

Yoruba Spiritual Heritage and its implications for the Yoruba Indigenous Churches in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the misuse of spiritual heritage in the Yoruba Indigenous Churches in particular, and Nigeria in general. The study argues that the misuse of spiritual heritage is not only detrimental to the Gospel message, but has the potential to destroy all the good that Christianity has achieved in Nigeria. Given this misuse, the growth of Yoruba Indigenous Churches is not commensurate with true Christian life. Yoruba Indigenous Churches add value to that community because they meet the existential and psychological needs of their members. However, the fusion of the spiritual and the physical to explain the reality of life in these churches leaves room for the abuse of spiritual heritage.

The Yoruba spiritual heritage has shaped and continues to shape Nigerian Christianity. The concept of *ori* (*alter ego*) (destiny) provides the Yoruba with a means to solve some of the important puzzles of the human condition. They believe that their lives are predestined by the type of *ori* chosen before their entry into the world. It is a Yoruba connecting point to the spirit world. They worship their *ori* because their success or failure depends on it. The thesis presents many other elements of the Yoruba spiritual heritage as background to the main argument.

The study examines the influence of the Yoruba spiritual heritage on two Yoruba Indigenous Churches whose theologies leave room for spirit causality of evil, injustice, inequality, gender discrimination and corruption. The study responds by suggesting a more critical inculturation theology as a paradigm to solve the problem of the misuse of spiritual heritage in Nigeria. The results of this study can perhaps be applied to other churches in Africa. It also provides the necessary ethical and theological framework that can be used to build societal morality.

Many African theologians seem to be comfortable with the impact of African traditional beliefs on African Christianity. The argument of this school of thought is understandable and acceptable to a certain degree. There is, however, no guarantee

that the role of traditional beliefs is always a positive one. There might also be negative effects that should be carefully considered.

Key Words:

The Yoruba, Yoruba spiritual heritage (African Traditional Religion) and Yoruba indigenous churches.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The proliferation of churches and ministries in Nigeria does not seem to have much ethical impact on the Nigerian society. This fact is confirmed by Transparency International (2010 & 2013), an organization that examines the corruption index in countries of the world. This realization motivated this study.

African Christianity has in recent years witnessed the emergence and proliferation of many new churches. Churches and ministries are springing up daily in Nigeria, especially in Lagos. Warehouses and shops are becoming worship and Bible study centres. Religious activities such as prayer meetings, vigils, crusades, revivals and camping are the order of the day in Nigeria. Billions of Nigerian Naira is spent on Christian messages over the radio and television with numerous evangelism vans. Most of the major roads in Nigeria are adorned with posters of religious activities. Asamoah-Gyadu affirms that “The centres of world Christianity have moved from London, Geneva and Rome to Accra, Harare and Lagos” (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2010:2).

The Yoruba Indigenous Churches, like other traditional African groups of believers, link societal problems to spiritual powers. They believe that behind every crime, form poverty, immorality, sickness, disease, misfortune, barrenness, corruption and failure, are evil forces. Dopamu (2000:149-150) argues that Yoruba doctrine stresses belief in a spirit that causes evil and instigates people or prompts human beings to do evil. Walls (1997:98) remarks, “In Africa, illness is regularly associated with spiritual powers and with moral or social offences and obligations, conscious and unconscious. The chief diagnostic question is not, therefore, what illness is it? But what or who caused it?” Kolie (2005:133) in line with Walls argues that in Africa, the cause of suffering, sickness or evil is more important than the clinical symptoms. Ayegboyin (2011:169) and Awoniyi (2011:155) are emphatic about bad spirits being the authentic source of evil in Aladura churches. Quayesi-Amakye maintains that many African Pentecostal church leaders, especially the prophetic groups, have a

strong belief that nothing happens accidentally; there is always a connection between physical evil and wicked spirits (Quayesi-Amakye, 2014:257-259).

The above peak into the Nigerian mind offers a clue to the problem of the proliferation of corruption and the multiplication of churches that do not discern human behaviours. Stinton (2004:124) also remarks, “While the organic causes (of misfortunes) may well be recognized, the overriding belief is that spiritual or supernatural forces lie behind the sickness, such as offending God or ancestral spirits and possession by evil spirits, witchcraft, breaking taboos, or curses from offended family or community members”. Meyer (1999:102) argues that the Ewe of Ghana, like the Yoruba, attribute their life challenges to spiritual powers. Aladura churches trace the root of all human sufferings to the devil and evil powers in general. These churches stress that broken relationships with God cause famine, disease, premature death and that a repaired relationship can only be maintained through prayer (Peel, 1968:128-129). This idea is closely related to the Yoruba traditional beliefs. However, every evil should not be attributed to spiritual powers; there should be thorough investigation into each situation or event.

In most of the Yoruba traditional myths, spirits, magic, taboos, power and evil are attributed to demons, witches, enemies and sin against ancestors or *Olodumare*, the Supreme God. This research investigates these beliefs thoroughly and traces their relation to human behaviours in the hope to find solutions that can provide people with a new orientation with a new comprehensive worldview that can improve the moral values in societal life.

Of course there are many factors that lead societal problems. The above-mentioned Nigerian paradox shows, however, that the Yoruba fusion of the spiritual and the physical when explaining evils or bad events does not contribute positively to the solution of the huge societal problems in current Nigeria. As long as the spirit world is seen as the main source of most societal problems, real responsibility is evaded. The growth in the number of churches and ministries with weak moral values is a socio-ethical and ecclesiastical challenge that calls for academic inquiry.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The paradox of increase adherence to Christianity and a decline in the quality of societal moral life is a challenge to the Gospel message in Nigeria. How can the Church most effectively correct the negative aspects of the societal impact of the Yoruba traditional spiritual heritage?

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions emerge in light of the above:

- How can the paradox of increased adherence to Christianity and the decline of the societal morality be explained?
- What is Yoruba spiritual heritage and how does it affect the behaviours of believers?
- How does the Yoruba spiritual heritage affect the Yoruba Indigenous Churches?
- How do the Yoruba misuse their spiritual heritage?
- Has the strong emphasis on spiritual heritage in African Christianity brought positive or negative behaviours?
- In which way can the Church improve the moral standard of the Nigerian society?

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study is to show that over-emphasis on the spirit world might have contributed in one way or another to the moral evil of Nigerian society. The argument aims to counter the numerous African theologians such as J. Mbiti, B. Idowu, K. Bediako, O. Imasogie Kofi Appiah-Kubi and J. K. Asamoah-Gyadu, who seem to be comfortable with the impact of African traditional beliefs on African Christianity. These scholars support the significance of African traditions in Christianity. Asamoah-Gyadu argues that, “the pneumatic orientation of non-Western Christianity accounts in significant measure for the growth and dynamism of the faith in this context” (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013:4). These theologians affirm that the African religious

conscientiousness has been fertile soil for Christianity, and this might explain the rapid numerical growth of churches in Africa.

The strong emphasis of many African theologians on sensitivity towards the spirit world as a means to enhance African Christianity is central to this question addressed here and forms the background of this study. However, none of these theologians have spoken on immorality or corruption with reference to African spiritual heritage. Are they critical or uncritical of the relationship between African heritage and Christianity? Can they not see the obstacles created by emphasis on the spirit world in African Christianity? Can they not see the evil committed in the name of activities of the spirit world? The positive assessment of the role of the spirit world in the African mind set by these African theologians may be understood and acceptable to a certain degree. There is, however, no guarantee that the role of traditional beliefs is always a positive one. There may also be negative effects that open up questions.

This study has academic significance in that most African scholars not only stress the importance of African tradition as a foundation for theological reflection in Africa, they also emphasize that African social life is filled with the presence of the spirit world. Therefore, to understand Africans in their practical life, one needs to understand their worldviews. Many African scholars presume that there is a relation between African worldviews and African practices. Imasogie (1986:75) contests that an African man can find real fulfilment in life only in relation to his human and spiritual communities. This study is tailored to demonstrate that there are strong indications that some aspects of the Yoruba traditional heritage play a negative role in the degree of social responsibility that believers are willing to accept. Their beliefs seem to uphold a certain logic that gives them the opportunity to escape societal responsibility. Therefore, to unravel and to criticize this logic could have an immense societal impact. It is the aim of this research to give strong indications of these negative effects and to show how they can be addressed.

The objective of this work is to contribute to the ethical discourse in the Nigerian society with specific attention to the role of religious ideas in relation to the practical socio-economic life of the Yoruba community. This study is not an attempt to

condemn the Yoruba spiritual heritage. Its main objective is to examine critically the spiritual worldview that causes many African Christians to escape from the consequences of their actions in society. It is also aimed at purifying such thoughts so that churches in Nigeria may have a greater impact on the social and moral life of Nigerians. Unless people are responsible and become accountable for their deeds, there will be no significant improvement on the moral behaviour in Yoruba society in particular, and in Nigeria in general.

