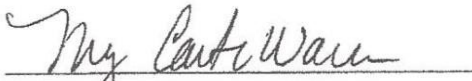# Igbo Culture and the Irish Spiritan Evangelization:

Exploring a Post-Colonial Igbo Catholic Cultural Identity and Spirituality for the Twenty-first Century and Beyond
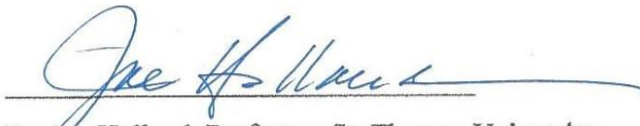
By: Fidelis Nwankwo, M.A.

May 26, 2016

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Doctor of Philosophy in

Practical Theology

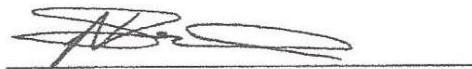St. Thomas University

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Igbo Culture and the Irish Spiritan Evangelization: Exploring a Post-Colonial Igbo
Catholic Cultural Identity and Spirituality for the Twenty-first Century and Beyond

Fidelis Nwankwo
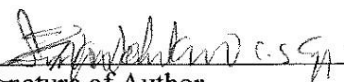
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Abstract

This dissertation explores and articulates theologically the postcolonial intercultural encounter between Igbo and Irish cultures as the Irish culture was informed by the mission theology and spirituality of Spiritan religious missionary Congregation in the 19th Century. Within this encounter, the theological concept of *Namasté* played a dominant positive role in the Irish Spiritan evangelization of the Igbos. This intercultural encounter which elicits effects experienced within the Igbo Catholicism, the Nigerian Spiritans as well as their formation process, and pastoral and ongoing personal formation, necessitated culturally and theologically, the questions of a *sui generis* cultural identity and a sustainable spirituality. Prior to this encounter, both cultural societies have their identifying cultural characteristics and spirituality inherent from their cultural identity. Viewed through the prism of contemporary society, this spirituality inherent from Igbo culture and informed by Roman Catholicism of the "Irish kind" – rooted in the Augustinian tradition, – as experienced, is deemed unsustainable. The theological method of pastoral circle root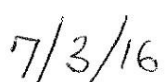ed in See-Judge-Act and from an involved researcher perspective was utilized in designing the research, as well as analyzing, assessing, reflecting, and formulating adequate pastoral plan that responds to the contextual situation and challenges. The research plan offers among others, three major important theological focal paths to the challenges of *sui generis* cultural identity and sustainable spirituality: – Going back to roots and origins, appropriation of the two books of revelations as two sides of the same coin, and a constant renewal for relevance and sustainability. Despite the challenges of this pastoral plan, our origin and spirituality are ours to reclaim and preserve. Albeit, as it is better to light a candle than to curse darkness, the future of hope

holds and burns brighter for Igbo Catholicism, Nigerian Spiritans, and pastoral and

ongoing personal formation within the Igbo cultural milieu.

Acknowledgements

It is the grace of God that enabled me to start this Ph.D. program, and so, I remain ever grateful that it is God's grace that has led me so far. I remain also grateful to Dr. Mary Carter-Waren who did initiate, paved the way and encouraged me to begin this program, and at the same time, doubles as my dissertation committee chair. The same thanks also go to other members of my dissertation committee – Professor Joe Holland and Dr. Nathaniel Samuel who willingly accepted to accompany me on this journey and devoted their time to reading and correcting my work. I also acknowledge with thanks the unquantifiable efforts of Professor Bryan Froehle, the Ph.D. Practical Theology program director, Msgr. Terence Hogan, the dean of the School of Theology and Ministry, Dr. Ted Whapham, Dr. Ondina Cortes, Dr. Jennifer Kryszak, and staff members: Ms. Cynthia Rose and Cary Trujillo. I wish also to thank Dr. Jonathan Roach for accepting to assist with the editorial work, Jonathan Best, the library staff, and my colleagues at St. Thomas University: Candace Smith, Robert Pennington, Bryan Allen-Demeritte, and Pianapue Early for their encouragement.

I could not have gone this far without my family and friends: Ochendo Nwanyi, Monica, Jane, Emma, Cee, Benjy, Stanley, Inno, Eugene, Luke, Nkiru, Juliet, Esther, Uju, Sr. Chetachi, Fr. Uzoma, my nieces, and nephews for their prayers, support, and encouragement. I remain also grateful to the Spiritan Congregation at large and in particular, the Spiritan confreres here in Miami – Frs. Francis Akwue, Sam Muodiaju, and Alex Ekechukwu – who have been of immense help to me throughout this period. Finally, I remain grateful to all my friends, well-wishers, and all who in one way or the other have been of very tremendous support and assistance to me throughout this journey.

May you all be blessed by the good Lord. Eternal rest grant unto my dad – Ojinnaka –

whose support and encouragement are felt from far away our heavenly home land.

Dedication

I wish to dedicate this dissertation to all who hold and work for the better development and formation of the human person, my family, friends, religious Congregation, and in memory of my father – Chief Innocent Muoghalu Nwankwo "Ojinnaka."

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

It is felt more and more hardly that any trait of culture can be understood when taken out of its general setting.[1] – Franz Boas

All theology is fundamental practical theology as theologian Don Browning argues, "We never really move from theory to practice even when it seems we do. Theory is always embedded in practice."[2] According to James Woodward and Stephen Pattison, practical theology is "a place where religious beliefs, tradition and practice meets contemporary experiences, questions and actions and conducts a dialogue that is mutually enriching, intellectually critical, and practically transforming."[3] Drawing from some scholars, it is a branch of theology[4] that is both a method[5] and an academic discipline[6] that uses both the lived and contemporary Christian experience as basis to reflect critically on religious beliefs, culture, Christian scripture, and tradition. This critical reflection is engaged through the lenses of social sciences' descriptive and empirical method[7] that is practically transforming. The fundamental concept here and emphasis in

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[1] Franz Boas, "Introduction" in *Patterns of Culture*, Ruth Benedict (New York: Mariner Books, 2005), xxii.

[2] Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 9.

[3] James Woodward and Stephen Pattison, eds., *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 7.

[4] David Tracy divides theology into three parts: Fundamental theology, Systematic theology, and Practical theology. David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981), 55.

[5] Whiteheads describe method of theological reflection as a process by which we pursue a communal discernment which begins with listening, moves to assertion, and then toward practical pastoral response. James Whitehead and Evelyn Whitehead, *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1995), 13.

[6] Duncan B. Forrester, *Truthful Action: Explorations in Practical Theology* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 2000), 34.

[7] Richard Osmer understands descriptive-empirical task as one of the practical theological methods. *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdmans 2008), 31.

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practical theology lies on experience which is at the heart of every theological

conversation. Hence Pattison explains that, "there is no such thing as a view from

nowhere, a text without a context, subtext or pretext, or an essay without an author

formed of dust and social forces."[8] This key concept gives force and credence to the

individual voice. Through thick descriptive method practical theology seeks to identify

and bring individual and unrecognized voices and experiences to the forefront. In this

chapter, I will present the context and biases for my study based on my lived experience.

This context begins with the thick description of myself, which forms the basis for my

major thesis argument – cultural identity and spirituality are products of one or group's

root and context. My primary resources are drawn from my lived experience, which is

fundamental in practical theology, and the following texts: *A Fundamental Practical

Theology; Practical Theology: An Introduction; Models of Contextual Theology; Truth

and Method; The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria; Africa and the New Face of

Mission;* and *In the Footsteps of Our Founders: A History of the Spiritan Province of

Nigeria.*

Personal History and Experiences

As one's voice and lived experiences are fundamental and foundational in

practical theology, so also context provides the necessary pathway in the construction of

local theology.[9] My personal history and experiences have become of interest, beneficial,

and also foundational not only in my work as a practical theologian, but also

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[8] Stephen Pattison, *The Challenge of Practical Theology* (London, England: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2007), 13.

[9] Bevans outlines the importance of context as the necessary foundation for the formulation of theology. It also forms the lens for which interpretation, knowledge and understanding take place. See Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (New York: Orbis, 1992), 5.

transformative in my personal life, formation, and spirituality as a human person. I will discuss my personal history and experiences under the following headings, (–some of which will be in summary form as broader treatment of them will be in the following chapters–): family background, academic formation, Igbo culture, Igbo religious setting, Irish evangelization of the Igbos, Irish and Igbo Catholicism as integral part of Roman Catholicism, Spiritan religious missionary formation, spiritual formation, and present experience in the United States.

Family Background

I was born and raised in Igbo traditional culture[10] of southeastern Nigeria in the continent of Africa to a considerably large Igbo Catholic religious family of eight children: three females and five males. I am the fifth child and the second son. My parents were respectful, loving, seasoned disciplinarians, and hardworking who earned their living through trading. As disciplinarians, they taught their children respect and care for elders and people in positions of authority, care and hospitality for the other and visitor, respect for the universe, and cultural practices of our African traditional heritage. In addition, they taught us to do the right thing and avoid wrong. At the end of the day's activity we gathered together as a family where we evaluated the activities of the day, and my parents pointed out to us areas of improvement for future actions. Among other African cultures, Igbo culture is more of an oral culture as opposed to a literary one. When sharing, stories are told by our parents to encapsulate and transmit the cultural tradition, practices, values, and morality. As low income and petty traders, they instill in us the idea of hard working with the proverbial saying that *aka aja aja n'ebute onu*

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[10] Igbo (plural Igbos) means any of the following: people, tribe, culture, or language. Igbos occupy five states in the southeastern part of Nigeria forming a major tribe in the country. Igbo culture is androcentric. This culture forms my context for this study.

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nmanu nmanu "dirty hands bring about an oily mouth." This is the cultural way of indoctrinating and passing on the tradition and understanding that there is dignity in labor. Hence the idea of dependency has no place in my parents' dictionary. With this training and formation, I grew up in the wisdom and tradition of Igbo culture and that of becoming industrious.

Academic Formation

Formal academic education was not prevalent during my parents' time and as such, they had no opportunity of formal education except for my mother who attempted, but had to stop after her second year in the then British standard of education called "standard six." During my own upbringing, formal academic education has become the order of the day. However, with my other siblings, my parents made sure that we all had the opportunity of formal academic education despite the cost. This definitive stand of my parents was not without stress, who had to make ends meet with the meager resources from their petty trading doubling with the fact that tuition is also very expensive. At the age of six, while living with my parents, I began my initial journey into formal academic education in an all-male school. This initial formal education was a six-year program. Midway into the six year initial education program, I had to relocate to another school in a different locality where I lived with my oldest sister who was a teacher by profession. This time, the school was a mixed school of girls and boys. It offered me the opportunity of a co-education. The relocation was not an easy experience, as I had to leave my parents and other siblings to a new and distant environment. At first, I enjoyed it as I gained respect from my peers because of the privilege of living with a teacher. As time passed, I was then left with the choice of adjusting and adapting to the new reality,

situation, and environment. My experience at this stage was initially that of excitement and later lonesome.

At the end of the six-year initial formal primary education, I found myself in higher education, a five-year program. This secondary level of education became a turning point in my life. The environment of this secondary education was different from the first, as living with grandparents was a common practice at that time. Knowing my family background and the fact that some of my siblings went through this same experience, I made some adjustments to fit into the new reality and environment. It was not an easy task because the domestic workload was such that there was little or no time for academic and social life put together. However, one of the advantages of this environment in comparison to the second part of my primary education was the occasional opportunity of associating and recreating with my peer group. The experiences of hardworking, being self-sufficient, and satisfied with what I have were also part of the advantages of this period.

At the end of my five-year secondary education, I had the luxury of taking a year off from academic education for serious reflection and discernment. After the one year of reflection, I continued my tertiary academic and religious formation in philosophy and theology, undergraduate and graduate levels respectively, in the formation houses of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit.[11] The quest for academic knowledge continues to this point of studying practical theology at St. Thomas University, Miami, Florida.

Igbo Culture

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[11] This formation in the Congregation of the Holy Spirit is in preparation for the Catholic missionary priesthood.

Igbo culture is proverbial and ritual laden. Its philosophy, theology, and spiritual life are heavily based on the wisdom and experiences of past generations. One of the proverbial wisdom laden sayings is *onye mere ihe nna ya mere, emeghi ajo ihe* "whomever does what the father did has done nothing wrong." This proverb emphasizes the importance of beginnings and tradition,[12] suggesting that the origin of every person is anchored either to somewhere or in something else.

Igbo people take pride in their personal identity as anchored in the community existence. In this way, the community takes precedence over the individual hence an important fundamental and theological saying "I am, because we are"[13] is lived out within Igbo community. The common good takes priority over the individual's and the individual's good takes its cue from the community's. *Onye huru nwa zua nwa maka na nwa bu nwa ora* "it takes a village to raise a child because the child belongs to the society," stresses the communitarian nature of Igbo society. It is a culture of strictness to tradition and rituals, leaving no room for mediocrity.

Originally, Igbos earn their living through farming and trading on agricultural products. The farming here is that of direct labor as opposed to mechanized farming. This accounts for among other reasons, of embracing polygamy as it affords the family the opportunity of having enough human resource to work on the family's large acres of farmlands. A family's wealth is determined not only by the large acres of landed property, but also the ability to care for the large number of children who work on the

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[12] Terrence Tilley describes tradition (a complex reality) as a set of enduring practices that are necessarily historically embodied and inculturated. Terrence Tilley, *Inventing Catholic Tradition* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2000), 45.

[13] Igbo culture does not negate the identity of the individual however; it seeks to emphasize the priority of the community over the individual as a way of enhancing community and preserving its values. In upholding this position, Igbo culture is aware of the fact that separate individuals constitute the society.

farms. Gradually, with industrial development, lands became limited and people started

giving up farming for trading not only in agricultural products, but also in industrial

products.

Since Igbos live in community, the priority of the community is expressed and

emphasized over and above that of the individual. In addition, their political structure

parallels their pattern of living. Hierarchy of power is prevalent among the Igbos with the

town having the superior power over the village down to the clan, extended family, and

family. The least in rank is the court of first instance with reference to issues.

Igbo Religious Setting

The Igbo belief system views the universe as a sacred entity created by God with

spiritual and religious values and dimensions. This universe and all that dwell in it are

regarded as good, sacred, and beautiful since they are all created by God who is

omnipotent, omniscience, good, sacred, beautiful, and cannot create anything that

contradicts the essence of God's being. The creator called *Chineke* translates "Spirit who

creates" is incomprehensible and awe inspiring. John Mbiti stressing this understanding

of the Universe as sacred and intimately connected with God, points out that:

> According to African [Igbo] peoples, man [woman] lives in a religious universe,
>
> so that natural phenomena and objects are intimately associated with God. They
>
> not only originate from Him but also bear witness to Him. Man's [woman's]
>
> understanding of God is strongly coloured [sic] by the universe of which man
>
> [woman] is himself [herself] a part. Man [woman] sees in the universe not only
>
> the imprint but the reflection of God; and whether that image is marred or clearly

focused and defined, it is nevertheless an image of God, the only image known in traditional African societies.[14]

The creator who lives in the sky, beyond the earth and beyond the physical reach of humans, maintains the universe through some deities or divinities called *Chi* who oversee the activities in the universe. These deities are in themselves not creators, but are in communal relationship with the creator. They are responsible to the creator, and attend to human beings in their relationship with the creator. The creator through these deities or divinities directs all the affairs in the universe, rewards goodness, and punishes wrong doing. The creator establishes order in creation and thus human beings try to maintain that established order by the creator. As Mbiti explains, "it is considered that the universe is orderly. As long as this order is not upset there is harmony."[15] The existence of harmony between the universe and humanity is maintained by keeping away from breaking the taboos and observing the dos and the do not's within the society, and the universe at large. The universe is also considered as a structured system of cause and effect hence reward for good deeds and punishment for evil deeds. This understanding presupposes the existence of both good and evil paralleling each other. Thus from the religious and spiritual perspective, the Igbos understand the creator as God of instant justice. The Igbo religious setting is also anchored in some religious belief system, like the belief in ancestors, moral goodness, among others.

Irish Evangelization of the Igbos

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[14] John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1989), 48.
[15] John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1991), 40.

The Irish were tribal people who have deep respect for mother earth and nature. They were mainly farmers who depend on the product of the ground for their living and well noted for their potato produce, which required little labor and can grow on different types of land. Good weather and soil means rich harvest and as such are committed to the preservation of the land. The Irish society with the native Gaelic language parallels the Igbo society where, as Lisa Bitel explains, "the network of relationships that linked one family to another formed the building blocks of Irish society. The family was the basic landholding unit, producing the multiple heirs who caused so much trouble at elite levels. A person's identity derived entirely from his or her kin. Kinless men were landless outlaws."[16] By implication, the individual's identity is guaranteed as a result of the group's identity.

The Igbos owe their Catholic faith to the selfless, untiring efforts, and missionary spirit of the Irish Holy Ghost (Spiritan) missionaries. Catholic faith can be described as arriving late in Igbo land. The early Irish Catholic missionaries arrived in Igbo land around 1893. Prior to their arrival, the Protestant missionaries of the Anglican Communion (CMS) enjoyed the monopoly of evangelization in Igbo land, as they arrived as early as 1857 led by Rev. Samuel Ajai Crowther in the company of Rev. John Christopher Taylor.[17] Two Roman Catholic missionaries who arrived in Igbo land in 1883 from the Western Ecclesiastical Province[18] of Nigeria went back since Igbo land is

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[16] Lisa M. Bitel, *Isle of the Saints: Monastic Settlement and Christian Community in Early Ireland* (London, England: Cornell University Press, 1990), 6.

[17] V. A. Nwosu records the Anglican missionaries as arriving Onitsha (the heart of Igbo land in the early years) and the surrounding towns on July 26, 1857 and made considerable inroads to occupying the following areas: Asaba (1874), Alonso (1877), Abo (1883), and Obosi (1883). A. O. Makozi ed., *The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria* (Lagos: Macmillan Nigeria Publishers Limited, 1982), 39.

[18] Ecclesiastical Provinces in the Catholic tradition are for juridical and administrative purposes. Lagos is the western ecclesiastical province from which these first Catholic Missionaries (SMA - Society of African Mission also known as White Fathers) arrived.

beyond their jurisdiction. December 5, 1885 marks the arrival of four Catholic

missionaries of French origin, two priests – Frs. Joseph Lutz and Horne, and two

religious brothers – Hermas and Jean-Gotto, of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit to

Onitsha. As one would expect, the arrival of these Catholic missionaries brought about

competition between both missionaries. As the Catholic missionaries were not of British

origin, they were treated with suspicion in such a way that they had to sign a treaty that

their mission will have no political or commercial interest. For some reasons, including

political and from Propaganda Fide, the French missionaries could not make it in the

English speaking British colony of Igbo land and gradually faded away.

Administratively, a decision was reached to send in English speaking missionaries to

"Lower Niger" including the location of Igbo land. On the other hand, it is also important

to point out, as Charles Ebelebe does, that the "scramble to reach 'pagan' souls and

nations ahead of the Protestants would be a driving force in the Irish Spiritan missionary

apostolate in Igbo land."[19]

The first Irish Spiritan missionary to Igbo land was Br. David (Michael) Doran

who arrived in 1893, followed by Fr. Joseph Shanahan (later Bishop)[20] who gave the

missionary activity in Igbo land a new phase and other subsequent missionaries. Despite

the apparent success recorded by the early French missionaries, the arrival of the Irish

Spiritans to Igbo land signaled a change in missionary strategy. The change in strategy

yielded positive fruits in the evangelization ministry. One of the benefits of practical

theology method is to offer appropriate solutions to challenging pastoral situations, after

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[19] Charles Ebelebe, *Africa and the New Face of Mission* (New York: University Press, 2009), 67.
[20] Casimir Eke records the arrival of the first Irish Spiritan missionaries to Igbo land in 1893 after a "failed" missionary activity in Igbo land by the French. Casimir Eke, *In the Footsteps of Our Founders: A History of the Spiritan Province of Nigeria [1953-2002]* (Onitsha: SNAAP Press, 2006), 96.

an adequate assessment of the situation. Joseph Shanahan, drew from these practical theology skills in assessing the mission situation and arrived at appropriate pastoral response. His success in transforming the evangelization ministry in Igbo land as argued by Makozi, lay largely not only in his personality, but also in his:

> Vision and method as well as in the somewhat favourable [sic] environment in which he and his team of devoted missionary men and women laboured [sic]. The first advantage he had was one of hindsight. Monsignor Shanahan had studied the methods used by his predecessors and assessed their merits and demerits. He knew, therefore which method would prove more useful and successful. He took a deep interest in people's lives and aspirations and saw that they were already religious. He realized that what was needed was not a destruction of those religious values but a transformation of them into Christianity. This he tried to do. The method he chose as most effective was education.[21]

In addition to the establishment of schools, other methods used by the early missionaries include the redemption of slaves, care of the sick and destitute, and distribution of charities. "Their liturgy with its richly decorated altars and ornate vestments, [which] appealed to the people who by nature loved signs and actions,"[22] also contributed to the missionary success recorded by the Irish Spiritans. Naturally, people prefer to have options rather than confined to no option at all. The presence of these "late comers," - the Catholic missionaries to Igbo land afforded the people this opportunity of having alternatives. From this perspective, Makozi argues that, it "provided the people with an

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[21] A. O. Makozi, *History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria*, 42.
[22] A. O. Makozi, *History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria,* 40.

alternative for which they longed for, as well as satisfying the people's propensity for competition."[23]

Down the road of evangelization and missionary activities, the Irish Spiritan missionaries taught strict observance and decorum to religion, the culture of people's generosity to their priests, and the spirituality of detachment and disengagement as part of their Spiritan spirituality heritage. They also brought in the concept of the material world as sinful which includes the human body, and as such to be avoided and detached from. This concept is rooted in Augustinian theology and Jansenism. Contrary to the God of instant justice, which is native to the Igbos, they also brought in the idea of the God of mercy. I will give a brief description of the Irish and Igbo Catholic Churches as belonging to the Roman Catholic Church.

Irish and Igbo Catholicism as Integral Part of Roman Catholic Church

The Catholic Church has a very long history and tradition. Anchored in the apostolic tradition, it has a tradition dating back to over two thousand years. Its traditions like any other tradition changed, evolved, and experienced some sort of amenability in the course of time and history to what is currently in place today. This subsection is not an attempt to reproduce the history of Catholic religion or Christianity throughout the centuries. Rather, it aims to give a glimpse of the history of Catholicity as originally one entity anchored in Jesus Christ, concise historical development, and the source of division between the Western and Eastern Catholic Churches. As belonging to the Western Church otherwise known as the Latin or Roman Catholic Church, I will also explore the Latin Church – one out of the larger twenty-four Catholic Churches, as theologically influenced by the Augustinian tradition.

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[23] A. O. Makozi, *History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria,* 40.

Perusing through the history of Christianity dating back to the apostolic period, this religion (Catholic) was originally one entity with one faith, doctrine, and a unified leadership. Within the Catholic Church's historical development, and as one would envisage, within the contextual human society, frictions and disagreements are prominent. Christianity is not immune from such experience of schism and rift. The schism between the Churches of the East and West reached its crescendo in 1014 with "linguistic and cultural differences, as well as political events"[24] as contributing factors to the schism. In addition to these factors, the prominent factor was when the Patriarch of Constantinople, Michal I Cerularius, and the Papal Legate, Humbert of Silva Candida, exchanged mutual excommunications[25] that have since been revoked, by Rome and Constantinople in 1965. The year, 1054 was

> wrongly considered as the date of the schism (which had actually been developing over a period of time), was, in fact, an unsuccessful attempt at restoring relations, disintegrating as they were because of political competition in Italy between the Byzantines and the Germans and also because of disciplinary changes (enforced celibacy of the clergy, in particular) imposed by the reform movement that had been initiated by the monks of Cluny, France. Conciliatory efforts of Emperor Constantine Monomachus (reigned 1042-55) were powerless to overcome either the aggressive and uninformed attitudes of Frankish clergy, who were governing the Roman Church, or the intransigence of Byzantine patriarch Michael Cerularius (1043-58).[26]

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[24] Philip W. Goetz, ed., *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 15th ed., s.vv. "Eastern Orthodoxy."
[25] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 15th ed., s.vv. "Eastern Orthodoxy."
[26] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 15th ed., s.vv. "Eastern Orthodoxy."

However, the genesis of the schism began with the council of Constantinople in 381 as a result of disagreement in matters of doctrine and faith, which continued through the middle ages and reformation period. The Council of Constantinople (381) revised the Nicene Creed and defines the "teaching about the Holy Spirit into line with what it believed about the Son."[27] While affirming the divinity of the Holy Spirit, the Eastern Church holds unto a single procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father; the Western (Latin) Church also affirms the divinity of the Holy Spirit, but holds unto the Holy Spirit's double procession from the Father and the Son which in Latin language is represented as *ex Patre Filioque* meaning "from the Father and the Son" implying proceeding also from the Son. "What really divided East and West in their acrimonious and often unsavoury [sic] quarrel over the *filioque* was a fundamental difference of approach to the problem of the mystery of the triune Godhead. Naturally the leaders of Western Christianity, while fully accepting and teaching the doctrine of the double procession, were far too cautious and diplomatic to flaunt it as an official dogma in the face of Eastern theologians."[28] Constantinople (present-day Istanbul), "the centre [sic] of Eastern Christianity, was also the capital of Eastern Roman, or Byzantine, Empire, while Rome, after the barbarian invasions, fell under the influence of the Holy Roman Empire of the West, a political rival of Byzantium. In the West, theology remained under the prevailing influence of St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), while in the East doctrinal thought was shaped by Greek Fathers."[29] There is no doubt that there is also a political undertone to the schism between the East and the West as emperors wielded much power

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[27] J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds 3rd ed.* (New York: Longman Inc., 1985), 340.
[28] Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds,* 360.
[29] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 15th ed., s.vv. "Eastern Orthodoxy."

and control over the Church, including convoking councils within the time frame. The first council of Nicaea attests to this historical fact thus:

> The ecumenical council met a few months later, at Nicaea instead of Ancyra. According to the historian Socrates, its opening session was held on 20 May 325, but it has been shown that the true date was 19 June. The full discussion of the proceedings, with the many fascinating and often unanswerable problems which they raise, belongs rather to the field of Church history proper than to the study of creeds. Here it is sufficient to emphasize the point that Constantine's object in summoning the council (or, if it was already planned or at least in the air, in taking it over and enlarging its scope) was to consolidate the Church, which represented in his eyes the spiritual aspect of his empire, on the basis of the widest possible measure of doctrinal unity.[30]

The schism between the East and West was also, reflected in the acceptance of the ecumenical councils accepted by both. Over the Roman Catholic Church's historical period, twenty-one Councils from the first council of Nicaea (325) to Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) were held. Among these twenty-one Councils, the first seven: Nicaea I 325, Constantinople I 381, Ephesus 431, Chalcedon 451, Constantinople II 553, Constantinople III 680-81, and Nicaea II 787 convoked by Christian Roman Emperors, were recognized "by both East and West as ecumenical and authoritative."[31]

In addition to the dual procession of the Holy Spirit, the infallible authority of the Pope by the first Vatican council of 1870, widened the schism between the East and the West. The Western Church of Rome – Latin speaking Churches, hold unto the infallible

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[30] Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds,* 211.
[31] Jaroslav Pelikan, *Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 9.

teaching authority of the Pope while the Eastern Church – Greek speaking Churches, reject this view. However, the "theological differences could have been settled if the two areas of Christendom had not simultaneously developed different concepts of church authority. The growth of Roman primacy, based on the concept of the apostolic origin of the Church of Rome, was incompatible with the Eastern idea that the importance of certain local churches–Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and later Constantinople–could be determined only by their numerical and political significance and not by apostolic foundation."[32]

Eastern Catholic Church

With the division between the Eastern and the Western Churches apparent, both Catholic Churches are regarded as autonomous; maintaining their theology, spirituality, liturgies, and rituals as both Churches accept the spiritual and juridical authority of the Pope. Eastern Orthodoxy designates:

> The large body of Christians who follow the faith and practices that were defined by the first seven ecumenical councils. The word orthodox ("right believing") has traditionally been used, in the Greek-speaking Christian world, to designate communities, or individuals, who preserved the true faith (as defined by those councils), as opposed to those who were declared heretical. The official designation of the church in Eastern Orthodox liturgical or canonical texts is "the Orthodox Catholic Church." Because of the historical links of Eastern Orthodoxy with the Eastern Roman Empire and Byzantium (Constantinople), however, in English usage it is referred to as the "Eastern" or "Greek Orthodox" Church.[33]

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[32] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 15th ed., s.vv. "Eastern Orthodoxy."
[33] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 15th ed., s.vv. "Eastern Orthodoxy."

The Eastern Catholic Churches as *sui iuris* constitute twenty-three out of the twenty-four autonomous Catholic Churches in communion with the bishop of Rome. These twenty-three *sui iuris* Churches have five different liturgical traditions or rites: Alexandrian, Antiochian, Armenian, East Syrian, and Byzantine. Eastern liturgical celebration is one of the ways of knowing and keeping the religion alive. The liturgy is organized in such a way that it is emotionally, intellectually, and aesthetically appealing to human nature. Within the five liturgical traditions, the following Churches constitute these liturgical traditions: Alexandrian tradition made up of these Churches: Coptic Catholic Church, Cairo; Eritrean Catholic Church, Asmara; and Ethiopian Catholic Church, Addis Ababa. Antiochian or West Syrian tradition consisting of Maronite Church; Syriac Catholic Church; and Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. Armenian tradition (Armenian Catholic Church); East Syrian or Chaldean tradition consisting of the Chaldean Catholic Church and Syro-Malabar Catholic Church; and Constantinopolitan (Byzantine) tradition made up of the following Churches: Albanian Catholic Church; Belarusian Catholic Church; Bulgarian Greek Catholic Church; Byzantine Church of Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro; Greek Byzantine Catholic Church; Hungarian Greek Catholic Church; Italo-Albanian Catholic Church; Macedonian Catholic Church; Melkite Greek Catholic Church; Romanian Church United with Rome; Russian Catholic Church; Ruthenian Catholic Church; Slovak Catholic Church; and Ukrainian Catholic Church.[34] The Eastern Catholic Churches administer and share in the theology of the seven sacraments without an enforced clerical celibacy.

Roman (Western or Latin) Catholic Church

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[34] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 15th ed., s.vv. "Eastern Orthodoxy."

The Roman Catholic Church forms an integral part of the entire Catholic Church as the one remaining Church among the twenty-four Catholic Churches in full communion with the bishop of Rome. Roman Catholic Church also known as the Western or Latin Church with juridical or administrative office in Rome, embraces the Catholic Churches with the Latin rite. Its theology as already mentioned is influenced by St. Augustine of Hippo. Augustine (354 – 430), bishop of Hippo (from 390 to 430), considered an important and dominant figure in Western Catholic theology, was before his conversion to Christianity influenced by Manichaeism as a religion that appeals to his intellect. As a belief system, Manichaeism holds onto a materialistic dualistic view of creation, giving rise to the conflict between good and bad, light and darkness. From this point of view, the realm of materialism which is matter, is considered as illusion and evil, and consequently to be avoided. The real good lies in the immaterial or spiritual realm hence, Manichaeism is a religion where adherers are strictly ascetic and celibate; and as such, marriage from this religious perspective "was permitted as a concession to human weakness."[35] Manichaean ascetic principle of reality as found in the immaterial or spiritual realm is embedded in Neoplatonism in such a way that the "way of return to God must be through escape from the body; and for Augustine this meant primarily and immediately escape from the ties of sexuality."[36]

These key important Manichaean teachings have dominant influence in Augustine's pastoral activities, thoughts, and writings even after his conversion to Christianity; and consequently the Roman Catholic theological teachings. Irish Catholicism belongs to this Western Roman Catholic theological heritage influenced by

[35] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 15th ed., s.v. "Augustine."
[36] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 15th ed., s.v. "Augustine."

Augustine's thoughts and writings. As an offshoot of Irish Roman Catholicism, Igbo

Catholicism ipso facto shares in this same Roman theological thoughts as part of its

religious and spiritual heritage from the Roman Catholic Irish Spiritan missionaries.

Within the Igbo Catholic religious heritage and practice, the material world including the

human body (especially of the opposite gender) is conceived as evil and an occasion of

sin that needs to be avoided. This view as argued by Joe Holland, has a long Platonic

traditional legacy that includes "a cultural-spiritual demeaning of the human body, human

sexuality, and especially the body of woman who, in the contrasting understanding of

Genesis 1:27, represents the feminine face of the 'image of God.'"[37]

In addition to the first seven Councils held by both the Eastern and Roman

Catholic Churches as ecumenical and authoritative, the Roman Catholic (Latin) Church

has a total of twenty-one Councils that she regards as ecumenical from the first Council

of Nicaea (325) to Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), each of the Councils addressing

specific aspects of the life of the Church. These twenty-one Roman Catholic ecumenical

Councils can be grouped into four periods: Councils in the first millennium (Nicaea I 325

to Constantinople IV 869-870), Councils in the Middle Ages (Lateran I 1123 to Vienne

1311-1312), Councils in the Reformation period (Constance 1414 to Trent 1545-1548;

1551-1552; 1562-1563), and Councils of Modern Era (Vatican I 1869-1870 and Vatican

II 1962-1965). The Councils of the first Millennium addressed the fundamental statement

and orthodoxy of faith, while those of the Middle Ages worked on the Church's

reformation. The Councils of the reformation era took up the tasks the previous Councils

could not complete and the Councils of the Modern times were convoked to respond to

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[37] Joe Holland, *Postmodern Transformation of Catholic Spirituality* Draft Version of 2015-01-20 forthcoming book, 25.

the contextual issues (Vatican I – rationalism, liberalism, and materialism) and spiritual

renewal and growth of the Church (Vatican II). The liturgy of the Roman Catholic

Church reflects its life, theology, and spirituality. The Roman Catholic Church, like the

Eastern Catholic Church, celebrates the seven sacraments with the appropriate minister to

each sacrament; but upholds the mandatory clerical celibacy (except the case of

permanent deaconate), which is an Augustinian traditional heritage.

