1974
- Schiltz, Marc. "A Yoruba Tale of Marriage, Magic, Misogyny and Love." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 32, no. 3 (Aug., 2002), 335–365.
- Schmidt, Gregor. *Evil and Salvation in African Religion and Christianity*. Minnesota: Maryknoll Institute of African Studies of Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, 2006.
- Scott, Edward. "Witches, Wise, Weak or Wicked Women." *Journal of Religion and Health* 15, no. 2 (Apr., 1976): 136–139.
- Setiloane, G. "How the Traditionalist Worldview Persists in the Christianity of the South-Tswana." In *Christianity in Independent Africa*. Edited by E. Fasholé-Luke, 389–401. London: Rex Collings, 1978.
- Sheils, Dean. "The Great Ancestors Are Watching: A Cross-Cultural Study of Superior Ancestral Religion." *Sociological Analysis* 41, no. 3 (Autumn, 1980): 247–257.
- Shorter, Aylward. *Jesus and the Witchdoctor: An Approach to Healing and Wholeness*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *African Culture and the Christian Church*. New York: Orbis Books, 1974.
- Sidhom, Swailem. "The Concept of Sin in the African Context and its Application to the Theme 'Justice and Christian Responsibility based on Incarnation.'" *Communi Viatorum* 9, no. 4 (1966): 243–250.

- Smith, Daniel J. *A Culture of Corruption: Everyday Deception and Popular Discontent in Nigeria*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007.
- Smith Gerald W. "Determinism, Freedom and Responsibility." *Issues in Criminology* 3, no. 2 (1968): 183–194.
- Steadman, Lyle B., Craig T. Palmer and Christopher F. Tiller, "The Universality of Ancestor Worship." *Ethnology* 35, no. 1 (Winter, 1996): 63–76.
- Steel, Carlos. "Does Evil Have a Cause? Augustine's Perplexity and Thomas's Answer." *The Review of Metaphysics* 48, no. 2 (Dec., 1994): 251–273.
- Stevens, Phillips, Jr. "Women's Aggressive Use of Genital Power in Africa." *Transcultural Psychiatry* 43, no. 4 (December, 2006): 592–599.
- Sundermeier, Theo. *The Individual and Community in African Traditional Religions*. Hamburg: Die Deutsche Bibliothek - CIP Einheitsaufnahme, 1998.
- Swales, J. K. "Witchcraft and the Status of Women: A Comment." *The British Journal of Sociology* 30, no. 3 (Sept., 1979): 349–358.
- Swanson, Guy. *The Birth of the Gods: The Origin of Primitive Beliefs*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960.
- Tanner, Kathryn. "Human Freedom, Human Sin, and God the Creator." In *The God Who Acts: Philosophical and Theological Explorations*. Edited by T Tracy, 111–135. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994.
- Tatje, Terrence and Francis Hsu. "Variations in Ancestor Worship Beliefs and their Relation to Kinship." *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 25, no. 2 (Summer, 1969): 153–172.
- Taylor, John. *The Primal Vision*. London: SCM Press, 1963.
- Tebbe, Nelson. "Witchcraft and Statecraft: Liberal Democracy in Africa." *Georgetown Law Journal* 96, no. 1 (November 2007): 183–236.
- Tempels, Placide. *Bantu Philosophy*. Orlando, FL: HBC Publishing, 1959.
- Tienou, Tite. "The Common Roots of African Theology and African Philosophy." In *Issues in African Christian Theology*. Edited by Samuel Ngewa, Mark Shaw, and Tite Tienou, 38–48. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1998.
- Togarasei, Lovemore. "The Pentecostal Gospel of Prosperity in African Contexts of Poverty: An Appraisal." *Exchange* 40, no. 4 (January 1, 2011): 336–350.