Once people are held responsible for their behaviour and the Yoruba spiritual heritage is re-interpreted in the light of ecclesiastical, ethical and communal existence, an important stumbling block can be removed or mitigated in Nigeria. There is a complex relationship between religious ideas and the actual behaviour of people. As such one may not be able to empirically prove that such a re-interpretation of the Yoruba spiritual heritage would help lessen the level of corruption and injustice. The objective of this study is therefore to at least show a logical link between certain ideas about the cause of evil and the way people behave. In addition, the study questions that logic in the hope to removing the obstacles to linking Christian ideas to Christian behaviour. Below is a summary of the research questions, aim and objectives of the study.

Table 1.1 Summary of the research

Questions	Aim and objectives	Chapters
How can the paradox of Christianity and the decline of societal moral life be explained?	<p>To show that churches are always to some extent influenced by the society and culture within which they function.</p> <p>To show a logical link between certain ideas about the spirit causality of evil and the way people behave.</p>	Chapter 1
What is Yoruba spiritual heritage and how does it affect human behaviours?	To critically examine Yoruba spiritual heritage and to indicate that the spiritual heritage influences the Yoruba political, economic, social and religious life.	Chapter 2
How does the Yoruba spiritual heritage affect the Yoruba Indigenous Churches?	<p>To show that there are continuities and discontinuities of Yoruba spiritual heritage within African Christianity.</p> <p>To indicate that there are tensions between the continuity and discontinuity in Yoruba Indigenous Churches.</p>	Chapter 3

Questions	Aim and objectives	Chapters
How do the Yoruba misuse their spiritual heritage?	To examine the negative effects of Yoruba spiritual heritage and to reveal that over-emphasis on the effect of the spirit world on human behaviour may have contributed in one way or another to the moral decay of Nigerian society.	Chapter 4
Has the strong emphasis on spiritual heritage in African Christianity brought positive or negative behaviour?	To show that there are limitations to the use of Yoruba heritage in African Indigenous Churches.	Chapter 5
In which way can the Church contribute to the moral standard of the Nigerian society?	To show how the abuse of spiritual heritage can be addressed and to contribute to the ethical and moral discourse in Nigeria.	Chapter 6

1.5 CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

The central theoretical argument of this study is that the rapid growth of churches in Nigeria with a corresponding decline moral impact on society is a paradox that results from the over-emphasis on the spirit world in Yoruba indigenous heritage. The resulting worldview poses a social, ethical and ecclesiastical challenge for Christianity in Nigeria.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is a continuation of a Masters project (completed in 2007) and is both literature and field-based. The methodological framework of this study mixes a literature review and empirical field work.

The literature review included intensive research into books and journals that are related to the topic. The consulted libraries include those of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (Amsterdam, The Netherlands), the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary (Ogbomoso, Nigeria), the Bowen University (Iwo, Nigeria) and the University of Ibadan (Ibadan, Nigeria). Nigerian newspapers and magazines are cited extensively to show the contemporary misuse of spiritual heritage within Yoruba society as these publications mirror society. As an African theologian who is proud of the contributions of African Christianity to global Christianity, the researcher takes a critical approach in this study so that Yoruba spiritual heritage can have positive impact on African Christianity in particular and global Christianity in general.

An empirical approach was selected for field work, since it probed people's experiences as they result from the Yoruba worldview and context that shape individuals and institutions. The methodological framework of this study is therefore mixed. Personal participation, observations and interviews are utilized. For the fact that this work deals with the influence of the Yoruba traditional heritage on the Yoruba society, efforts were made to interview people within Lagos who are practically involved, such as Yoruba Indigenous Church leaders and their members. The ages of participants ranged from 20 to 80 years. The researcher also attended a great number of church services, prayer meetings, festivals, marriages and naming ceremonies. For the purpose of comparison of ideas and information, the researcher

interviewed some leaders and members of other churches such as the Pentecostal and Protestant churches in Lagos.

The unstructured interview method was utilized to benefit from its conversational nature. An unstructured interview is likely to elicit more information on religious attitudes, commitments, opinions and feelings than a rigidly structured interview (Haralambos, Holborn & Heald, 2008:828-829). During the interview, I began with greetings, which is a typical Yoruba custom used to get people's attention. I introduced myself as a student researching the Yoruba spiritual heritage and its implications for Yoruba Indigenous Churches. I provided information on the details of the study and informed the participants that participation is voluntary. Participants gave consent for the interviews and were assured of the confidentiality of their comments.

The research focused on two Nigerian denominations to examine the influence of the Yoruba belief system and traditions on the belief systems of these churches. They were the Cherubim and Seraphim Church and the Celestial Church of Christ (Omoyajowo, 1995:130-132). These two denominations were chosen to limit the scope of the research and because the origins and founders of both churches are Yoruba. However, the results of this study can be applied to other denominations within African Christianity. The liturgy of worship, beliefs and practices of other indigenous churches are also greatly influenced by the Yoruba system of thought and traditions. The selected two denominations were furthermore chosen because of their growth, attributable to the charismatic powers of their prophets and the emphasis on healing as a means of counteracting evil forces, enemies, diseases and witchcraft (Appiah-Kubi, 1979:120).

A few African indigenous Pentecostal churches were selected for comparison and reference because many African Pentecostal churches once had roots within the African Indigenous Churches and they to some degree still function within the worldview of the Yoruba spiritual heritage (Kalu, 2008:65).

Five African inculturation theologians are examined and their positions are subsequently juxtaposed with the findings of this study on the misuse of spiritual

heritage. Having stated their theses and antitheses, the researcher synthesizes their positions.

1.7 CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

1.7.1 *The Yoruba*

Currently land of the Yoruba people comprises six states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The national population census of 2006 gave the total of the Yoruba population as follows: Lagos 9.01 million, Oyo 5.59 million, Ogun 3.72 million, Ondo 3.72 million, Osun 3.42 million and Ekiti 2.38 million, which comes to a total of 29.82 million people (Sann & Chesa, 2007:3). Yoruba people inhabit the Kogi, Kwara and Edo states of Nigeria and some parts of the Republic of Benin. Some major cities inhabited by the Yoruba land are Lagos, Ibadan, Abeokuta, Ife, Ondo, Ogbomoso and Osogbo. Today, Lagos is the economic capital of the Yoruba and Nigeria in general. Although Islam has an important presence and predates Christianity among the Yoruba, the Yoruba are mostly Christians. The Yoruba community is not only predicated upon the fact that it is one of the prominent ethnic groups in Nigeria with a population of about thirty million people, but also that as a result of their early missionary contact, they are the most educated ethnic group in the country (Manus, 1991:28).

The Yoruba people of southwest Nigeria have two origin myths. The first myth says that they are descendants of Oduduwa, who migrated from Phoenicia and settled down in Ile-Ife, the cradle of the Yoruba and the supposed centre of the origin of humankind. While Oyo is the political headquarters of the Yoruba, Ile-Ife is the spiritual headquarters (Salami, 2006:73). According to Modupe-Oduyoye, Ile-Ife is the spiritual centre and the origin of the Yoruba race. Ooni, the *Oba* (king) of Ile-Ife is the first among Yoruba *obas* (Oduyoye, 2008:91). Peel argues that apart from a linguistic definition of the Yoruba, the Yoruba trace their origin to Ile-Ife and love to describe themselves as the sons of Oduduwa (Peel, 1968:19). According to this Yoruba mythology, Oduduwa was the first king of the Yoruba and his children were kings in all Yoruba land (Johnson, 1921:3-14).

The second myth was documented by Crowther (1943). According to this myth, Oduduwa, the younger brother of Orisa-nla (arch divinity), was the first Yoruba man. He descended from heaven with a chain and held dirt in a small shell to create the earth (Olorode & Olusanya, 2005:25). The debate on the nature of Oduduwa is elaborately discussed in Chapter 2. Even though there are different origin myths, there is unanimity about the fact that the Yoruba can be traced back to Ile-Ife and the belief that Oduduwa resided there.

Most of the land inhabited by the Yoruba falls within the forest zone and enjoys a good climate for agriculture. The land is rich and good for growing vegetables and fruit trees. The geographical area is fairly well watered (Peel, 1968:21).

Figure 1.1 below gives an indication of the states that the Yoruba mostly inhabit, while Figure 1.2 shows the major cities of Nigeria.



Figure 1.1 The distribution of the Yoruba People

Adapted from: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2001



Figure 1.2 The major cities of Nigeria

Adapted from: www.mapsofworld, 2012

1.7.2 The Yoruba spiritual heritage

The Yoruba spiritual heritage is analysed here within the context of the Yoruba involvement in the African traditional religions. The Macmillan English Dictionary defines heritage as “the arts, buildings, and beliefs that a society considers important to its history and culture.” The Yoruba spiritual heritage is therefore the beliefs, practices, moral values and the worldviews of the Yoruba about the environment, the

universe, the spirit world and everything that surrounds them and that explains their cultural and religious experiences. Dopamu (2000:1) defines the Yoruba religion or spiritual heritage as the indigenous religion of the Yoruba with a strong belief in spirits that cause, stir and prompt human beings to do good or evil. The Yoruba are highly religious. Everything in the Yoruba society has a religious undertone and they interpret every event of their lives from a religious viewpoint.