Spiritan[38] Religious Missionary Formation

My family Catholic religious background provided the foundation and bedrock

for my religious and priestly journey and formation in the Congregation of the Holy

Spirit for about three decades. The foundation of Nigerian Spiritan religious formation

was laid by the Irish Holy Ghost Fathers who evangelized the Igbos. In addition to the

Igbo culture of strictness to tradition, the Irish Spiritan missionaries brought in their

cultural and spiritual practices, similar to the Igbos and influenced by Catholicism,

Spiritan spirituality, Augustinian tradition, and Jansenism. This Irish influence in the

Nigerian Spiritan formation stands to this date.

Spiritual Formation

Spirituality, as defined by Joseph Komonchak, is "a lived experience . . . [of]

one's entire life as understood, felt, imagined, and decided upon in relationship to God, in

Christ Jesus, empowered by the Spirit."[39] Igbo culture upholds moral righteousness and

holds the individual accountable for any deeds of discord and disharmony. The morality

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[38] Spiritan (plural: Spiritans) is a member of Congregation of the Holy Spirit or Congregation of the Holy Ghost: An international Catholic religious missionary congregation founded in France, 1703 by Claude Francis Poullart des Places. The Congregation is also called "Congregation of the Holy Ghost" or "Holy Ghost Congregation." Members of the congregation take the three simple vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. The detailed Spiritan congregation story is discussed in chapter four.

[39] Joseph A. Komonchak ed., *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 972.

within this worldview is that of an emphasis on avoiding wrong doing over and above the stress on doing what is right. Though, a genuine morality and spirituality, but built on the parameter of half empty rather than half full ideology - an emphasis on the do not's over the dos. Nevertheless, despite the foundations of this morality and spirituality in question, it does fulfill its prime purpose of maintaining harmony in the society. Any disharmony or adverse human experience is perceived as a result of an unethical behavior and action that calls for reparation and appeasement. The Igbo understanding of sin is first and foremost, that of disruption of the cosmic and divine order through action. This spills from this to the disruption of interpersonal relationship, whether willingly or unwillingly, knowingly or unknowingly, but in particular, willfully and knowingly. From this perspective, the effects of sin do not begin and end with the sinner rather it has social and relational effects. Hence, sin affects not only the individual, but the entire community and the cosmos as a whole. I grew up with this spirituality of half empty over the half full and the emphasis on the do not's over the dos ideology. It is within these cultural, religious, and spirituality of disengagement, which underlining notion is that the material world is profane and as such needs to be avoided, that I find my initial cultural and spiritual identities.

<div align="center">**Present Experience in the United States**</div>

Against the background of my cultural, contextual, religious, spiritual, and Spiritan formation, I moved to the United States for the sole purpose of missionary apostolate as a hospital chaplain before my interest in academic advancement developed. My first initial challenge working as a hospital chaplain was experiencing the apparent abandonment of elderly patients in the hospital with no family taking care of them.

Against my cultural formation and background, where the care for the other especially

elders is a given, this experience was a bitter pill for me to swallow. I was confused and

felt like a fish out of water. I asked myself, "How can I imbibe this practice and

spirituality?" Gradual acquaintance with the new cultural and environmental setting, and

the theological method of pastoral circle of social analysis, helped me to resolve this

mystery. A few weeks ago, I met with a newly hired employee (nurse) in the hospital

where I work. As an old employee, I had the privilege of welcoming her on board

informally. We exchanged pleasantries and introduced ourselves. I introduced myself as

coming from Nigeria in Africa. Not wanting to make assumptions regarding her origin, I

asked her where she was from originally. She replied "from Miami." Curious as to her

roots, I inquired about her parents' roots. To my amazement, she responded that she

really does not know where her parents came from. Bevans' concept of context and

Gadamer's concept of horizon[40] all came to the forefront.

German theologian Johann Metz holds that two different worldviews shape

human experience. He writes that "the myth of the progress of the Western bloc and the

historical and dialectical materialism of the Eastern bloc."[41] However, my experience is

that of more than two worldviews different from the "Western and Eastern blocs"

shaping my formation and spirituality. In some situations, these worldviews blend very

well and in others, they create a rift, chasm, and pose a challenge hence, questioning the

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[40] Bevans outlines the importance of context as the necessary foundation for the formulation of theology. It also forms the lens for which interpretation, knowledge and understanding take place. See Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (New York: Orbis, 1992), 5. Hans-Georg Gadamer introduces "fusion of horizons" as a hermeneutical task and a means of acquiring knowledge mediated by experience of historical events. By fusion of horizons, Gadamer means not only the limit of one's experiences rather, this and what the environment puts back on the individual is what shapes the individual. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1985), 273, 337, & 358.

[41] Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2011), 216.

core of my cultural identity and spirituality. My experience is that of a conglomeration of multiple cultural worldviews, practices, and spiritualities. At present, my spirituality is gradually metamorphosing from half empty to half full and from disengagement to engagement with the material world bearing in mind that these are moments of encounter with God. The challenge here is that of identifying a *sui generis* cultural identity and spirituality. Igbos are migrants, and as part of the cream of those in diaspora, the question extends to all and sundry.

Individual's root, tradition, and in theologian Stephen Bevans' terminology context, give credence to one's identity.[42] Experience however, builds on and gives final shape to personal identity and spirituality. *Onye amaghi ebe mmiri bidoro maba ya, agaghi ama ebe O no kwusi* "one who does not know where one is drenched by the rain will not know where one is free from being drenched." This proverbial saying is rooted in beginnings and consequently, an end. It emphasizes the end of one thing as the beginning of another.[43]

In some situations, there may be a dividing line between two things or events while in other situations, the line is interwoven in such a way that the end of one thing and the beginning of the other are difficult to determine. Culture, formation, and spiritual identities borrow from and influence one another. My experience helps in posing the questions**:** Is one's culture, practice, tradition, or spirituality superior to the other? How

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[42] Bevans describes "context" as a complex reality representing a combination of several realities: experiences of a person's or group's personal life; personal or group experience within a culture which expresses itself in various forms; person's or community's social location and the reality of social change. Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (New York: Orbis, 1992), 5.

[43] Joe Holland and Peter Heriot hold the view of the end of one thing as the beginning of another as described in the pastoral circle. In the pastoral circle diagram, insertion leads to social analysis, to theological reflection, and to pastoral planning. Pastoral planning thus becomes the beginning of another pastoral circle. See Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), 8. See also Johannes van der Ven, *Practical Theology: An Empirical Approach* (Leuven: Peeters Press, 1998), 119.

are cultural and spiritual identities passed on? The question in this context rests not on the dominance of one culture, tradition, and by implication spirituality by the other. Rather, drawing insights from the notion that, as theologian Joan Chittister argues, "Adulthood is not a matter of becoming completely independent of the people who lay claim to our lives. Adulthood is a matter of being completely open to the insights that come to us from our superiors and our spouses, our children and our friends, so that we can become more than we can even begin to imagine for ourselves."[44] This becomes an important formative and spiritual concept to uphold and a way forward. Utilizing this conceptual insight and engaging it in conversation with contemporary living human experience, lays the foundation for solid cultural, personal, and spiritual identities.

This conceptual insight in conversation with the prevalent Irish cultural experience,[45] Spiritan mission, and Spiritan spiritual theology, form the bedrock of the identity of Irish Spiritans who defied all odds to engage in missionary activities in Igbo land. The Irish Spiritans among other Catholic missionaries made the most significant missionary impact among the Igbos of southeastern Nigeria. Working on Igbo culture and the Irish Spiritan evangelization with a view of exploring a *sui generis* post-colonial Igbo Catholic cultural identity and spirituality, I am arguing the following.

First, cultural identity formation and spirituality are products of complex human phenomena identified as context of which culture forms an integral part and understanding cultural identity formation and spirituality from this context, and with the concept of adulthood as foundation brings in the conversation of practical theological

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[44] Joan Chittister, *The Rule of St. Benedict: A Spirituality for the 21ˢᵗ Century* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2010), 27.
[45] Irish cultural experience is discussed in details in Chapter Four.

method of interdisciplinarity as opposed to monodisciplinarity[46] to the forefront. American developmental psychologist Erik Erikson argues that individual identity and by extension, spirituality is the product of one's environment.

> A baby may show something like "autonomy" from the beginning, for example, in the particular way in which he angrily tries to wriggle his hand free when tightly held. However, under normal conditions, it is not until the second year that he begins to experience the whole *critical alternative between being an autonomous creature and being a dependent one;* and it is not until then that he is ready for a *decisive encounter* with his environment, an environment which, in turn, feels called upon to convey to him its *particular ideas and concepts of autonomy and coercion* in ways decisively contributing to the character, the efficiency, and the health of his personality in his culture.[47]

Individuals have their own internal make-ups and the capacity to actualize such internal identity. However, these make-ups are realized in constant relation and interaction with one another and the society. This is to say that individual's make-up changes with the individual's context. These changes, which can either be positive or negative, contribute in an enormous way to the human development and formation of the individual.

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[46] Johannes van der Ven outlines four levels of conversation of theology with the social and allied sciences as monodisciplinarity, multidisciplinarity, interdisciplinarity, and intradisciplinarity. In monodisciplinarity, theology utilizes the findings of social sciences and applies it to theology. In multidisciplinarity social sciences provide the data through empirical research while theology reflects on the empirical findings. In interdisciplinarity, the stress is on the interaction and reciprocity between theology and social sciences. In intradisciplinarity, theology becomes empirical and expands its instruments consisting. The emphasis here is on the borrowing of concepts, methods and techniques of one science by another and the integration of these elements into other science. See van der Ven, *Practical Theology: An Empirical Approach*, 89-102.
[47] Words in italics are from the author's text. See Erik H. Erikson. *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York: Norton and Company Inc., 1994), 56.

No one academic discipline responds adequately and objectively to the question

of experiential and practical knowledge. The four levels of conversation[48] between

theology and social and allied sciences, attest to this position. With this in mind and from

the perspective of practical theology, the interdependence of various disciplines of

knowledge is of paramount importance as this method, enriches the various disciplines

concerned over and above the non-dependence of each discipline otherwise known as

monodisciplinarity. Scholars attesting to the importance of interdependence of various

academic disciplines, propose the conglomeration of the individual's contexts as giving

rise to adequate and objective knowledge.[49] Adequate, informed, and objective

knowledge take into account the totality of the human person. Hence, understanding

cultural identity formation and spirituality, the totality of the living human person is to be

taken into account. From the hermeneutical point of view, the living human person and

all that affects the human person, become text[50] to be studied. A reader can infer that the

total identity of the human person, including spirituality is the product of the complex

human phenomena identified as context. From this point of view, a person's spirituality is

influenced and shaped by the prevalent individual context.

Secondly, drawing from the above, Igbo spirituality is a dynamic phenomenon

with context as the dependent variable, which calls for the need for renewal in reference

to contemporary society. The concept of renewal as widely debated by scholars is not

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[48] See van der Ven, *Practical Theology: An Empirical Approach*, 89-102.

[49] Hans-Georg Gadamer introduces "fusion of horizons" as hermeneutical task and a means of acquiring knowledge mediated by experience of historical events. By fusion of horizons, Gadamer means not only the limit of one's experiences rather, this and what the environment puts back on the individual is what shapes the individual. See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 273, 337, & 358.

[50] The understanding of the concept of "text" or "textuality" in hermeneutics shifts from one scholar to the other. For Luther and Schleiermacher, it is the written text; for Gadamer, it becomes conversation; and for Ricouer, text becomes the human person. See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 300-311 and Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 9-10, 69-71.

new to the disciplines of theology, social sciences, and spirituality. The 1970s socio-theological debate is a case in point for both the dynamic and dependable nature of spirituality on human phenomena, and the need for renewal. Theologian Robin Gill argues that "Christian faith 'should be completely transformed in order to conform' to 'the outlook of contemporary secularized man.'"[51] This view is criticized on the ground that it is disastrous for theology, as theology in this situation will be irrelevant hence, the contrary view that "if modern people cannot accept the claims of the Gospel, then it is they who must change, not the Gospel."[52] Whichever position that one holds, indicates a dynamic phenomenon, and the need for renewal and updating either from the human perspective or the understanding and interpretation of the Gospel message. This concept of renewal is rooted in the earthly ministry and message of Jesus as he emphasizes going beyond the letter to the spirit of the law. As the Gospel of Matthew highlights:

> At that time Jesus went through the cornfields one Sabbath day. His disciples were hungry and began to pick ears of corn and eat them. The Pharisees noticed it and said to him, 'Look, your disciples are doing something that is forbidden on the Sabbath.' But he said to them, 'Have you not read what David did when he and his followers were hungry – how he went into the house of God and they ate the loaves of the offering although neither he nor his followers were permitted to eat them, but only the priests? Or again, have you not read in the Law that on the

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[51] This is the position of Paul van Buren, John Knox, and John Robinson among other scholars. See Robin Gill, *Theology in a Social Context: Sociological Theology Vol. 1* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2012), 73.
[52] This is Eric Mascall's position and a critique of van Buren, Knox, and Robinson's position. Robin Gill, *Theology in a Social Context: Sociological Theology Vol. 1* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2012), 74.

Sabbath day the Temple priests break the Sabbath without committing any

fault?…For the Son of man is master of the Sabbath.'[53]

This position of Jesus calls for the need of renewal as it takes into account, the dynamic

nature of the human condition. As spirituality is the product of the human context, so

also, spirituality is dependent in the here and now, and on the changing human context

for its content and meaning.

The prophetic vision of John XXIII in reading the signs of time, and the call to

return to nature, culminating in the second Vatican Council, emphasizes the need for

renewal as a result of the dynamic nature of human context. As *Gaudium et Spes*

explains:

In every age, the church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of times

and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel, if it is to carry out its task. In

language intelligible to every generation, it should be able to answer the ever

occurring questions which people ask about the meaning of this present life and of

the life to come, and how one is related to the other. We must be aware of and

understand the aspirations, the yearnings, and the often dramatic features of the

world in which we live. . . .Ours is a new age of history with profound and rapid

changes spreading gradually to all corners of the earth. They are the products of

people's intelligence and creative activity, but they recoil upon them, upon their

judgments and desires, both individual and collective, upon their ways of thinking

and acting in regard to people and things. We are entitled then to speak of a real

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[53] Matt. 12:1-8 (The New Jerusalem Bible Pocket Edition).

social and cultural transformation whose repercussions are felt at the religious level also.[54]

The emphasis of Second Vatican Council on the signs of time, points to the fact that spirituality is a human phenomenon that changes with the contextual human situation. By this, it implies that spirituality of one generation may not necessarily serve the next generation, but can serve as a foundation and stepping stone, hence, the need for renewal, and tracing one's roots and cultural identity.

Thirdly, there are areas of similarities and differences between Igbo culture and experiences with that of their Irish counterpart. Human experiences show similarities and distinctions between and among cultures. In some situations, the tendency is to say that one culture is better than the other. It apparently seems so, but the complexity of culture leaves one with no other option than comparison, and as such, draws a quality conclusion. The existential reality of human phenomenon cannot be detached from comparison and competition or else, growth and development become difficult if not impossible. The question rests on what kind of comparison and competition? Is it a healthy or unhealthy comparison and competition? Culture, an identifier of people cannot extricate itself from this existential human phenomena, but best approached, from the point of view of similarities and differences, aim at promoting growth and development. Cultures viewed from this perspective, dissipate not only "intellectual [and experiential] provincialism,"[55] as Paul Tillich argues, but they also create cross-cultural individual formation, and the conquest of intellectual and experiential provincialism.

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[54] Austin Flannery ed., *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents* "Gaudium et Spes," (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 2007), no.4.
[55] Paul Tillich uses the expression, "intellectual provincialism" to describe his experience, and the challenge of moving from Europe to America after his removal from the chair of Philosophy at the

Finally, the similarities and differences between the Igbo and Irish cultures creates a theological and spiritual impact by the encounter between the Irish Spiritan missionaries and the evangelized Igbos. This encounter brings to the forefront, the theological and spiritual concept of *Namasté,*[56] where the Igbos' encounter with the Irish missionaries is not entirely an importation of the Irish culture, but rather, a heart to heart connection of the Igbos with the Irish – an encounter that produces certain spirituality. Scripture identifies the encounter between Jonathan and David as one that produces certain kind of spirituality. As 1 Samuel notes "After David had finished talking to Saul, Jonathan's soul became closely bound to David's and Jonathan came to love him as his own soul…Jonathan made a pact with David to love him as his own soul; he took off the cloak he was wearing and gave it to David, and his armour too, even his sword, his bow and his belt."[57] What is behind this encounter is not a friendly and equal party relationship, for both share different contexts rather, a deep connectedness eliciting a spiritual concept of *Namasté*. This kind of encounter, paves the way where there is none and surmounts obstacles thus producing growth and spiritual development. It is important to remember that the Irish Spiritan missionaries were not the first Catholic missionaries to arrive in Igbo land. December 5, 1885 marks the arrival of four Catholic Spiritan missionaries of French origin[58] to Igbo land (Onitsha). However, either by divine design or human action, the French Catholic missionaries could not connect and establish

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University of Frankfort. Immersed in his German culture, Tillich doubted the possibility of academic carrier (philosophy and theology) outside of Germany. Finally, his experience proves the possibility of this outside of Germany. See Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 159.

[56] *Namasté* is a Sanskrit word which basically means "The God (divine or sacred) within me greets (or sees) the God in you." Kenneth J. Doka and Amy S. Tucci eds., *Living with Grief: Spirituality and End-of-Life Care* (Washington: Hospice Foundation, 2011), 13.

[57] 1 Sam. 18:1,3-4 (The New Jerusalem Bible).

[58] Two priests: Frs. Joseph Lutz and Horne, and two religious brothers: Hermas and Jean-Gotto.

adequate relationship with the Igbos whom they have ample opportunity of evangelizing. When the French Catholic Spiritan missionaries could not make a head way into the evangelization of the Igbos, the Irish Catholic Spiritan missionaries came in and were able to establish a deeper connection with the Igbos. The first Irish Spiritan missionaries to Igbo land arrived in 1893[59] and gave the missionary activity in Igbo land a new phase, strategy, and its resultant effects. This encounter between the Igbos and the Irish Catholic Spiritan missionaries can be seen as an important spiritual encounter.

In the context of these cultures, a fundamental theological question arises: "How does God reveal God's self in these cultures?" The study of both cultures is from a thematic perspective with reference to cultural living, which includes political structure, economy, storytelling, and marriage. It also includes religion and spirituality. This thematic approach gives a clearer understanding of the cultural identity formation and spirituality of both cultures.

Critical concepts in this study are spirituality, culture, formation, identity, and context. Spirituality is both an individual and group's entire lived experience as understood, felt, imagined, and decided upon in relationship to God.[60] It is a personal or group's experience of God in lived history. This experience of God in lived history as Kenneth Doka argues also involves a "search for meaning and purpose; transcendence involving self or a higher being; a feeling of community or communion with self, nature, higher being, or interpersonal relationships; faith or belief system that may involve a

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[59] Casimir Eke records the arrival of the first Irish Spiritan missionaries - Br. David (Michael) Doran followed by Fr. Joseph Shanahan (later bishop) to Igbo land in 1893 after a "failed" missionary activity in *Igbo* land by the French. Casimir Eke, *In the Footsteps of Our Founders*, 96.
[60] Komonchak ed., *The New Dictionary of Theology,* 972.

higher being; hope; appreciation; and self-reflection."[61] Meaning making and purpose as

it pertains to human and divine relationship, is a journey that needs to be discovered

either as individuals or a group – a journey of faith. When it is an individual journey, it

becomes a unique experience for a particular time, place, purpose, and perhaps may not

be reproduced or repeated.[62] It behooves the individual to give meaning to such

experience. The meaning and purpose accorded to such experience by the individual may

make little or no sense to the other whose world view and contexts are different.[63]

Practical theology, at the core of its discourse, has the human experience as foundational.

Fundamental to understanding spirituality from this context rests on the individual's

understanding of the experience in relation to the divine. The question of spirituality is all

about survival and life in relation with the divine, hence, the critical theological and

spiritual question, "What does God want one to make out of any particular experience?"

Meaning making and purpose can as well take the dimension of the group experience

whereby, the group interprets and assigns meaning to a collective experience. The

Israelites' departure from the land of Egypt as narrated in the Old Testament,[64] describes

a collective experience in which the group attaches the meaning of God's action and

intervention in their lives.[65] This meaning making and purpose become the bedrock of

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[61] Doka, *Living with Grief,* 8.

[62] Hans Urs von Balthasar, in discussing "the Experience of Faith" and "the Form of Revelation," describes their uniqueness and holds that such experience cannot be reproduced or repeated. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics Vol. 1* (New York: Crossroad Publications, 2009), 334, 424.

[63] Bevans recounts his experience of having prepared an advent liturgy while a student in Rome around the theme of the sun. Much work went into the preparation only for him to come to the realization through an Indian, that the sun is not a very striking symbol for the coming of Christ among the Indians. See Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, xix.

[64] See Exodus 12 and the following chapters (The New Jerusalem Bible).

[65] See David N. Power, *Sacrament: The Language of God's Giving* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1999), 154-155 & 159.

sacramental theology anchoring its roots in encounter, and as human beings, people encounter as bodies.

While understanding the complexity and multi-definitions of culture from various disciplines, English anthropologist Edward Tylor argues that culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man [woman] as a member of society."[66] It is a common phenomenon within a society to identify people by either their names, as belonging to a group, race, nationality, language, or ethnic group, among others. These are ways of identifying and attaching importance to the identity of the human person. Some of these ways of identification present in some cases, similar characteristics, and in others different characters. These characteristics considered as a complex whole is what identifies a group of people as separate from others. This identifying character is transmitted from one generation to another within the ambient of the group. In this process, the following definitions are operative.

Formation is the advancement of a person's makeup to the point of a mature decision, taking into account all the variables at the individual's disposal. Augustine was heavily influenced by Manichaeism and afterwards by the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus. He converted to Christianity in 386CE. After his conversion and baptism in 387CE, he developed his own approach to philosophy and theology, accommodating a variety of methods and different perspectives.[67] One such ideas holds that God created two books: the first book is that of nature while the book of bible is the second. Knowledge and truth about God are found in both books. The book of bible builds on that of nature. This idea

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[66] Edward B. Taylor, *Primitive Cultures: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom Vol. 1* (New York: Gordon Press, 1974), 1.
[67] Paul Edwards ed., The *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.vv. "Augustine, St."

parallels the Catholic theological position that grace builds on and perfects nature.[68]

Human beings are born with innate tendencies that are nurtured and developed by a whole lot of circumstances including one's experience, society, and context. When these innate tendencies are inadequately nurtured and developed, it paves the way for a less mature and responsible personality as Parker Palmer's argument that "we arrive in this world undivided, integral, whole. But sooner or later, we erect a wall between our inner and outer lives, trying to protect what is within us or to deceive the people around us,"[69] from a theological, formation, and spirituality point of view, calls for attention. Critical questions arise such as, What happened? How did it happen? Why did it happen? What are the effects created by this situation? However, when these innate tendencies are adequately nurtured and developed, it creates the foundation for a mature and responsible personality. A step further, within the individual formation, the adequately nurtured and developed tendencies face the hurdles, and experience the impact of society on the individual. Formation considered as advancement, happens when one is able to integrate all these living experiences and brokenness not as obstacles, but rather, as Palmer points out, a means of "embracing brokenness as an integral part of life,"[70] spiritual wholeness, and formation.

Identity is a "communities' or persons' symbolic self-representation of their origins, present self-understanding, and destiny."[71] Understanding identity involves responding adequately to the following questions: Who am I? How can I define myself?

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[68] Thomas Aquinas, whose thoughts and teachings heavily influenced Catholic theology, holds the view that grace builds on nature. However, from the Protestant perspective, grace cannot build on nature. See Thomas Aquinas, "Treatise on God," *Summa Theologica 1* (Chicago, IL: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), Question 12, article 13.

[69] Parker J. Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey toward an Undivided Life* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publication, 2004), 39.

[70] Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*, 5.

[71] Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 121.

What values do I hold? Identity from the context of this study encompasses spirituality, culture, and formation understood as identities.

Context is a complex reality representing a combination of several realities and life experiences of people in a culture, which express themselves in various forms within the individual's or group's social location and the reality of social change.[72] Context embraces an individual's or group's world view which Gadamer calls horizon,[73] as playing important role in knowledge.

Theological Problem/Problem Statement

Culture and contexts are fundamental foundations for identity formation and spirituality, and as such can be life-giving inasmuch as they have a way of keeping and making themselves alive and relevant within the society. On the other hand, when culture and contextual identities become stagnant, they become oppressive and stand the risk of extinction and domination by other cultures and spiritualities. The risk of extinction, irrelevance, and domination become possible where the origin, motive, and values behind cultural and spiritual practices cannot be traced, identified, or at the polar end, cannot stand the challenges of the contemporary societies. Identifying with Igbo culture and drawing from my experience as part of the entire experience of the Igbos who are migrants, I identify multiple layers of both cultural and spiritual identities among the Igbo Catholics. I identify the Igbo traditional culture and spirituality, Irish culture, Irish Catholic Spiritan spirituality, and in my case, the American culture and spirituality. Which of these is responsible for one's identity at each point in time? Which plays a dominant role?

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[72] Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 5.
[73] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 273, 337, & 358.

In the midst of the multiple layers or dimensions of culture and spirituality, sometimes, there is a blending or synchronization of all. On the other hand, there is a rift, chasm, or tension within the individual. The blending may not create as much crisis situation as the tension counterpart. The tension that the unsynchronized identities create calls for a deeper thinking and review of cultural and spiritual identities. Hence the core question: what would be a *sui generis* Igbo Catholic cultural identity and spirituality? In the wake of the advent of the Irish Spiritan Catholic missionaries to Igbo land, the Igbos trade in some of their cultural and religious practices, and spiritual identities and so is the Irish in embracing Catholicism. However, this will be discussed in full later in chapter five, for the new religion and way of life. Contextual human experience shows dual aspects of the fact that in some situations, people lose sight of their origins and contexts, consequently their identity, or at an extreme situation, do not know who they are. The other side of the experience shows the possibility of remembering and holding fast to origin and context, leading to identity definition. Unless the Igbo Catholics are able to identify what their core cultural and spiritual roots and identities are, it will be difficult to chart a path for a sustainable cultural identity and spirituality for the twenty-first century and beyond.

The priority of a hospital chaplain is that of spiritual guidance, to help patients and families find meaning and value in their existing situation. However, on one occasion, the chaplain asked a family going through difficult situations about their story, and roots including their values. To the chaplain's amazement, the family could neither identify who they are, their roots nor their values. The visit took a whole lot out of the chaplain as the chaplain tried to help the family identify their roots in order to draw

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meaning and value from their identity. In the final analysis, with the assistance of the chaplain, the family was able to see the importance of cultural formation not only in their lives as human beings, but also in their spiritual journey as well. It is only when the family identified themselves that they were able to navigate and find meaning in their challenging situation. As the parable of the good Samaritan in the Christian scripture ends with Jesus admonishing the lawyer to "go and do the same yourself,"[74] the family took it upon themselves to educate others on the importance of knowing one's roots, values, and meaning, as necessary for engaging in divine-human relationship.

From the chaplain's experience above, one envisages an important fundamental question, and wonders what does it mean to remember one's or group's origin and identity? On the other hand, what does it look like to lose or forget one's or group's origin and identity? The importance of origins as identifying characteristics cannot be overemphasized. Reiterating the importance of origins and contexts as integral parts of one's or group's cultural formation and spirituality, become of vital importance to this work. Unless one is able to identify who they are, the Socratic dictum of "the unexamined life is not worth living" becomes a prophetic invitation to search and answer the question, "Who am I?" Responding adequately to this question and discovering my root form the foundation of who I am.

Research Question

The central research question for this study is: What would be a *sui generis* Igbo Catholic cultural identity and spirituality for the twenty-first century and beyond? Igbo people especially, within the twenty-first century are generally migrants. This migrant nature necessitated by colonialism and other factors, gives the impression that the Igbos

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[74] Luke 10:37 (The New Jerusalem Bible).

are all over the countries of the world. At the same time, they are noted for their hospitality to visitors hence the reference to "Igbo hospitality" or in a broader sense "African hospitality." Their hospitality to visitors, perhaps, accounted for their embracing foreign religions such as – Catholicism, Protestantism, other Christian, and non-Christian denominations. As a result of their migrant tendencies, they tend to exchange, acquire, and assimilate whatever they consider useful. Hence the proverbial native saying *ihe onye ji apu-apu bu, ka O wenata nma di n'ebe O gara* "the migrant's aim is to bring home the good experienced in a foreign land." In some situations, there is no doubt that one goes overboard. Besides the Igbo cultural practices, one discovers an influence of ideas and practices, and in some situations, a mixture of ideologies, cultural, and religious practices among the Igbos. This tendency influences their spirituality leaving one to wonder what the core of Igbo cultural identity and spirituality is. Against this background, Igbos as a cultural group with longevity propensity, and having received the Catholic faith with the spirituality therein from the Irish Holy Ghost Fathers, the question remains, "What would be a *sui generis* Igbo Catholic cultural identity and spirituality for the twenty-first century and beyond?"

Addressing this core research question gives rise also to the following subsidiary questions:-

1. What constitutes the deep core of Igbo/Irish cultural identity and spirituality?

2. Within the Irish Spiritan evangelization of Igbo land, what did the Irish Spiritan missionaries and the evangelized Igbo Catholics lose or gain in terms of their culture and spirituality?

3. What is the creative path for the future of Igbo Catholic cultural identity and spirituality for the twenty-first century and beyond?

Challenges

The problem of hermeneutics as encountered in secondary sources is central and a core challenge. In accessing the available resources, the challenge rests on the propensity and reality of reading others' history from an *etic*[75] perspective which as Bernard Lonergan points out, becomes an obstacle to learning.[76] This brings about the notion of distanciation in order to arrive at an objective position with the reality of the historical events.

The second challenge paralleling the first is that of asking the historical critical hermeneutical questions: from whose point of view is the history in question written? Where lies objectivity in the written text? In accessing secondary sources, I will reconcile the texts and available resources.

Contributions to Practical Theology

The contributions of this work will be felt more in theology, method, and spirituality in relation to the three publics: society, academy, and church.[77] Theology forms the foundation for the other contributions of this work. From the theological perspective, context plays important role in the construction of local theology. This point

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[75] "Anthropologists have coined the terms *emic* and *etic* identities, by which is meant the identity a particular group holds with respect to itself and that which others place on it. This is an important distinction that has far reaching consequences, especially with regard to early historical periods. After all, many or even most of the cultural and ethnic categories that historians habitually employ function at the *etic* level and not at the *emic* one at all." Oliver Davies, *Celtic Spirituality: The Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 5.

[76] In discussing "understanding oneself," Bernard Lonergan points out that for learning to occur, one is to be "critical not merely of his author but also of the tradition that forms his own mind." Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1999), 162.

[77] David Tracy understands theology as addressing three publics: society, academy, and church. The three branches of theology: practical theology, fundamental theology, and systematic theology address each of these publics respectively. See Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination,* 3.

of view shapes the method, spirituality, and ministry. As theologian Kathleen Cahalan[78] seeks to redress the long standing Catholic tradition of priority of identity over practice, the point here emphasizes that encounter is the beginning of spirituality and sacramentality. Among the Igbo Catholics, the world is considered as matter borrowing from Augustine's Manichean background influence on his theology. From Augustine's perspective, matter is considered profane and sinful. Hence, the material world from the Igbo Catholic perspective is considered sinful, to be avoided, and disengaged from. Drawing from this point of view, it follows that understanding the material world as profane and sinful that is inherent within the Igbo Catholic theology and spirituality (drawing from St. Augustine's influence on the Roman Catholic theology), and as such to be avoided, calls for a review and updating. It emphasizes the priority of the positive over the negative, the theology and spirituality of encounter and engagement as opposed to disengagement.

Method describes a pathway to arriving at a desired goal. Practical theology method builds on See-Judge-Act. In this practical theology method, the "see" stage identifies the situation at stake (including the social analysis) while, the "judge" stage gives credence to social analysis through the theological reflection there upon in understanding the dynamics at play. Gadamer points to the importance of the fusion of horizons in knowledge and scholarship. This work draws attention to the theological method of correlation between theology and social and allied sciences. From this perspective, interdisciplinarity as opposed to monodisciplinarity, while enriching all the disciplines concerned, allows for the retaining of the identities of each disciplines.