- Treat, Jeremy. *The Crucified King: Atonement and Kingdom in Biblical and Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.
- Turaki, Yusufu. *Foundations for African Traditional Religion and Worldview*. Nairobi: Word Alive, 2006.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Christianity and the Gods: A Method in Theology* (South Africa: Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir CHO, 1999).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Tribal Gods of Africa: Ethnicity, Racism, Tribalism and the Gospel of Christ* Jos, Nigeria: Crossroads Media Services, 1997.
- Turner, Harold W. "The Contribution of Studies on Religion in Africa to Western Religious Studies." In *New Testament Christianity for Africa and the World: Essays in Honour of Harry Sawyerr*, 169–178. London: SPCK, 1974.
- Udogame, Afeosemime U. "Yoruba Cultural Matrix." In *Celestial Church of Christ: The Politics of Cultural Identity in a West African Prophetic-Charismatic Movement*. Edited by Afeosemime Udogame, 107-129. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 1999.
- Udokang, Emmanuel. "Traditional Ethics and Social Order: A Study in African Philosophy." *Cross-Cultural Communication* 10, no. 6 (2014): 266–270.
- Umoh, Dominic. "Superstition and Syncretism: Setbacks to Authentic Christian Practice in Africa," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention* 2, no. 7 (July 2013), 32–40.
- United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. *Greening Africa's Industrialization: Economic Report on Africa*. Addis Ababa: Economic Commission for Africa, 2016.
- Van der Walt, B. J. "Morality in Africa: Yesterday and Today: The Reasons for the Contemporary Crisis." In *Die Skriflig* 37, no. 1 (2003): 51–71.
- Van Rinsum, Henk J. "'Wipe the Blackboard Clean': Academization and Christianization-Siblings in Africa?" *African Studies Review* 15, no. 2, Special Issue: African Universities in Crisis and the Promotion of a Democratic Culture (Sept., 2002): 27–48.
- Vatican, The. *Religions: Fundamental Themes for a Dialogistic Understanding*. The Vatican, 1970.
- Vicens, Leigh. "Divine Determinism, Human Freedom, and the Consequence Argument." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 71, no. 2 (April, 2021): 145–155.

- Wagner C. Peter and Joseph Thompson, eds. *Out of Africa*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2004.
- Walls, Andrew F. "The Gospel as the Prisoner and Liberator of Culture." *Missionalia* 10, no. 3 (November 1982): 93–105.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Africa and Christian Identity." *Mission Focus: Current Issues*. Edited by Wilbert R. Shenk and Arthur F. Glasser, 212–221. Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press, 1980.
- Wanamaker, Charles A. "Jesus the Ancestor: Reading the Story of Jesus from an African Christian Perspective," *Scriptura* 63 (1997): 281–298.
- Weber, Hans Ruedi. "Christ's Victory over the Satanic Powers." *Study Encounter* 2, no. 3: (1966): 160–165.
- Weber, Joseph. "Christ's Victory over the Powers." In *Above Every Name: The Lordship of Christ and Social Systems*, 66-82. Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1980.
- Weihong, Luo. *Christianity in China*. Translated by Zhu Chengming. China: China Intercontinental Press, 2005.
- Wiredu, Kwesi. "The Moral Foundations of African Culture." In *Philosophy from Africa*. Edited by P. H. Coetzee and A. P. J. Roux, 306-316. Halfway House: International Thompson Publishing (SA), 1998.
- Wiredu, Kwesi. "Morality and Religion in Akan Thought. In *Philosophy and Culture*. Edited by O. Odera and D. A. Wasola, 7–19. Kenya: Bookwise, 1983.
- Wright, John H. "Problem of Evil, Mystery of Sin and Suffering." *Communio* 6, (1979): 140–156.
- Zahan, D. *The Religion, Spirituality, and Thought of Traditional Africa*. Translated by K. Ezra and L. Martin. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.
- Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops', Conference. "Communion between the Living and the Dead: Christian Response to Spirit Possession." *Afer* 29, no. 5 (October 1987): 309–314.