The Yoruba's religion permeates the socio-political and economic orientation of individuals and the community. It can be recognized in their societal values and norms, behaviours, the economy, politics, religion, morality, myths, proverbs, dirges, arts, symbols and songs that, upheld through succeeding generations, have spread over countries (Adogame, 1999:108).

1.7.3 Yoruba Indigenous Churches

Yoruba Indigenous Churches (Aladura) are African Indigenous Churches. The indigenous churches attribute some human problems to malevolent forces and solve these problems by invoking spiritual powers (Ray, 1993:1-3). They combine the two fundamental elements of Christianity and African culture in a way that advertise their Christian intentions without undermining their African credentials. They emphasize some features that are relevant and valued by the African people, such as prophecy, healing, prayer, vision, dream and the use of sacred objects (Omotoye, 2007:335-340).

Turner defines an African indigenous church as “a church which has been founded in Africa, by Africans and primarily for Africans” (Turner, 1979:92). Appiah-Kubi says that they are churches founded by Africans for Africans with African worldviews (Appiah-Kubi, 1979:117). Oduro argues that African Indigenous Churches, though formed by Africans, are not primarily for Africans. He also defines African Indigenous Churches as, “congregations and or denominations planted, led, administered, supported, propagated, motivated and founded by Africans for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and worshipping the Triune God in the context and worldview of Africa and Africans” (Oduro, 2009:17). Masondo (2005:97) states that African Indigenous Churches are recognized as “authentically Africans”

due to the fact that they draw heavily from African traditional religion. Bediako (1995:113) appreciates African Independent Churches for “indicating the trend and direction of African Christianity”. Sanneh (1983:180) calls African Independent Churches, “the signature tune of African Christianity” because they have contributed to the growth of Christianity globally. Pobee and Oshitelu (1998:5) see these churches as “African initiatives in Christianity.” Allan Anderson defines the word “initiative” as a means of reforming African Christianity (Anderson, 2000:4). Nwaura (2005:67) defines these churches as independent church groups with “an all-African membership and an all-African leadership.” Pobee (2012:15) stresses that other descriptive names given to African initiatives in Christianity are “African Independent Churches”, “African initiated churches”, “African instituted churches” and “Indigenous churches”. All these names use the acronym ‘AICs’. Yoruba Indigenous Churches, like other independent African churches are “the churches that have taken over the functions of the traditional religion” (Awolalu & Dopamu, 1979:20).

1.8 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: Introduction.

Chapter 2: The Yoruba Spiritual Heritage.

Chapter 3: The Influence of the Yoruba Spiritual Heritage in Yoruba Indigenous Churches.

Chapter 4: Misuse of Spiritual Heritage.

Chapter 5: Inculturation Theology.

Chapter 6: The Ethical Role of the Church in Society.

Chapter 7: Recommendations, Conclusions and Summary.

1.9 SCHEMATIC PRESENTATION

SUB-RESEARCH QUESTIONS	AIM AND OBJECTIVES	RESEARCH METHOD
What is Yoruba spiritual heritage?	To critically examine Yoruba spiritual heritage and how it affects their social, economic and political behaviours.	In order to study Yoruba critically, the study includes a literature review on Africa Traditional Religions to determine the past and present arguments.
How does the Yoruba spiritual heritage affect the Yoruba Indigenous Churches?	<p>To show that there are continuities and discontinuities of Yoruba spiritual heritage in African Christianity.</p> <p>To demonstrate that some aspects of the Yoruba traditional heritage play either a negative and positive role in Yoruba Indigenous Churches.</p>	Two Yoruba Indigenous Churches are studied and their characteristics are critically evaluated.
How do the Yoruba misuse their spiritual heritage?	To reveal the negative effects of Yoruba spiritual heritage that causes people to evade responsibility.	The researcher used literature, journals, Nigerian daily news and magazines extensively to show the contemporary misuse of spiritual heritage in Yoruba society.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

SUB-RESEARCH QUESTIONS	AIM AND OBJECTIVES	RESEARCH METHOD
Has the strong emphasis on spiritual heritage in African Christianity brought about positive or negative behaviour?	To show that there are limitations to the use of Yoruba traditions in African Indigenous Churches?	Five African inculturation theologians are examined and their positions are juxtaposed with the findings on the misuse of spiritual heritage.
In which way can the Church contribute to the moral standard of the Nigerian society?	To show how the abuse of spiritual heritage can be addressed.	Literature on the role of the Church in society is correlated with the result of the interviews.

1.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a general introduction and background to the phenomenon under study. Most scholars promote the significance of African traditions in African Christianity and sensitivity towards the spirit world in understanding the reality of life in Africa.

Following this general introduction, Chapter 2 examines the Yoruba spiritual heritage in detail. What role does spiritual heritage play in human and societal behaviour? In what ways has the spiritual heritage shaped Yoruba communal life? What are the influences of this spiritual heritage on the Yoruba perception of reality of life?

CHAPTER 2

THE YORUBA SPIRITUAL HERITAGE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the Yoruba spiritual heritage. It examines the beliefs of the Yoruba regarding God, divinities, spirits, ancestors, magic, morality and myth, as these all shape their view of reality. The discussion points out some areas where these views influence Yoruba political, economic and social behaviours. The Yoruba indigenous religion has inspired various works of different fervour both from early and recent scholars. Scholars who have investigated the phenomenon of the Yoruba religion include historians, sociologists, anthropologists and specialists in comparative religion, theologians, philosophers and church historians. These academics have written about the Yoruba religion from various angles and the writings relevant to this inquiry are examined in this chapter. Early scholars on Yoruba religion are Johnson (1921), Peel (1968), Lucas (1948), Jone (1946), Fadipe (1967), Parrinder (1970), Idowu (1973 & 1996), Abimbola (1976), Awolalu (1979), Shorter (1975), Turner (1967) and Beier (1980). Recent writers on Yoruba religion include Adewale (1988), Hallgren (1988 & 1992), Oduyoye (2008), Omoleye (2005), Dopamu (1999 & 2000), Burgess (2008), Olurode and Olusanya (2005).

No definition of the Yoruba spiritual heritage can be understood without relating it to the rest of the African traditional religion. The concept of Yoruba spiritual heritage is therefore defined against the background of African traditional religion as a whole. Nabofa, a Nigerian anthropologist, describes Yoruba religion as “the Old Testament of Christianity in Africa.” Unlike Christianity and Islam, the Yoruba religion has neither founder nor sacred scriptures; rather it is a religion passed from one generation to another (Nabofa, 1994:2). It is a religion that emanated from the historical experience of the Yoruba. Awolalu, a Nigerian theologian and comparative religious scholar, confirms that Yoruba religion is not a fossil religion, but a religion that Africans today have made theirs by living it and practicing it. It is a religion that has no written literature, so it is “written” all over for those who care to see and read. It is mainly written in the people’s myths and folktales, in their songs, proverbs, dances, rituals,

shrines and pithy sayings. It is a religion that has no passion for membership drive, yet it offers tenacious fascination for Africans, young and old (Awolalu, 1976:275).

Oral tradition as a major source of religion and philosophy of life is common all over Africa. Mbiti (1989:1) remarks that African religions can in different contexts be very close in essence, beliefs and practices. The belief system passes from one generation to another through the oral tradition. In African traditional religion, the strongest and greatest influence on the thinking, behaviour and living of the individual is the cultural heritage. Mbiti (1989:3) continues by declaring that, “in traditional religion, there are no creeds to be recited: instead, the creeds are written in the heart of the individuals, and each one is himself a living creed of his own religion. Where the individual is, there is his religion, for he is a religious being, it is this, which makes Africans so religious: religion is in their whole system of being” (Mbiti 1989:3). In African traditional religion, man’s acts of worship and adoration to God are pragmatic and utilitarian rather than spiritual or mystical (Mbiti, 1989:5).

The Yoruba spiritual heritage therefore primarily has the purpose of enhancing spirituality and maintaining law and order for the development of society and to institute a relationship between man and the spirit world. It revolves around the belief in the existence of *Olodumare* – the Supreme Deity who controls the affairs of people in the universe. *Olodumare* has intermediaries, called divinities, who stand between him and human beings. There are several divinities with distinct offices. The Yoruba believe that these divinities affect and influence the behaviours and fortunes of people either positively or negatively. *Esu*, for instance, is a primordial divinity who plays a major role in the economic, political, religious and social landscape. He is a messenger who acts as either a good or bad emissary for people according to the dictates of individuals.

The Yoruba political structure also derives from *Olodumare*, the king of heaven. *Olodumare* has surrogates among people who are known as *obas* (kings) and who are considered as divine and representative of their ancestors. Just as *Olodumare* can only be approached indirectly through divinities, *obas* (kings) are also very powerful and cannot be approached directly (Idowu, 1962:30-56).