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[78] Kathleen A. Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), viii.

Interdisciplinarity as a method becomes a more robust method. Every intellectual discipline needs cooperative relationship and parallel dialogues[79] with each other to enrich themselves. Drawing from this, interdisciplinarity as a method is important not only in practical theology scholarship, but also in the formation of one's spirituality and personal identity as "formation should prepare and enable us to operate in an unfamiliar territory, in cross-cultural situations, and to be significantly better equipped to deal with an ever-changing world."[80]

The third contribution is on human formation and spiritual identity. As context defines an individual or group, it draws attention of individuals to seek their identity as rights unclaimed cannot be defended.[81] The identity question, "Who am I?" requires a soul searching response. Uprooting and losing individual's or group's root is not an option in changing individual's or group's cultural, formation, or spiritual identities. This contribution to human formation and spiritual identity draws attention to the need always to seek and renew identities especially in the face of changing contemporary society.

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Research Method

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Theological method and design are significant and important, not only in the construction of local theologies, but also in research work. Adequate and appropriate research method relevant to the research problem yields the desired goal. Practical theology as a theological discipline with experience as its focus point, in conversation with tradition, culture, and Christian scriptures, with its rigorous method of thick

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[79] See van der Ven, *Practical Theology*, 97.

[80] Philip Massawe, "A Commentary on the Guide for Spiritan Formation," *Spiritan Horizons: A Journal of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit,* no. 8, 90.

[81] This is one of the wisdom sayings of my seminary professor – Dr. Raymond Arazu at Spiritan International School of Theology, Attakwu, Nigeria in 1994.

description[82] provides the framework as a way to proceed. Among the various practical

theological methods, I will take on the design of the pastoral circle method in exploring

the connections between cultures, individual formation, and spirituality as experienced in

the See-Judge-Act method. This research design employs the four stages of pastoral

circle: insertion, social analysis, theological reflection, and pastoral planning[83] in

achieving the desired research goal. The "see" embraces the insertion and social analysis

stages. The "judge" involves the theological reflection stage while the "act" describes the

pastoral planning.

The first movement of this method "see," identifies the theological problem which

is the multiplicity of cultural and spiritual identities prevalent among the Igbo Catholics

of southeastern Nigeria, leading to the theological research question: what would be a *sui*

generis Igbo Catholic cultural identity and spirituality for the twenty-first century and

beyond? An important key question in this first movement is "why is this going on?"

This question leads to the second aspect of the movement – the social analysis. Chapters

three and four will adequately respond to this movement.

In the second movement "judge," my role is that of the theologian reflecting

critically on the social analysis of the Igbo and Irish cultures, practices, and spiritualities

and at the same time raising critical theological questions. Chapter Five employs the

"judge" movement as it deals with the theological explorations of the Igbo-Irish

encounter. The last movement of the method is the "act." In this movement, drawing

insights from the social analysis and the theological reflection, give a smooth transition

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[82] Browning uses "thickness" in his four movement approaches to practical wisdom as a way of demonstrating and understanding the complexity and richness of congregational life and groups, and the necessity of several disciplines in practical theology. This method is also important in practicing strategic practical theology. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 16-18, 55.
[83] Holland, *Social Analysis*, 7.

from the theological problem, I will proceed to create a pastoral plan adequate to the theological problem.

Overview of the Work

In Chapter 2, I will describe the choice of pastoral circle method linked to the see-judge-act method relevant to this study. As the study requires an appropriate method, this chapter gives the justification for the choice of the see-judge-act with a thick descriptive theological method, relevant in responding to the research question of this study.

Chapter 3 constitutes the first step in the "see" moment of the See, Judge, Act method of practical theology. Charity begins at home hence, as a way forward; I will begin with a thick description of the Igbo society of Nigeria. The discussion of Igbo society is from a thematic perspective which focuses on three key themes. The first theme is cultural living embracing political structure, economy, storytelling, and marriage. The other themes are religion and spirituality as integral aspects of human formation and spiritual identities, and a way to understanding the Igbos. This thematic approach to the study of Igbo society, forms the constituent of formation and spiritual identity of the Igbos, and responds to the subsidiary research question of what constitutes the deep core of Igbo cultural identity and spirituality?

In Chapter 4, which constitutes also the first step in the see-judge-act method of practical theology, I will discuss the Irish Spiritan identity and spirituality also from a thematic perspective focusing on three key themes. The first theme is cultural living embracing political structure, economy, storytelling, and marriage. The other two themes are religion and spirituality as integral aspects of human formation and spiritual identities. This forms the basis for a closer look at the Igbo and Irish cultures not from the

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point of view of superiority of one culture over the other, but from the reference point of commonality and areas of difference, which will be discussed in the next chapter, forming the nursery for the influence, and borrowing from other cultures. I will also discuss the Spiritan story with its mission theology and spirituality as an integral part of the Irish Spiritan identity and spirituality who in turn brought in the Catholic faith to Igbo land. This discussion also responds to the subsidiary research question: What constitutes the deep core of Irish cultural identity and spirituality?

In the Fifth and final chapter, I will employ the second movement "judge" in the see-judge-act method of practical theology with the practical theological multicultural and contextual lenses as an African, Catholic missionary, among others, in exploring the insights from this research. In exploring theologically the implications of the Igbo-Irish encounter, I will also look at the areas of similarities and differences between Igbo culture and experiences, with that of their Irish counterpart, and the impact of this cultural experience on the Irish Spiritans' evangelization of the Igbos. This chapter responds to the subsidiary research question: Within the Irish Spiritan evangelization of Igbo land, what did the Irish Spiritan missionaries and the evangelized Igbo Catholics gain and lose?

The last section of this chapter provides direction for the "act" moment of the see-judge-act method of practical theology. In this section, I will explore and describe the implications of this research work for practical theology, society, academy, and church. In describing and discussing the implications of this research work for practical theology and its various publics, I will draw clue, strength, and insights from the exploration of the core research question: what would be a *sui generis* Igbo Catholic cultural identity and spirituality for the twenty-first century and beyond? Finally, I will begin to propose, a

creative path for the future of a *sui generis* Igbo Catholic cultural identity and spirituality

for the twenty-first century, and will conclude with some theological questions as to

emerging African spiritualities for future research and a future of hope.

In this chapter, I outlined the various contexts for my thesis argument, theological

problem, research questions, the goals of my research work, and why this research work

is important for practical theology. I described the Irish Catholics (by implication, the

Igbo Catholics as well), as belonging to the Roman Catholic Church (among other

Catholic Churches), as influenced by both the Augustinian theological tradition and

Jansenism. I also outlined the theological research method I will use for the study and

gave in the various chapters, an overview of the entire study. In the next chapter, I will

outline in details, including the See-Judge-Act theological method of my study, the

various stages of the method, and how I will apply the method to the entire study.

CHAPTER TWO

Practical Theological Method

Social sciences and theology are not simply equal partners

but in fact sequential, with the social-scientific approach

being subordinate to the theological one.[84] – *Karl Rahner*

Describing theology as "practical" does not in any way mean to imply that

theology was only theoretical, but it serves as a wakeup call to the practical nature of

theology which as the Scottish theologian Duncan Forrester argues, aims at

transformation and an "orientation of the whole person rather than a simple intellectual

assent."[85] Against this background, Schleiermacher understands practical theology as the

crown of theological study. The Dutch theological school of thought popularized by

Johannes van der Ven, draws a link between practical theology and social sciences

thereby ascribing to practical theology an empirical dimension. This empirical dimension

of practical theology, alludes to the various levels of correlation between theology and

the social sciences,[86] and attests to the scientific spirit of practical theology.[87]

In this chapter, I will describe the theological method of see-judge-act. I will also

focus on the circle method, also known as pastoral circle method or circle of praxis, as

rooted in the See-Judge-Act[88] method. Preceding the discussion of the pastoral circle

method as a theological method I am using in this study, I will explore the root and

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[84] Johannes van der Ven, *Practical Theology*, 94.

[85] Forrester, *Truthful Action*, 33.

[86] See van der Ven, *Practical Theology*, 89-102

[87] Duncan Forrester emphasizing Schleiermacher's view of the scientific spirit of practical theology, holds that "if the scientific spirit is set aside, theology becomes the in-house discourse of small and declining Christian communities, without sustainable claims to being public truth with something to offer in the public square. The balance or tension needs to be maintained for the sake of responsible and relevant theology, to save the Church from becoming a ghetto incapable of communicating with culture and society in which it is embedded." See Forrester, *Truthful Action,* 43.

[88] Joe Holland, "Introduction" In *The Pastoral Circle Revisited: A Critical Quest for Truth and Transformation,* eds. Frans Wijsen, Peter Henriot, and Rodrigo Mejia (New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 9.

development of See-Judge-Act as a practical theological framework and one of the methods in practical theology, and its use by Catholic Church leaders and theologians. The pastoral circle involves the four moments of insertion, social analysis, theological reflection, and pastoral plan, otherwise known as four tasks of practical theology,[89] which is also similar to the three-stage method of attending, asserting, and pastoral response.[90] I will also explore in details, each of the four moments of the pastoral circle as they relate to the entire work, and their applications in the practice of theology. I will conclude this section with the limitations and merits of this method as a rationale behind the choice of circle method in my theological research, and the effects of truncating the pastoral circle method. My resources include the following texts: *Social Analysis; The Pastoral Circle Revisited; Modern Catholic Social Teaching;* and *Encyclopedia of Philosophy Vols. 1 and 8.*

The Root and Development of See-Judge-Act Method

See-Judge-Act, in its ordinary sense in relation to an issue, applies the empirical principle of observation, leading to assessment, and taking concrete steps in responding to a particular situation.

Aristotle

See-Judge-Act as a practical theological continuum framework is rooted in Aristotle's[91] concept of *phronesis,* known as "practical wisdom."[92] His understanding of

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[89] Holland and Henriot describe these four meditations of experience as pastoral circle, otherwise known as "circle of praxis," as it emphasizes the on-going relationship between reflection and action. Holland and Henriot, *Social Analysis*, 7-8. See also Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4. Osmer also describes the core tasks of practical theology in the form of "what is going on? Why is this going on? What ought to be going on? How might we respond?"

[90] Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 13.

[91] Aristotle was born in 384BC in Stagira of northern Greece to Nicomachus (his father who was a doctor, friend, and physician to King Amyntas of Macedon) and Phaestis (his mother). He moved to Athens in 367

human nature gives a clue to understanding the concept of *phronesis.* Aristotle understands human beings as rational animals with souls, and at their best when human reasoning is used in the best way in search and knowledge of the truth.[93] The search and knowledge of the truth, which involves the discovery of the nature of human beings, is peculiar to human beings as distinct from other animals. This uniqueness and peculiarity rest on the direction of the rational soul[94] endowed it at creation by the creator; aims at guiding the human person to a life lived in congruence with the very nature of the human person.

In the development of Aristotle's thoughts and ideas, there is initially no distinction between theoretical and practical wisdom; however, as his thoughts and ideas progressively developed, he contrasts *sophia* (theoretical wisdom) with *phronesis* (practical wisdom). Practical wisdom, an intellectual virtue and skill, whose function as argued by D. S. Huntchinson is "to enable us know the correct way to behave,"[95] helps people in the right steps in bringing about change. Aristotle esteems practical wisdom which he defines as "the capacity of deliberating well about what is good and advantageous for oneself."[96] It relates to and rooted in "excellent deliberation, and excellent deliberation is correct practical thinking, which can quickly reach the correct conclusion from the correct premise by means of correct inference."[97] Aristotle's concept of practical wisdom involves intelligence, understanding, skill, and application of good

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where he became a member of the intellectual circle centered on Plato. See Jonathan Barnes, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 3.

[92] Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, trans. Martin Ostwald (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1975), 1140b11.

[93] D. S. Hutchinson, "Ethics" in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle,* Jonathan Barnes, ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 205.

[94] D. S. Hutchinson, "Ethics," 202.

[95] D. S. Hutchinson, "Ethics," 206.

[96] Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, trans. Martin Ostwald, 1140a25.

[97] Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, trans. Martin Ostwald, 1142a23-43a24.

judgment in bringing about the desired goal or change in one's life; and as argued by Paul Edwards, "it is *phronesis* which discovers what is right in action and so makes it possible for desires to conform to reason by discovering ends and then relating means to ends."[98]

Thomas Aquinas

Against the horizon of Aristotle's philosophical background of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) encompassing intelligence, skill, understanding, and application of good judgment in order to achieve the desired objective, this concept forms the foundation of the development of the theological method of See-Judge-Act. Like the challenges encountered in the transmission of traditions and cultural practices whereby certain elements of tradition and practices may either be lost, undergo some mutation, or at best transmitted in its entirety, the transmission of Aristotle's concept of practical wisdom is not different especially along the centuries. The major concern of this section is not a historical and chronological development of the See-Judge-Act method from Aristotle's *phronesis* down to the present age. Rather, it is to outline the origin and root of the See-Judge-Act method and its retrieval into Catholic theological discourse by Aquinas. It also outlines the use of this method by the Catholic Church leaders and theologians, its link with the circle method and practical application as a method within the Catholic theological discipline. Finally, I will also explore the importance of this method in relationship to my work.

Thomas Aquinas[99] retrieves, in a Christian way, the Aristotelian ideas. As Augustine of Hippo is credited as holding onto Platonic thoughts and ideas so also

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[98] Edwards ed., *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. "Aristotle."
[99] Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274), a Dominican Catholic theologian and philosopher, born in Italy, and the youngest son of Landolfo and Teodora. He studied under the Benedictine monks and spent some number of

Aquinas is thought of retrieving Aristotelian thoughts. Aquinas became interested in the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle and his critical and practical philosophical thinking aimed at intelligent performance of actions. Aquinas retrieves Aristotle's practical wisdom (reasoning) in his treatment of political philosophy and ethics (which some scholars consider as natural moral law, but it is "misleading to limit Aquinas' ethics to a natural law position"[100]), where he discusses the three natural human inclinations[101] all of which are considered as good insofar as they are pursued reasonably. The key word in Aquinas' ethical discussion of natural law is "reason," and as a matter of fact "right reason" *recta ratio* which justifies Aquinas' thoughts on ethical judgment.[102] This right reason is rooted in "Prudence" *prudencia* which is key in practical habit. In justifying this thought, Aquinas uses three moral determinants: the kind of action, the purpose to which it is directed, and the pertaining circumstances under which the action is to be performed in capping his theory of right reasoning (prudence).[103]

Following Aquinas' retrieval into Catholic domain of the Aristotelian concept of practical wisdom (*phronesis*), which he called *prudencia* (prudence), and describing this principle as having three steps linked to See-Judge-Act, it became a practical theological framework and method used mostly by the popes, theologians, and even beyond, in addressing pastoral and other related issues that confront them.

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years lecturing in philosophy and theology. He died in the year 1274. See *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.vv. "Thomas Aquinas, St."

[100] *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.vv. "Thomas Aquinas, St."

[101] Aquinas discusses three human natural inclinations as "man's substantial nature toward the conservation of its own existence and physical well-being, that of man's animal nature to seek such biological goods as sexual reproduction and the care of offspring, and that of man's reason whereby he tends toward universal goods, such as the consideration of the interests of other persons and the avoidance of ignorance." *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.vv. "Thomas Aquinas, St."

[102] *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.vv. "Thomas Aquinas, St."

[103] For Aquinas, prudence, the key practical habit in moral discourse is defined as "right reasoning in doing things." *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.vv. "Thomas Aquinas, St."

Use of See-Judge-Act Method by Catholic Church Leaders and Theologians

Perusing through some Catholic ecclesial leaders' responses to the contextual

theological and pastoral situations down through the centuries and especially from the

early eighteenth century, either in writing (in the form of encyclicals) or otherwise, their

responses to the prevalent challenges and issues confronting the Church at the particular

time point to the use of the See-Judge-Act methodological framework which begins with

the diagnosis of the prevalent issue and the context.[104] Though the challenges at each

point in time present themselves in various forms, the responses have followed a similar

pattern of the Aristotelian *phronesis* and Aquinas' *prudencia* as developed in the See-

Judge-Act framework.

For the purpose of brevity, I mention here few examples of theologians and

Church leadership in the pre-Leonine, Leonine, and Johannine eras, who used the See-

Judge-Act methodological framework in responding to the contextual situations. It is

important to mention that while the Pre-Leonine leadership (1740-1878) responded to the

societal challenges of industrial capitalism[105] at the local stage, the Leonine leadership

(1878-1958) responded to the industrial capitalism at the national level, and the

Johannine leadership (1958) responded to the same societal challenges at the global

level.[106]

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[104] Holland, "Introduction" In *The Pastoral Circle Revisited,* 10.

[105] Joe Holland describes "Industrial Capitalism" to which the ecclesial leaderships respond to as "that form of society which, having emerged from the Industrial Revolution, was based on the assumption that strategic guidance for political-economic organization of nature, human labor, and technology is best left to the free-market process of capital accumulation…. The guiding social principle of industrial capitalism may thus be described as the priority of the market. The market, in turn, is seen philosophically as driven by economic self-interest, or more narrowly for the business enterprise by the pursuit of profit. The market, in turn, is seen philosophically as driven by economic self-interest, or more narrowly for the business enterprise by the pursuit of profit" See Joe Holland, *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: The Popes Confront the Industrial Age 1740-1958* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 21.

[106] Holland, *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, 24.

Encyclical of Benedict XIV (1740)

Using the See-Judge-Act framework in responding to the challenges of capitalism at the local level, Benedict XIV[107] a scholarly and Pre-Leonine pope continued the reforms of the Council of Trent. His interest in improving clergy formation, episcopal residentiality,[108] and pastoral visitation as a response to the contextual situation,[109] necessitates his letter to all the bishops. This letter titled *Ubi primum*[110] "where first" concerns the duties of the bishops.

Encyclicals of Leo XIII (1879 and 1891)

Leo XIII (of the Leonine era), whose papacy ran from February 20, 1878 to July 20, 1903, addressed the challenges of his time by bringing the "church into dialogue with the modern world, but also challenging the modern world to live up to the standards of the gospel in terms of social justice."[111] Employing the See-Judge-Act framework, he established an important theological path way in addressing the challenges of his time in his *Aeterni Patris* "Of the Eternal Father" encyclical of 1879. In this encyclical as documented by Joe Holland, Leo XIII establishes "the intellectual base of the new papal strategy by ordering that the future of Catholic intellectual life be grounded on a revival of the philosophical-theological system of the medieval scholastics in general and Thomas Aquinas in particular."[112] Again, using the same methodological framework, his

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[107] Benedict XIV was born on March 31, 1675 and elected pope on August 17, 1740. His papacy ended on May 3, 1758. See *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 15th ed., s.vv. "Benedict XIV."

[108] Many bishops at Benedict XIV time were still living away from their dioceses. See Richard P. McBrien, *Lives of the Popes: The Pontiffs from St. Peter to John Paul II* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997), 322.

[109] Benedict XIV responds to the modern European Enlightenment with its new philosophy of liberalism. See Holland, *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, 1.

[110] This letter *Ubi primum* written on December 3, 1740 is generally regarded as the first papal encyclical. McBrien, *Lives of the Popes*, 322.

[111] McBrien, *Lives of the Popes*, 347.

[112] Holland, *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, 118.

famous encyclical *Rerum Novarum* "Of New Things" (published: May 15, 1891), considers as one of the most important and famous papal encyclicals on social justice, responds to the challenge of capital and labor.

Joseph Cardijn

Inspired by Leo XIII's popular encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, Joseph Cardijn,[113] known for his interest in social work and the improvement of workers, organized a Trade Union Movement and founded the Young Christian Workers (YCW) as a church movement, not only for creating awareness of the importance of social works, but also a way to emancipate and improve workers' condition. Through this movement, he publicly articulated[114] and popularized the Thomistic See-Judge-Act framework applied in Catholic Action movements. This model becomes a very useful theological framework especially for Liberation theologians particularly from Latin America.

Encyclicals of John XXIII (1961 and 1963)

The prophetic vision and insights of John XXIII in reading the signs of time also attests to the application of the See-Judge-Act methodological framework by the ecclesial leaders. John XXIII whose papacy ran from October 28, 1958 to June 3, 1963, released an encyclical – *Mater et magistra* "Mother and Teacher" of May 15, 1961 – which was a proposal by Cardinal Joseph Cardijn to mark the 70th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. In this encyclical, John XXIII "updated Catholic social teaching on property, the rights of workers, and the obligations of government. It also struck a balance between the

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[113] Joseph Cardijn was a Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church. Born in suburb of Brussels, Belgium on Nov. 13, 1882. The oldest son of working class Flemish parents – Henri and Louise Cardijn. He died in Louvain on 24 July, 1967. Berard L. Marthaler ed., *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., s.vv. "Cardijn, Joseph."

[114] Holland, "Introduction" In *The Pastoral Circle Revisited*, 9.

principles of subsidiarity and socialization."[115] His *Pacem in terris* "Peace on Earth" of

April 11, 1963, also based on the See-Judge-Act framework, with emphasis on the

recognition of the human rights and responsibilities as the foundation of peace in the

world, ushers in the second Vatican Council with the vision of reading the signs of time

and renewal in the light of the gospel message.

Encyclical of Pope Francis (2015)

Still within the realm of the use of the See-Judge-Act method by the ecclesial

leaders and identifying with the most recent development of the use of this

methodological framework, Pope Francis on Thursday June 18, 2015 released his

populous and challenging encyclical *Laudato Si*[116] "May You be Praised," calling for a

proper attention and care for the Earth as people share their lives with the Earth. Based on

this methodological framework, the Pope calls for an integral ecological conversion and

relationship, respecting not only the dignity of the human person as the center of God's

creation, but also other creatures, and the earth in particular. Francis also calls for action

oriented towards justice, identification with and liberation of the poor, which is the bone

of integral ecology. This action is a daily life affair, and by implication, a kind of

spirituality.

Latin America

Down the runs of the ladder, the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM)

held its regional conference in Medellin, Colombia in 1968, also adopted this

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[115] The principle of subsidiarity holds that "nothing should be done by a higher agency that can be done as well, if not better, by a lower agency." Socialization refers to the "growing interdependence of citizens in society requiring higher agencies, especially governmental, to meet the needs that otherwise could not be met by lower or voluntary agencies." McBrien, *Lives of the Popes*, 373.

[116] This encyclical takes its name from the invocation of St. Francis, "Praise be to you, my Lord," in his Canticle of the Creatures. See Pope Francis, *Laudato Si* (Vatican City, Italy: Libreria Editrice, 2015), no. 1.

methodological framework in their more progressive stance on global liberation, calling the Church for a preferential option for the poor.

Gustavo Gutierrez

A prominent Latin American theologian of the 20th century and founder of Liberation Theology, Gustavo Gutierrez applied the See-Judge-Act method popularized by Joseph Cardijn, in responding to his contextual theological thesis statement in the development of his Liberation theology. A Peruvian Catholic theologian and from the context of experiencing the oppressive and challenging situations of the Latin American populace, challenged the Church and its leadership on her gospel values and preferential option for the poor. Drawing from his experience and assessment of the prevailing poverty and oppressive situation in Peru and Latin America as a whole, he develops his liberation theology thesis centering on the fact that the life of the Church needs to reflect the teachings of the gospel message in the areas of social justice, option for the poor, liberation, and salvation. He challenges the Church of Latin America that rather than being an agent of social change and liberation, allies itself with the oppressive structures of the oppressors thus, perpetuating poverty the more. The Church from this perspective is also in need of liberation. He makes a connection between liberation and salvation. The practical way forward out of this situation from his perspective is the Church's identification and solidarity with the poor as a way of life, and only when this happens will there be authentic theological discussion on poverty and liberation hence bearing witness to the gospel message and mission of Jesus.[117]

Under the auspices of the practical application of the See-Judge-Act theological framework, the early Irish Spiritan missionary activity in southeastern Nigeria under the

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[117] Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1973), 302.

leadership of Joseph Shanahan applied this practical theology methodological framework as mentioned in the introductory chapter, in turning around the missionary strategy and activity which yielded a huge positive result in the evangelization of the Igbos.

Link with the Circle Method

The circle method as a theological method, as earlier mentioned is rooted in the See-Judge-Act[118] method which employs the principles of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) and prudence derived in right reasoning and judgment. This circle method has four movements enabling the right reasoning and judgment. Since the circle method is of importance to my work, I will discuss this method with the four movements as a subsection.

<div align="center">

The Circle Method

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As experience is fundamental to practical theology enterprise so experience is also applicable to the pastoral circle moments as the moments are reflections on lived human experience[119] which as Holland argues "looks at reality from an involved, historically committed stance, discerning the situation for the purpose of action."[120]

The story of the six Indostan blind men[121] who went to see an elephant resonates in my mind as I reflect on the various approaches to scholarship and pastoral issues. The experience of these six men offers a trajectory to accessing knowledge and truth, each of

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[118] The three steps of Cardijn became four: "see" was divided into *experience* (insertion leading to commitment to the marginalized) and social and cultural *analysis*. See Joe Holland, "Introduction" In *The Pastoral Circle Revisited: A Critical Quest for Truth and Transformation,* eds. Frans Wijsen, Peter Henriot, and Rodrigo Mejia (New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 9.

[119] Holland, *Social Analysis*, x.

[120] Holland, *Social Analysis*, 7.

[121] This is a common folk lore originating in the Indian subcontinent where six blind men went to see an elephant. Their description of the elephant was in disagreement as each felt and experienced the elephant differently. The folk lore is aimed at moral lessons of which one of them for the purposes of this study is that each separate step is incomplete on its own, but identified as an integral part of the whole, becomes formidable.

which are very essential and offer helpful insights, but at the same time limited in themselves. The conglomeration of these diverse and efficient pathways provides insights and creates a robust method of accessing knowledge, truth, and adequately addressing issues for action purposes. Inferring from this, skipping or doing away with any of the pathways, limits the accessibility of knowledge, truth, and adequately addressing the contextual issues for action purposes. The circle method can be seen from two different perspectives: academic oriented which is from a detached perspective and pastoral base which is from an involved perspective[122] for action purposes, hence the reference to it as "pastoral circle method." These two perspectives are relevant and applicable to this work.

The circle method rooted in the See-Judge-Act is reflected also in the "circle of praxis[123] as developed by Paulo Freire and the hermeneutic circle as elaborated by Juan Luis Segundo,"[124] and the pastoral circle of Henriot and Holland among other sources. As there are various practical theology scholars, so also there are other variations to this method.[125] The term "pastoral circle" is popular in the United States, Canada, and Africa while "pastoral cycle" is widely used in United Kingdom, Australia, and Asia, and "pastoral spiral" appears to be an exclusive term in Asia.[126] Despite the variations in nomenclature, however, all point to the same approach which I will like to refer to as a continuum. This method referred as such argues Joe Holland, "continues without final

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[122] The two approaches to social analysis can be applied to circle method. See Holland, *Social Analysis*, 7.
[123] "Circle of praxis" emphasizes the on-going relationship between reflection and action. Holland, *Social Analysis*, 8.
[124] Jon Sobrino, "Preface" In *The Pastoral Circle Revisited: A Critical Quest for Truth and Transformation,* eds. Frans Wijsen, Peter Henriot, and Rodrigo Mejia (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), xxi.
[125] Variations from other theologians include: Browning has descriptive and strategic planning; Osmer refers to it as four (empirical) tasks of Practical theology; and Whitehead and Whitehead refer to it as method of theological reflection, among other sources. See Don Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 16-18, 55. Richard Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, 4. James Whitehead and Evelyn Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 13.
[126] Sobrino, "Preface" In *The Pastoral Circle Revisited,* xxi.

conclusion. It is, in fact, more of a 'spiral' than a 'circle.' Each approach does not simply

retrace old steps, but breaks new grounds."[127] Hence, this method as Bryan Froehle holds

is structured in such a way that "it offers dynamic way of proceeding for theological

reflection, beginning and ending in action"[128] for which each of the movements within

the entire method are very much interconnected. Within this circle method, there are four

closely connected movements or meditations of experience: (1) insertion, (2) social

analysis, (3) theological reflection, and (4) pastoral planning.[129]

I conceive this method as circular and pastoral, and apply it as such, with insertion

as the entry point, for the simple understanding of the interconnectedness of the various

moments, in such a way that one moment flows from and into the other, and oriented

towards action. Hence, the end of one stage is the beginning of another stage. Pastoral or

strategic planning and action which is the fourth stage that completes the circle, forms the

stage of insertion for another course of study. The approach to this work follows the four

stage movement pattern of Holland and Henriot pastoral circle method. Chapter 1 deals

with the stage of insertion with my biases and context, and Chapters 3 and 4 deal with the

social analysis. Chapter 5 explores the stage of theological reflection and charts the path

to pastoral planning and action which inevitably forms the insertion for another course of

study.

Insertion

Insertion is the first moment of the movement within the circle method. This first

stage is of vital importance in addressing pastoral issues as it forms the foundation and

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[127] Holland, *Social Analysis*, 9.
[128] Bryan Froehle "The Revitalization Consultation Process and the Circle Method" Paper prepared for Manila, July 14-18, 2015, 4.
[129] Holland, *Social Analysis*, 7.

gives the clue to the "what" of the contextual issue at stake. This stage not only tells the story at first glance without judgment, but also seeks to understand the story as it employs attentive listening. While listening attentively to the story as it is told, discernment becomes an important process of identifying the issues at stake. Hence, according to Holland insertion is better described as the moment of identification—the moment of identifying "what people are feeling, what they are undergoing, [and] how they are responding"[130] to the contextual living human experience. In this stage of identification, the complex human reality also calls for identifying one's biases and position within the entire framework.

As a movement in practical theological method, there are variations to insertion. One of the variations describes this stage as a "descriptive-empirical task" in which gathering information that helps discern the patterns and dynamics of particular situations and issues becomes very helpful as it asks the question, what is going on here?[131] In the same vein, according to theologian James Whitehead "attending" as to "seeking out the information on a particular pastoral concern that is available in personal experience"[132] is another variation of insertion. All the variations conglomerate into gathering useful information about the issue at stake taking into account one's biases and assumptions.

The importance of insertion as an entry stage into practical theology knowledge acquisition inquiry and pastoral issues, cannot be overemphasized, and in particular, as it relates to my research work. Hence, it forms the foundation and the basis of achieving the objectives of the research. Crucial and critical questions within this stage that help in giving direction to my work rest on where am I locating myself and the issue at stake?

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[130] Holland, *Social Analysis*, 8.
[131] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4.
[132] Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 13.

With whom am I locating myself? And whose experiences are taking into consideration in this work? Taking a retrospective look at the introductory chapter regarding the moment of insertion in relation to this research work, I addressed the above questions as forming the bedrock and giving direction to my work. I identified the personal location and that of the issue at stake as rooted within the Igbo cultural society. According to Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* that, the roots of cultural crisis are deep,[133] Igbo cultural society and spirituality are influenced by those of the Irish hence, Irish cultural society and spirituality also form the locus of the issue at stake. Within this framework and experience of the Igbos, I identified multiple layers of both cultural and spiritual identities among the Igbo Catholics. I identified the Igbo traditional culture and spirituality, Irish culture, Irish Catholic Spiritan spirituality, and in my case, the American culture and spirituality also. Sometimes, there is "perfect" synchronization of the identities in question and in other case, a discord. Which of these is responsible for one's identity at each point in time? The moment of insertion becomes an important entry point into the research problem and questions. As an involved researcher, I resonate and identify with the insertion stage and situation, and become not only part of the problem, but also part of the solution.

Social Analysis

Having identified the issues at stake in the first stage, social analysis is the second moment of the circle method and an important tool for practical theology scholarship and pastoral action. Social analysis stage considers primary, secondary, and possibly other factors giving rise to the situation described in the insertion stage. Buttressing the causative action, Holland argues that the task of social analysis is to examine "causes,

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[133] Pope Francis, *Laudato Si* (Vatican City, Italy: Libreria Editrice, 2015), nos. 201 and 209.

probe consequences, delineates linkages, and identifies actors."[134] Understood from this point of view, social analysis moment includes important elements like history, culture, structures, divisions, levels of issues, their interrelationships, among many other elements that have a stake on the issues in question. Suffice it to say that sometimes one could be in haste to arriving at a desired objective without the appropriate pathway to achieving it thereby, truncating the process, the result thus becomes half measured, substandard, and less-desired. The basic goal of social analysis is to understand why and how the issue at stake developed to its present point. Two levels of approach to social analysis are identified: academic (detached) and pastoral (involved) social analyses.[135] This work is not limited to either, as right knowledge leads to better action and hence, a more developed and formed human person, and consequently a sustainable spirituality.

As there are various ways of understanding and approaching practical theology and theological issues, variations of social analysis exist. In addressing theological issues, practical theology seeks to understand and gain relevant knowledge into issues and hence, asks and digs into the question why is this going on?[136] This is also referred to as interpretive task which draws from the theories of arts and sciences to better understand the occurring patterns and dynamics.[137] Theologian Osmer argues that social analysis also invokes wisdom characterized by "thoughtfulness, theoretical interpretation, and wise judgment."[138] Assertion which brings all the perspectives gathered from various sources

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[134] Holland, *Social Analysis*, 8.
[135] Holland, *Social Analysis*, 7.
[136] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4.
[137] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4.
[138] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 82.

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into a lively and mutual dialogue of clarification[139] is also another variation of social analysis. In this case, the triangular model[140] of reflection becomes helpful.

The invaluable richness of social analysis cannot be underestimated in academic research and pastoral action. When adequate social analysis is undermined, knowledge and effective pastoral response or actions are compromised. Given the diverse nature of social analysis which helps in understanding the contextual realities and issues at stake, Chapters 3 and 4 apply this second moment of the circle method in which the horizons of my social analyses are the Igbo society in general with specific focus on distinctive key elements within the society, and the Irish cultural heritage as the secondary source of Igbo spiritual heritage. Applying the second moment of social analysis to my work which I limit to three broad areas of history, social location, and religious pattern and lived spirituality,[141] and the questions these areas evoke, these two chapters give a clearer understanding of the Igbo society in general.

The historical element which is important to social analysis forms the bedrock of understanding a society's past and creates the path for the possibility of change in the future. Hence, with reference to the Igbo society, the historical element asks the question where are the Igbos coming from and where are they going? This implies the question of origin and identity – who are the Igbos? In Chapter 3, I apply this historical element of social analysis by situating and localizing Igbo society within Nigeria and give a description of who they are. Linked to the historical question and understanding of Igbo society is also the Irish society described in Chapter Four.

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[139] Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 13.
[140] Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 6.
[141] The three broad divisions are adaptations from Joe Holland and Peter Henriot.

The second element of the social analysis is the social location within the society in question. At the heart of this second element of social analysis as described by Holland are the categories of "government, law, education, business, labor, church, family, etc."[142] These categories come under the umbrellas of economic pattern, political pattern, and social pattern within the society. As economy is the mainstay of any society and nation, the economic pattern looks at and asks questions relating to production, economic role in the contextual situation, and survival. What are the main sources of Igbo and Irish economy? What are the economic situations of the Igbo and Irish societies before and after the Irish evangelization of the Igbos? Of particular interest is did economy play important role in Irish missionary evangelization expedition to Igbo land?

From the political pattern perspective, the questions relating to power and authority within the society arise. What kind of leadership and governmental structures exist within the Igbo and Irish societies including colonization? Did political structure in Ireland play an important role in the Irish evangelization conquest of the Igbos? The institutionalized structure of the society centers on the pattern of life and cultural settings and institutions of both the Igbo and Irish societies. Hence within this context, the second element of social analysis focuses and questions the kind and impact of the pattern of life and cultural settings of both societies. What are the dominant cultural strains within these societies? I will explore these questions in Chapters Three and Four as a practical application of social analysis to my work and a way of understanding the realities at the disposal of this study.

The last element within the broader perspective of social analysis is religious pattern and lived spirituality. According to Holland, this element deals with the various

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[142] Holland, *Social Analysis*, 24.

divisions of the society – "race, sex, age, class, ethnicity, religion, geography,"[143] and

spirituality. Acknowledging the diverse divisions within a society and the peculiarities of

human societies, for the purposes of this study, I limit this exploration to the religion and

spirituality of the Igbo and Irish societies. For a clearer understanding and appreciation of

these societies under study, the question of religion focuses on what religions are

indigenous to the Igbo and Irish societies? Are there any other religious movements that

play important roles within these societies? How best can their spirituality be described?

Again, Chapters 3 and 4 explore in details these questions as they relate to the Igbo and

Irish cultural societies.

Theological Reflection

Theology and spirituality involve conversation and discussions centered on a

groups' understanding of God and their lived experience of God through their history.

With this in mind, adequate and effective pastoral and practical theological method,

involves theological reflection asking the theological questions: what is God saying to us

in this context? How does God want us to understand God's self in the encounter

between Igbo culture and Irish evangelization? When the social analysis stage is

effectively addressed, theological reflection becomes the third moment in the circle

method. Important concepts to the moment of theological reflection are analyzing,

meaning, interpretation, and understanding. Theological reflection articulates an effort

towards analyzing and understanding the lived human experience in the light of Christian

tradition, faith, and Scriptures.[144] This gives rise to a new way of responding to issues and

consequently a new way of living, as the revelation of God in whatever form, contains

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[143] Holland, *Social Analysis*, 27.
[144] Holland, *Social Analysis*, 9.

surplus of meaning[145] and as a matter of fact, has sacramental implications. Hence,

questions that might originate from this third moment will focus on these resources of

interpretation, meaning, and understanding. What theological or scriptural concepts and

meanings can be related to the thematic understanding of the Igbo and Irish cultures and

spirituality?

David Tracy's theological method and pluralism which emphasize the role of

interpretation and hermeneutics, offer us an important way of engaging in and utilizing

theological reflection in practical theology and pastoral issues. In this way, he sees the

task of the theologian as that of interpretation.[146] His analogical concept, plurality, and

classics create an important theological reflective framework as they are open to

interpretation which inevitably is important in meaning making and understanding. The

Igbo culture and Irish evangelization encounter raises the theological reflective questions:

what theological understanding seems to emerge from the exploration of the encounter

between Igbo culture and Irish evangelization? Within the Igbo-Irish encounter, how does

this situation challenge or expand specific understanding of Igbo cultural identity and

spirituality? Has colonization any theological effect?

Variations to theological reflection emerge owing to the different theological

contexts. It is also referred to as normative task understood from the perspective of

prophetic discernment grounded in divine disclosure,[147] which uses theological concepts

in interpreting and finding meaning to particular situations and events. Discernment in

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[145] Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 248.
[146] Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 236.
[147] Osmer was first introduced to the normative task of practical theological interpretation while an intern in clinical pastoral education (CPE) at Norwich State Hospital. He made extensive use of the case study and verbatim methods in which he wrote up particular episodes, or "critical incidents," and cases working with patients. Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 129-33.

this context, argues Osmer, is "the activity of seeking God's guidance amid the circumstances, events, and decisions of life."[148] Hence, the underlining question here from the normative task perspective within the religious framework becomes what ought to be going on?[149] Assertion is also another way of understanding theological reflection. However, Whitehead's triangular model of reflection (as noted above) will be incomplete without the religious tradition and experience. The assumptions here are that God is revealed in these three models of reflection and that the available religious information from each of the models is partial.[150] Suffice it to say that while Holland and Henriot as well as Osmer have four movements within the circle method, Whiteheads have three movements: the moment of assertion is split between social analysis and theological reflection.

In the first section of Chapter 5 which deals with theological reflection, I will explore in detail the following challenging and critical theological questions I raised in this section above: What is God saying to us in this context? How does God want us to understand God's self in the encounter between Igbo culture and Irish evangelization? What theological understanding seems to emerge from the exploration of the encounter between Igbo culture and Irish evangelization? Within the Igbo-Irish encounter, how does this situation challenge or expand specific understanding of Igbo cultural identity and spirituality? Responding to these theological questions with the resources of culture, Christian tradition, scripture, and experience, gives a sense of the theological understanding, interpretation, and meaning Igbo cultural society make of their lived experiences and encounter with the Irish Spiritan missionaries. It also enriches my

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[148] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 137.
[149] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4.
[150] Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 15.

scholarship in the understanding of other cultures and charting a path not only for my spirituality especially as an involved researcher, but also that of the Igbo society in general.

Pastoral Planning

The fourth moment of the circle method is pastoral planning. Since the circle method is an experience based reflection, a well-designed and effective pastoral plan, addressing practical theological issues flows and draws its strength from properly implementing, and navigating through the various moments of the circle method. Pastoral planning as the completion of the circle method is crucial as it empowers and moves towards decision and action in response to a particular situation hence, it is also referred to as strategic planning and action. Osmer argues that actions "are responses to action upon us [and] our responses are shaped by our interpretation of these actions which place particular episodes, situations, and context in larger wholes."[151] It follows that the question of what needs to be done which is at the center of pastoral planning, depends on what the contextual situation is all about and, the interpretation and meaning attached to the situation in question. The task of pastoral planning is to outline relevant strategies that not only address the issue at hand, but also revitalize the community, and in turn according to Holland bring "about a situation of new experiences. These experiences in turn call for further mediation through insertion, analysis, reflection, and planning. Thus, the pastoral circle continues without final conclusion."[152]

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[151] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 140.
[152] Holland, *Social Analysis*, 9.

The moment of pastoral planning described also as the pragmatic task with the primary focus of servant leadership,[153] asks the pragmatic and action based question how might we respond?[154] The challenge of this fourth moment Whitehead argues is to "translate insight into action. The effectiveness of this stage depends on the quality of earlier reflection."[155]

Drawing from the richness of the reflection of earlier moments, interpretation, and meaning gleaned from the theological problem at stake, in the second section of Chapter 5, I provide a direction for the "act" moment of the See-Judge-Act. In providing this direction, based on adequately explored and accessed earlier moments, I have at the fore front a direction that will be *sui generis*, a direction that will be revitalizing, and a direction that will be sustainable. Within the multiplicity of various cultural and spiritual identities that the Igbo populace experiences, I will conclude my work by charting the path of a pastoral plan for the *sui generis* Igbo cultural identity and spirituality for the twenty-first century and beyond.

Limitations and Merits of the Circle Method

One important scientific principle is the principle of cause and effect. Effects are proportionate to the cause that produces them. Method, an invaluable tool not only to practical theology enterprise, but also in academic and scientific inquiry, and the quest for knowledge, can be seen in the light of scientific principle of cause and effect. Adequately applied theological method yields the desired academic and pastoral response. Practical theology understood from the perspective of an academic discipline

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[153] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 175-218.
[154] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4.
[155] Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 16.

and a method, cannot achieve its objectives without theological methods. Each distinctive issue requires a method or approach relevant to it in addressing the issue at stake.

A critical examination of the circle method, indicates the circular or spiral nature of the method with the various moments seemingly interwoven hence, creating the difficulty in identifying the end of one moment and the beginning of another. Secondly, the circle method is presented as an approach or task best executed in a sequential form or order. This sequential order leaves room for no circumvention of the pathway and gives the impression or understanding as to the rigidity of the method rather than flexibility.

Besides other limitations of the circle method, its contributions to the academic and contextual human experience are overwhelmingly positive. From the academic and pastoral point of view, the circle method as designed creates room for a detached, an involved, or both positions in the research. However, the challenge here is for the researcher to be aware of one's biases and position and hence not to be a barrier on the way of scholarship and effective pastoral action.

Practical theology defined as both an academic discipline and a method in its quest for knowledge and transformative action, employing the circle method as one among other practical theological methods, creates the opportunity of a robust scholarly approach to knowledge and effective pastoral action. As practical theology also has as its objective, transformative action, circle method creates that pathway to effective transformative action as theology that is divorced from action is irrelevant[156] and needs to be rejected.

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[156] Wijsen, *The Pastoral Circle Revisited*, 108.

As experience is foundational and fundamental in practical theological discourse, the task of the practical theologian is not limited to interpretation, but also that of identifying various and individual voices. Within the various moments of the circle method, descriptive analysis plays helpful roles in identifying the individual, missing, and unheard voices.

The sequential nature of circle method leaves no room for circumvention. If properly and adequately applied, the process leads to a carefully crafted and well-designed strategic planning for a transformative action. Though challenging the path to transformative action may be however, it calls for the need for renewal as the prophetic vision of Pope John XXIII in reading the signs of time in the light of the gospel message, led to a transformative action in convoking the Second Vatican Council and consequently, a spirituality that addresses the needs of our time.

Though a seemingly rigorous and tactful method, however, in the light of the values of the circle method within the context of this study, my biases notwithstanding, I consider the circle method a far enriching, appropriate, and applicable method for my research work.

Truncating the Circle Method

Contextual human experiences show that some pastoral planning and decisions fall short of their desired response to the reality and challenging situations intended to address. One of the reasons among others[157] is identified as truncating the circle method to the point that identifying an issue at stake is one thing and the next line of action is planning on the action to be taken. Put in a simple way, asking the question what is going

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[157] Holland and Henriot identify several reasons for truncating the circle method as complex nature of society, changing nature of society, and social analysis as realm of the controversial among others. Holland and Henriot, *Social Analysis*, 17.

on leads to what needs to be done. This approach cuts off other integral and important aspects of this practical theological method in addressing contextual situations. Osmer argues that as priestly listening–an integral part of social analysis of the circle method is "needed in intercessory prayer and preaching, it is also needed in teaching, pastoral care, and other forms of ministry,"[158] so also other moments of the pastoral circle methods are essential for adequate and effective pastoral planning and action. In conceiving this theological method as circular and pastorally oriented towards action, the theologian is left with little or no option for circumventing the process other than to apply sequentially this method in its entirety as to achieve the desired and sustainable response.

In brief, I traced the pastoral circle method rooted in the see-judge-act theological method back to Aristotle's concept of *phronesis* known as "practical wisdom." Aquinas retrieves in a Christian way, Aristotle's concept of phronesis and translates this concept as *prudencia* "Prudence," describing it as having three steps linked to see-judge-act. This step became a practical theological framework and method used by Church leadership, theologians, and beyond in addressing contextual pastoral issues. I also described in details, each of these various steps of the pastoral circle method and their application in my study. The next two Chapters – Three and Four – will describe in details, the various elements of the second step in the pastoral circle method in reference to the social analysis stage.

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[158] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 37.

CHAPTER THREE

Igbo Cultural Identity and Spirituality

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi he put this question

to his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of man is?' And they said,

'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of

the prophets.' 'But you,' he said, 'who do you say I am?' Then Simon

Peter spoke up and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'[159]

Introduction and General Overview

The concept and question of personal or group identity[160] attracts a wider

discussion. A biblical scholar holds that there are three ways[161] of responding to identity

questions while anthropologists respond to this question from two perspectives - *emic* and

etic.[162] The biblical scholar's first two approaches to the question parallel the

anthropologists' *emic* and *etic* approaches. However, the third approach, which

investigates the ontological identity, seems difficult if not impossible to identify. The

thick description method of practical theology is employed in discussing the Igbo story

from both the *emic* and *etic* perspectives. The fundamental question in this chapter is:

who am I as an Igbo person? Put in a broader perspective, what does it mean to be an

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[159] Matt. 16: 13-16 (The New Jerusalem Bible).

[160] Identity question within the context of this work, rests on who am I? Who are you? All in the bid to draw attention to individual or group's roots, diversity and complexity of the human person.

[161] Ernest Munachi Ezeogu points out the three ways of responding to the identity question include: The first is who people think you are; the second is who you think you are and the third is who actually you are. The first two may not really describe in toto one's identity and is described by philosophers as phantom but, the last describes one's real identity. Dr. Ernest Munachi Ezeogu, lecture delivered at Spiritan International School of Theology, Attakwu, Nigeria in 1994.

[162] "Anthropologists have coined the terms *emic* and *etic* identities, by which is meant the identity a particular group holds with respect to itself and that which others place on it. This is an important distinction that has far reaching consequences, especially with regard to early historical periods. After all, many or even most of the cultural and ethnic categories that historians habitually employ function at the *etic* level and not at the *emic* one at all." Oliver Davies, *Celtic Spirituality: The Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 5.

Igbo person rather than from another cultural group? This chapter, while including the review of various literatures, explores the thematic approach to the Igbo story: cultural identity and spirituality at the time of encounter with colonization and evangelization. While pointing out the relevance of this study, and forming the basis and context for achieving and charting the part for Igbo cultural identity and spirituality, the goal of this chapter is an understanding and contextualization of Igbo society within a global picture with the view of identifying and responding to the question of the sources of individual or a group's identity and spirituality. This chapter brings out a clearer understanding and identity of the Igbos. In addition to my identity as belonging to this group, other primary texts for this chapter include: *Things Fall Apart; Igbo History and Society; Traditions of Igbo Origin; The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria; Patterns of Culture;* and *African Traditional Religion: A Definition.*

I explore in this chapter, the geographical location of the Igbos within the context of Nigeria as a country. Also, I explore the Igbo society from a thematic perspective which includes three broader categories of historical elements, social location, and religious pattern and lived spirituality. From the historical elements of the exploration, the questions relating to Igbo origin and identity will be addressed. Social location explores Igbo society from three categories–economic patterns, political patterns, and social patterns. The economic pattern looks at and asks questions relating to production, the role of economy in the contextual situation, and survival. What are the main sources of the Igbo economy? What was the economic pattern of Igbo cultural society before the evangelization of the Igbos? Did the economy play an important role in the Irish missionary evangelization expedition to Igbo land? This question will be addressed in

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details in the next chapter. The political pattern looks at leadership and governmental structures existing within Igbo society while the social pattern looks at the relational pattern and cultural pattern within Igbo society. What are the dominant cultural traits within Igbo society? Finally, the last broader element of religious pattern and lived spirituality will explore the religion and spirituality prevalent within Igbo society. What religion and spirituality are indigenous to Igbo society? Are there any other religious movement and spirituality that play important roles within the Igbo society?

Geographical Location

Igbo society constitutes an integral part of Nigeria as a whole. Nigeria belongs to the continent of Africa within the West African region. The country is bound in the North by Niger, South by the Gulf of Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean, East by Chad and Cameroon, and in the West by Benin. Nigeria was colonized and ruled by the British in the 1800s until her independence in 1960, and experienced a civil war from 1967 to 1970. The country is populated by about 177.156 million in 2014 with about over 500 tribal or ethnic groups of which Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba are the major ethnic groups within these larger ethnic or tribal groups.[163] Presently, Nigeria has thirty-six states and the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja). Within these thirty-six states, Igbo ethnic group occupies five states.

It is of utmost importance to mention by way of concision, a general overview of this cultural society and some of the historical challenges facing such traditions. This culture is more of an oral, non-documenting than documenting tradition understood by way of storytelling. A popular and succinct way of describing and passing on the cultural practice and tradition is "tales by moonlight." Tales by moonlight explains and captures

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[163] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 15th ed., s.v. "Nigeria."

vividly the atmosphere where all the village children of certain age groups have their

moonlight play and recreation. Nigerian novelist, Chinua Achebe describes this setting as

where "the happy voices of children playing in the open fields would be heard. And

perhaps those not so young would be playing in pairs in less open places, and old men

and women would remember their youths. As the Ibo say: when the moon is shining the

cripple becomes hungry for walk."[164] Within this setting, stories with both ethical and

moral contents, and their implications are told. The culture and tradition are transmitted

orally to the younger and growing generations. The challenges of documenting such an

oral culture cannot be underestimated. Tony Falola argues that, "it is difficult to

reconstruct the early history of a preliterate and acephalous people. Those who seek to do

so can easily fall victim to either wild romanticism or sterile scepticism [sic]. These two

dangers have been among the main obstacles to the proper study of the history of the

Igbo-speaking peoples of southeastern Nigeria, and until a decade or so ago those who

made excursions into this subject were ensnared by the one or the other mistake."[165] As

Falola describes, "Igbo precolonial history and culture remain an imponderable,"[166] and

as such, most of the written texts evolving from the oral tradition on the culture began

mostly with colonization and especially from the 19th Century[167] hence, the cultural

society under discussion here centers around the 19th Century and beyond following

colonization and the evangelization of the Igbos.

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[164] Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart: 50th Anniversary Edition* (New York: Anchor Books, 1994), 10.
[165] Tony Falola, ed., *Igbo History and Society: The Essays of Adiele Afigbo* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2005), 167.
[166] Falola, ed., *Igbo History and Society*, 32.
[167] There is however an earliest memoir on Igbo society published in 1789 by an ex-slave. See John N. Oriji, *Traditions of Igbo Origin: A Study of Pre-Colonial Population Movements in Africa* (New York: Peter Lang Publishers, 1990), 14.

Igbo culture and tradition is more, static than dynamic in its practices, especially within this timeframe as migration was an uncommon phenomenon before colonization and evangelization. However, with migration resulting from colonization and evangelization, some if not most of the cultural practices attained a dynamic rather than static nature as some rituals were either modified or dropped off completely. This is as a result of cross cultural interaction necessitated by migration. In translating an oral culture and tradition into documenting form, some challenges and limitations become evident. First, there is a transitional gap between these two forms consequently, creating some difficulties in assigning timeline to historical data and events. Despite the fact that archeological findings[168] have the Igbos as settling in Igbo land around 2000 BCE, this challenge and limitation is the case with the Igbo cultural society.

Communication is key to understanding a group, thus one means of communication and expression is language. Within the domain of communication and language, there is verbal and nonverbal communication and language. Given this context then, oral, expressive and non-verbal languages are difficult to be communicated and understood in another form other than that for which it is intended. Any effort to translate such into written form, amounts to a difficult task and also runs the risk of losing its meaning. The same also is applicable to oral communication from one language and translating same in written form to another language. Igbo culture and language faces the same challenge as it is more of the language of expression than written or documenting culture. Suffice it to point out that most of the documented traditions of Igbo culture are the products of post colonization era. Despite the challenges and limitations of understanding Igbo culture historically, it is still important to begin the study from some

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[168] Oriji, *Traditions of Igbo Origin,* 14-15.

point in history. Hence, the choice of the 19th century synchronizing with both

colonization and Igbo evangelization, which are at the heart of this study, becomes

intentional.

Historical Element of the Igbo Society

The Igbos are located in the southeastern part of Nigeria and form one of the three

major ethnic groups in the country. They occupy five states: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi,

Enugu, and Imo. The historical discussion of Igbo society first and foremost brings to the

fore front, the meaning of the name "Igbo" ascribed to this cultural group. As reminiscent

of other words, the name has been interpreted differently among scholars of different

fields of study. One meaning attached to the name "Igbo" describes the word as "forest

dwellers" however, an outstanding meaning of the word, and perhaps adding to the

identity of the group, describes the word "Igbo" as "a community of people" and "the

people,"[169] and as such, the Igbos are described by John Oriji as "a people who speak a

common language and occupy a contiguous territory. They also evolved similar political

and cultural institutions and worshipped common gods."[170] From this perspective, it is

important to note that what is said about the Igbo in one state of the nation is applicable

to the rest from the other four states of the country. However, this does not imply that

special tribal or dialectical characters do not exist as there are splinters of ethnic

characters within Igbo land.

The historical origin of the Igbos remains an important aspect of the integral part

of Igbo cultural group to be addressed by scholars of Igbo history. Various accounts of

the origin of Igbo cultural group have been put forward ranging from the Jewish and

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[169] On the meaning of "Igbo," see: Oriji, *Traditions of Igbo Origin*, 2.
[170] Oriji, *Traditions of Igbo Origin*, 4.

Egyptian hypothesis of the origin of the Igbos to other theories of origin, including

originating from no other place than from within themselves.[171] The possible Jewish

origin hypothesis of the Igbos, may have arisen as a result of some current identifiable

cultural similarities between these two cultures. If this hypothesis is upheld, it leaves one

with the question and responsibility of accounting for other non-similar cultural traits and

characteristics. These various theories of Igbo origin make concerted efforts in tracing the

origin and root of Igbo culture, and are at the same time relevant in identifying and

situating the Igbos within the geographical location of the universe, nevertheless, these

theories are not in accord with a particular origin of the Igbos. Hence, the question of

their historical origin remains to be addressed as roots are important elements in cultural

identity and spirituality. Taking into account that one of the earliest, if not the earliest

published memoirs on Igbo society by an ex-slave was in 1789, the more intelligible

conclusion to be drawn from the various origin hypotheses, is that Igbos originated from

and have their roots or origin anchored in some where perhaps, may have been lost on

transit, untraceable, or along the line of historical development. Addressing the question

of the historical origin of the entire Igbo cultural group may be a difficult task,

nevertheless, it is not out of place to associate the origin of this cultural group with

another cultural group sharing similar cultural characteristics. The challenges surrounding

the question of Igbo origin notwithstanding, it is however important to understand the

quest of Igbo origin as a necessary part toward self-understanding and a prelude to

addressing contextual human situations and challenges.

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[171] See S. Okechukwu Mezu and T. Uzodinma Nwala, eds., *Igbo Nation: History, Challenges of Rebirth and Development Vol.1* (Maryland: Black Academy Press, 2014), 99-105; See also Oriji, *Traditions of Igbo Origin*, 14-16.

Three different periods can be identified within Igbo historical developments. The first is the pre-colonial period; the second is the colonial period beginning from the occupation of the country by the British to the period of independence in 1960; while the third is the post-colonial period from the period of independence to the present. The limitations and challenges aforementioned as to the timeframe of these periods within this cultural society become applicable. The focus of this work is not to give a chronological historical development of events within Igbo land, rather, to describe the elements of cultural identity and spirituality. Hence, the periods from the 19th Century regarded as the colonial era within Igbo society to the present, fall within the framework of this study.

Colonization and its Impact on Igbo Culture

The history of the Igbos from their origin as mentioned earlier is a difficult task for the reasons already mentioned however, the story of the Igbos have to start from somewhere as the journey of a thousand miles begins with a step. There is no doubt that the British colonization of the Igbos in the 1800s played important role in Igbo history and development.

As an oral and non-documenting cultural tradition, it is difficult to cite exactly when Igbo cultural society came under the colonial rule of the British as some documentations or publications of such were either colonial or postcolonial era, and perhaps only from an etic perspective.[172] However, various opinions have emerged as to when this cultural group came under British rule either in the nineteenth or twentieth century. The prominent view describes Igbo cultural society as coming under British colonial rule in the first decade of the twentieth century with the British having little or

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[172] This view is attested to in a statement read out by F.D.L. who after the Igbo and the British encounter, "have come to hold a different opinion. I now regard books in that tradition [Igbo] as pious nonsense." See Falola, *Igbo History and Society,* 363.

no knowledge of Igbo traditional political institution.[173] This occupation of Igbo land by the British, which was not without struggle and resistance by the Igbos,[174] entails a lot of adjustments and restructurings including as Falola describes, the

> establishment of a new line of judicial redress, starting from the Native Courts to the Supreme Court, and this under-cut the position of Ibinokpabi (the Long Juju) as the highest court of appeal for the people. This evoked vociferous complaints from the Aro. From the British side there was the fear that as long as this famous oracle was in existence there was bound to be a group of incorrigible conservatives who would always side-track the new judicial system in favour [sic] of it. [Hence] it is not without some justification that Crowther has pointed out that the British destroyed the Long Juju not only because it encouraged slave raiding but because it represented a rival source of authority.[175]

The impacts of colonization can be viewed from these two perspectives: adverse and positive effects. I will draw very few examples from both aspects. The aberration and destruction of some vital aspects of Igbo cultural system (sacredness of the land, some religious beliefs, and way of life – especially polygamy) as mentioned briefly in Chapter 1 and above, and will be discussed to some length in the next chapter can be identified as an adverse impact of colonization. This implies the destruction of a group's identity as their values are no longer held in high esteem.

With industrial development which is as a result of colonization, farming for which the people were known, was given up due to scarcity of farm lands. The offshoot

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[173] Victor C. Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1965), 46.

[174] For the forms and patterns of Igbo resistance against the British, see Falola, *Igbo History and Society*, 341-48.

[175] Falola, *Igbo History and Society*, 323.

of this is emigration and dispersion of families destroying the community living which is at the heart of Igbo cultural society. Industrialization to some extent brought about some level of impoverishment as farming which is the main economic stay of the society was abandoned for trading, and working in the industries and agriculture was regarded as the poor people's occupation.

There is no doubt that whatever has adverse effects also has positive effects. The positive effects of Igbo experience of colonization cannot be underestimated. Despite the fact that colonization brought about emigration and the disintegration of families, its positive effect is exposure to the global cultural world, giving rise to civilization and development. From a personal and emic perspective, experiencing the world from different perspectives and beyond myself, has tremendously impacted my acquisition of knowledge and experience. Hence, enhancing my personal formation and spiritual growth. Drawing from the above, one important positive Igbo experience of colonization is the gift of Western education which is like a unifying factor of people from every race and nation. From the religious perspective in addition to the gift of education, is the gift of Christian religion as another way of understanding, living, and interacting with people in the world.

From a contextual emic perspective, and doubled as one who also benefitted positively from the above, colonization has been of immense help to me in particular, in appreciating my cultural and traditional values, identity, and spirituality and at the same time, serves as a wakeup call for a continuous search for a more sustainable spiritual identity and retrieval of one's cultural heritage.

Social Location

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The second broader category for which Igbo cultural group will be explored and understood is its structures. Generally, every society has structures within the context of the society that define its parameters, give shape to the society, help in identifying, and maintaining the status quo within the society. These structures also facilitate not only the administrative components of the society but also other aspects that revitalize and give meaning to the society. Within this framework, Igbo cultural society will be explored under the following three subheadings: economic pattern, political pattern, and social pattern.

Economic Patterns

Economy is said to be the mainstay of any society or nation. A nation or society that cannot provide and sustain itself and its populace is bound to collapse. Igbo economic patterns and activity can be described as having at least two phases. The first phase can be described as the pre-colonial known as foraging and cultivating period. The second phase, the colonial and post-colonial era is described as trading and industrial era. In the first phase, Igbos earn their living through foraging and farming, hence agrarians. The farming here is that of direct labor as opposed to mechanized farming. "The Igbo have a root crop economy. Yam, cassava (manioc), and many varieties of cocoyam (taro) are the chief staples and provide the bulk of the population with the most subsistence needs. No meal is considered to be complete without at least one or two of them. These staples have a high yield which is offset to some extent by their long growth period. Only one crop is possible in a year's farming cycle. Their profitable cultivation requires abundant land and cheap labor."[176] This occupation and economic system of survival among other reasons, account for the embrace of polygamy as a way of living that

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[176] Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria,* 22.

guarantees the raising of many children as it affords the family the opportunity of having enough human resource to work on the family's large acres of farmlands as is the situation with Okonkwo. A family's wealth is determined not only by the large acres of landed property, but also the ability to feed and care for the needs of the large number of children within the household who work on the farms.

Gradually, with colonization, industrial development sets in and lands became limited ushering in the second phase of the Igbo economic pattern. In this second phase, "trading has become an important source of livelihood for the Igbo. It is no longer possible for them to maintain their present standard of living by depending entirely on their agriculture. There are some Igbo communities where trading has superseded farming in importance, but the prestige attached to the farmer who grows his own food is still high."[177] The limited available lands for farming became sterile as they are put into use all year round hence, yielding poor harvests. With colonization, roads and factories came to be built necessitating expansion, fewer farm lands, importation, and exportation of products. People began to shift their attention from farming to trading not only in agricultural products, but also in industrial products. Presently, greater percentage of Igbo families who take to farming are doing so basically on a very low scale to serve only the needs of the immediate family, as the main source of their economy is trading and industrialization. Industrialization brings in the question of labor and production, and the role of economy in relation to family living. As farming was abandoned due to the limitedness of farmlands, in addition to the very low desired yield, this second stage in relation to the first, raises an important question and concern as to what happens to the populated families needed to work in the farms. This is of vital importance especially as

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[177] Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria*, 27.

the increase in birth rate intended for enough human resources for the farms, does not

necessitate or guarantee a commensurate increase in land acquisition during the second

phase. What is the way out of this situation? Necessity is said to be the mother of

invention. An important inventive way out of this situation expressed itself in population

movements and emigration. It is important also to note that their migrant propensity and

nature gives meaning to the name or phrase within the cultural group *O je mba enwe iro*

"a traveler or sojourner incurs no enemies."

Political Patterns

The second subsection of the societal structures is the political patterns. In this

section, the kingship and leadership pattern of the Igbo cultural society as a way of

understanding the group is explored. Two separate views throw light and weight to the

leadership pattern among the Igbos. However, any of these views is validated taking the

context into account. The proverb *Igbo ama eze* or (depending on the accent or dialect)

Igbo enwe eze "Igbos know no king" or "Igbos have no King," expresses the opinion of

the first view, describing Igbo society as acephalous. This view expresses the notion of

leadership in Igbo land not from a negative perspective as portrayed, but from the view

that each individual in the long run, becomes responsible for themselves. Hence,

leadership pattern from this perspective rests on the individual.

Since Igbos live in community whereby the priority of the community is

expressed and emphasized over and above that of the individual, their political pattern

and structure parallels their pattern of living. The second view parallels the leadership

structure in line with their community living. These proverbs: *onye fee eze, eze ero ya* "if

one respects or honors the king or elder, one will in turn become a king someday," and

nwata kwocha aka, o soro okenya rie ihe "a child who washes the hands clean, eats with the elders," acknowledge the communitarian dimension and the leadership structural pattern within Igbo cultural society. Hierarchy of power is prevalent and respected among the Igbos with the town having the superior power over the village down to the clan, extended family, and family. The least in rank is the court of first instance with reference to resolution of issues. Within the cultural society, there are traditional titled men called *Ndi Ichie*, whose responsibility it is to maintain law and order within the society and to resolve disputes and issues among the people as they arise. This political pattern affirms not only that there is a leadership pattern in Igbo land before colonization, but also attests to the pattern of leadership existent within the community then. This leadership pattern became of immense help during the colonial period as it facilitated the divide and rule system of the colonizers.

Social Patterns

In addition to maintaining economic and political values, every society has a structure and pattern around which it organizes its life and relationship in order to accommodate, project, and maintain its values. Igbo society is not isolated from such institutionalized structures and pattern of life. These social patterns that communicate the cultural values and identity of the Igbos will be explored under relational patterns of life and cultural patterns.