As noted in the previous chapter, the well-being of a person is determined by the choice of the *Ori* that the person chose in the presence of *Olodumare* before coming to the world. The choice of *Ori* determines what will happen to the person on earth as it is sealed before *Olodumare*. While the Yoruba still stress hard work, success, however, depends on the choice made in heaven.

Most events of the Yoruba's lives are interpreted with religious sentiments. Their religion is highly pragmatic and the reason for their worship of deity is the supply of their material things on earth (Burgess, 2008:47). African spiritual heritage centres on man and his relationship with the spirit world. The whole emphasis of African spiritual heritage is upon man gaining the power needed to live a good life. Life centres on man and his interests and needs (Gehman, 2013:35). Adewale (1988:55-58) points out that the Yoruba traditional prayer centres "primarily on material things here on earth". The contents of the Yoruba's prayers are divided into three parts. They include *owo* (money), *omo* (children) and *Alaafia* (peace). Shorter (1975:8-13) stresses the importance of prayer for African people. He argues that the Supreme Being is experienced directly in life and worshipped directly in prayer. Africans, through prayer, adhere to a "strict theism." There is, however, an element of "relative theism" in their religious practices because they can also offer prayers to the Supreme Being through divinities. The discussion now moves to examine each spiritual being individually, starting with the *Olodumare*, the First and the Last in Yoruba religion.

2.2 GOD – OLODUMARE

As mentioned above, the Yoruba religion revolves around *Olodumare*, the Supreme Being who lives, hears, sees and controls the universe. This does not exclude the existence of other deities or spiritual beings. Dopamu (2000:20) describes this well by saying that *Olodumare* is the absolute Ruler of the universe, and all other divinities and human beings are under his control. The same idea is expressed in more general terms by the Dutch theologian, Brinkman (2009:21), who affirms that the presence of lower deities and ancestors does not threaten the Supreme God; rather these divinities and ancestors complement the belief in him. Lesser gods therefore serve the Supreme Being and worshipping them implies worshipping him. Due to this relationship between the Supreme God and the other deities, it is

impossible to characterize the African religion as either monotheistic or polytheistic. Finally, Parrinder (1970:81-88), a sociologist and specialist in African traditional religion, points out that African religions and practices simultaneously include concepts of monotheism, polytheism and pantheism. An attempt to exclude any one of the above concepts will limit the understanding of the Yoruba religion.

Among the Yoruba, a name in itself has a character and importance of its own. Every name is invariably a sentence, and no child gets a name without a cause or reason. In the Yoruba religion a person's name tells a clear story about the circumstances surrounding the child's birth and the situation of the parents' affairs when the child was born. In this sense, the Yoruba name represents character and personality as among the Hebrews. The Supreme Being has several appellations, depending on the perception of the adherent or worshipper and the context in which the Yoruba people find themselves. Idowu (1962:32) identifies with the popular name *Olodumare* (the one who possesses superlative qualities), the deity who is unchanging, trustworthy and reliable and from which everything on earth and heaven emanated.

Idowu explains that in the Yoruba account of creation, *Olodumare* is the prime mover of all things by whose grace everything on earth originated and became inhabited. Idowu declares, "One name stands above every other. That is *Olodumare*, the deity. In the account of the creation, we have met him as the Prime Mover of things by whom the origin of our inhabited earth was commissioned" (Idowu, 1962:32).

Dopamu (2000:20) prefers another appellation common among some ethnic groups within the larger Yoruba group. It is *Eledaa*, the One who creates all thing things (Dopamu, 2000:20). *Olorun* (Owner of the sky or Lord of heaven) is the most popular name for God among the Yoruba. It is also used in the translation of the Yoruba Bible. *Olorun* is a common name for Supreme Being. Fadipe (1967:281), a Nigerian sociologist, describes the Supreme Being as *Olorun* (Owner of the sky or Lord of heaven).

The Supreme Being is believed to be the ever-present. He can be seen or felt everywhere. Among the Yoruba, doubting the existence of *Olodumare* would be like doubting the existence of kings in Africa (Hallgren, 1988:23). The word *Olodumare* (the Supreme Being) is used for the remainder of this study because it is an ancient

and unique name that alludes to several myths in the Yoruba religion. The above scholars hold that Africans believe in the reality of a god who controls, sustains and directs the universe. This is in line with the hypothesis that how they see reality and life is influenced by the spirit world.

2.2.1 Debate surrounding Olodumare

Before one begins to spell out the attributes of *Olodumare*, it is expedient to discuss the debate on the belief in the Supreme Being among African theologians. Initially, social or cultural anthropologists of Western origin and thinkers holding agnostic religious views carried out most studies on African indigenous religions. However, recently new scholars have emerged who approach the study of indigenous African religions from different angles.

The new set of African scholars who make much effort to convince their detractors that Africans have their own ideas about God is called the *devout* scholars, while scholars who oppose the idea that African religions are at all close to monotheism are referred to as the *de-Hellenist* scholars.

The use of the term *devout* to describe certain scholars was introduced by Robin Horton, an English social anthropologist, philosopher and a specialist in comparative religion who adopted a Nigerian nationality and did his research work among the Kalabari of Nigeria. Horton used the word *devout* in a critical, almost cynical and slightly pejorative way. It gives away the considerable influence of the researcher's Christian faith on his approach to African religion. That being said, Horton's terminology of the *devout* and *de-Hellenist* are broadly used. The devout scholars carried out their research while greatly influenced, first by their own Christian faith, and then by a long tradition of comparative studies of religions. Some of the devout scholars, as mentioned by Horton, include Idowu, Mbiti, Bediako, Gaba and Turner. Idowu, a staunch devout scholar, places emphasis on the originality and the genuineness of the African concept of God as the believers' ultimate reality. He, like many African scholars, affirm that the notion of the Supreme Being as the ultimate reality was present in all African ethnic groups before their contact with Christianity and Islam (Horton, 1995:161-162).

Horton (1995:162-66) delivers a thorough academic critique of this new wave of scholars who are attempting to study African religions while being influenced by the Christian faith. He himself provides a means through which African religions may be expressed in the language of Western conceptual schemas. His methodology is anthropological and a different view of African traditional religion, especially about the concept of God in Africa.

Horton submits that the devout scholars and their orthodox anthropological counterparts are all involved in the comparative, cross-cultural study of thought systems. In this role, they utilize two distinct levels of language interpretation, which Horton provisionally labels as *translational understanding* and *further explanation*. Translational understanding depicts the kind of understanding of a particular thought that results from the successful translation of the language and conceptual system that embody the thought into the terms of a language and the conceptual system that currently enjoy “world” status. Devout scholars regard the error inherent in the translation recipes of other schools of thought as lying in their classifying religious discourse as a variety of some broader type of discourse. They argue that since religious discourse is quite distinct from other types of discourse, both in its rules and in its aims, such classifications lead to pretence. Therefore, they turn to the religious discourse of their own culture as a translational instrument. Some devout scholars will go as far as to maintain that a scholar lacking in personal experience is deprived of the means of understanding the religious thought and life of another culture.

According to the devout scholars, all systems of African religious thought centre on the Supreme Being or God, to whom they ascribe all the attributes that Christians accord their God. However, these scholars acknowledge the existence of lesser spiritual forces, but they tend to emphasize that the African worshippers regard such forces as mere intermediaries between themselves and the Supreme Being and as agencies whose powers and very existence invariably depend on the will of the Supreme Being (Horton, 1995:162-66).

As earlier mentioned, Idowu describes *Olodumare* as the Prime Mover. The Prime Mover is a philosophical concept coined by Aristotle in his metaphysics to refer to the unmoved mover of all the motion in the universe. Thomas Aquinas also adopted Aristotle’s understanding and described God as “*prima causa*”, the ultimate

cause of all things. It appears that Idowu was greatly influenced by the Greek culture with his view of *Olodumare* as the Prime Mover. Horton (Horton, 1995:190) is therefore right to say that some African scholars, whom he calls the devout, are biased and not sincere in their African concept of God. He contends that Idowu's Christian faith provides him with the broad overall foundation for his concept of *Olodumare*.

Idowu, one of the major voices among the devout scholars, bases his argument on the role of the Supreme Being in the midst of other African gods. In his argument, the supreme role of *Olodumare* in the African religion lies in his relation to spirits, ancestors and believers. In his apologetic and theological approach, Idowu recognizes a Yoruba monotheism. Though his argument on the monotheism of *Olodumare* is logically presented, his thought about Yoruba monotheism is debatable among religious scholars, partly because of the multitude of divinities and spirits involved. Although he is aware of the existence of other spiritual beings, Idowu (1962:204) suggests the term *diffused monotheism*. In his words:

“Diffused Monotheism: this has the advantage of showing that the religion is monotheism, though it is monotheism in which the good Deity delegates certain portions of his authority to certain divine functionaries who work as they are commissioned by Him. For a proper name, we unhesitatingly say that there can be no other but, ‘Olodumareism’. The world is already crowded with ‘isms’, we know; but this is a vitally meaningful one to appreciate the full import of which will benefit the world immeasurably.”