Relational Patterns of Life. In this subsection, I will explore the Igbo pattern of life from the perspectives of tribal life, clan, family, communication and language pattern, and various institutions. Igbos consider themselves tribal people–descent from a common ancestor, and congruent to the meaning of their name as a community of people,

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is the pattern of life they live–a contiguous, simple, down to earth, natural, and communitarian life. This tribal pattern of life gives them their identity.

In this tribal pattern of life lies the identity of the individual as projected in the identity of the community hence, the saying that *igwe bu ike* "unity is strength." The individual identity does not exist without that of the community. This is not to say that the individual is nothing to write home about rather, a way of placing emphasis on priorities hence, the emphasis on the priority of the community over the individual. As people belonging to the same tribe, they live in communal relationship with one another and become one another's keeper hence, the child belongs not only to the immediate family, but to the community. Part of the responsibility of tribe is to foster unity, maintain, and propagate the cultural values within the society. In matters pertaining to the cultural group, the tribe is the final arbiter and authority figure, while the relationship bonds are stronger within the clan and strongest within the various families.

The clan referred to as *umunna*, is next to the tribe in the order of dignity and importance. Clan is composed of various extended families. One of the conditions of belonging to a particular clan is the propensity of the various families in question tracing their ancestral roots to a common ancestor, other than that, the families would not belong to the same clan. The clan shares similar authority and responsibilities with the tribe but at a lower level. Belonging to a clan is not an individual option or a choice, rather one is born into it. However, as growth in population is a rapid phenomenon within the cultural setting, there is the provision of larger clans (due to growth in population) to split up and form more clans. Nevertheless, the newly formed clans must consist of families with the same ancestral roots at least to a certain generation.

The family that is the next and least in the order of lineage, consists of biological parents and children. Despite the fact that children belong generally to the community and society at large, primarily, they belong to their respective biological families who shoulder the responsibility of their upbringing and upkeep. The family is the first and primary place children learn their cultural identity, morality, and spirituality. Hence, their parents are their first teachers in this regard, and as they grow up, the environment and society also help to model their experiences. This is typical of the lad Ikemefuna as he takes on the contextual societal framework he found himself in while growing up in Okonkwo's family.[178] Anthropologists attest to the important role of environment and society in the development of a child as Ruth Benedict describes, "From the moment of his birth the customs into which he is born shape his experience and behaviour. By the time he can talk, he is grown and able to take part in its activities, its habits are his habits, its beliefs his beliefs, its impossibilities his impossibilities. Every child that is born into his group will share them with him, and no child born into one on the opposite side of the globe can ever achieve the thousandth part."[179] As mentioned earlier, Igbo culture is androcentric. Within this family setting, the father is considered the head of the family with the responsibility of providing a solid economic and financial base for the family, and sets up the standard and direction for the family. The mother has the responsibility of caring for the entire family while the children assist the mother in the household chores. The mother of the family is also burdened with the responsibility of training the children in morals and ethical behavior. If the society through association and relationships, impacts negative moral and ethical values on the child, the mother takes the responsibility

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[178] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 27-28.
[179] Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (New York: Mariner Books, 2005), 3.

of addressing the situation. From this perspective, if a child is properly trained, the child is said to be trained by the father and the father takes the glory, but if the child is lacking in morals and discipline, the mother takes the blame. Suffice it to say that whatever good that the family experiences is attributed to the father's hard work while the lacks are ascribed to the mother's incompetence or negligence. This draws attention to the concept and understanding of masculine and feminine genders as linked to strong and weak, good and bad concepts and categories respectively, leaving one with the scriptural and spiritual question that if "God saw that it [creation] was good,"[180] why the delineation of masculine and feminine genders as good and bad respectively?

This delineation attests to the ways of communication and expression. Igbos have a pattern of communication and ways of expression. They speak a common language called Ibo with some accents due to ethnic variations. Ibo language is more of a gesture and expressive language of communication than written language. Hence, it becomes difficult writing a gestural communicative language or translating it into a written language. In this case, there will be gap or difficulty in expression and communication. In relation to English language, and among scholars, it is a known fact that with all good intent, sometimes the Igbo person speaks their native language all in the name of speaking the English language. This is evident as they transliterate the native language into English using the equivalent native words in English. Igbos communicate verbally in language and non-verbally using body language and sensual expressions or what I call expressive language. Their verbal communication in words is sometimes, if not most often, done either in parables or proverbial sayings as it is culturally said that *ilu bu mmanu ndi Igbo ji eri okwu* "proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten by the

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[180] Gen. 1:31 (The New Jerusalem Bible).

Igbos" simply put, proverbs are ways of speaking and expression by the Igbos hence, proverbs pose a challenge to the non-initiate in understanding whatever conversation that is going on. This art of communication (through proverbs) among the Igbos is of high repute as one could communicate a lot sometimes in few words or draw attention to some uncanny situations, events, or episodes within the society without demeaning, disrespecting anyone or mentioning names. Achebe describes this art of communication thus:

> Having spoken plainly so far, Okoye said the next half a dozen sentences in proverbs. Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten. Okoye was a great talker and he spoke for a long time, skirting round the subject and then hitting it finally. In short, he was asking Unoka to return the two hundred cowries he had borrowed from him more than two years before. As soon as Unoka understood what his friend was driving at, he burst out laughing. He laughed loud and long and his voice rang out clear as the *ogene*, and tears stood in his eyes. His visitor was amazed and sat speechless.[181]

Suffice it to say that the non-initiate can be physically present and attentive in a meeting or gathering without knowing what discussions and communications that are going on. Non-verbal communication among the Igbos takes the form of body or sensual expressions which generally communicate messages peculiar to the culture, and different in other contexts. An example is drawn from an Igbo institution of respect for elders. A non-verbal communicative way of respect while an elder is speaking to or with a younger

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[181] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 7.

person is for the younger person to make no eye contact whatsoever with the elder. A younger person making an eye contact with an elder during conversation communicates disrespect whereas in some other contexts, not making an eye contact during communication indicates been economical with the truth. Within Igbo society, various institutions shape the relational pattern of life. These include: age group, sex, marriage, and race among others. For the purposes of brevity and relevance, I will like to limit the discussion here to two of these institutions: age group and marriage.

An important feature in Igbo society is that it is characterized by class or age groups. In some ethnicities, only males belong to age groups while in others it is open to both male and female. Nevertheless, every person whether male or female must belong to a group according to their gender, but prominent among these groups is the age group. People born within a certain age bracket or range, form an age group from the puberty stage or adulthood upwards to the oldest within the society. Age is well respected and as such, old age is regarded not only an embodiment of wisdom and knowledge for the younger generations to draw inspiration from, but also a blessing. Hence younger generations look forward to their becoming old to earn the respect and reverence of the younger generations. This respect is not without hard work.

Another vital characteristic feature and an important relational pattern within the society is marriage. Within the Igbo cultural context, engaging in marriage is a sign of mature adulthood and requires traditional ritual to pass on to this stage. Marriage in this context is between a man and a woman and as mentioned earlier, for the purpose of procreation. The marriage ceremonies (there are various rituals and ceremonies that accompany this institution and relational pattern) embody in themselves, a whole lot of

rituals to be performed in the bride's family. The rituals and ceremonies could number at least two or three visits to the bride-to-be family with the traditional palm wine and kolanut (in addition to other items). The final ceremony which involves a much bigger crowd with the official presentation of the bride and groom to both in-laws also takes place in the bride's family home with the payment of the dowry or bride price by the groom. Traditionally, once the bride price is paid, the bride is engaged however, the bride price does not necessarily mean that the bride is sold. The climax of the ceremony lies in the handing over of the new bride to the husband which traditionally recognizes the couple as married and hence concludes the ceremony upon which the bride departs her family house to begin a new home with the husband. The marriage rite establishes a relationship bond between both families.

Within the cultural settings, pattern of life, and institutions within Igbo society as relational patterns, various traits can be identified as dominant cultural identity. Among these dominant traits include the superiority (superiority in this context does not in any way indicate the inferiority of the other) and priority of the community over the individual. Stemming from their contiguous pattern of life, it is also important to identify the core of the Igbo identity as communitarian living. The hospitality which they are noted for, also draws its strength from their communitarian living.

In the light of the migrant nature of the Igbos, the consequent effect of this migration and the resulting impact on the migrants' roots (cultural interaction giving rise to loss, gain, or enrichment) where the world is seen as a global village aiding cultural interaction, this new context forms part of the constituents and sources of one's or group's heritage and identity. Relevant literatures point to Igbo cultural identity as

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products of their cultural roots and societal interaction. In the light of this, the question is, "What is a sustainable *sui generis* cultural identity of the Igbos in the current dispensation?"

Cultural Patterns. Every culture has ways of keeping itself alive and transmitting its tradition. These cultural settings within a society throw more light in understanding the society in question. Some of these cultural patterns to be explored include: myth, hospitality, and music. In these cultural pattern and settings, a critical question arises: what are the dominant cultural traits?

Within a cultural setting, myth functions as a way of passing on the cultural and moral values of a group, explains, and communicates the rationale behind some of the cultural practices within the society. Igbo society is not an exception. Igbo culture dwells heavily on myth in communicating belief system, values, ethical, and moral principles and practices. In this way, myth functions as a foundational basis for some of the belief system and practices within the cultural society. This buttresses the point that behind every practice, there is a theory behind it hence, practices are theory laden.[182] Both theory and practice are intimately connected and cannot be separated. Some of the myths may have less of a theological basis for their existence and the message intended to communicate, but serve their purposes. Like the Jews who develop their own myth correlating with their practice of not eating the sciatic nerve of an animal based on their ancestor Jacob who wrestled with an angel,[183] the Igbos on their own part, have similar myths communicating their belief system and practices. These myths also add to the philosophical, theological, experiential, and spiritual values of the people in question. As

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[182] See Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology,* 9.
[183] Gen. 32:23-33 (The New Jerusalem Bible).

Igbo society relies on proverbs for communication, so also myth is depended upon as a means of transmitting the belief systems. One of such myths include: "a snake was never called by its name at night, because it would hear. It was called a string."[184] Other harmful and dangerous creatures are also not mentioned by names at night or else they would show up and perhaps do some harm to the individual as their space was invaded. This communicates the belief that there is order in the universe and each creature has a designated time and role allotted to them, hence any encroachment or invasion into the other's space creates disorder, anarchy, and some sort of violence and distortion. Through myths, some ethical, cultural, moral principles, values, and practices are inculcated and passed on to the next generation, including the values attached to hospitality.

Igbos, and in general, Africans, are well known for their hospitality. Hospitality is one of the key cultural identities of the Igbos. Their concept of hospitality rests on attending to and treating the other with respect and dignity. This concept of hospitality resonates not only with the golden rule of "doing to others what you would want them do to you," but also with the Christian scriptural injunction of treating and taking care of strangers "for by doing this, some people have entertained angels without knowing it."[185] Igbos have a tremendous spirit of welcoming in their culture. At early childhood, children are taught by their parents to learn not only how to receive, but more importantly, how to give and welcome people. One of their hospitality rituals is centered on the reception of visitors and strangers. Visitors are always welcomed in Igbo culture. There is no right time to pay a visit to someone as "the feeling of togetherness among the people surpasses

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[184] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 9.
[185] Heb. 13:2 (The New Jerusalem Bible).

all forms of formal invitations."[186] When someone visits a house or family in Igbo

culture, the guest is first and foremost received into the house and the host offers the

guest a seat. Pleasantries are exchanged including inquiring about the guest's wellbeing.

The host then presents to the guest a kolanut – a symbol of life, unity, love, and a sign of

welcome – and asks the guest to feel at home here for it is also the quest's home. One of

the key important and rich symbols of Igbo cultural hospitality lies in the kolanut. The

kolanut is an embodiment of all that can be said about the Igbos: it is among others, a

symbol of life, a symbol of unity, a symbol of love, a symbol of friendship, and a symbol

of reconciliation. Joseph Healey and Donald Sybertz describe the richness of the kolanut

symbol thus:

> The Ibibio and other ethnic groups in Nigeria use kolanut to accept a
>
> guest into the community. The kolanut is the size of a Ping-Pong ball
>
> and signifies life. A guest is welcomed or rejected depending on whether
>
> the kolanut is offered. The guest accepts the gift and chews the seed of
>
> the kolanut. The Nigerian rite is a special ceremony or ritual, which is
>
> the beginning of a long process by which an outsider is received into the
>
> community through an interaction, sometimes painful, of the parties
>
> concerned. The African people say, the person who presents kolanut
>
> offers life in effect.[187]

Suffice it to say that as an Igbo Christian theologian, if Jesus were to have lived in Igbo

culture, he would have used kolanut, the rich and powerful symbol of love, unity, and

reconciliation for the institution of the Eucharist.

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[186] Joseph Healey and Donald Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 180.

[187] Healey and Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, 169.

Within the Igbo culture, that is proverbial and ritual laden, the kolanut draws a whole ritual to itself. The kolanut ritual signifies its meaning within the contextual framework for which it is presented and brings to the forefront, the tradition within the society. In a community gathering for either a meeting or traditional ceremony, the first ritual to be performed perhaps after prayer (and in some situations, it embodies the prayer itself) is the kolanut ritual. The prayer of blessing over the kolanut is said by the oldest person (as an androcentric culture, in this case a male) at the gathering. The kolanut is broken and passed on to all present. Not to share in the kolanut is a sign of rejection and unacceptance. The kolanut, a very rich symbol and powerful symbol in itself is such that if people have scores or issues to settle among themselves, kolanut is not shared together unless the problems are resolved.

The same hospitality principle is applicable to sharing one's meal with a guest. There is no formal invitation or need for information prior to visiting. When a guest walks into another's house at meal time, it is considered a blessing for the household as there is joy in sharing one's wealth with the other. The guest is then invited to share in the meal. Declining to share in the meal even if the guest is satiated, means rejecting the host's hospitality. Instead of outright rejection, the guest will taste a little bit out of the meal. In such a situation, half a tea or table spoonful is sufficient. These hospitality rituals unite the people together, identify them as a group, as they share in one another's joy and bear one another's burden. These burdens and joys are also shared in the form of music and dance especially as the situation necessitates.

Culturally, Igbos blend their very busy and strict lives with some traditional music with the corresponding dance. Each of the various aspects of ceremonies within the

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culture, have corresponding music in such a way that an indigene becomes aware of what is happening within the society by the type or rhythm of music in the air. Just as there are music for the various age groups and gender, there are also particular music for various ceremonies like: funeral ceremony, coronation ceremony, marriage ceremony, competition ceremony, even war songs, and other ceremonies. These music rhythms are distinct in such a way that one distinguishes between a dirge or coronach and a war song. With the rhythm of the music, one cannot confuse one ceremony with the other. The musical instruments could also differ based on the ethnic variations within the cultural group, but basically the key instruments and the rhythm of the music remain the same. The rhythm of the various musical instruments gives the context of the ceremony within the culture.

Religious Pattern and Lived Spirituality

The last element of the broader categories in the discussion and understanding of Igbo society is the religious pattern and lived spirituality. Within these societal contexts, two elements of Igbo religion and their lived spirituality will be explored. Igbo religion rests on their religious practices while their spirituality rests on their lived experience of God through their cultural history involving search for meaning and purpose.

Religious Pattern

Igbos are tribal and very religious people who have great care, respect, and reverence for the earth hence, their religion draws from who they are. Before colonization and evangelization in the 19th century they have their native (indigenous) religion know as traditional religion and dubbed "pagan religion" during the evangelization era perhaps, due to the fact that the early missionaries had little understanding of such practices. Any

Igbo citizenry, male or female, is ipso facto born into this traditional religion. Igbo

traditional religion does not proselytize for membership as membership into this religion

is by birth. As a traditional religion, it is strictly cultic and ritual laden with serious

consequences for violations. The religious belief system focuses on the worship of the

supreme God through the various deities that are mediators between *Chineke*[188] and

human beings which includes: *Ala* (earth deity), *Igwe* (sky deity), *Amadioha* (thunder

deity), Spirits, and Ancestors among others. As this is not an extensive discussion of Igbo

religion and for the purpose of brevity, I will limit my exploration of Igbo traditional

religious belief system[189] to the following: *Chineke* or *Chukwu*, *Ala*, *Igwe*, *Amadioha*,

Spirits, and Ancestors.

The concept of *Chineke* or *Chukwu* is very prominent in Igbo traditional religion.

Igbos understand the universe as created by *Chineke* who is also the supreme and

omnipotent God. As such, creation or the universe is regarded as a sacred entity that is,

relating to God and has religious value. *Chineke*, (symbolized in masculine terms), is

incomprehensible and awe inspiring. *Chineke* created and placed humanity at the center

of created things and reveals himself through created things and the deities, and these

creatures portray his greatness. Igbos as part of the rest of Africans, believe in the

supreme creator and his aseity is experienced through the deities or divinities who are his

messengers. "Each people has a local name for God. Invariably there are other names

besides the principal name. God's principal name may be the generic name for deity in

general; in which case, there is a qualifying suffix or qualifying word to distinguish

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[188] *Chineke* broken into two syllabi: *Chi* "Spirit" and *Na-eke* (creating). Simply means Creator. In the same vein, *Chukwu*: *Chi* (Spirit) and *Ukwu* (Great or Supreme) meaning Great God or Supreme God. Sometime in the spoken language, *Chineke* and *Chukwu* are used interchangeably.
[189] The exploration of this belief system is more from an emic, lived, and involved perspective than from the etic perspective.

between the Supreme Deity and the divinities."[190] *Chineke* after creating the world, lives somewhere else beyond the earth, perhaps in the sky, beyond the reach of humans and maintains the universe through some deities or divinities called *Chi* that oversee the activities in the universe. Hence within the tradition, he is referred to as *eze bi n'igwe ogodo ya na-akpu n'ala* "the king who lives in the sky and his robe extends to the earth." These deities are in themselves not creators but are in communal relationship with the creator, responsible to the creator, and attend to human beings in their relationship with the creator. Igbos worship *Chineke* and offer sacrifices to him through these deities.

An important theological debate of the past with reference to the Igbo concept of God as Charles Ebelebe argues was "whether or not the Igbo, and African peoples in general, had a concept of a Supreme Being similar to or identical with the Christian concept of a Creator God."[191] With theological exploration and interpretation of, and within African Traditional Religion (ATR), scholars have come to the conclusion in the affirmative that Igbos and Africans in general have the concept of Supreme Being similar to that of the Christian God.

Ala is the earth goddess and is regarded as a powerful deity within the cultural setting. This deity, characterized as feminine is important in the lives of any Igbo person who lives and interacts with the earth. This goddess takes proper care of all that inhabit and come from the land: human beings, animals, and land produce alike. Hence, any act of desecration to the land in the form of killing of a fellow or stealing of the produce of the land (especially yam, cocoyam, cassava, etc.) is an abomination and requires a ritual

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[190] Bolaji E. Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1975), 149.
[191] Ebelebe, *Africa and the New Face of Mission*, 2.

to appease the earth goddess. In view of its superintendent nature, *Ala* is regarded as the custodian of Igbo ritual and tradition.

The Earth is to be properly cared for, respected, and revered as an awe inspiring deity and messenger of the supreme being, *Chineke,* in such a way that in matters of dispute between fellows or doubt as to the veracity of witnessing, one might be required to stand barefooted on the earth as an intimate connection with the earth goddess, declaring one's innocence and truthful witnessing. In the same vein, when in doubt about witnessing, the witness might also be required to taste the soil from the earth similar to taking an oath in the name of the earth goddess, as a proof of one's innocence and truthful witnessing.

Within the Igbo religious belief system, the sky is considered the abode of *Chineke* and as such needs to be respected and revered. *Igwe,* the sky god is beyond the reach of humans and not directly concerned with the maintenance of tradition, but oversees from above, all human activities. Igbos believe that blessings come from above and hence, *Igwe* the sky god is looked upon as the source and fountain of blessings consequently, they worship and pray to *Igwe* on regular basis. Igbo belief system resonates with the concept of god of instant justice. *Amadioha*, thunder deity is one of the most dreaded deity as it strikes and punishes without hesitation, any defaulter and hence referred to as an arbiter or god of instant justice. Any person struck by *Amadioha* is presumed to have committed a serious offence either publicly or privately and as such, may be denied cultural funeral rites which in Igbo tradition, is regarded as a passage rite into the ancestral world.

Within the structure of Igbo traditional religious belief system, the place for spirits is very prominent. These spirits are created by *Chineke*. Spirit is traditionally either called *chi* or *muo*. When it is referred to as *chi*, it means personal god. Igbos believe that each individual has a personal *chi* (personal god – like the guardian angel in the Catholic religious tradition) taking care of that particular individual, hence the saying, *onye kwe chi ya ekwe* "one's personal god concurs when the individual in question affirms." When spirits are referred to as *muo*, it also implies incorporeal beings who are messengers of *Chineke* and minister to human beings in their relations with God. Consequently, their presence with humans attracts some fear and at the same time, awe inspiring feeling. The friendly spirits that bring good tidings are called *muo-oma* (angels) while the unfriendly are referred to as *ajo-muo* (bad or evil spirits). Either *chi* or *muo*, both are respected and revered in Igbo traditional religious belief system.

Some elements of the Catholic belief system parallel and correlate with that of the Igbo traditional religious belief system. As Catholics believe in the communion of saints, Igbos believe strongly in respecting, revering, and communicating with their ancestors. Within Igbo traditional religious setting, ancestors are family members who lived good lives and passed on to join their deceased family members and forefathers whose functions are to protect and watch over the living members of their family. Not all who lived and passed on qualify to be ancestors. The qualification to the level of ancestor kind includes, but not limited to one who lived a good and fulfilled life with great achievements that are beneficial also to the community; lived up to an old age, died honorably; and had befitting funeral rites considered also as the passage rite into the level

of ancestor kind. A person who commits suicide cannot be invoked during family rituals and is not considered an ancestor.

These ancestors are no longer bound by the shackles of the human body, hence, are considered spirits. They can communicate to and with the living human person either in the form of spirit or appear in human form. The desire of a traditional Igbo person is that a member of the family attains that level of ancestor kind. In the daily ritual prayers of the traditional Igbo person, the ancestors are invoked to guard and protect the family.

During colonization, a new and currently dominant religious movement–Christianity with two big branches of Catholicism and Protestantism developed. Each of these Christian religious groups has had dominant effects on Igbo cultural society to date. One predominant inflow of religious concept in Igbo land with the new religious movements is the religious concept of a merciful God as oppose to the God of instant justice prevalent in Igbo land.

Lived Spirituality

Spirituality (as mentioned earlier) is about one's or a group's lived experience in relationship with God, and from the Christian perspective, an experience of Christ Jesus, empowered by the Spirit. Igbo culture upholds moral righteousness, the principles of cause and effect, and as such, holds the individual accountable for any deeds of discord and disharmony. Igbo spirituality is deeply rooted in the indigenous traditional religious belief system, and cultural practices that is more of static than dynamic (as already mentioned) as its sources. This spirituality believes in the avoidance of wrong doing, the law of Karma: *nke onye metara, ya were isi ya buru* "one reaps the fruit of one's action," and the golden rule. The spirituality within this worldview is that of strict emphasis on

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avoiding wrong doing over and above the stress on doing what is right and disengaging from what the community considers evil. Though, a genuine morality and spirituality, but built on the parameter of half empty rather than half full ideology hence, placing emphasis on the do not's over the dos. Despite the foundations of this morality and spirituality in question, it does fulfill its prime purpose of maintaining harmony within the society. Any disharmony or adverse human experience is perceived as a result of an unethical behavior and action which calls for reparation and appeasement.

This spirituality of avoidance (disengagement and emphasis on the do not's over the dos) and half empty raises a critical question. The relevant literatures in Igbo cultural tradition are of immense help in showing that Igbo spirituality is rooted in its tradition of strictness to cultic rituals. In the light of the experience of current societal changes in the twenty-first century and given the migrant nature of the Igbos, cross cultural interaction becomes a non-negotiable fact and the order of the day. From an emic Christian religious missionary perspective and mandate[192] where the key concepts and principles of evangelization are reaching out and engagement, the sustainability of this kind of spirituality in this century and beyond is called to question and review?

In line with other religious movements developed during colonization and evangelization of the Igbos, these religious movements brought along with them their own spirituality. However, this spirituality is very akin to the cultic ritual spirituality prevalent in Igbo land at the time of colonization and evangelization. Perhaps with a little bit of softness as the missionaries brought in the concept of a merciful God and the spirituality attached to it.

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[192] Mark 16:15 (The New Jerusalem Bible).

In summary, I reviewed the various literatures relating to Igbo history and described their origin including their geographical location within Nigeria. I also described their identity from a thematic perspective based on their story and cultural living which embraces their history, social location, religious pattern, and lived spirituality as integral aspects of their cultural identity which distinguishes them from other groups. I also discussed colonization and its impact on the cultural group. This thematic approach to the study of Igbo society in this chapter, forms the constituent of the Igbo cultural identity and spirituality, and responds to the subsidiary research question of what constitutes the deep core of Igbo culture, identity, and spirituality? The next chapter continues with the social analysis method and explores the Irish Spiritan Identity and Spirituality, as an integral part of the constituents of Igbo Catholic Identity and spirituality.

CHAPTER FOUR

Irish Spiritan Identity and Spirituality

The command to Abraham to leave his homeland and his father's

house means the command to leave the gods of soil and blood, of

family, tribe and nation; that is, the gods of space, the gods of

paganism and polytheism, the gods who stand beside each other–

even if one of them is the most powerful.[193] *– Paul Tillich.*

Introduction and General Overview

This chapter argues that the Irish Spiritan identity and spirituality is important,

influencing cultural and spiritual beliefs and practices that have had dominant impacts on

Igbo Catholic cultural identity and spirituality. One simple question that readily begs

attention is: why is the Irish story important to the study of Igbo Catholic religious

identity and spirituality? The full answer to this question is not simple, however, the

immediate response to this question is that the Irish Spiritan missionaries – though not the

first Catholic missionaries to set their feet in Igbo land – were historically the Catholic

missionaries accredited with playing significant roles and impacts in the evangelization

and development of the Catholic faith in Igbo land. In this chapter, through a thematic

approach (similar to the previous chapter), I will explore the historical experience and

characteristic identity of the Irish society and the Spiritan Missionary story. My resources

for this study include the following texts: *A History of Ireland; The New Encyclopaedia*

Britannica Vol. 6 and 18; The Irish Short Story: A Critical History; Isle of the Saints;

Ireland: A History; Celtic Spirituality: The Classics of Western Spirituality; Led by the

Spirit: The Life and Work of Claude Poullart Des Places; The Spiritual Writings of

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[193] Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 35.

Father Claude Francis Poullart des Places; Spiritan Horizons: A Journal of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, Issue 8; *Information Documentation*, no. 60; and Spiritan website.

Two broad important categories stand out as playing dominant roles within the context of this study. The first is the Irish cultural history and experience, and the second is the Spiritan missionary story. This chapter discusses these two broad elements in details (as they influence the Igbo Catholic identity and spirituality) in addition to the Irish evangelization of the Igbos. The first part of this chapter explores the Irish history and identity. Aligned with that of the Igbo society, I will begin this subsection with the geographical location of Ireland within Europe, and explore the Irish cultural society from a thematic perspective that includes the three broad categories of historical elements, social location, and religious pattern and lived spirituality. From the historical element of the exploration, I will address questions relating to Irish origin and root. From the social location perspective, I will explore the Irish society from three categories–economic pattern, political pattern, and social pattern. The economic perspective asks questions relating to production, economic role in the contextual situation, and survival. What are the main sources of Irish economy? What was the economic situation of Ireland before and after British colonization of Ireland? Did economy play an important role in the Irish missionary evangelization expedition to Igbo land? The political pattern looks at leadership and governmental structures existing within the Irish society, while the social pattern looks at the relational pattern and cultural pattern within Irish society. What are the dominant cultural traits within Ireland? Finally, the last broad category of religious pattern and lived spirituality will explore the religion and spirituality prevalent and

indigenous within Ireland. Are there any other religious movements and spirituality that play important roles within the Irish society? The goal of this chapter is for a clearer understanding and identity of Irish cultural society. This clearer understanding forms not only the basis of comparison with the Igbo cultural society in the following chapter, but also an understanding of the roots of Igbo Catholic religious spirituality. This paves the way to charting the path to a *sui generis* and sustainable Igbo Catholic spirituality in the last chapter.

The second part discusses the second broad major important category which is the Spiritan Missionary Story. This subsection adds to the identity and spirituality of the Irish Catholic missionaries that made their way to Igbo land on a missionary evangelization expedition. I will explore this subsection from two perspectives namely: Spiritan (Congregation of the Holy Spirit) identity and history, and the Spiritan life. Discussions on Spiritan life will focus on two subheadings of Spiritan mission theology and Spiritan spirituality. Important questions also to be explored here are the influence of Spiritan life and spirituality on the Irish culture who in turn were the missionaries who evangelized the Igbos, and what are the proximate causes of this influence? Other important theological and spiritual questions that need also to be explored include: What does it look like to leave one's culture and home? What did the Igbos and Irish lose and gain in the evangelization process? These two last questions will be addressed in the following chapter.

Irish Cultural History and Experience

A brief introduction to Irish culture and society might be of immense help in the discussion and understanding of Irish cultural history and experience. This historical

study of Ireland is from an etic (outsider) perspective, with some emic (insider or involved) resources is not meant in its entirety to give the whole history and development of Ireland from the original settlers to the present day. The purpose of this section is to indicate that the nation in question has its root anchored somewhere, to highlight some important historical events in the development of the nation, and to give a glimpse of the cultural traits and experiences of the nation that are of vital importance to this study.

Irish culture and society (which also shares the same androcentric concept with the Igbo culture) in its present form has a complicated long historical experience of colonization, wars, and development through the centuries. Its development evolved from the tribal root and nature of the native people with their Gaelic or Celtic language. As tribal and native people, their culture, life style, philosophy, religion, and spirituality are rooted in nature; and had significant influence on some other cultures in various fields like literature, science, and education.[194] Above all, their experience of famine, oppression, and starvation resulted in their migrating to other countries which has significant impact in the whole of Europe and beyond. Its transition from an oral and non-documenting to a documenting tradition gives credence to the development of the culture, and charts the path for an easier understanding of Irish cultural society. Nevertheless, as a nation, Ireland experienced a long history of colonization from Britain until 1922, when twenty-six counties of southern Ireland seceded from the United Kingdom, becoming Republic of Ireland leaving the remaining six counties of the north called Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom still to date. The context of the Irish cultural society and nation within the framework of this study is that before 1922 (that is the

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[194] See *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 15th ed., s.v. "Ireland."

whole of Ireland with its experiences of colonization) as the Irish evangelization of the

Igbos of southeastern Nigeria took place in 1893.[195]

Geographical Location of Ireland[196]

Ireland has its Latin equivalent "Hibernia." From the religious perspective, St.

Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland and the second patron of Nigeria. While in Seminary

formation in Nigeria from 1985 to 1994, on March 17 every year (feast of St. Patrick), we

use to sing a song from our Catholic Hymn Book titled "Hibernia's Champion Saint all

Hail," in honor of St. Patrick and indirectly to render homage to our Irish Spiritan

missionaries. As a nation, it is an island located north of the continent of Africa with a

land area of 27,137 square miles (70,285 square km), about 302 miles (486 km) long

from north to south, and about 171 miles (275 km) from east to west.[197] Currently, the

Republic of Ireland is an island with Northern Ireland (the remaining six counties) of the

United Kingdom as the only neighbor. As an island, it is bounded in the north, south, and

west by the Atlantic Ocean and in the east by the Irish Sea and St. George's Channel

separating the country from Great Britain. As of late twentieth century, Ireland has a

population of about three and half million people. The island of Ireland is made up of

"four provinces: Munster, Leinster, Connacht and Ulster. These are subdivided into

thirty-two counties. Six of the counties, much but not all of the historic province of

Ulster, form Northern Ireland, which is part of Britain and ruled from the Palace of

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[195] See "Irish Evangelization of the Igbos" in chapter one.
[196] A citizen of Ireland is called an Irish. Irish is also the first official language of Ireland similar to Scottish Gaelic and widely spoken. It was used in schools, but later declined. English is the second official language. See Edmund Curtis, *A History of Ireland* (New York: Methuen Publishers, 1961), 3.
[197] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 15th ed., s.v. "Ireland."

Westminster in London, while the other twenty-six counties form the Irish Republic, which is governed from Dáil Éireann in Dublin."[198]

Historical Element

The question of identity rests on what does it mean to belong to a particular cultural group other than the other? Contextually, what does it mean to be an Irish? Responding adequately to this question linked to one's roots, anchors on origin, history, and destiny. Ireland as a nation, has an ancient history of civilization and development with the arrival of hunter-gatherers and fishers as the first settlers:

> who travelled the short distance across the water from Scotland into north-eastern Ireland during the Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age) era. Remaining artefacts from these people are few and far between, but archaeologists are certain they inhabited the areas around modern-day Antrim, Down, Louth and Doublin in the years after 6000BC. They were followed, a mere two and a half thousand years later, by the Neolithic (New Stone Age) settlers. Although the exact origins of these travelers are uncertain, the huge array of megalithic remains which they left behind have similarities with megaliths in England such as Stonehenge, and those in France at Carnac. The Neolithic settlers brought such diverse skills as agriculture, pottery and weaving to Ireland.[199]

As the original settlers enjoy their new home, down the road, the Gaels began to arrive Ireland in about 700BC and, as one would expect, with their own distinctive culture. It also has a history of successive invasions, settlements, and colonization from the early occupants, the Vikings (who ruled for over a hundred years and founded cities like

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[198] Mike Cronin, *A History of Ireland* (New York, Palgrave Publishers, 2001), xiv.
[199] Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, 1.

Limerick, Cork, Wexford and Dublin - the capital of Republic of Ireland) to the Normans'

invasion in 1169 bringing about Norman and English rule in Ireland.[200]

> In 795 Ireland suffered a full-scale Viking invasion. The Viking presence had an
> important impact on Irish life. At one level the Viking legacy continues today.
> Whereas Irish settlement had previously been based around forts or monasteries,
> the Vikings brought with them to Ireland the idea of the walled city. Obviously
> the central reason for such a city was defensive, and many of those cities remain
> today. The modern towns and cities of Dublin, Wexford, Waterford, Youghal,
> Cork, Bantry and Limerick all originate from the time of the Viking invasions.
> The Vikings were great traders and their operations brought wealth to their cities
> and the surrounding districts. The cities were centres of trade, manufacture and
> commerce.[201]

In about 1169, Ireland experienced the arrival and subsequent invasion by the British.

Britain, then a world power due to its naval strength, became interested in Ireland for the

following reasons: Ireland's large and fertile land (including the human resources for the

farm), Ireland's easy access to the sea, and above all, market for the English industrial

products. With the British invasion and occupation of Ireland, Ireland became a British

colony. For the purposes of brevity, Ireland's long history and experience of invasions,

was "overshadowed by a much more devastating event: the Great Famine, 1845 to 1849,

which reduced the population by nearly 2 million, one-fourth of Ireland's total, by death

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[200] The early occupants includes: hunter-gatherers and fishers around 800BCE, the Vikings (who ruled for over 100yrs and founded cities like Limerick, Cork, Wexford and Dublin - the capital of Republic of Ireland) and the Normans' invasion in 1169. See Edmund Curtis, *A History of Ireland* and Mike Cronin, *A History of Ireland* for brief history of Ireland with important dates and events.
[201] Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, 7.

and emigration."[202] As history of a given society has its root both in origin and development, and as reminiscent of the history of other societies or nations, it does seem from among scholars of Irish history, there is no consensus single view of Irish history. However, Irish history points to the following: "Ireland was invaded by the Normans, ruled over by the English crown, brought under the Union of a greater Britain, and finally partitioned so that one part views itself as Irish and sovereign, the other as British and loyal."[203] One important deduction regarding the origin of the Irish cultural society is that it has an origin that may have been lost in history, and the original inhabitants were hunter-gatherers and fishers, with checkered and complicated historical experiences of suffering, poverty, famine, and emigration. Nevertheless, all these experiences in my opinion, form the Irish foundation story paving the way for success and greatness. One can also infer from the Irish historical experience of invasion and colonization (by Celts, Normans, English, and Scots), and subsequent cultural integration, that the island of Ireland has a welcoming mat awaiting citizens of any nationality. With this in mind, the diversity which the country experienced is no longer a phenomenon foreign to Ireland. Responding to the core question of the identity traits of Ireland, hospitality and diversity play prominent roles in the cultural identity of the Irish.

Social Location

The second category in the exploration and understanding of the Irish cultural society is the social location. I will explore this second category from the perspectives of economic patterns, political patterns, and social patterns as they throw more light in understanding Irish cultural society.

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[202] James F. Kilroy ed., *The Irish Short Story: A Critical History* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), 12.
[203] Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, xiii.

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Economic Patterns

Ireland was considered for a long time, among the poorest countries in Europe. Its economy could be said to be of two phases. Before the colonization of Ireland by the British, the economy of Ireland rests on agricultural products. After colonization, the economic strength centers on industrial products, though still with some bits of agriculture but in lower scale. As tribal people, and an acceptable fact among scholars of Irish history that the original inhabitants of the island of Ireland were hunter-gatherers and fishers, it is beyond doubt that they were farmers and depended on the produce of the earth for their living. They are well noted for their potato produce traditionally known as "Irish potatoes" which can grow on different types of soil texture. Good weather and soil means rich harvest and as such are committed to the preservation of the land. As Ireland is surrounded by water which moistens the land, gives the land the required fecundity and the required water nutrients for the crops, the effect of this fertility is the abundance of potatoes, food, and other agricultural products. Naturally, such a habitat becomes a target for other nations especially those with vested interest. However, in the course of history and with prolonged frequent cultivation of the land coupled with the "weather, the soil, and the lack of equipment all hindered food production, and a community's survival depended upon finding a relatively hospitable corner of the landscape."[204]

As agriculture was the main economic base of Ireland, with the British invasion of Ireland and the acquisition of the Irish lands by the British, the next phase of the nation's economic pattern sets in. As the British occupied Ireland and acquired their farm lands, gradually farm lands constituted a problem not only as ownership of it rests in the hands of few British, but land for agricultural purposes became very scarce entailing industrial

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[204] Bitel, *Isle of the Saints*, 36.

products from England finding a market place in Ireland. This replaces the agricultural

products for which the tribal and native people were known for. Farming at this stage was

mainly for family consumption rather than for commercial purposes. The experience of

the great famine caused by potato blight from 1845 to 1849 and the consequent outbreak

of disease inadvertently also played an important role in this shift in the nation's

economic source. However, there are various perspectives to the history of the great

famine, starvation, and the resulting effects. The down-side of the experience of the great

famine was greatly felt in that "in 1845, the population of Ireland stood at approximately

8.5 million. By 1851, and the nominal end of the famine, the population had been

reduced by over 2 million. Roughly half of this figure died from starvation and its

accompanying diseases, while the remainder left Ireland's shores for a new life in a

foreign land."[205] Suffice it to say that this great famine had a very sever consequence for

Ireland entailing in emigration to almost all parts of the world for survival and greener

pastures. The positive side of this experience of great famine, starvation, and the resulting

effect of emigration, parallels the Israelites' foundation story as it "provides a sense of

belonging, idealistic notions of 'home', and the reassurance that they have successfully

survived and prospered in a new land, while never forgetting where they came from."[206]

Drawing from the experience of the Irish, it is clear the importance of a solid economic

base for the survival of any nation. In the light of this experience, one can deduce that

there is no doubt that economy, hardship, starvation, poverty, and the quest for survival

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[205] Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, 135. Writing from an emic point of view and responding to the various perspectives, he observes that "it has been a long-held view, of many Irish nationalists at least, that the famine was, if not engineered by the British, then certainly managed to their supposed benefit. Considering the extreme effects of the famine, and the emotional attachments that it has formed within the Irish consciousness, such conclusions are perhaps understandable." The other side of the same coin is that "there was a widespread acknowledgement, even before the famine, that families could not survive and feed themselves on small plots of under an acre." Pgs. 136-137.
[206] Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, xiv.

and greener pasture, played important roles in the Irish Spiritan missionary expedition to

Igbo land; hence, responding in affirmation to one of the critical questions of particular

interest: did economy play important role in Irish missionary evangelization expedition to

Igbo land? With the mass emigration necessitated by its economic pattern and

experience, a huge percentage of Irish-born citizens live outside of Ireland. This

characteristic trait of emigration emanating from their contextual situation, adds to the

Irish identity.

Political Patterns

Prior to British invasion, Ireland had a traditional monarchical system of

leadership with small kingdoms forming provinces. Each province is ruled by its own

king creating room for no central leadership or at its best a very weak central leadership.

The resulting effect is its rift in central unity. This weak central system, played into the

hands of the British during invasion. Irish political structure especially from the twelfth

century onwards lay in the hands of the British who conquered, colonized, and extended

their parliamentary authority and power to Ireland and by implication, makes laws and

decisions governing her colonies. As one would imagine, these laws are more for the

benefit of the master than for the subjects. A typical example of such decisions is that the

British parliament in 1759 decided "to open the British market to Irish cattle. The British

cattle market had hitherto been protected from Irish cattle through high tariffs, but growth

in population and increasing demand meant that Britain had to look elsewhere to support

its food industry and where better to look than to its next-door neighbor? This law had a

major effect on Irish agriculture and land use system."[207] In 1801, Ireland became part of

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. However in 1922, twenty-six counties of

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[207] Ebelebe, *Africa and the New Face of Mission,* 33.

southern Ireland seceded from the United Kingdom and became Republic of Ireland
leaving the remaining six counties of the province of Ulster from the north called
Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom still to this date.

Social Patterns

For a society to remain functional, effective, and vibrant, it has to organize its
existence based and around its values; and evolve a way and system of holding onto,
maintaining, communicating, and passing on its values to other generations. Ireland as a
nation with a long history of existence, has some values that communicate who they are,
hold, and bind the people together as a nation. These social patterns that communicate the
cultural values and identity of the Irish will be explored from the perspective of their
relational pattern of life, cultural pattern, and institutions within the society.

Relational patterns of life describes the way people live their lives and carry on
their livelihood within a given cultural context. As already cited in chapter one that the
Irish society with the native Gaelic language and accent called Irish brogue, parallels the
Igbo society where "the network of relationships that linked one family to another formed
the building blocks of Irish society. The family was the basic landholding unit, producing
the multiple heirs who caused so much trouble at elite levels. A person's identity derived
entirely from his or her kin. Kinless men were landless outlaws."[208] By implication, the
individual's identity is guaranteed as a result of the group's identity, thereby holding the
communal and family values more important than whatever values the individuals hold of
themselves.

As farm and hunter-gatherers, with localized system of farming, this economic
pattern shapes their pattern of living as there is need for enough human resource to

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[208] Bitel, *Isle of the Saints,* 6.

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provide for the direct labor needed in the farm lands hence, the need for relatively large families. While holding onto the political system of Provinces whereby various kingdoms make up the province, it becomes implicit that the relational pattern of life is the extended family system as it grows to become kingdoms and provinces. The extended family known as the kin group or kindred, draws its identity and strength from the nuclear family. The relational pattern of living provides more for the communal recognition over and above the individual.

One of the ways of understanding a society and getting closer to the heart of the people is understanding their cultural patterns of life. This pattern not only throws more light on the people, but also helps in keeping the society alive as it inculcates and transmits the values of the society to other generations. With reference to Irish culture and society, few cultural patterns to be examined include: their myth and their hospitality. The role of myth within a society cannot be underestimated. Societies holding onto their traditional belief and practices, depend on myths as the foundational basis for the explanation of such traditional belief system and practices not minding whether or not the myth gives enough explanation and justification for such belief system and practices. Myths vary from society to society and each society develops their own myth depending on what values the society wants to project. As a cultural society with ancient history that transitioned from an oral and non-documenting cultural tradition to a documentation of its oral tradition, myth helps to put these tradition and practices in perspective and together. One of such myths in the Irish society, puts together and forward, their history of origin thus:

That we know little of these early inhabitants of Ireland has by no means

prevented the creation or fabrication of origin legends, which, over the centuries,

have sought to give historic legitimacy to contemporary institutions and to

validate contemporary political stances. A manuscript *History of Ireland* compiled

in *c*. 1819, but based on seventeenth-century compositions (which in their turn

borrowed from the twelfth-century compilation, *The Book of Invasions*, the core

of which can be dated to the seventh century), states baldly, 'The first

[inhabitants] that landed upon this island were three Spanish fishermen drove

upon the coast by a storm'. Happily, after some discussion of how the wives and

families of Capa, Laighne and Luasat arrived, the anonymous scribe had a

moment of doubt and confessed: 'Note, this landing of the fishermen is deemed

faboulous'. Fable or not, the legend of a Spanish origin, and the story of

successive waves of invaders each of whom were assimilated to the 'native'

stock, proved enduring.[209]

The point here is to show that Ireland like any other cultural society has myths that help

in explaining their traditional belief system and practices, and affirms the importance

these myths play in putting together their value system. An important focal point that

creates the conducive atmosphere for myths and storytelling, facilitating the rural life,

and transmitting the customs and values is the Irish pub.

      Early dwellers of Ireland, who were rural and tribal people, enjoy a

communitarian and contiguous life pattern as they enjoy their living in closer relationship

with their neighbor. This kind of living emanates from their respect and care for the earth

and most importantly, care for one another. Every culture has a concept of hospitality

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[209] Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland: A History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1.

however, the degree of hospitality and to whom, are the key questions here. Irish

hospitality emanates from their cultural understanding and belief system of the respect

and care for the earth and all its inhabitants. The Irish monastic culture, which flourished

between the sixth and seventh centuries AD, is rooted in the cultural living pattern of the

tribal and native people, for the purposes of selfless service to the people and as the social

binding network among the people; plays important role and speaks volumes about Irish

hospitality. It is of interest to read and know about the Irish hospitality in addition to the

conversant "Igbo" or "African" hospitality. Lisa Bitel argues that hospitality in Ireland is

not only a legal obligation, but also a social duty whereby visitors, travelers, and the

indigent natives are taken care of and treated to the hospitality of the host. "The eight-

century tract *Crith Gablach* set forth the traveler's rights of hospitality at the house of a

specially appointed class of freeman, the *briugu*. This well-to-do farmer had to feed and

shelter anyone off the road, no matter how many times the guest demanded hospitality of

him. Such legally mandated hospitality included both the entertainment of stray guests

and the formal feasting of overlords."[210] The monastic culture transcends this legality to a

way of living for all to follow by taking the lead. This culture of hospitality emphasizes

the importance and responsibility of the host providing for the guest, and for the guest to

be receptive of the host's hospitality as anything to the contrary implies disgrace and

shame to the host. One could argue that the monks may have been externally influenced

by religion or something else in their practice of hospitality. However, one formidable

response is that if such was externally influenced, in the course of time it will fizzle

away.

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[210] Bitel, *Isle of the Saints,* 196.

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The last segment of the social and relational patterns within Irish cultural society to be explored is the institutions within the cultural society itself. Various aspects of the institution within the society to be explored which shape the social relational pattern include: age groups and marriage. These patterns add to the cultural identity of the Irish community.

Social, class, or economic structures in one form or the other are prevalent in every society. Currently, Irish cultural society conforms to their surrounding neighboring countries with the tradition of egalitarianism and informality. However, despite the conformity of this current tradition, class structure as one of the traditional cultural traits is still prevalent within this cultural setting especially in the area of social class status manifested in the working, middle, and gentry classes with clearly defined boundaries. Age, along with it gender, as in many situations, play important roles and have significant implications within and for the wider society; which manifests itself in the areas of use of the native language, dress codes, among others. Hence, age groups are one of the characteristic traits in the traditional Irish society. Old age is considered a blessing, prestigious, and at the same time, a repository of wisdom and inspiration for future generations. It also entails respect and as such desired and aspired to by younger generations. Disrespect and scorn to the elderly is a sign of uncultured manner and non-civilization.

One of the important institutions in the relational pattern of Irish society is marriage. Within the traditional society in question, the agrarian economic pattern, depends on and gives rise to the necessity of marriage institution. The purpose of this social relational pattern is for, but not limited to procreation as it assures the availability

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and supply of human resources for the provision of human labor for the farm lands. Hence, the traditional Irish family is considered as relatively large emanating from monogamous system of marriage.

As an androcentric culture with the traditional practices of one son inheriting the patrimony, thereby leaving the others to other possibilities including emigration, the traditional Irish marriage ritual is rich in symbols as described below:

> The ritual was most probably carried over from Pagan times and is the Celtic ceremony of unity. It was usual for couples to celebrate this ceremony around the harvest festival, Lughnasa, which occurs on 1st August. They could choose the length of the union either "till death do us part" or to be together in the afterlife or even while their love burned strong and true in which case if they still wished to remain married they would renew these vows the following year. During the ritual the couple hold hands, right hand in right hand, and left hand in left with their wrists crossed. Ribbon or cord is then wrapped around the wrists in a figure eight to represent infinity. This is most probably where the saying "tying the knot" originated from.[211]

The traditional marriage ritual planning is carried out by the bride's family, the same is applicable to the marriage expenditure. Both the planning proceedings and the expenses are done after a proposal has been made to the bride. This marriage ritual establishes a new family and binds both families together. One can infer from this that the Irish culture is also ritual and symbol laden.

Religious Pattern and Lived Spirituality

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[211] "Traditional Irish Weddings," accessed 12/12/2015, http://www.yourirish.com/traditions/weddings-traditions-in-ireland.

This last broad section explores the traditional Irish religious belief system and their lived spirituality. Within their traditional religious belief system, their reverence for the earth or nature, ancestral belief, and their use of religious symbols will be explored followed by their lived Celtic spirituality.

Religious Pattern

Ireland as is known today is principally and predominantly Catholic by religious denomination. However, prior to the advent of Catholicism, Ireland had a traditional religion which for centuries dubbed "pagan" religion. This religion is rooted in and influenced by the religion of the early dwellers-Celtic religion, rich in ritual and symbols. As a traditional religion which people are born into, this traditional Celtic religion has some belief system manifested in their practices, which centers among others on, respect for nature and care for the earth.

The Celtic religious belief system, with its central and point of convergence on harmonious relationships and deep respect for nature, especially with mother earth from whom human beings derive their existence, livelihood, and interaction from the earth, this earth and its activities are cared for by some deities who assist and minister to the Supreme Being in the day to day chores on earth. The Celtic respect and care for the earth is evident in the belief and respect for the various local and tribal deities who with the collaboration of humanity help in maintaining order and unity in the universe. Some of these local and tribal Celtic deities include, but not limited to the following: the earth mother goddess who ensures the fertility of the land, Mercury – the god of sovereignty serves as the god of warrior, and Mars (or Teutates in some areas – *teutā mea*ns tribe), also a tribal god serves as the protector of the people's tribe, the god of the sea, and the

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god of great father noted for blessings. One important thing to note about the traditional

Celtic gods is that these gods are tribal, local, and cannot be compartmentalized in terms

of their functions. "The lack of structure is sometimes more apparent than real. It has, for

instance, been noted that of the several hundred names containing a Celtic element

attested in Gaul the majority occur only once, which has led some scholars to conclude

that the Celtic gods and their cults were local and tribal rather than national."[212]

Traditional religion has pillars upon which the religious belief system are built.

These pillars play prominent roles in the cultic ritual practices as they are lived out in the

day to day lives of the people in question. As a religion, the Celtic traditional belief

system has a prominent place for eschatology in its doctrine. The belief in the life after

death is lived out and manifests itself in the burial tradition.

> They believed in a life after death, for they buried food, weapons, and ornaments
>
> with the dead. The druids, the early Celtic priesthood, taught the doctrine of
>
> transmigration of souls and discussed the nature and power of the gods. The Irish
>
> believed in an otherworld, imagined sometimes as underground and sometimes as
>
> islands in the sea. The otherworld was variously called "the Land of the Living,"
>
> "Delightful Plain," and "Land of the Young" and was believed to be a country
>
> where there was no sickness, old age, or death, where happiness lasted forever,
>
> and a hundred years was as one day.[213]

Belief in the life after death is directly connected with the respect and reverence of the

ancestors within the traditional religion. The belief in ancestral worship within this

traditional religious framework could be said to account for the easy believe in the

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[212] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 15th ed., s.vv. "Celtic religion."
[213] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 15th ed., s.vv. "Celtic religion."

Catholic communion of the saints as some of the ancestral and deity worships found their place within the Catholic ritual practices. References could also be made to the cults of Mary traditionally linked to Danu – the earth mother goddess and the St. Brigit – an Irish patron saint.

Every religion has a visible way of expressing its belief system in the form of signs and symbols. The Celtic traditional religion is rich in symbols, imagery, and artifacts of their gods and rituals, depicting their belief systems and cultic rituals.

> The rich abundance of animal imagery in Celto-Roman iconography, representing the deities in combinations of animal and human forms, finds frequent echoes in the insular literary tradition. Perhaps the most familiar instance is the deity, or deity type, known as Cernunnos, "Horned One" or "Peaked One," even though the name is attested only once, on a Paris relief. The interior relief of the Gundestrup Caldron, a 1st-century-BC vessel found in Denmark, provides a striking depiction of the antlered Cernunnos as "Lord of the Animals," seated in the yogic lotus position and accompanied by a ram-headed serpent; in this role he closely resembles the Hindu god Śiva in the guise of Paśupati, Lord of Beasts.[214]

Lived Spirituality

As it is reminiscent of various spiritualities, Irish Celtic[215] spirituality emanates from the Celtic religion itself. It is a spirituality that is "in close dialogue with nature

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[214] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 15th ed., s.vv. "Celtic religion."

[215] "The origins of the term lie in Greek and Roman geographical and ethnographical writings. From the sixth to the fourth century BC, geographers such as Skylax, Avienus, and Hecataeus of Miletus begin to describe Celts as warlike peoples pushing down to the south of Europe. The evidence is, however, that the term had no precise ethnic signification and that Celts merely designated those peoples who lived in the west. . . . The word *Celtic* itself lay dormant for many centuries until it was revived by the linguistic researches of George Buchanan (1506-1582) and Edward Lluyd (1660-1709). . . . described seven languages as belonging to a distinctive "Celtic" family (Irish, Welsh, Scottish Gaelic, Manx, Cornish, and

rather than withdrawn from it."[216] The emphasis of this spirituality lies in experiencing

God's presence in creation which inadvertently invites one to a life of harmony with

creation; and an awareness of the sacredness of all things as a place for sacramental

encounter with God. This spirituality parallels Ignatian spirituality principle of

engagement with the world as a whole as opposed to withdrawal from it. As the Christian

religion anchors in tradition for legitimacy, Celtic spirituality is rooted in tradition,

culture, and nature: respect for the earth, family, season etc. As part of the religious

group, it has penance and creativity as guiding motifs of Celtic Christianity. This

spirituality hinges on the concept of Aquinas' first of the two books given by God: the

book of nature and the scripture, as a result, respect and reverence for the nature is not an

option but a precondition. Hence, the Celtic lived spirituality in as much as it is

concerned with harmonious living with creation and creature as a whole, implicitly, can

be perceived as that of strict observance to the religious and cultic practices.

The above simply indicates that Ireland had a traditional religion and a spirituality

emanating from the religious belief system, prior to the advent of Catholicism in the third

century and any other religious movement. In the practice of the Irish traditional religion,

an important critical question arising from the Irish history, traditional religion, and lived

spirituality pattern, is whether there are other religious movements that had dominant

influence in Irish cultural society? The answer to this important question is in the

affirmative. There are the Catholic religion and its spirituality, Jansenism, and Spiritan

religious missionary congregation. All these religious movements have had a dominant

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Breton as well as Gaulish)." Oliver Davies, *Celtic Spirituality: The Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 4.
[216] Davies, *Celtic Spirituality*, 3.

influence in Ireland and contribute in one way or the other to the identity and spirituality of the early Irish missionaries brought the Catholic faith to Igbo land.

Advent of Catholicism to Ireland

There are debates among scholars of Irish history as to when exactly Christianity came to Ireland especially as the contextual Irish culture in question was an oral and non-documenting rather than documenting tradition, as the challenges of transitioning from one tradition to the other abound. Among other reasons, this debate is also important and founded as Ireland was neither colonized nor directly or heavily affected by the Roman Empire. However, as the Roman Empire fell apart, Ireland became the melting place, the new found land, and the settlement area for the European Christians. The documentary tradition holds that Catholicism, the bedrock of Christian religion arrived Ireland in the third century, replacing the traditional native Irish Gaelic religion, and flourished within the fifth century through the instrumentality of St. Patrick. The advent of the Christian religion necessitated the advent and consequent settlement of various religious orders including monasteries flourishing in Ireland. These monasteries became not only centers of learning, but also "were the power-houses of Irish culture from the early seventh century on. While the rest of Europe was being torn apart in the fall-out from the collapse of the Roman Empire, Ireland remained a beacon of light in what have traditionally been described as the Dark Ages. The reputation of Irish monks for piety, manuscript production and Latin scholarship was unsurpassed."[217]

St. Patrick, a slave and key important figure in this Catholic evangelization of Ireland, was brought into Ireland in 432. However, prior to the arrival of St. Patrick was "St. Palladius having been ordained by Pope Celestine, is sent as first bishop…Prosper

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[217] Bartlett, *Ireland: A History,* 18.

has an earlier reference to Palladius in 429 which shows him as an enemy of the Pelagian heresy. Unfortunately that is the extent of the historical record concerning Palladius and Ireland."[218] St. Patrick proclaims the gospel message as he travels the whole of Ireland, and his ministry laid a solid foundation for the Church in Ireland and consequently, brought about firm establishments of Churches. The structure of the Church in Ireland at the time of St. Patrick "duplicated the power system that was already in place. St. Patrick and others accepted the Celtic system that was based around local kingdoms which, in turn, was underpinned by powerful families and loose alliances, and adapted the Church's system of internal government around such. The bishops of the Irish Church were located around families who ran the small kingdoms, and were not based around geographical unit of governance, such as the diocese, as would have been the case elsewhere in Europe."[219]

Christianity in Ireland brought about the development and transition from the native oral tradition to the documentary tradition; and as such, necessitates most of the documentations by Patrick himself. These documentations gave insight to his early life, identity, and pastoral ministry in Ireland. Christianity, which later became the official religion in Ireland, continues to flourish for centuries after the death of Patrick. The existing monasteries serve as centers of learning, civilization, and power-houses. Irish Catholicism within this framework, encounters British political power and agenda. With the British invasion and colonization of Ireland in 1169, Ireland came under British rule for centuries. With Anglicanism founded in 1534 and later became the official British religion, one expects an influence of the new British religion and policies on Ireland.

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[218] Bartlett, *Ireland: A History,* 3.
[219] Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, 5.

There were moves by the British through political power to suppress Irish Catholic religion however, the more the suppression and oppression, the more the bond of unity, faith, and Catholic religiosity among the Irish grew stronger; hence, the tool of oppression produces positive results.

British political power within this context of the colonization of Ireland, far much outweighs that of the Irish, and consequently, becomes a weapon to regulate Irish religion and other aspects of Irish heritage. From an etic perspective of Ireland, one would expect here not only a conflict of interest, but also an intermingling or blurring of faith traditions (Catholic and Anglican religions) in Ireland for which the Irish Catholic clerics, seek to address. This period of repression witnessed the development of some spiritual exercises like: "processions, novenas, missions, Benediction, stations of the cross, confraternities, sodalities, devotion to the Sacred Heart and to the Immaculate Heart - and their supporting sacramentals (scapulars, medals, holy pictures) were imported into Ireland…[and] identified with Catholicism of the Irish kind."[220] These devotional exercises, sacramentals and the practice of attending regular mass and many more form part of the Igbo Catholic Church heritage and legacies from the Irish Holy Ghost missionaries.

As one would expect, a country with experiences of invasions and colonization will experience a lot of conflicts as change becomes frequent. Ireland is not excluded. Religion is identified as a source of conflict in Ireland. Irish traditional religion blended with and described as pagan for thousands of years[221] until the arrival of Christian missionaries (including the legendary - St. Patrick) in the early third century AD. With

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[220] Ebelebe, *Africa and the New Face of Mission*, 37.
[221] Curtis, *A History of Ireland*, 2.

the Christian missionaries, Ireland is closely identified with Catholic religion and spirituality. This faired amply well until about 1169 which marks the beginning of over seven centuries' rule linked to the political power invoke within the British colonial era. The British rule invoke at this time wants to wean Ireland of Catholicism as Britain's religion is predominantly Anglican. In the bid to effect this, Britain enacted penal laws, banning native Gaelic language in schools, dispossessing the natives of their lands all in the bid to suppressing the people. Contrary to expectation, these laws achieved the opposite and unexpected effect. "The harder the repression, the more tenaciously the Irish clung to their Catholic faith. The Irish have always loved their priests, but the bond grew even closer during the era of repression, for the clergy bore the brunt of these laws. The close identification of being Irish with being Catholic was also forged during this period."[222] About ten years after the great famine (1845-1849), Ireland first came in contact with the Spiritans in 1859 who established a junior scholasticate (high school) in Blanchardstown, which was later transferred to Blackrock the following year. This first contact of the Spiritans with the Irish came under the Spiritan leadership of Fr. Ignace Schwindenhammer as the Superior General. The need to have English speaking Spiritans to work in the English speaking British colonies necessitated the expansion of Spiritan missionary activities to Ireland. A critical look at this experience of repression, poverty, and famine prompts and spurs positively, not only among the Irish missionaries, but also the entire Irish citizenry; an enduring, determining, and surviving spirit. One could infer among other reasons that the fruits of these adverse experiences provided for the Irish missionaries' enduring spirits and the determination not only to thrive, but also to bloom where they are planted.

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[222] Ebelebe, *Africa and the New face of Mission*, 35.

Jansenism

The great repression, poverty, famine, and persecution in the early nineteenth century, necessitate the migration of Irish citizenry to other countries in search of survival and greener pasture. The boundaries of this emigration was not contained or restricted to a particular country as the quest for survival and greener pasture spreads its dragnet very wide. Some of the migrant Irish who found themselves in France, came in contact with a religious movement of French origin known as Jansenism. This view begs the question: why the Irish migrants to France are of particular interest than others? While migrants to other countries are important as well, however, of particular relevance and interest are the Irish migrants to France as the Congregation of the Holy Spirit under the umbrella which the early Irish Catholic missionaries who evangelized the Igbos, owe their origin and possible additional religious influence on the early Irish Catholic missionaries. Since Jansenism is not the major focus of this study only to show the possible influence on the Catholic religion in France and the surrounding neighborhood, the discussion on it is limited to its origin, thesis statement and theological position, and its present position within the Catholic Church.

Jansenism, a religious movement within the Catholic Church and popular in France and Netherland, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, owes its origin to Cornelius Otto Jansen[223] who was born in Acquoi, Holland in 1585. This movement which began as a religious movement arose out of "the theological problem of reconciling divine grace and human freedom; but it became connected in France with the

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[223] Cornelius Otto Jansen was the son of Jean Otto. He studied theology in Louvain in 1602, became the rector of the same university in 1635, and later in 1636, became the bishop of Ypres, Belgium. His thoughts were influenced by Augustine's theology of grace in relationship with the debate with Pelagius. He died on May 6, 1638. His views and thoughts were published posthumously in 1640. See *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica Macropaedia,* 15th ed., s.vv. "Jansen, Cornelius Otto."

struggle of the proponents of Gallicanism (*q.v.*) against the papacy and with opposition to the monarchical absolutism of Richelieu and Louis XIV."[224]

The main thesis statement and theological position of this religious movement rests on the theological foundation concerning humanity that "the divine grace that alone can save man is not due at all to his good actions. It is, he claimed, a gratuitous gift by means of which Christ leads the elect to eternal life, but the multitude, "the mass of perdition," is doomed to damnation. Thus, men are predestined to obtain grace or to suffer condemnation."[225] Jansen's theological thought and position is to some extent influenced by Augustine (even though Augustine himself, does not envisage such a fate for humanity) and more so by Baius' theological teaching holding that human beings "can be saved only by the grace of Christ, accorded to a small member of the elect who have been chosen in advance and destined to enter the Kingdom of Heaven."[226] However, in 1642, Jansen's theological position was condemned by the Pope Urban VIII on the basis of its theological foundation on the doctrine of Baius.

Spiritan Missionary Story

Spiritan missionary story dates back to its foundation story on Pentecost day, 27th May 1703 in Rennes, France, by Claude François Poullart des Places[227] who then, a seminarian started this new congregation as a project with twelve students. He was twenty-four years old at the time he started this young congregation. The goal of this new congregation was and is for the formation of Catholic religious missionaries for the

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[224] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica Micropaedia,* 15th ed., s.v. "Jansenism."
[225] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica Macropaedia,* 15th ed., s.vv. "Jansen, Cornelius Otto."
[226] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica Macropaedia,* 15th ed., s.vv. "Jansen, Cornelius Otto."
[227] Claude François Poullart des Places was born in 1679 to a wealthy and noble family. His father studied law which he combined with his commercial art and skills. He founded the congregation at the age of twenty-four and journeyed along with the group. On December 17, 1707 he was ordained priest at the age of twenty-eight. See Seán P. Farragher, *Led by the Spirit: The Life and Work of Claude Poullart Des Places* (Dublin: Paraclete Press, 1992), 4, 216.

evangelization of the poor and needy. To date, this mustard seed planted by Poullart des

Places, has grown to an internationally acclaimed, recognized religious missionary

congregation with its Generalate[228] in Rome for administrative purposes. The

Congregation has 2630 professed members with 61 circumscriptions (32 Provinces and

29 Groups) where the members are working worldwide.[229] Each Province or Group has a

designated leader known as Superior (this does not insinuate in any way that other

members are inferiors), responsible to either the Province or Group, while the overall

leader is referred to as Superior General who resides in Rome. In this section, the Spiritan

Identity and history, and Spiritan life will be explored. Spiritan life will be discussed in

details under two headings of Spiritan mission theology and Spiritan spirituality.