Here, Idowu adopts the name *Olodumare* to prove the unity of the concept at the core of the Yoruba religion.

In other words, Idowu, like other devout scholars, stresses the authenticity, significance and originality of the belief in the Supreme Being as the basis of monotheistic religion. He goes further to discount the independent reality of the lesser spiritual forces in the minds of worshippers, seeing it as justified to refer to African religious thought generally as *diffused monotheism*.

The devout scholars also argue that the overriding aim of life for the African worshipper is the attainment of communion with God and that the relation between man and God is something of intrinsic value to the African worshipper. However, they

do sometimes accept that African thoughts have something to do with explanation, prediction and control of events in the everyday world. According to devout scholars, one of the aims of African religious thought is escaping from this flawed temporal world into the perfection of eternity.

While trying to engage at the interpretation level, devout scholars have the following three basic assumptions: first, there is a Supreme Being with approximately the attributes assigned to him by the modern Judaeo-Christian tradition of religious thought. Second, this being has endowed all human beings with the awareness of his presence and desire for communion with him. Third, he has endowed all human beings with some ability, albeit inadequate, to testify about his presence and nature. Devout scholars see these assumptions as the ultimate explanation of religious thought in Africa, as indeed in other parts of the world. They claim that the overriding aim of African religion is to commune with the spirit beings (Horton, 1995:164-172).

When discussing translational understanding, Horton points out that it is true that there is a concept of a Supreme Being who created the world and sustains it in many African cosmologies. However, he disagrees with devout scholars on the idea that the attributes ascribed to this Supreme Being are the same as those of its Judaeo-Christian counterpart. Horton further points out the weakness in the thought of devout scholars in recognizing the lesser spirits as mere manifestations of the Supreme Being. The average indigenous African, on the contrary, acknowledges or considers these spirits as realities in their own right, as independent sources of volition and action and as the ultimate recipients of everyday ritual attention. Horton stresses that devout idea of lesser spirit beings as mere intermediaries of the Supreme Being is a mere conceptual idea that resides in the heads of the devout scholars themselves and not in those of the people whose beliefs they purport to describe. He further argues that the monographic evidence on this point is overwhelmingly negative. People want a coherent picture of the realities that underpin their everyday world. They want to know the causes of their fortunes and misfortunes in this world. They want to know how to predict the outcomes of their various worldly projects and enterprises. In line with Horton, I found that the Yoruba are prone to searching for the causes of successes and failures, looking for a means of controlling their

environment with the intention of explaining the factors that influence their behaviours.

Horton stresses that the personal and social backgrounds of devout scholars may have contributed to the formation of their academic views. According to him, Christians' ontological subordination of all other spiritual forces to the one God over the ages causes devout scholars to attempt to provide an adequate translational understanding of most African religions. Also, the dichotomy between Western Christian religious scholars and scientists, which resulted in a division of labour where scientists pursued explanation, prediction and control, while religious thinkers pursued communion with God, also affected the translational understanding of the devout scholars.

Horton suggests two ways forward in studying African religion. First, one should draw on a more "demotic" strand of the Western heritage of religious discourse that allows for reference to a wide diversity of spiritual forces without automatically reducing such forces to manifestations of a single Supreme Being. Secondly, "...whilst retaining elements of modern Western religious discourse in our toolkit, we should bring in alongside them elements of theoretical discourse, now the monopoly of the sciences, elements which were once combined with their religious counterparts, but which have now become separated" (Horton, 1995:192).

The "de-Hellenists"

The de-Hellenist concept of a Supreme Being does not deny the reality of God in African traditional religions. Rather, their argument is based on the attributes accorded to this Supreme Being. They argue that the concept of a Supreme Being and ultimate reality in African religions are creations of devout scholars. They criticize the devout scholars for generating the concept of a Supreme Being and a reality out of a non-reality, such as found in Christianity. As a result, they claim that before the advent of Christianity and Islam, Africans were not concerned with ontological definitions where people's interactions with the spiritual beings were governed by the concepts of omnipresence, omnipotence and transcendence.

The prefix *de-* refers to the removal of something. *Decarbonization* means the removal of carbon. The name used to refer to the de-Hellenist school comes from the idea of stripping or removing the concepts of transcendence, immutability, providence, omnipotence and the ultimate reality from African traditional religion. Brinkman (2009:210) draws a distinction between the above two schools of thought. In his words, “the devout scholars in particular emphasize the authenticity and originality of African ideas concerning a supreme God, whereas the de-Hellenist scholars see these ideas exclusively as a pious (devout) construction by the devout scholars that no African reality can live up to”.

The de-Hellenist scholars argue that the devout school is an overreaction to Western theologians who underestimate the African traditional religion and culture. They base their argument on the fact that the African worldview is not concerned with abstract thinking. In other words, they see the concepts of omnipotence, transcendence, eternity, Prime Mover and the providence of the Supreme Being as by-products of Christianity in Africa.

A Yoruba religious scholar and staunch supporter of the de-Hellenist approach, Lucas (1948:35-37), rejects the idea of comprehensive monotheism in Yoruba religion. However, he claims that there are traces of monotheism. He uses the word *Olorun* (Owner of the sky), rather than *Olodumare*. He suggests a reconsideration of the description of deities such as *Olorun* as the Supreme Being. In his thought, the idea of God as a monotheistic divinity in the Yoruba religion is the result of the influence of a more civilized culture on the religion. He feels that this concept is “too lofty and too sublime” to have originated from the Yoruba. Lucas (1948:35-37) also argues that Yoruba religious phraseology has been influenced by ancient Egypt and the Eastern world. He posits that “the religion of the Yoruba stands in genetic relation to the religion of ancient Egypt” (Lucas, 1948:35-37).

The argument between the devout and the de-Hellenist scholars is essentially an argument that centres on continuity versus discontinuity between African religion and Christianity. Idowu adheres to continuity, while a Nigerian evangelical theologian, Kato (1975:17), adheres to discontinuity. The above argument is a perpetual issue because it continues to generate tension among African theologians.

Idowu describes Yoruba religion as monotheistic, and if monotheism is the belief in one God, it then follows that he owes us further explanation of his monotheistic description of the Yoruba religion, because the significance of a religion is not necessarily based on its name, but on the attitude of the worshippers towards the object of worship.

If Idowu recognizes the existence of other divinities within the Yoruba religion, and if belief is defined as the habit of mind where the devotee puts confidence in some person or thing, it stands to reason then that the Yoruba do not only believe in divinities, but also worship them. How then could the Yoruba religion be monotheistic? I appreciate Idowu's awareness of the pitfalls of using the term *polytheism* and his suggestion of a kind of "modified monotheism". However, whether or not *Olodumare* is described as "modified monotheism" or not, the claim to monotheism seems to contradict the importance of the *orisa* (deities) in Yoruba religion. In the end Idowu's monotheism is nothing other than looking at the Yoruba religion through the eyes of Christianity. His understanding of monotheism is contrary to the concept of biblical monotheism, where it is forbidden for Christians to have any other god besides the living God. This is discussed more elaborately in Chapter 5.

In presenting the spiritual heritage of the Yoruba, I identify with the de-Hellenist school of thought. The attributes of *Olodumare* described below therefore centre around the purely Yoruba understanding of *Olodumare*.

2.2.2 *The attributes of Olodumare*

The goal of this section is to define and interpret the nature, attributes and the functions of *Olodumare*. The Yoruba, like the Jews in the Old Testament, use anthropomorphic expressions in describing *Olodumare's* attributes. *Edumare* is the Yoruba cognitive description of the Supreme God. The concept of *Olodumare* cannot be fully grasped without considering its etymology. Etymologically, *Olodumare* is a Yoruba compound noun formed out of *Odu- Osu- Mare*. *Odu* means a chief, a bigness and vastness, or an exalted person, and *Osu* means rainbow in the sky, while *Are* is the symbol of uniqueness fixed on the original crown worn by the *Ooni* (king of Ile-Ife.) *Oi-odu-mare* is the one who combines *Odu* with *Are*. The suffix *-mare* means splendour, dazzling, shining and glorious. *Olodumare* therefore means the

one who has all the glory and splendour, the one who clothes himself with glorious light (Oduyoye, 2008:31-33).