Spiritan Identity and History

Like any other society in the world, Spiritan Congregation has its own foundation

story, blessings, and challenges as it moves on to chart its path in the history of religious

missionary congregations of the world. As at the time of the foundation of this new

project which later became a large congregation, the Council of Trent (1545-1563) has

already set out guidelines for the structure of seminaries and seminary formation, and as

such, students met with financial challenges especially in the areas of bed and board,

regardless of the fact that the formation and the studies entailed there in are free of

charge. As a new project, the original intention of the founder was to "aid poor students

to live and enable them pursue their studies. He did not limit himself to such temporal

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[228] For administrative purposes, the headquarters of this congregation is called Generalate. Provinces and Groups are the two major administrative branches within the congregation that are at the service of the Church's mission on the grass root levels.

[229] This statistics of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit is as at 31st December, 2015. Provided by Generalate administration in Rome. See "Where We Serve," *The Spiritans*, accessed 1/14/2016, http://www.spiritanroma.org/worldwide.

aid. He conceived a plan of bringing them together in a room where he would occasionally go to give them instruction and look after them."[230] As this new and young congregation founded by a twenty-four year old, whose ultimate goal was for the care of these poor students finding it difficult to make ends meet, continue to meet the needs of these poor students, the founder journeyed along with them, but for a very short time. Claude François Poullart des Places died six years after starting his new project-the Congregation on October 2nd, 1709 at the youthful age of thirty. This left the new and young Congregation of the Holy Spirit rocking and struggling for survival and at this time, it has seventy-two students.

As question of identity focuses on origin, development, and destiny, questions relating to the Spiritan identity rest on who they are? What is the Spiritan DNA? What is their mission? And how have they fared? As a Roman Catholic religious missionary congregation who share a community living paralleling the experience of the early Christians found in Acts 4:32, they have as their guiding principle and core of their community living, "One Heart and One Soul." This guiding principle which gives the members their identity, guides also their mission and their future. In line with the original goal and the foundation motive, and as a missionary congregation, at the heart of their mission and ministry, "the evangelization of the "poor" is our purpose. Therefore we go especially to people, groups and individual who have not yet heard the message of the Gospel or who have scarcely heard it, to those whose needs are the greatest, and to the

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[230] Farragher, *Led by the Spirit: The Life and Work of Claude Poullart Des Places*, 113.

oppressed. We also willingly accept tasks for which the Church has difficulty in finding workers."[231]

Despite its struggle for survival, the new and young congregation was able to stand its ground in the midst of the storm as it swayed, produced missionaries, and sent them out on mission. In the course of history, in 1841, François Marie Paul Libermann, founded the Society of the Holy Heart of Mary. In 1848, this Society of the Holy Heart of Mary founded by François Libermann was suppressed by the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith (Propaganda Fide) and the members merged with the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. The amalgamation of these two congregations gave rise to one congregation with the name: Congregation of the Holy Spirit under the protection of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This has become the official and full name of the Congregation to date with the short form as "Congregation of the Holy Spirit." With this fusion, on November 3rd, 1848, the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith approved the election of François Libermann who then became the eleventh Superior General of the new Congregation giving it its new force and direction. Before the merger of the Society of the Holy Heart of Mary with the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, the Congregation of the Holy Spirit experienced a couple of suppression and restoration as part of its weathering storm. As expected, the fusion amounts also to the unity of mission theology and spirituality. In as much as the history of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit is important to the understanding of this discussion as it gives the origin and direction of the Congregation, also of importance in this context is the Spiritan Life from their mission theology and spirituality.

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[231] This mission statement of the Spiritans is taken from their website. "Who We Are," *The Spiritans*, accessed 1/14/2016, http://www.spiritanroma.org/about.

Spiritan Life

Life-based discussions focused on the entire being in question. It involves not only the physical or external, but also the internal concepts and categories. Discussion on Spiritan life involves not only the empirical aspects of who the Spiritans are, but also the internal principles giving form to the entire identity of the Spiritans in general. Besides the Spiritan history and missionary activities, other aspects of the Spiritan life is discussed from their mission theology and spirituality. These in addition to their history, give a comprehensive and entire picture of the identity, life, work, and spirituality of the Spiritans.

Spiritan Mission Theology. As a religious missionary congregation within the ambient of the Catholic Church, Spiritan mission theology, an important identifying characteristics of the motivating factor of the Spiritan missionary activities and ultimately who the Spiritans are, rests within, and forms part of the entire mission of the Catholic Church as a whole. The mission theology of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit is rooted in its motivating factor and foundational motive of providing for the poor and needy hence, it provides the guiding motive, principle, and direction for the Spiritan missionary activities around the globe. This mission theology is succinctly captured in one of the letters of the founder (Claude Poullart des Places) to his good friend Louis de Montfort who wants him (des Places) to partner with him in his new mission bid. He replies:

> I do not feel attracted to the missions, but I am too well aware of the good they can do not to cooperate as much as I can and not to be inseparably attached to them together with you. You know that for some time I have been distributing everything at my disposal to help poor students continue their studies. I know

several who offered excellent possibilities but for lack of help were unable to

exploit them. Consequently, they were forced to bury talents that would have been

very useful to the Church if they were developed. That is the goal to which I

would like to aim by gathering them together in a house. It seems to me that this

is what God wants of me…If God gives me the grace to succeed, you may count

on missionaries.[232]

Understood also from an emic perspective, the Spiritan mission statement (referred to

earlier) and charism, also captures this mission theology as it relates to the poor,

oppressed, and the less privileged. David Tracy holds that part of the tasks of the

theologian is interpretation. Spiritan missionary activity worldwide is an integral mission

of the universal Church hence, an important task of the Spiritan missionary congregation

stemming from their mission theology is that of the voice of the voiceless and liberation.

It follows that the mission theology of the Spiritans is to be of service to the poor and

needy and in particular, where it is difficult for the Church to get missionaries. Hence, the

Spiritan missionaries see and understand themselves as primary evangelizers within the

entire missionary activity of the Catholic Church at large. This mission theology brings

the Spiritan missionaries to the fore front of mission places and areas of first missionary

evangelization in over sixty countries in the continents of the world: Africa, Asia,

Australia, Europe, North, and South America.

Spiritan Spirituality. Spirituality as a lived experience of people in relation to

their God draws attention to the fact that individuals and groups have their own lived

experience and a way of responding to that lived experience. Speaking about Spiritan

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[232] Henry J. Koren, *The Spiritual Writings of Father Claude Francis Poullart des Places* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1983), 27.

spirituality, refers to the way Spiritans live out their faith in response to their mission in relationship with God and humanity. Hence, Spiritan spirituality is also seen as a way of being in the world with God and humanity. The spirituality of the congregation draws its strength and focus from its mission theology of service to the poor and less privileged hence, Spiritan spirituality is rooted in and stems from the identity of the Spiritans as a religious missionary congregation; and their mission theology with reference to what their mission is. Spiritan mission in turn influences its spirituality "as Spiritans specifically (though this again is not unique to us) we are committed to God's mission throughout our lives, and our commitment implies a calling and a sending to many persons, places, and circumstances. These serve to shape and (re)form our spirituality. If spirituality is about how the Holy Spirit relates to actual people (and *vice versa*), then culture – including history and context – and the specific person in concrete circumstances, are critically important variables."[233] Drawing from the spiritual writings of the founder, and in line with the evangelical and missionary counsels of the Christian scripture, spirituality of the Spiritans can be summarized as follows:

Self-emptying, abandonment to God, or kenosis is an important and most valuable characteristic identity of Jesus' ministry in the world. "Make your own the mind of Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped. But he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are; and being in every way like a human being, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross."[234] Paul describes this unqualifiable and unquantifiable self-emptying and total abandonment of Jesus to divine will, as a model for Christian ministry

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[233] Anthony Gittins, C.S.Sp., "Spiritan Spirituality? Possibilities and Limitations," *Spiritan Horizons: A Journal of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, no.* 8, (2013): 41.
[234] Phil. 2:5-8 (The New Jerusalem Bible).

and spirituality. Key to this concept of kenosis are servanthood and identification with the other in their lived situation. The Spiritan founding fathers, sharing in the ministry of Jesus through the Church, make these concepts of servanthood and identification with the other, the kernel and foundation of not only the Spiritan mission, but more importantly also the Spiritan spirituality. The spirit of abandonment to God, draws the attention of the Spiritan members and inculcates in them, total dependence on God for their individual life, sustenance, and the success of their mission as François Libermann invites the missionaries to be one with the people they are sent to work with and for, especially missionaries to Africa as he charges them to "forget about Europe and be African with the Africans."[235] Hence, François Libermann in his spiritual writings, constantly reminds the Spiritan members that God is all, man is nothing.

Holiness of life and rule of life. Spiritan spirituality of holiness of life and rule of life implies detachment as essential and integral aspect of Spiritan mission theology. The Christian scripture not only is it a record of the ministry of Jesus, but also the Word of God, a guiding principle, and way of life for Christians. In a like vein, Spiritans as a congregation have their written document guiding their life, mission, and spirituality called "Spiritan Rule of Life." The scripture forms the foundation upon which the Spiritan Rule of Life rests as peculiar to the Spiritans in their mission theology and spirituality. Christian scripture and Spiritan Rule of Life are for the Spiritans, two sides of the same coin, and each is as important as the other. Spiritan holiness of life and discipleship, are deeply rooted in the blending, internalizing, and living out both experiences of God's word and presence in the world.

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[235] Marc Whelan, C.S.Sp., "Drinking from Our Own Wells Bagamoyo 2012 and Spiritan Identity and Tradition," *Spiritan Horizons: A Journal of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit,* no. 8, (2013): 14.

Harmonious relationship with civil authority. It will be recalled that among other reasons, relationship with civil authorities was one of the reasons the English speaking Irish Spiritan missionaries arrived in Igbo land after the British and French relationship could no longer hold water. A fulfilled and successful missionary activity rests entirely on harmonious relationship with the people in question including their civil authority. This harmonious relationship involves all aspects of the peoples' lives. Hence, the counsel by the founding fathers to be one with the people in all ramifications. This Spiritan mission spirituality becomes an important condition for proper, adequate, and grass root evangelization to occur.

Inculturation and justice. The spirituality of inculturation and justice is an offshoot not only of harmonious relationship, holiness of life, but also of kenosis. The Spiritans involving in the ministry of the Catholic Church at large whose missionary principles is that of inculturation and social justice, internalize and live out these principles as part of their spiritual heritage. Gustavo Gutierrez, the founding father of Latin American Liberation Theology holds that practical way forward for inculturation, justice, and liberation is identification and solidarity with the people especially the poor as a way of life. When this happens will there be authentic theological discussion, liberation, and bearing witness to the gospel message and mission of Jesus. Spiritan spirituality is a necessary and important aspect of its mission as it fuels and propels its missionary activities. The Spiritan internal DNA is summarized as been available for the mission in docility to the Holy Spirit. In this way, "openness, availability, and docility to the Holy Spirit are identity marks of Spiritan spirituality."[236]

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[236] Congregation of the Holy Spirit, "Living Spiritan Spirituality," *Information Documentation*, no. 60 (2007); 10.

The mission theology, spirituality of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, and the cultural context of Ireland formed the identity and spirituality of the Irish Spiritan missionaries who in turn brought the Catholic faith to Igbo land. Gleaning from both the Spiritan mission theology and spirituality, one can argue that the salvation of the "pagan" African souls (Igbos inclusive) was the Irish missionary evangelization driving motive to Igbo land.[237] This argument nevertheless, can be seen as part of the entire Irish-Igbo evangelization story as the need for an English-speaking missionaries in the Igbo land after the failed French missionary activity becomes an important and also a propelling factor. However, from the Irish contextual situation of poverty, oppression, famine, and outbreak of disease from the mid-1800s, and from the role economy played in Irish society one can also infer at least the following two points:

First and foremost, within the contextual Irish framework necessitating Irish emigration to other parts of the world, this contextual situation in question found a soft landing ground in the waiting and welcoming arms of the Spiritan missionary congregation in their mission theology, whose missionary ideal and motive is for the evangelization of the poor. Irish experience of suffering becomes an advantage in this regard as Hebrews 2:18 points to the human experience of Jesus as a necessary part of his qualification as a high priest. From this point of view, the Spiritan missionary activity became a necessary gateway to survival and greener pasture for the Irish Spiritan missionaries who were readily available to embrace the missionary activities in the poor regions of Africa. Secondly, the Spiritan spirituality of abandonment and harmonious relationship with civil authority among others also met an important and interactive

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[237] See Ebelebe, *Africa and the New Face of Mission*, 67.

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match among the Irish Spiritans whose contextual experience necessitated the abandonment spirituality of the Spiritan kind.

In brief, I reviewed the various literatures relating to Irish history and discussed the Irish Spiritan identity and spirituality from a thematic perspective under two broad areas of Irish history and Spiritan story. Within the Irish story, I focused on key theme of cultural living embracing historical elements, social location, religious pattern, and lived spirituality as integral aspects of Irish cultural identity and spirituality. I also explored other religious movements in Ireland as having dominant influence within the cultural society. Finally, I explored the Spiritan story with its mission theology and spirituality as an integral part of the Irish Spiritan identity and spirituality that in turn influenced and shaped the Catholic faith in Igbo land. This chapter responds to the subsidiary research question: what constitutes the deep core of Irish culture, identity, and spirituality? In the next chapter which is the last chapter, I will restate my thesis arguments and explore the Irish-Igbo intercultural encounter to determine the areas of differences and commonalities. I will also explore theologically the implications of the Irish-Igbo encounter. Based on the implications of my study, I will then propose a pastoral plan for the sustainability of cultural identity and spirituality beyond the twenty-first century and conclude my study with a future of hope for both the Igbo Catholic Church and the Nigerian Spiritans.

CHAPTER FIVE

Theological Explorations of Irish-Igbo Encounter: Towards a Twenty-first Century and Beyond

The revelation of grace is not the establishment of a new

form within the created world; it is but a new manner of

God's presence in the form of the world, a new intimacy in

our union with him [God], an intimacy to which the child of

God has access and in which he [she] participates.[238] –

Hans Urs Von Balthasar

In the course of this study, I have argued among other points, the following:

Firstly, individual or group's identity is primarily a product of their root and secondarily their contextual situation. An individual is first and foremost identified by their cultural roots. Aquinas' theological position of grace building on nature holds a prominent place in Catholic theology, so also contextual societal influence becomes an important secondary characteristic traits building on the cultural traditional roots. From this perspective, understanding individual or group's ancestral roots becomes a pointer to understanding other aspects of their lives. Secondly, flowing from identity element, I also argued that spirituality as peoples' lived experience of their relationship with God is rooted in their cultural tradition and influenced by their contextual situation. This influence of the contextual situation on both the cultural tradition and lived spirituality is such that each moment of one's life becomes a teachable moment of encounter with God. In this teachable moment of encounter with God, the contextual spiritual question "what does God want to communicate in this situation?" becomes ultimately important.

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[238] Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics Vol. 1*, 440.

In the light of this, the Ignatian spiritual perspective invites "a person to search for and find God in every circumstance of life, not just in explicitly religious situations or activities."[239] In experiencing God in the every life circumstance, David Tracy argues that these ordinary events and circumstances of life are revelatory of the divine.[240] Hence, these positions become important spiritual viewpoints to uphold. These viewpoints are such that they cannot be overlooked as analyzing Psalm ninety-five, Dennis Hamm argues that "the phrase, 'if today you hear his voice,' implies that the divine voice must somehow be accessible in our daily experience, for we are creatures who live one day at a time. If God wants to communicate with us, it has to happen in the course of a twenty-four-hour day, for we live in no other time."[241] Thirdly and finally, I argued that the success of the Irish Spiritan missionaries' activities in Igbo rests on among other factors, more on the heart to heart connection – the concept of *Namasté* – between these two cultural groups as both cultural groups have a lot of commonalities than divisions.

Intercultural Encounter

The Irish-Igbo encounter in the later part of the nineteenth century is an encounter that is not only economically motivated, but theologically enriched and also spiritually laden. In this section, I will apply the second movement – "Judge," of the see-judge-act method of practical theology. I will also apply the practical theological, multicultural, and contextual lenses as an African, Catholic missionary, among others, in exploring theologically, the Irish-Igbo encounter. The "judge" moment is the moment of

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[239] George W. Traub, ed., *An Ignatian Spirituality Reader* (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 2008), 48.
[240] Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 267.
[241] Dennis Hamm, "Rummaging for God: Praying Backwards through Your Day" in *An Ignatian Spirituality Reader*, ed. George W. Traub (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 2008), 105.

theological reflection which applies the theological task of interpretation in analyzing both cultures and the Irish-Igbo encounter.

Life involves taking risks, and the ability of embracing such risks as integral part of the whole human existence, and coming out of them whole or unbroken, makes one a hero or in a more general terminology, successful. Hence, a Christian prayer is not for deliverance from a challenge-free society, but rather for the grace to face the challenges that one encounters daily in life. The risks, challenges, and temptations of analyzing two cultures are such that it is difficult to resist the tendency of comparing both cultures to the extent of ascertaining the superiority or inferiority of one to the other; or even to the point of concluding that the "quality" of one culture is better than the other. To this, Benedict cautions that "any scientific study [of cultures] requires that there be no preferential weighting of one or another of the items in the series it selects for its consideration."[242] While analyzing both cultures, I will try to resist such temptations; and take a look at the areas of differences and commonalities between both cultures, and the impact of this cultural experience on the Irish Spiritans evangelization of the Igbos.

The study of cultural patterns or customs from a social theorists' perspective is an important aspect of understanding any group as it is nothing but "the lens without which they could not see at all."[243] This study of various cultures play important roles in the present day context as this study "has thrown many civilizations into close contact, and at the moment the overwhelming response to this situation is nationalism and racial snobbery."[244] An important and systematic approach in analyzing and examining the differences and similarities between these two cultures lies also in the thematic approach

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[242] Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*, 3.
[243] Benedict, *Patterns of Culture,* 9.
[244] Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*, 11.

to the study of both cultures concerned. This thematic approach rests on the characteristic traits centered on the three broad categories of historical elements, social location, and religious pattern and lived spirituality. Two important external differences among others that stand out very prominently that I will like to highlight is on location. The first of these differences is the geographical location of both societies. Geographically, both cultural societies are in two different continents of the world.[245] Ireland, in the continent of Europe is north of the continent of Africa – the location of Igbo cultural society. Ireland is located in an island surrounded by water with practically no physical neighbors to interact with without crossing the sea or ocean. From this perspective, one could argue that the location of Ireland on an island necessitates and fosters the kind of cultural and relational pattern within Ireland itself. The resulting effect is the vulnerability of Ireland to other countries as evidenced in their experienced historical invasions. Igbo cultural society on the other hand and by extension, Nigeria, is bound in the south by Gulf of Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean and surrounded by neighbors on other parts fostering human interaction and relationship.

An offshoot of this major difference in geographical location between these two cultural societies is the shortest air distance between both cultural societies which sets them about 3,198 miles (5146 km)[246] apart from each other. This distance as mentioned earlier can be seen and interpreted not only from a theological perspective, but also from a spiritual point of view as will be explored shortly in the question what does it look like to leave one's culture and home? The weightiness and implication of this question rests

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[245] See Chapters Three and Four for the location of these two cultural societies.
[246] "Distance Between Countries," accessed 2/14/2016, http://www.distancefromto.net/distance-from-ireland-to-nigeria.

also on the fact that the destination of the Irish Spiritan missionaries was a foreign and unknown land.

Despite these two but major differences, these two cultural societies, share a lot in common in the areas of identity, religion, and spirituality to the point that most of the characteristic traits of one could suffice for the other. As the question of identity rests on origin and history, both cultural societies share similar historical experiences. Though their documented historical origins fall short of consensus view among scholars of the various historical background, both had long historical origin, history of invasion, and colonization by another cultural group.[247] However, while Ireland had a prolong history of invasion and colonization, Igbo cultural society also experienced the same history of invasion and colonization from the same colonizers, though not on the same lengthy scale as the situation with Ireland. Still on the historical element, another important resonating cultural characteristics existing between these two cultural societies is their androcentric and patriarchal nature which attaches much importance to masculine gender over and above the feminine counterpart. This is attested to by the patrimony of the oldest son while other children are left without family inheritance or at worst, in search of alternatives for themselves.

Social location looks at the existing commonalities between these two cultures from three broad categories of economic patterns, political patterns, and their relational patterns. Their economic patterns exhibit the same pattern and phases. It is important to note that both cultures shared the same two phases of economic patterns and the agrarian means of survival within the first precolonial phase of economic development. This first phase of the economic patterns necessitate also within both cultures, an increase in

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[247] See Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, xiii and Oriji, *Traditions of Igbo Origin,* 14-15.

population as a means of responding to and assuring their need of human resources to

satisfy their economic source of livelihood.[248] Both cultures in question also share the

same second phase economic patterns of experience. It is also important to observe that

either by design or accident both cultures share the same colonizers –, the British,[249] –

hence, one could argue on the one hand, that the second phase of the economic patterns

of both cultures may be attributed to the pattern or system of the colonizers to meet their

personal interests; or on the other hand, that the colonizers built on what was already on

the ground. The offshoots and impacts of these two-phase economic patterns of living

that permeate all aspects of lives on both cultures can be identified as, but not limited to

giving rise to emigration tendencies. The emigration tendencies evoke on the citizenry an

endearing, surviving, and resilient spirit wherever and in whatever situation they found

themselves. All these commonalities arising from their economic patterns of living and

experience, form their characteristic traits, and by implication, enhanced the

evangelization process between both cultures.

Within the political pattern, the leadership structure in the Irish cultural society,

whereby families grow and attain the status of tribes and kingdoms with a leader,

parallels the leadership structure existing within Igbo cultural society. The families

becoming the first primary and court of first instance is a given commonality in both

cultures. This commonality from both cultures one can infer paved the way for the divide

and rule political system of the British colonizers as already observed. Another important

and broad commonality existent in both cultures is their relational pattern. Within these

relational patterns, both cultures emanate from, and share experience as native and tribal

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[248] See Bitel, *Isle of the Saints*, 36 and Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria*, 27.
[249] See Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, xiii and Falola, *Igbo History and Society*, 341-48.

people.[250] This experience as native and tribal people creates their foundation story and gives them their identity and unity as a cultural group. From their native and tribal origin and identity stems their cultural pattern. Culture as an identifier of a group and also a way of passing on the values and beliefs to subsequent generations becomes an important characteristic that both cultures share in common. These two societies have cultures rich in signs and symbols, and ritual laden. Hence their practices become easy ways of not only keeping the society alive, but also of transmitting their cultural values and belief system. Apart from very few areas like the difference in language, one can affirm that both cultures share similar ceremonial rituals especially in the areas of marriage and burial.

The native and tribal nature of both societies, necessitate their pattern of life and communication pattern. The native and tribal natures of both societies express themselves in their communal patterns of living stressing the priority and importance of the community over and above the individual. This communal characteristic trait becomes an intrinsic and innate value within these societies in question that cannot be easily rooted out without destroying the identity of the people and group in question. Having similarity in language and communicative pattern expressive in their myth and proverb, embodies in each cultural society, their philosophy, wisdom, theology, and spirituality.

Some other similarities also exist within both cultural societies' traditional religion and lived spirituality. The traditional religion is very native and tribal to each of the cultures.[251] These traditional religions are not specifically proselytizing religions as membership into them is by birth. As traditional and native religions even though dubbed

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[250] See Bitel, *Isle of the Saints,* 6. See also Oriji, *Traditions of Igbo Origin*, 2.
[251] See *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 15th ed., s.vv. "Celtic religion" and Idowu, *African Traditional Religion,* 149.

"pagan" by their respective evangelizers, respect and care for the earth and the creatures, along with harmonious living among all creatures are important for effective religious practice; hence, strictness to cultic religious observance and practice becomes not only a necessary condition and commonality, but also an integral part of the native and cultic spirituality emanating from the traditional religion. However, with the Irish experience of their traditional religion dubbed "pagan," one wonders or questions the rationale behind using the same terminology in describing the traditional religion of the Igbos.

Despite the fact that the continent of Africa is credited as the cradle of civilization, and given the above commonalities evident in both cultural societies, it can ipso facto be inferred that both the Irish and Igbo cultural groups have perhaps, an unidentifiable common origin and root. These commonalities cannot be negated as playing minimal or no roles at all in the Irish Catholic Spiritan missionary success of the Igbo Catholic evangelization than their French Catholic missionary counterparts who first stepped their feet in Igbo land.

Theological Implications of Irish-Igbo Encounter

In this subsection, I will explore the theological implications of the Irish-Igbo encounter and respond to the important subsidiary research questions: What does it look like to leave one's culture and home? Within the Irish Spiritan evangelization of Igbo land, what did the Irish Spiritan missionaries and the evangelized Igbo Catholics lose and gain? An important task of the theologian is that of interpretation and theological conversation with these various categories: culture, experience, scripture, and tradition. The theologian asks critical and core questions relating to meaning, values, and the place of God within the entire picture or conversation. Within this realm, Jose de Mesa strongly

argues that an important task of the theologian is that of finding God and meaning in peoples' lives, culture, and contexts rather than bringing God to them. Hence, he echoes with M.A.C. Warren that "our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on [people's] dreams. More serious still, we may forget that God was here before our arrival."[252] From this perspective, Howard Gray argues that "the best Jesuit missionaries asked not, 'can we bring God to you?' but rather, 'where in your culture, in your profession, in your occupation, in your religious experience, in your life, does God already exist and act?'"[253] Hence, an important question to be explored within the Irish-Igbo encounter is finding God within these cultures rather than importing God into these cultures. In so doing, another important subsidiary question remains what does God want to communicate through these cultures? Assisting in the understanding of the theological implications of the Irish-Igbo encounter, the following two questions are of vital importance.

The first question is why did the Irish Spiritan missionaries succeed in their missionary activity in Igbo land than their French missionary counterparts who were the first to arrive? From the historical point of view, the Irish Spiritan missionaries were not the first to step their feet in Igbo land. Recapping briefly, the early Irish Catholic missionaries arrived in Igbo land around 1893, but prior to their arrival, the Protestant missionaries of the Anglican Communion (CMS) led by Rev. Samuel Ajai Crowther in the company of Rev. John Christopher Taylor enjoyed the monopoly of evangelization of

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[252] Jose M. de Mesa, "Inculturation as Pilgrimage" In *Mission and Culture*, ed. Stephen B. Bevans (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012), 8.
[253] Howard Gray, SJ, "Ignatian Spirituality" In *An Ignatian Spirituality Reader*, ed. George W. Traub (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 2008), 73.

Igbo land in 1857. The first two Roman Catholic missionaries who arrived in Igbo land in 1883 from the Western Ecclesiastical Province of Nigeria went back as Igbo land was beyond their jurisdiction. December 5, 1885 marks the arrival of four Catholic missionaries of French origin, –two priests– Frs. Joseph Lutz and Horne, and two religious brothers – Hermas and Jean-Gotto, –of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit to Onitsha. The duration of stay of the first Catholic missionaries from the Western Province in Igbo land was not clarified however, one theological question that readily comes to mind is why could these first missionaries not stay and continue the work since they have set their feet in Igbo land for missionary work only to withdraw for juridical purposes? The second Catholic missionaries of French origin came in after the first attempt by these first Catholic missionaries from the Western Province. These French missionaries could not make any headway through in the missionary evangelization of the Igbos. Though political structure and Propaganda Fide played important roles, and as at the time in question, Nigeria was under the British colonial rule in opposition to the French evangelizers, hence friction could be envisaged. However, Casmir Eke argues in addition to the above reason, that the French nationalism was also a major obstacle to proper and successful evangelization by the French missionaries. Taking all these into account, inasmuch as the above reasons are valid, I am arguing that the whole story regarding the Irish successful Igbo evangelization can be seen from the point of view and concept of *Namasté*. In this concept, the Irish Spiritan missionaries stepped into a welcome mat and matching mate of Igbo cultural society who, together, share the same foundational life experience in their historical development and spiritual journey.

The concept of *Namasté*, a spiritual concept of heart to heart relationship connection and put in a religious context, "the divine in one identifies the divine in the other," is important in this context, in that it creates a way where there is none. The principle for creating this way is such that it not only meets and treats people on the human level, but also beyond the human in seeing the image of the divine in each individual. Where there is a way, this concept paves and solidifies it; and where this spiritual relationship concept is absent, it becomes difficult to make a headway through. From this perspective, an important theological interpretation of the Irish-Igbo encounter is that the success of the Irish Spiritan missionary activities in Igbo land is not only credited to their effective human and material resources in terms of the Irish Spiritan missionaries and missionary strategies respectively, but most importantly also to divine design in the heart to heart connection concept of *Namasté*.

Inferring from this heart to heart relationship connection between both cultural groups, the second question arises: what does it look like to leave one's culture and home to an unknown destination? It is most probably difficult to walk in another person's shoes as it is the person who wears the shoes, feels the pain. Nevertheless, it is also possible to have a glimpse of what pain others are experiencing, but not to the degree of feeling one's pain. Ruth Benedict understands culture as "what really binds men together … the ideas and the standards they have in common,"[254] and the individual needs to be understood as "living in his culture; and the culture as lived by individuals."[255] Religion as an integral part of culture, concerns itself with the "meaning-giving substance of culture, and culture is the totality of forms in which the basic concern of religion

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[254] Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*, 16.
[255] Franz Boas, "Introduction" in *Patterns of Culture*, Ruth Benedict (New York: Mariner Books, 2005), xxii.

expresses itself. In abbreviation: religion is the substance of culture, culture is the form of religion."[256] By implication, culture is the totality of one's being and life. Israelites' experience of sojourning, leaving their home land for another land was a totally different experience that from their context, leaves much to be desired; hence, the injunction to treat strangers with hospitality becomes an important spiritual principle and practice to be upheld.[257] Tillich also argues from this context that "the command to Abraham to leave his homeland and his father's house means the command to leave the gods of soil and blood, of family, tribe and nation; that is, the gods of space, the gods of paganism and polytheism, the gods who stand beside each other–even if one of them is the most powerful."[258] Leaving one's culture indirectly applying to one's life must have seemed like uprooting one from their cultural identity or even ceasing to exist. From the spirituality perspective, it is a great sacrifice and greater sacrifice in dealing with the challenges inherent with such experience, as leaving one's culture and home amounts to destroying the person's identity and existence. With the concept of the heart to heart connection playing important role in finding a welcoming mat and a home, the difficulties and challenges of leaving one's culture becomes not too much of a burden to bear. From the Spiritan mission theology, the virtues of availability and abandonment provide the fortitude and grace in addressing the challenges at stake.

As it is important to recall that economic patterns, poverty, and oppression played important roles in the emigration of Irish Spiritans, missionary activity became then an important gateway to survival and greener pasture; it is also important on the other hand

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[256] Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, 42.
[257] See Exodus 23:9 (The New Jerusalem Bible).
[258] Tillich, *Theology of Culture,* 35.

to affirm and praise the courage, zeal, endearing, and resilient spirit of the Irish Spiritans who left their culture and entire life to an unknown African land, all in the name of faith and evangelization. The same affirmation and praise also accrue to missionaries in the reverse missionary activity. It is vital to brainstorm on what it could look like for the Irish Spiritan missionaries leaving their cultural identity to Igbo land without the heart to heart relational connection with the evangelized Igbos?

With the welcome mat out for the Irish Spiritans in Igbo land, these missionaries found their homes in the welcoming hearts of the Igbos more than their predecessors. They were treated with such great hospitality (needless to say that it is one of the characteristic traits of Igbo identity) in such a way that their status was more of a king than a servant in the mind of Jesus. Such hospitality reached its crescendo as the Irish Spiritan missionaries' newly found home became their natural home hence, going back to their natural home was again more challenging as it becomes a re-living of the whole experience of poverty, oppression, and struggle for survival. Hence what does it also look like to come back to one's natural home from this perspective, becomes an important question and task that is not within the framework of this study.

Finally, in this all important encounter between the Irish Spiritan missionaries and Igbo cultural society in which evangelization of the Igbos took place, it becomes of interest to explore on what the Irish Spiritan Missionaries and the evangelized Igbos lost and gained or from a more positive perspective, what both gave up and received. The biblical interpretation regarding the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee, and the study of chemical components become relevant in this regard. Biblical and spiritual scholars draw

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insights and comparison between the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee[259] from the perspective of giving and receiving. The river Jordan which is the most important river in Palestine, feeds both seas.[260] The Dead Sea as it receives water from the river Jordan, has no way of giving out except through evaporation and as such, has a high concentration of salt, hence it is known as the Salt Sea.[261] Due to its high salinity, it supports no animal or plant life and hence, the name of Dead Sea[262] is applied to it. The Sea of Galilee receives water from the same river Jordan, but completes the cycle by giving out. This process of receiving and giving out, sustains life hence the Sea of Galilee is "famous for its abundant supply of fish, so there was a vital and active fish trade there that included several of the apostles."[263] The act of receiving and giving becomes formative and encourages growth. For this growth to occur, one needs to give up something.

From the study of chemical components within the branch of organic chemistry, Alkanes, Alkenes, and Alkynes are chemical components in descending order. Alkanes are saturated and hence, cannot receive any external chemical components except exchanging. Alkenes and Alkynes receive chemical components in order to be saturated and become Alkanes. For these chemical components to maintain and continue their existence, there will be an activity in the form of movement of whatever sort. This

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[259] The Sea of Galilee is also called Lake. It is "the largest freshwater lake in Palestine (Matthew 4:18; Mark7:31; John 5:1). Many names have been used for it. In the Old Testament, the lake was called "the sea of Chinnereth" (Numbers 34:11; Joshua 12:3…). In the New Testament, Luke uses the Lake of Gennesaret (Luke 5:1) or simply "the lake" (Luke 5:2; 8:22, 23, 33). Mark and Matthew also use the word "lake," but they sometimes use "sea" and "sea of Galilee" (Mark 1:16, 7:31; Matthew 4:18, 15:34). John calls it the "the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias" (John 6:1)." See Scott Hahn ed., *Catholic Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 300.
[260] Hahn ed., *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, 470.
[261] See Gen. 14:3; Num. 34:3; Deut. 3:17 (The New Jerusalem Bible).
[262] The name "Dead Sea" was not used in the Bible, but was first applied by Pausanias. Josephus referred to it as the Asphalt Lake, owing to the large quantities of asphalt in the region. See Hahn ed., *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, 203.
[263] Hahn ed., *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, 300. See also Matt. 4:18-22 and Luke 5:1-11 (The New Jerusalem Bible).

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movement can as well be seen from the concept of giving or receiving, or both. Benedict argues from the cultural perspective that "since the beginning of human history, it can be shown that peoples have been able to adopt the culture of peoples of another blood. There is nothing in the biological structure of man that makes it even difficult."[264] Inferring from the above, human beings have the ability to make changes and adjustments in life to their own convenience and benefit; and to promote interaction and enhance living, something has to be given up in exchange for something else and perhaps, something of higher value. This implies that for life to be sustained, there must be giving and receiving. What did the Irish Spiritan missionaries and the evangelized Igbos lose and gain in this encounter?

From the above exploration, one cannot but affirm that the Irish Spiritans gave up some vital elements of their identity and being. The Irish Spiritan missionaries gave up their cultural identity and family; and from Tillich's perspective, their very lives – and from the spirituality point of view, this is regarded as the highest sacrifice and gift. Suffice it to say that at this point and from the sociological point of view with regard to the contextual Igbo society, the Irish Spiritan missionaries were in the state of liminality. This reflects the Spiritan missionary spirituality of kenosis and abandonment stemming from the Spiritan mission theology. On the other hand, it is important to mention that while they gave up their lives, some vital elements of their identity, and were in the state of liminality, in the course of time they regained their status back and even much more as they were treated as kings and lords. The treatment as kings and lords implies that they have acquired a new cultural home, a new identity, and status. The poverty and famine that economically necessitated emigration, was exchanged for affluence in return;

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[264] Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*, 13.

survival for something more than greener pasture; and for oppression, treatment as lords and kings.

From the perspective of the Igbos who are the recipient of the fruits of the missionary evangelization activity, they had some tradeoffs in order to get to the point where they are, and to benefit from the Irish Spiritan missionary activities. The Igbos lost some of their cultural practices and in particular, their traditional religious practices and belief system. A particular tradeoff is the Igbo's God of instant justice which is a vital aspect of Igbo traditional religious belief system for God of mercy and compassion. Suffice it to say that among the traditional Igbos, they hold that the advent of the missionaries and the introduction of the God of mercy, compassion, and slow to anger into the society, brought about decay in the traditional morality as culprits get away with their loots and are not brought to instant justice. The trading-off of these vital aspects of the culture and traditional practices, affected the traditional spirituality which indirectly affected the entire life of the people. Hence, Christianity is viewed traditionally as an aberration of the traditional cultural and religious practices. With the embracing of the new Christian religious movement, culminating in missionary activities by the Igbos, the contiguous and communal family life pattern is compromised as emigration is an integral part of embracing missionary activities.

Life is all about give and take, giving and receiving. It is important to remark and see things from the other side of the spectrum that all is not totally negative. The Igbos themselves gained something from the tradeoffs. In exchange for their tradeoffs, the Igbos on their own part acquired a new religious identity – the Catholic religious faith – which can as well be seen as an important gateway to the global world. This important

gateway – Catholic religion, brings along with it a new spirituality and way of experiencing and encountering God – the God of mercy and compassion, slow to anger and abounding in love. The resultant positive effect of the "Western" education (as one of the fruits of the tradeoffs), as it was referred to then within the traditional Igbo society cannot be underestimated. This overarching positive gain in the Irish-Igbo encounter as the Irish are noted for their educational influence within Europe, brought about a new worldview as it affords the Igbos a different way of looking at reality beyond themselves. Within the new religious acquisition necessitating missionary evangelization activity, the Igbos embraced this missionary evangelization activity – something completely contrary to the traditional religious belief system – to the extent of reverse missionary activity. However, it is and will be interesting within the contextual society to brainstorm on what reverse missionary activity looks like especially from the lenses of the countries of the early missionaries? This perhaps can be an area of further investigation and exploration among scholars of missiology.

The theological exploration of the Irish-Igbo encounter brings to the fore front some practical theological questions that are of vital importance to this study – What are the implications of this exploration to Igbo Catholic identity and spirituality? What are the implications for Nigerian Spiritan formation spirituality? What are the implications for personal formation and pastoral ministry? These theological questions serve as ways of giving direction to charting the pathway to a sustainable cultural identity and spirituality for the twenty-first century and beyond.

Implications of My Study

Drawing from these arguments, spirituality which is at the heart of this study becomes a cultural, contextual dependent, and amenable variable. When a culture is more of static than dynamic, it becomes more challenging as to the relevance of spirituality immanent from such a cultural tradition within the changing global society. A retrospective view at this study brings to the fore front, practical theological questions and the publics[265] for which this study has particular and dire implications to. These practical theological questions focus on the implications of the theological exploration of the Irish-Igbo encounter to Igbo Catholic identity and spirituality, Nigerian Spiritan formation and spirituality, and on personal formation and pastoral ministry. These three broad areas or publics form the pivotal point in proposing a creative path for the future of a *sui generis* and a sustainable Igbo Catholic cultural identity and spirituality beyond the twenty-first century.

The exploration of the Irish-Igbo encounter has become what I describe as a tip of an ice berg, a learning experience, and evaluation of self in relation to the world beyond myself. In the evaluation of self, the key questions – who am I? What identifies me as different from the other? – still come to mind calling for an in-depth response. An important implication of this exploration to Igbo Catholic identity and spirituality, draws attention to the *sui generis* and sustainability concepts in relation to identity and spirituality. From the study of Igbo cultural identity and spirituality in Chapter Three, Igbos experienced a multiplicity of cultural identity and spirituality, the outcome of such experience is plurality. Hence, a *sui generis* Igbo Catholic identity and spirituality becomes one that retains the valid, relevant, and richer stream of Igbo cultural tradition

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[265] David Tracy identifies three publics which the theologian addresses namely the society, the academy, and the church**.** See Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 5.

and at the same time, takes the contextually lived experiences into consideration for the sake of posterity. Emanating from the exploration is the question of the sustainability of the spirituality inherent from the cultural tradition and inadvertently from the type of Catholicism invoke in Igbo land – examples include spirituality of flight from the world and do not's over the dos. There is no doubt that such spirituality is short of sustainability calling for a review and updating. This review and updating of the Igbo Catholic spirituality becomes of vital importance as the Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff's remarks that "the modern world lives in the midst of sacraments but does not have the open eye to visualize them effectively"[266] is applicable within the context of Igbo Catholicism.

My biases as both a practical theologian and an involved Igbo Spiritan are of vital importance in evaluating the implications of this study not only for the Igbo Spiritan formation, but also for the Nigerian Spiritan formation, personal formation, and pastoral ministry. A retrospective look at the Igbo cultural identity, the inherent spirituality therein, and the Nigerian Spiritan spirituality formation heritage in conversation with the contextual global society, brings to the fore front some of the implications to Nigerian Spiritan formation. As an international missionary congregation, Spiritan spirituality is not to be conceived as "something we can acquire, and which is then in no further need of being modified by our ongoing encounters with God, with others, and with creation as our life's journey unfolds. But part, surely, of our [Spiritan] spirituality is that it evolves and is shaped by our life experience. Not to allow for that is to become closed to our own

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[266] Leonardo Boff, *Sacraments of Life: Life of the Sacraments* (Portland, OR: Pastoral Press, 1987), 11.

ongoing conversion, which ought to be a transformative experience."[267] Nigerian Spiritan

formation process requires flight from the world and as stratified by gender, flight from

the other gender. The question here is if one takes a flight from the world and gender,

what happens after formation where one encounters these situations? A review and a

chart to a sustainable formation process are necessary. Spiritan spirituality is a dynamic

attribute affected, shaped by culture, mission, and signs of time. In conversation with

Igbo society, a culture that is androcentric, patriarchal, with much emphasis on the do

not's over the dos, and leaning more towards a static rather than dynamic nature, runs the

risk of extinction and calls for an action in view of an on-going formation and spirituality.

An important aspect and practical nature of theology as the Scottish theologian

Duncan Forrester argues, is transformation and an "orientation of the whole person rather

than a simple intellectual assent."[268] Charity begins at home and as such, a vital aspect of

this study focuses on the implication for personal formation and pastoral ministry –

which is transformative – as it calls for a continuous appreciation of one's identity and

cultural values, and at the same time an updating and review where necessary. Drawing

from this, the implication for personal formation is an openness and understanding of

other sources of encounter with God including the material world and other

circumstances other than the explicit religious situations and activities. An offshoot of

this will be an effective pastoral ministry as finding God in other peoples' culture and

lives rather than bringing God into their culture and lives become an important

missionary strategy for me to uphold.

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[267] Anthony Gittins, C.S.Sp., "Spiritan Spirituality? Possibilities and Limitations," *Spiritan Horizons: A Journal of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, no.* 8, (2013); 41.
[268] Forrester, *Truthful Action*, 33.

Drawing from the above implications and from personal biases of cultural plurality which from a spiritual perspective are sources of strength, these sources of strength in most cases, pose serious challenges and rift (as mentioned earlier) to one's traditional cultural and spiritual heritage. These challenges become very evident as one relates with the global changing contextual society. In the midst of all these challenging realities reflected in conversation with the contemporary society – whereby emphasis on cultural practices and spiritual encounter are shifting, one questions the sustainability of such cultural and spiritual heritage. From a lived experience, the answer to this question is not far-fetched. Encounter with the changing contextual society brings to the forefront, the obsolete and redundant nature of some cultural heritage and lived spirituality there in and hence, unsustainable. I will draw three examples from each to argue the unsustainability of some cultural and lived spiritual heritage. First, the Igbo and Irish cultural practices are from an androcentric and patriarchal perspective – placing more and perhaps absolute importance on male children who also are heirs to the patrimony. This importance creates unnecessary tension for couples not even without a child, but without a male child and communicating the unintended message that the female counterparts are second class citizens with little or no importance at all within the family system. If one is a male child within such a society, this argument may not be something to think home about, but if this person is female, the conversation takes a different dimension. Suffice it to say that this view has a strong influence in the formation of clergy and missionaries within the Catholic Church in Igbo land. Secondly, flowing from the first point gives rise to relatively populated and large children in the family. This is to some extent due to the economic patterns of survival and heirs to the inheritance that are predominantly males.

Thirdly, the offshoot of all these is the denial of "Western" education to the females as it is viewed as cultivating and investing in another person's farmland as women are seen as properties of their husbands.

From the lived spirituality perspective, an important lived spirituality that proves obsolete and redundant within the contextual society is the material world viewed as sinful and hence to be avoided. This lived spirituality is totally and completely unsustainable within the contemporary world as one lives in, shares, encounters, interacts daily with, and is sustained by the material world. Secondly and stemming from the first is the gender stratification and disparity to the point that the opposite gender is considered a source of sin and distraction, and as such to be avoided. The point here is rather than appreciating the gift of God in the other, it has become the source of flight and distanciation. Within the contemporary society, the "theology of *fuga*" – theology of flight – implying encounter with the opposite gender as sinful, becomes inconceivable as all portray the image of God and share the same society. The third point indicating the unsustainability of such spirituality is the emphasis of the do not's over the dos. Within the contemporary society, encouragement is an important motivating factor and hence emphasis of the dos over the do not's tend to encourage and elicit positive response rather than the reverse. An important question at this point is which way out of this unsustainable cultural and spiritual dilemma and experience?

Charting the Path to a Sustainable Cultural Identity and Spirituality

American theologian, Elizabeth Johnson echoing the voice of German theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg, argues that "religions die when their lights fail, that is, when their teachings no longer illuminate life as it is actually lived by their adherents. In such cases,

the way the Holy is encountered stalls out and does not keep pace with changing human experience. History's dynamism is inexorable. Some people will cling to the old views, but eventually most will move on, seeking ultimate meaning in a way that is coherent with their current experience of life."[269] Johnson further argues for the relevance of tradition as "a tradition that cannot change cannot be preserved. Where people experience God as still having something to say, the lights stay on."[270] An important interpretation of the biblical story of the wedding at Cana in Galilee[271] where Jesus changed water into wine offers an important and sustainable way out. The water that Jesus changed into wine was the water meant for the Jewish traditional purification ritual. Jesus changing those jars of water into wine indicates a new way replacing the old way. Hence, a sustainable way replacing the unsustainable way becomes of vital importance to the context of this study.

Arguing for the need of relevance and sustainability of cultural and spiritual heritage, Thomas Aquinas would remind us of an important theological and spiritual foundational principle that grace builds on nature. Drawing from this theological and spiritual inspiration, John XXIII in convoking the Second Vatican Council in 1962, and arguing for the need of relevance and sustainability, prophetically draws the Catholic Church's attention in reading the signs of time. Through John XXIII's prophetic vision, the Second Vatican Council focused its attention on pastoral reforms and renewal aiming at the relevance of the Church in the contemporary society. Hence, human existential

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[269] Elizabeth Johnson, *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God* (New York: Continuum International Publishers, 2007), 23.
[270] Johnson, *Quest for the Living God*, 23.
[271] John 2:3-10 (The New Jerusalem Bible).

phenomenon and experience are vital in relevance, meaning making, and chatting the path for a sustainable cultural identity and spirituality.

In charting the path for a sustainable Igbo Catholic cultural identity and spirituality for the twenty-first century and beyond, I re-state that the Igbo migrant and hospitable nature create room for the cultural plurality among them and consequently, spiritual identity. In this vein, one wonders if their cultural and spiritual identities are not compromised if not lost. Drawing from the inspirations of Christian Scripture comparing the kingdom of heaven to a "treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off in his joy, sells everything he owns and buys the field,"[272] I propose the following three pastoral plans in relation to the Igbo Catholic Church, Nigerian Spiritan formation, and personal and pastoral ministry as a sustainable cultural identity and spirituality beyond the twenty-first century. This pastoral plan can also be seen in the light of the pastoral circle method as a continuum as discussed previously in Chapter Two.

The first proposal to a sustainable cultural identity and spirituality beyond the twenty-first century is going back to the roots and origins. One of the motivating prophetic insights of John XXIII in convoking the Second Vatican Council was the going back to our original sources and roots which Marc Whelan argues for while echoing the spirit and call of Vatican II "to a constant return to these sources which give us the original inspiration for the founding of our Congregation."[273] I have argued in the course of this study that individual or group's identity is dependent primarily on their cultural roots and secondarily on contextual situations hence, ignorant of such roots amounts to a

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[272] Matt. 13:44 (The New Jerusalem Bible).

[273] Marc Whelan, C.S.Sp., "Drinking from Our Own Wells Bagamoyo 2012 and Spiritan Identity and Tradition," *Spiritan Horizons: A Journal of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, no.* 8, (2013); 13.

loss of identity, meaning, and consequently spiritual heritage. Every culture has

something valuable and meaningful to communicate to the group and society at large or

else, it will cease to exist. Such values and meaning need to be rediscovered, appreciated,

and appropriated or else such a culture will die off for lack of progeny and vivification.

The relevant questions in this first step of charting a sustainable pastoral plan remain who

am I? Who are we? What makes me different from the other person? What values in my

roots are meaningful? Responding adequately to these questions, brings to the forefront

American theologian – David Tracy's – notion of the "classic"[274] – which portrays

meaning and authority within a given societal context. Taking the contemporary society

into account, cultural and spiritual pluralities become important realities calling for

attention and response. However, in responding to such realities, Tracy's similarities-in-

real-difference becomes significant and helpful in this regard rather than abandonment of

one's core values and cultural identity. An important question regarding this first step is

what if the practices within the cultural roots and origins have become obsolete? One of

the theories and philosophical views of a pre-Socratic philosopher – Heraclitus – is the

theory of flux where he compared "all things to a river, meant that they all changed all

the time."[275] Drawing insight from this theory, cultural practices that are not amenable to

the contextual situations run the risk of extinction. Response to this important question

lies in the spirit, value, and meaning behind the cultural practices within such roots rather

than the actual practice itself. The actual practice can change in the course of time while

the meaning, value, and spirit behind such practice remain as Jesus' response to Jews –

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[274] David Tracy defines classics as a text, event, person, symbol encountered in cultural experience that claims authority because of the intensification of meaning and value. See *Analogical Imagination*, 100.
[275] *Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* s.vv. "Heraclitus of Ephesus."

"it is the spirit that gives life"[276] – becomes important clue in getting back to roots and origins. Hence, a *sui generis* cultural identity and spirituality always have recourse to roots and origins while taking the relevant contextual situations into account. From this perspective, through this study, I have come to a deeper realization of the facts that: I am made specifically from and for a purpose likewise the other and the appreciation of my cultural roots and origin as the saying that whoever is not proud of their color is not fit to live.

The second proposal is appreciating, appropriating, and internalization of the two books of divine revelation. Recapping the Catholic theological foundation by Aquinas that grace builds on nature, this second step flowing from the first, proposes an appreciation and appropriation of the two important books of divine revelation namely the book of Nature (the first book of revelation) and the Bible or Scripture (the second book of revelation). These two books of divine revelation, I consider as two sides of the same coin in such a way that they are inseparable hence, one cannot be accepted and the other rejected. The Genesis account of creation[277] holds that after creation, God saw that all was good and as such, creation mirrors the image of God. Aquinas's fifth way of the "Five Ways" of knowing and proving the existence of God focused on the orderly nature of things as he argues that "all things are directed toward one end (the principle of finality), and concludes that this universal order points to the existence of an intelligent Orderer of all things. At the end of his statement of each 'way,' Thomas simply said, and this is what all men call God."[278] Lived human experience placed relevance on one book – the Bible or Scripture – over and above the book of Nature. This is a sad experience as

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[276] John 6:63 (The New Jerusalem Bible).
[277] Gen. 1:31 (The New Jerusalem Bible).
[278] *Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* s.vv. "Thomas Aquinas, St."

nature is regarded no longer as mirroring divine mystery among humanity rather, a thing to be exploited, destroyed, and abandoned. From this lived human experience of exploitation of nature, Pope Francis exhorts humanity in his *Laudato Si* about the care of the earth, as our common heritage. The earth is not just a thing to be used and exploited rather, a revelation of God's mystery, creative act, love, and care for humanity.

Drawing from Manichaean dualistic conceptual influence of division between matter and spirit, one questions if these two books – Nature and Bible – are not in direct contrast or opposition to each other? From the sacramental theology and spiritual perspectives, these two books are not in direct opposition to each other. Boff's argument recapped here that "the modern world lives in the midst of sacraments but does not have the open eye to visualize them effectively. The reason is that it sees things only as things. It views them only from the outside,"[279] argues in favor of correlation between the two books rather than opposition. Both books are revelatory of divine mystery. Ignatian spiritual writer, George Traub holding the view that these two books are not in opposition to each other argues that "Ignatius came to see God as present and busily at work in all creation. God's spiritual presence so infuses the universe that nothing is merely secular or profane. Hence the Ignatian ideal of 'finding God in all things.'… For the Jesuits there was never anything like flight from the world, nothing like the medieval idea of Thomas à Kempis (Imitation of Christ), that leaving the monastery meant coming back less a monk."[280] Patriarch Bartholomew argues that both books are not only two sides of the same coin, but are also sacred. Bartholomew in reference to the book of Nature, sees the entire creation as good and beautiful. This beauty he argues is the "beauty of divine

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[279] Boff, *Sacraments of Life: Life of the Sacraments*, 11.

[280] Ronald Modras, "The Spiritual Humanism of the Jesuits" in *An Ignatian Spirituality Reader*, ed. George W. Traub (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 2008), 10.

sacredness, a self-revelation and self-realization of God, who invites us to share in and to enjoy that beauty. For everything that lives and that breathes is sacred and beautiful in the eyes of God. The whole world is sacrament."[281] Denial of the important spiritual values of these two books or the affirmation of one against the other, causes a colossal loss and damage to progress in and a sustainable spirituality. Hence, Holland argues that the "denial by some Protestants of 'natural theology' – that is, denial of what the classical Christian tradition saw as the Divine revelation immanently revealed in and through the mystical-sacramental 'Book of Nature' – further helped to uproot Christian spirituality from its essential nourishment by the Divine presence revealed in natural ecology."[282] The spirituality inherent in natural ecology Holland refers to as ecological spirituality. In this regard, the appreciation, appropriation, and internalization of these two books as "classics," as important means of divine encounter, and an emphasis and promotion of the spirituality of encounter and engagement with the world rather than flight from it – as is the case with some formation processes, – be encouraged in the formation of clerics and missionaries. Only when this is done will there be a balanced spirituality and effective pastoral ministry be assured. Johannes van der Ven's concept of interdisciplinarity throws in more light to this dual books of revelation as this relationship model not only enriches theology and social sciences, but also fosters a better understanding of adulthood and spiritual progress. In addition, the appreciation, appropriation, and internalization of these two books of revelation will also foster and encourage a sustainable spirituality among Igbo Catholics. From this perspective, it is

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[281] Patriarch Bartholomew I, "Addresses and Statements" in *Cosmic Grace Humble Prayer: The Ecological Vision of the Green Patriarch Bartholomew I,* ed. John Chryssavgis (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publication, 2003), 216.

[282] Joe Holland, *Postmodern Transformation of Catholic Spirituality* (Washington: Pacem in Terris Press, forthcoming), 17.

important to highlight a vital spiritual pathway of Bartholomew's ecological creed of which its negation is referred to as original sin. Bartholomew argues that "our original privilege and calling as human beings lies precisely in our ability to appreciate the world as God's gift to us. And our original sin with regard to the natural environment lies, not in any legalistic transgression, but precisely in our refusal to accept the world as a sacrament of communion with God and neighbor."[283]

The third and final proposal is constant renewal and updating for relevance. Johnson strongly echoes the view about a tradition that cannot change, cannot be preserved and consequently cannot give life. Hence for a tradition to be alive and vivifying, updating and renewal in various forms are *conditio sine qua non* and cannot be overlooked. The biblical interpretation of the Sea of Galilee been fed by the river Jordan thereby sustaining and encouraging life, can also be seen from the perspective of updating and renewal. Aggiornamento is a fundamental keyword in the Second Vatican Council aiming to bring theological, pastoral, and liturgical practices within the contextual human framework. Reiterating the socio-theological debate of 1970s[284] by scholars, of which Gill argues that the Christian faith needs to be completely transformed in order to conform to the needs and outlook of contemporary secularized humanity, this view emphasizes not only the need, but also the constant and regular need for renewal.

From the Spiritan mission and spirituality perspectives, as pointed out by Gittins "we are committed to God's mission throughout our lives, and our commitment implies a calling and a sending to many persons, places, and circumstances. These serve to shape

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[283] Patriarch Bartholomew I, "Addresses and Statements" in *Cosmic Grace Humble Prayer: The Ecological Vision of the Green Patriarch Bartholomew I,* ed. John Chryssavgis (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publication, 2003), 315.
[284] See Gill, *Theology in a Social Context,* 73.

and (re)form our spirituality. If spirituality is about how the Holy Spirit relates to actual people (and vice versa), then culture – including history and context – and the specific person in concrete circumstances, are critically important variables."[285] It implies that Spiritan mission and spirituality are not static, but rather dynamic as they are affected and understood by the current missionary context and living human context as Whelan argues, and calling for a "return to our sources and to seek new inspiration and new courage for our Spiritan life and mission today."[286] Negating this current missionary and human understanding makes progress difficult if not impossible and likened to Whelan's position of "just bringing us to stagnant water which has lost its clarity and freshness."[287] One important fear and perhaps, put in a question form is: does renewal and updating not compromise cultural identity and spirituality? Two important concepts – sociological and theological relationship of interdiciplinarity[288] and Chittister's definition of adulthood as not a matter of becoming completely independent of the people who lay claim to our lives rather, of being completely open to the insights that come to us from our superiors and our spouses, our children and our friends, so that we can become more than we can even begin to imagine for ourselves,[289] – become very relevant concepts in responding to this all important caveat question. From the human experiential perspective, the German theologian, Paul Tillich, felt that his movement to America after his removal from the chair of philosophy at the University of Frankfort, will compromise his identity and spirituality as a German. To his greatest bewilderment, he experienced the contrary.

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[285] Anthony Gittins, C.S.Sp., "Spiritan Spirituality? Possibilities and Limitations," *Spiritan Horizons: A Journal of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit,* no. 8, (2013): 41.

[286] Marc Whelan, C.S.Sp., "Drinking from Our Own Wells Bagamoyo 2012 and Spiritan Identity and Tradition," *Spiritan Horizons: A Journal of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit,* no. 8, (2013): 8.

[287] Marc Whelan, C.S.Sp., "Drinking from Our Own Wells Bagamoyo 2012 and Spiritan Identity and Tradition," *Spiritan Horizons: A Journal of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit,* no. 8, (2013): 13.

[288] See van der Ven, *Practical Theology: An Empirical Approach*, 89-102.

[289] Chittister, *The Rule of St. Benedict*, 27.

Hence Tillich wrote to a friend "I can continue everywhere my theological and philosophical work, because unconsciously I doubted whether one could do this anywhere except in Germany. This is what I mean by the term 'provincialism' in the title of my paper. After having lived for a few years in the United States and having worked with theological and philosophical students and colleagues, I became aware of this formerly unconscious provincialism…Today I hope that it has disappeared, which does not mean that my German education and the Continental European tradition which have shaped me have become ineffective."[290] Renewal and updating in my opinion, does not and do not compromise or undermine either cultural identity or spirituality. Rather, it offers a new, contextual, and relevant way of looking at and responding to those cultural identity and spirituality questions for relevance. For an adequate process of renewal and updating to occur, the core values and the spirit behind the various practices need to be taken into account.

A Future of Hope

I restated my thesis arguments and using my personal biases – Igbo with multicultural identities, multi-spirituality, Spiritan religious missionary formation and spirituality – as bases for building up the research question, argument, and the need for charting a pastoral plan for a *sui generis* and a sustainable cultural identity and spirituality. The implications of my research are felt more within the Igbo Catholic Church, Nigerian Spiritan formation, and on personal formation and pastoral ministry. This pastoral plan though relates more to the Igbo race, cuts across other cultural and spiritual heritage. These three pastoral plans though rigorous and challenging, seen from the perspective of pastoral circle nevertheless, I believe, will enhance and promote a

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[290] Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, 159.

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sustainable Igbo cultural identity and spirituality beyond the twenty-first century. Despite the challenges of this pastoral plan, our origin and spirituality are ours to reclaim and preserve as rights unclaimed cannot be defended. Gutierrez's theology of liberation is vital in this regard as "the experience that comes from the spirit is to be found in the midst of a people's struggle for liberation and that it is through this struggle and graced with God's gift of faith, hope, and love that we become disciples of Jesus. It is this experience of the praxis of faith and Gospel that is our well – the source of living water."[291] St. Paul[292] refers to the frequency of this renewal and updating as a daily exercise and I am also arguing that not only the third process rather, the entire process conceived as a circle method. Reiterating Gutierrez's important point in his liberation theology, he emphasized that the practical way forward to liberation is the Church's identification and solidarity with the poor as a way of life. It is only when this happens that will there be authentic theological discussion on poverty and liberation hence bearing witness to the gospel message and mission of Jesus.[293]

The path to a sustainable cultural and spiritual heritage is to be conceived as an evolving process and ultimately a way of life that keeps on evolving with the contextual human experience. This process to a sustainable path of religious renewal and updating according to British theologian Oliver Davies, "involves a complex dynamic of transference and interdependence as well as the visible structures of transformation. If a world religion is to take root within a community, then it is inevitable that some degree of fusion or coalescence will take place between the new religion and the religious forms it

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[291] Marc Whelan, C.S.Sp., "Drinking from Our Own Wells Bagamoyo 2012 and Spiritan Identity and Tradition," *Spiritan Horizons: A Journal of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit,* no. 8, (2013): 10.
[292] 1 Cor. 15:31 (The New Jerusalem Bible).
[293] Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation,* 302.

is seeking to replace. This in turn will lead to some degree of subtle adaptation on the part of the world religion to the religious sensibility of the host people."[294] In considering this process from a spiritual perspective as a gateway to a sustainable spirituality beyond the twenty-first century, I echo the position of Holland that this entire process be understood as a way of life rather than as a state of life.[295] It is only when this process is made an integral part of life and lived out, that a sustainable cultural identity and spirituality for the twenty-first century and beyond be achieved. Perhaps, at this point, possible areas for further research could be the strategic planning of incorporating this pastoral plan taking into account particular contexts, as part and parcel of the entire life cycle of the Igbo Catholics. The other area is the pedagogic development of missionary formation model and curriculum that incorporates this pastoral plan for a sustainable cultural identity and spirituality which ensures relevance within the contextual society. This study will fall short of an important and integral element of theology without an offer of hope to the Igbo Church and Nigerian Spiritans in general.

An important characteristic trend in the public ministry of Jesus is an offer of hope.[296] Hope is an integral component of theology. Hence, any theology without hope is devoid of an essential, vital, and integral part of its component. This integral component of theology needs to be defended as Metz argues that "what theology is about is 'defending hope,' defending a specific hope by which Christians are called to envision their futures as individuals, as a community of disciples, and, finally, as a community in

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[294] Davies, *Celtic Spirituality*, 12.

[295] Joe Holland, *Postmodern Transformation of Catholic Spirituality* (Washington: Pacem in Terris Press, forthcoming), 29.

[296] Jesus' Sermon on the Mount otherwise known as the beatitudes is Jesus' offer of hope to the people. See Matt. 5:1-12 (The New Jerusalem Bible).

solidarity with all of humanity."[297] This study draws for me echoes of the memory of

James Cone's theology[298] of people suffering which not only spurs into action, but also

elicits hope. It has become a channel for personal transformation and continuous

transformation from the Irenaeus perspective that human beings are the image of God

glorified and as by Chittister that spiritual life is "a way of being in the world that is open

to God and open to others"[299] as opposed to the self alone.

For the other two publics – the Igbo Church and the Nigerian Spiritan formation

process – "life is a way of walking through the universe whole and holy."[300] Our cultural

heritage has a lot to offer us, but more importantly, our lived experiences in correlation

with our contextual situation. This makes of our traditional heritage and spirituality

sustainable and ultimately makes of us better human beings. Parker Palmer argues that

"wholeness does not mean perfection: it means embracing brokenness as an integral part

of life. Knowing this gives me [us] hope that human wholeness – mine, yours, ours, –

need not be a utopian dream, if we can use devastation as a seedbed for new life."[301] My

three-fold pastoral plan is a call not only to an awareness of a new way of looking at our

being in the world as Balthasar argues – "the revelation of grace is not the establishment

of a new form within the created world; it is but a new manner of God's presence in the

form of the world, a new intimacy in our union with him [God], an intimacy to which the

child of God has access and in which he [she] participates"[302] – but also a call to

transformative action. This transformative action changes one's worldview as Metz

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[297] Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 215.
[298] James Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree,* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 13.
[299] Chittister, *The Rule of St. Benedict*, 11.
[300] Chittister, *The Rule of St. Benedict*, 3.
[301] Parker Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*, 5.
[302] Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord Vol. 1*, 440.

declares that "whoever hears the message of the resurrection of Christ in such a way that the cry of the crucified has become inaudible in it, hears not the Gospel but rather a myth of the victor. Whoever hears the Christian message in such a way that in it there is nothing left to be expected, but only something that needs to be perceived and acknowledged, hears falsely."[303] Metz's declaration is a message of hope for the Igbo Church and the Spiritans and also an invitation of commitment to action and praxis. As time evolves and situations change, I am optimistically hopeful that sooner or later and with the awareness of ecological spirituality, this three-fold pastoral plan will directly or indirectly form an integral part and life of the Igbo Catholic Church and the Nigerian Spiritans. This is important for a *sui generis* cultural identity and spirituality and for the progressive growth of both the Church and the Catholic priesthood and ministry in general. It is never too late to begin albeit, now is the appropriate time as a stitch in time saves nine. My hope and prayer drawing from the inspiration of the disciples' experience of the risen Christ, is the grace of the risen Christ to hope for the best and the courage to face the enormous task ahead of us, take bold renewing and transformative steps in our entire life in relation with God, nature, and humanity.

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[303] Johann Baptist Metz, *A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 158.

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