According to the Yoruba spiritual heritage, *Olodumare* is the Supreme Being whose power is not comparable. He is exalted to the extent that no person can compare him with anything. His majesty is beyond comparison. In the whole of Yoruba territory, no one has an image for *Olodumare*, his presence is felt everywhere (Awolalu & Dopamu, 1979:117). The Yoruba believe that the Supreme Being is the “ultimate reality”, he is supreme and transcends all history, he is the source, the root, the cause and the foundation of the religious understanding of Africans (Oborji, 2005:2). The Yoruba believe that *Olodumare* is real and personal. In their view, *Olodumare* has the capacity to create, act, see, bless and punish. He is eternal, permanent, unchanging, trustworthy, reliable and dependable. Idowu (1962:56) summarizes the belief of the Yoruba in *Olodumare* as follows:

“He is supreme over all on earth and in heaven, acknowledged by all the divinities as the Head to whom all authority belongs and all allegiance is due. He is not one among many; not even ‘Olodumare-in-council.’ His status of Supremacy is absolute. Things happen when He approves; things do not come to pass if He disapproves. In worship, the Yoruba hold Him ultimately, First and Last; in man’s daily life, He as the pre-eminence.”

The omnipotence of God results from his activities rather than from a metaphysical assumption. The name *Olodumare* means all-powerful, the almighty and the strong one (Mbiti, 1972:6).

Olodumare as the King

Kingship is a basic feature of the Yoruba spiritual heritage. The Yoruba brought their sociological system into their theology and their philosophical thinking about *Olodumare*. In the Yoruba hierarchy, kings are highly respected because they are seen as divine and as representatives of the Yoruba ancestors. Yoruba kings cannot be approached directly, only through intermediaries. The Yoruba carry this perception into their traditional religion. They believe that *Olodumare* is mighty and incomparable. He must not be approached directly, but through divinities and ancestors who serve as intermediaries between them and *Olodumare* (Awolalu & Dopamu, 1979:118-119).

Olodumare as Oba Orun – the King of Heaven

The Yoruba describe *Olodumare* as *Oba Orun* or *Olofin Orun* – the King of heaven. He is *Oba bi Olorun ko si*– the incomparable King. They also describe Him as *Oba Mimo* “the Pure King”, the “King who is without blemish”, “the King with unique and incomparable majesty” who settles in heaven (Sawyerr, 1970:40). He has jurisdiction over the universe. Since *Olodumare* is the King who is all-knowing and all-seeing, the Yoruba say, *Oba a-rinu-rode-Olumoran-okan* – “One who sees both the inside and the outside of every man, the discerners of hearts.” By implication the Yoruba believe that as much as the earthly king is powerful and important, his power is highly limited when compared with *Olodumare*.

Olodumare as the Creator

In the Yoruba myth of creation, *Olodumare* is *Eleda* - the Creator. He is the *ibere ati opin*- (the beginning and the end) of all things from whom everything both in heaven and on earth came into being. In the Yoruba cosmogony, *Olodumare* assigned and commissioned *Orisa-nla*, an arch-divinity, to mould a human being from the soil. According to this account of creation, *Orisa-nla* was under the supervision of *Eleda*. *Orisa-nla* had to mould a lifeless body, while *Olodumare* breathed life into the lifeless body for it to become a living being. This implies that the ultimate creation of the human being rested in the hand of *Olodumare* (Awolalu & Dopamu, 1979:47-48). *Eleda* does not only create, but possesses the ultimate power to sustain everything he has created. *Eleda*, the Creator, does not depend on the creatures, but all creations depend on him.

Olodumare as the Perfect Judge

Another equally great attribute of *Olodumare* according to Yoruba spiritual heritage is justice. The Yoruba believe that *Olodumare* is the perfect judge. The judgement of *Olodumare* involves rewards, punishment and retribution. He is perfect in discharging his judgement since he is the impartial judge. He executes judgement without fear or favour. The Yoruba say, *Oba a-dake-dajo* – “The King who passes judgement in silence.” It must be pointed out here that because *Olodumare* is morally just, his

judgement is just and final. He rewards the righteous and punishes offenders (Idowu, 1962:42).

Olodumare as the Controller

As pointed out, *Eleda* created the universe through *Orisa-nla*, the arch-divinity. The Yoruba strongly affirm that *Olodumare* controls and maintains the universe he has created. The sun, the moon and the stars are under the control of *Olodumare*. *Olodumare* controls spirits, ancestors and divinities. He not only created them to be his messengers, he also uses them to maintain orderliness in the universe (Idowu, 1962:39).

According to the Yoruba myth of the revolt of the 1 700 divinities, some divinities wanted to be self-governing and to control the universe. They did not want to be responsible to *Olodumare*. They asked *Olodumare* to allow them to control the universe for sixteen years without taking orders from him. *Olodumare* advised them to rule the universe for sixteen days as an experiment. They all agreed with joy and pride. Immediately after they left, *Olodumare*, who has absolute control, switched off the machinery of the universe and the whole creation started to work contrary to its original course. These divinities tried to put everything back in order, but all their labours were in vain. They found the universe ungovernable. Consequently, within eight days, they failed woefully. They realized their folly, went back to *Olodumare* and asked for forgiveness. *Olodumare* forgave them and switched on the machinery of the universe and everything began to work normally again. This myth reveals the supremacy of *Olodumare* over everything He created (Idowu, 1962:54).

In conclusion, the above discussion reveals that the Yoruba believe in *Olodumare* as one who is all-powerful, the Sustainer and Controller of all creation. *Olodumare* is uncreated. All prayers are directed to him through intermediaries. He is the Creator and the Controller of the universe, the Perfect Judge, the King of heaven, the Source of all wisdom, power, and strength. He is above everything that he created (Fadeji, 1990:30-32). All creatures, including divinities, depend on Him.

2.3 DIVINITIES

The Yoruba's belief includes not only the Supreme Being and numerous divinities called *Orisa*, but also a conglomeration of spirits, ancestral forces and psychic agencies who affect their realities of life. Beier (1980:62), a German-born scholar who spent more than twenty years among the Yoruba, contends that the Yoruba see the multiplicity of the *orisa* merely as an aspect of the same divine force. Jone (1946:118-121), a British scholar, argues that the Yoruba primarily believe in *Olodumare*, but their thoughts are daily directed to him through *orisa*, the lesser gods.

There are numerous Yoruba divinities and each has its specific area of influence and operation. Some of them were originally mythological figures in Yoruba legends, histories and cosmologies, while others were tribal heroes (Turaki, 2001:22). Divinities do not necessarily act in concert with one another and may sometimes act in opposition. They may be played off against each other so that they respond jealously to the need of the devotee (Steyne, 1990:75). Idowu argues that the existence of *orisa* is meaningless if separate from *Olodumare*, who is their creator. According to the Yoruba, divinities are the ministers of *Olodumare* and function in his theocratic government. The total number of divinities varies between 201, 401, 600 and 1 700 (Dopamu, 1999:5). Mbiti (1989:75) argues that the Yoruba have the largest number of divinities in Africa, comprising as much as 1 700.

Divinities are brought into being to serve *Olodumare* in the maintenance of orderliness in the universe. They also serve as intermediaries between human beings and *Olodumare*. Each *orisa* has a portfolio, a sacred place of worship, worshippers and priests or priestesses who lead worship in the shrine. They receive sacrifices and the Yoruba pray to *Olodumare* through them (Awolalu & Dopamu, 1979:70-73). The divinities are grouped into three: primordial, deified and personified divinities. Primordial divinities are those who came down from heaven and perform some major role in the theocratic government of the earth. Examples of primordial divinities are *Orisa-nla*, the arch-divinity who is in charge of moulding lifeless bodies, and *Orunmila*, the mouthpiece of the gods and ancestors and the divinity in charge of wisdom. *Orunmila* enables believers to find out when and for what reasons the supernatural forces are angry (Abimbola, 1976:151).

The deified divinities are the ancestors who left a great legacy among their people. They are regarded as people who possessed supernatural powers and became channels of blessings to their communities. Such examples are *Sango* (the god of thunder), *Oya*, a river goddess, and *Ogun*, the god of iron and war. Whether they are primordial or deified gods, the Yoruba believe that they are intermediaries between human beings, *Olodumare* and other spiritual beings (Otijele, 1991:9).

The last category is the divinities that are personified. These are associated with natural forces and phenomena (Awolalu & Dopamu, 1979:73). They are associated with hills, rocks, mountains, trees, lakes, thick forests and rivers. An example of this category is the Olumo Rock among the Egba of Abeokuta, Nigeria.

The following are some of the names of Yoruba divinities with their offices:

- *Obatala* or *Orisa-nla*, this arch-divinity is the deputy of *Olodumare*. He is a popular artist who possesses creative and procreative powers (Beier, 1980:15).
- *Orunmila* or *Ifa* is the minister in charge of wisdom, foreknowledge and predestination. *Babalawo(s)*, the Ifa priests, are associated with *Orunmila*. The Yoruba believe that *Orunmila's* wisdom is greater than the wisdom of *Orisa-Nla*. *Orunmila* knows everything about human beings and divinities because he was with *Olodumare* during creation. Except for *Olodumare*, no-one has greater insight and understanding of future than *Orunmila* (Gehman, 2013:109). The *Babalawo* is a diviner who, by virtue of his extra sensitivity to the spiritual powers and training, became the father of secrets. He has power to decipher the past, the present and the future (Imasogie, 1986:60).
- *Sango*, the god of thunder and lightning, is the minister in charge of justice and wrath upon lawbreakers.
- *Orisa-Ibeji* is the divinity in charge of twins and is associated with the mother of twins.
- *Obaluwaye* or *Sonpona* is the divinity in charge of small pox. He punishes offenders with small pox.

- *Ogun*, the god of iron, is the minister in charge of war. Hunters are associated with him.
- *Osun* is the river goddess in charge of benevolence and children.
- *Oya*, another river goddess, is in charge of the river Niger. She is loved and worshipped because she looks after children's safety (Dopamu, 1999:6-8).
- *Osanyin* is the *orisa* in charge of herbs. He controls 201 roots and leaves and knows their application in curing many diseases (Adogame, 1999:119).

The comprehensive names of the Yoruba divinities and their officers are listed by Peel (1968:29-33).

2.3.1 Oduduwa

Understanding the personality of *Oduduwa* is important, because many Yoruba prefer to be called “the son of *Oduduwa*” (Peel, 1968:19). *Oduduwa* is a powerful and important divinity among the Yoruba, because some stories say *Oduduwa*, not *Orisa-nla*, created man's material body (Gehman, 2013:109). As a result of the significant roles of *Oduduwa* in Yoruba socio-political life, this study presents some Yoruba scholars' views on this deity. As mention earlier, there are two accounts of his origin in the Yoruba tradition. The first account says that the Yoruba are the descendants of *Oduduwa*, who migrated from Phoenicia and settled in Ile-Ife, the cradle of the Yoruba and purportedly the centre of the origin of humankind. According to one version of Yoruba mythology, *Oduduwa*, an albino, was the first king of the Yoruba and his children were kings in all of Yoruba territories. Beier argues that *Oduduwa* was the first king of Ile-Ife and his son *Ogun*, was very dark in complexion.

The second tradition says that *Oduduwa* was the younger brother of *Orisa-nla* (the arch-divinity) and was the first Yoruba man who descended from heaven with a chain and some soil in a small shell to create the earth. Although *Olodumare* first sent *Orisa-nla* to perform the act of creation, as soon as *Orisa-nla* got to the gate, he saw some divinities celebrating and he joined them (Johnson, 1921:6). He was given palm wine, which he drank and then slept off. *Oduduwa*, who over-heard *Olodumare's* instructions to *Orisa-nla*, took the materials from *Orisa-nla*, climbed down and performed the act of creation. When *Orisa-nla* came to his senses, he

found the creation exercise already performed. He started to fight his younger brother. *Olodumare* settled the dispute by asking *Oduduwa* to own the earth and *Orisa-nla* was given the right to mould human bodies (Olurode & Olusanya, 2005:25). Both views of Yoruba origin traces the origin of the Yoruba to Ile-Ife, where they believe *Oduduwa* resided. Beier (1980:10) stresses that after *Oduduwa* had created the earth, the sixteen prominent *orisa* descended from heaven and they lived with him in Ile-Ife.

It is pertinent to state that *Oduduwa* is a synonym for the name of the Yoruba. Many Yoruba historians, however, have different arguments about its historical background. The question of the identity of *Oduduwa* is a contentious issue among the Yoruba people. Johnson (1921:3-14) explains the view that *Lamurudu*, one of the kings from Mecca, was the father of *Oduduwa*, who became the great ancestor of the Yoruba race. He indicates how various Yoruba groups trace their origins back to *Oduduwa*, who lived in Ile-Ife, the cradle of the Yoruba race. Indeed, the Yoruba believe that Ile-Ife is the spot where God created man. From there, humans spread out to cover the earth. Johnson also says that *Oduduwa*'s first daughter married a priest and gave birth to a son, the famous *Olowu*, who became the ancestor of the *Owu* in *Abeokuta*. The second child of *Oduduwa*, a princess, became the mother of the *Alaketu*, the progenitor of the *Ketu*. The seventh and last son, *Oranmiyan* is the progenitor of the *Oyo* people, the political head of the Yoruba (Johnson, 1921:3-4).

Lucas (1948:94-95) narrates the version where *Oduduwa* is the chief female *orisa* of the Yoruba, just as *Obatala* is the chief male *orisa*, and that she is the progenitor of the Yoruba race. She is one of the primordial deities of *Olodumare*. Lucas' explanation has, however, compounded the problem. Complicating the discussion on *Oduduwa*, Lucas concluded, "The goddess *Oduduwa* is the survivor of an ancient Egyptian deity" who lived in the Middle East. In other words, there is a close affinity between the Jewish culture and that of the Yoruba. Some Yoruba religious scholars believe that *Oduduwa*, the progenitor of the Yoruba race, migrated from somewhere in the Middle East. This is the reason why many of the Old Testament Hebrew practices reflect in the Yoruba culture (Lucas, 1948:94-95).

Idowu maintains that *Oduduwa* was one of the male divinities of *Olodumare* who came down by a chain and assisted *Orisa-nla* in his helplessness when he was

drunk. The *Igbo-Ora*, the people from the Oyo state, believe that *Oduduwa* was a female divinity. *Oduduwa* pitied *Obatala*, took up the assignment given to him by *Olodumare* and went to perform the task.

All these myths categorize *Oduduwa* as a deity. The Yoruba see him as one of the great ancestors who they believe to be one of the powerful leaders of the Yoruba race, under whom the nucleus Yoruba race migrated into the present Yoruba territory. *Oduduwa* was a strong man of virtue, a man of repute, a strong and visionary leader (Omoleye, 2005:14). Oduyoye argues that *Oduduwa* is not likely to be a historical figure, but an analogy of Adam in the biblical mythology, a postulate of the premier that is *ekeji orisa*, as *obas* are called (Oduyoye, 2008:91).

From the above arguments on *Oduduwa*, one can deduce the following. *Oduduwa* is a great divinity among the Yoruba and their love for him or her keeps increasing in their hearts. Among the Yoruba, various institutions and groups are named after him or her. Through oral history, *Oduduwa* lives permanently in the minds of the Yoruba as a deity whose shrine is located at strategic places of worship. In addition, he or she is believed to be an ancestor. Oduyoye finally affirms that *Oduduwa* is part deity and part ancestor, because the Yoruba have myths that reveal him or her as both.

2.3.2 *Esu (the invisible foe of man)*

Esu (the invisible foe of man) is another Yoruba divinity who needs further explanation in this work. *Esu* occupies a significant position among Yoruba divinities. He is believed to be one of the primordial divinities who have been with *Olodumare* from the beginning of things. *Esu* is regarded as a spiritual entity that has both positive and negative elements. His activities lodge in the spiritual realm or in the souls of people (Awolalu, 1979:28-29). He is given the office of the inspector of rituals. He is assigned to inspect the details of every act of worship and to report to *Olodumare*. *Esu* is the divinity invested with power to bring the wrath of *Olodumare* and other divinities upon the disobedient in the community. He is cunning, malicious and the promoter of evil. Another popular name of *Esu* among the Yoruba is *Elegbara*. *Elegbara* has the power to sow seed of discord among families and in the community (Adelakun, 2002:32).

The Yoruba concept of *Esu* has some similarities with the Christian view of the devil. However, there is some dissimilarity as well. *Esu* is, certainly, different from the biblical concept of Satan, who is always in opposition to God's plan of salvation for humankind. The word *Esu* is used for Satan in Yoruba Bible translation because it is the most comprehensible name for Satan in Yoruba everyday language. Yoruba scholars of religion see the functions and activities of *Esu* as having different dimensions, depending on the perception of each scholar.

Dopamu (2000:50-52) presents an objective and balanced view of the concept of *Esu* as found in the Yoruba religion. He looks at the deity's activities, strategies, characteristics, the misconceptions about *Esu*, and his agents. He points out the similarities and the differences between the Yoruba concept of *Esu* and the Christian and Muslim concept of Satan. He argues that *Esu* has his own mind, acts on his own and stirs people to do evil. He is similar to the biblical Satan in that his evil tendencies overshadow his benevolence. He is crafty and intelligent, but sometimes uses his wit in the wrong way. He is cunning and capable of creating enmity among people. *Esu* differs from the Christian concept of Satan because he favours and helps his devotees. His devotees therefore name their children after him. Examples of such names include *Esugbayi* (*Esu* has saved this child), *Esubiyi* (*Esu* has given birth to this one), *Esutoosin* (*Esu* is worthy of worship) *Esubunmi* (*Esu* has given me), and so on (Dopamu, 2000:50-52). Dopamu argues that *Esu* is a spiritual being who is considered as "a natural force between good and evil" (Dopamu, 2000:178).

Abimbola claims, in line with Dopamu, that *Esu* is not rightly evil. As a primordial divinity, he can also be invoked for some good; he averts evil from his devotees and protects them from attacks. Abimbola postulates that *Esu* has a multiple personality. Standing between evil and good power is the mischievous figure of *Esu* (the Yoruba trickster god), who is more or less a natural force in the conflict between the good supernatural power and the devil. He further argues that *Esu* is a "natural being" who is neither positive nor negative. His actions are directly linked to what sacrifices people offer him or make for him. He has no mind of his own to act and no specific direction at any time; he cannot act independently of what people make him do (Abimbola, 1976:152).

Unlike Abimbola, Idowu (1962:82-83) contends that in the Yoruba religion, people ascribe all the evil tendencies and practices of human beings to *Esu* and his agency. Whenever people commit evil unto either themselves or their neighbours, the Yoruba would immediately say *Esu loti i* □ “*Esu* stirred him to do it.” The Yoruba always pray, *Esu ma se mi, omo elomi ni kose* – “*Esu* do not instigate me, go and influence another person’s child.”

This aspect of the Yoruba heritage is germane to this study, as one wonders why individuals would assign the responsibility that should rest squarely on their shoulders, to *Esu*, spirit beings or spirit possession. This is one aspect of the Yoruba culture that impacts negatively on the behaviour of individuals in society. Unfortunately, this tendency is common among indigenous churches too, as they often borrow from aspects of culture to justify their actions. As a result, deliverance practices are prevalent in these churches, because it is believed that individuals are not responsible for some of their actions, but are rather victims of certain evil forces inhabiting them. Such evil spirits therefore have to be exorcized for the adherents to live normal, responsible lives.

A specialist in African traditional religion, Awolalu (1979:29), says that *Esu* is “an errand-boy”. He does not act by himself, but does whatever he is asked to do, whether good or bad, depending on the mission of the sender. He declares:

“What is intriguing about *Esu* is that he does not discriminate in carrying out errands - good and evil - he can be used as the instrument of retaliation; he can create enmity between father and children or between husband and wife as he can do between two good friends. At the same time, he can provide children for the barren or good bargaining power for the market women. He can cause a person to misbehave or to act abnormally as he can force a debtor to pay up a debt to a creditor... We see *Esu* as a personification of good and evil; and the way the Yoruba pay attention to him is indicative of their acknowledgement of the presence and co-existence of good and evil forces in the world” (Awolalu, 1979:29).

Lucas, on the other hand, argues that *Esu* is the devil. He bases his argument on the elements of evil associated with *Esu* in the Yoruba religion. He says that *Esu* has his own mind, commits evil and can make people create havoc (Lucas, 1948:51-53). The weapons of *Esu* for perpetrating evil in people include indiscipline, hatred, hypocrisy,

malice, violence, conspiracy, cruelty, ingratitude, impatience, disloyalty, arrogance, lying, rebellion and greed (Dopamu, 2000:145).

Dopamu also offers a summary of the general concept of *Esu*. He remarks that “*Esu* is not evil; he is both good and bad but is not devilish”. The thinking that *Esu* is satanic is the influence of Christianity on the Yoruba religion (Dopamu, 2000:40).

Based on the foregoing arguments on the activities of *Esu*, three things can be deduced. First, *Esu* is an errand being who acts according to the dictates of his sender, either for good or bad. Second, he has his own mind to bless and to curse people. Third, wicked people can stir him to wreak havoc in society. This reveals that in the Yoruba religion, there is the belief that both *Esu* and human beings are responsible for societal evil. *Esu* is not solely responsible for all evil. Sometimes the belief in *Esu* as the causality of moral evil deprives people from their responsibility to struggle against sin. The authentic message is that *Esu* and his agents are not solely responsible for all sinful behaviours in humankind.

In conclusion, there is sufficient ground to compare *Esu* with the devil of the Bible. Despite the nuances of understanding in the Yoruba religion and Christianity, there are similarities between *Esu* and the devil when it comes to functions, activities, characteristics, strategies and modes of operation. He can be engaged by *Olodumare* to punish moral offenders. One cannot, however, stretch his positive activities, as his benevolences are swallowed up by his negative actions (Dopamu, 2000:35-55 & 178).

It is obvious from the foregoing that the Yoruba believe that divinities play meaningful roles in their social lives at the pleasure of *Olodumare*. They affect human behaviours either positively or negatively. However, African theologians have over-stressed the positive influences of divinities in understanding the realities of life. This shall be fully discussed in Chapter 5. The discussion now turns to spirits.

2.4 SPIRITS

Spirit beings are a very prominent part of the Yoruba spiritual heritage. They form an important supernatural reality of life. They are powerful, but are not omnipotent like the Supreme Being. The Yoruba believe that spirit beings are more powerful than the

living-dead and the living (Kunhiyop, 2008:18). Though they are not visible, the Yoruba use anthropomorphic expressions to describe them. They hold that spirits can think, speak and move and that they possess power to bless and harm people at will. Human beings cannot see spirit beings, except people who have an extraordinary power to relate with them. They are associated with natural objects such as three-pathways, rocks, rivers, lagoons, hills, mountains and winds; and can inhabit animals. According to the Yoruba and other African ethnic groups, whenever they inhabit an object or animal, such an object becomes a mysterious being with a peculiar power and eventually becomes the emblem of such spirits. When they inhabit a plant, such plants are used for magic and medicine (Dopamu, 1977:103). As many as they are, spirit beings are not identical. Although they are all spirits, their spheres of influence differ. For example, nature spirits are associated with hills, rocks, mountains, the thunder and storm. The Yoruba believe that a spirit is behind storms. It must be noted that just as people belong to their native land and can move to other lands for a purpose, so do spirits. They can move from their domains and go to other territories for a mission. On the accomplishment of their mission, they may return to their permanent abodes.

The Yoruba believe that societal evil has two sources: the visible and the invisible. The visible sources are possessed human beings. The human aspect of evil includes the menace of armed robbers, road accidents through reckless driving, immorality, lawlessness, violence, domination and oppression (Dopamu, 1979:28-44). The Yoruba describe a person who possesses an evil spirit as *elemi Esu*. They believe that *emi Esu* (evil spirits) are always responsible for societal evil because they are capable of acting through human beings and other spiritual agents (Dopamu, 2000:28). The invisible source of evil is spiritual. In other words, the Yoruba look beyond the physical causation of problems. They believe that although human actions may be involved in societal evil, evil can essentially be traced to the spirit world.

Dopamu affirms that the Yoruba believe that *Esu* is the spirit responsible for many evils in society. He states:

“Everything points to the fact that *Esu* is associated with most of the moral and social evil that befall human beings. When a person misbehaves, when a person is disobedient,

when a person quarrels, when a person murders, when a person commits suicide and when a person does anything bad, people usually attribute it to the hands of *Esu*. It is also believed that evil people accomplish the work of *Esu*. They work for *Esu* to bring chaos into the world of men and women. *Esu* and his agents lead human beings into spiritual and moral disaster thereby resulting in bitterness, acrimony, oppression, persecution, personal ambition, selfishness, lust of power, lust for domination, arrogance, wickedness and all acts of atrocities and indiscipline” (Dopamu, 2000:149).

One example of the belief in spirit beings and their involvement in temptation to corrupt behaviour manifested in the life of one of the male counselees who came to see me. He came for prayers because he had been fired from work. He attributed his plight to a spiritual attack and enemies of his progress. During the process of counselling, I questioned him on his job and found out that he used to be involved in stock exchange and that he had embezzled unclaimed dividend warrants for years before being discovered by auditors. This is a clear example of the fact that the question of evil is not properly formulated in African Christianity. Has this man been influenced by Yoruba spiritual heritage, especially in relation to the spirit causality of evil? Does his attribution of his dismissal to an attack by enemies or evil forces not reveal the influence of Yoruba traditional religion in his Christianity? Finding appropriate answers to these questions is very significant to this study.

Next to the moral evil is the physical evil that occurs due to natural forces. Physical evil happens in a particular area and at a specific time. It includes storms, earthquakes and famine. Unlike moral evil that occurs in the daily life of society, physical evil is not an everyday occurrence. As the Yoruba cannot completely separate the cause of visible and invisible evil, so many African ethnic groups cannot completely distinguish between the cause moral and physical evil. Hick (1993:45), a British philosopher of religion, remarks, “In practice, it is often impossible to trace a boundary between the sufferings that result from human wickedness and folly and that which befalls human beings from without; both are inextricably mingled in human experience.” From the above argument, it is certain that both the human and non-human agencies are involved in societal evil. While the Yoruba place much emphasis on invisible powers, the Western world stresses human actions as the major cause.

The Yoruba believe that when the living fail to follow the instructions or customs of the ancestors, it becomes the duty of the living-dead to correct their mistakes through

famine, afflictions and sickness. Any problem that develops, be it drought or disease, sickness or death, may be traced to the living-dead. Through these challenges, the living-dead can let the living know that they are angry with their behaviours. When these challenges occur, a diviner consults the ancestral spirit that has been offended so that sacrifices are made to earn their forgiveness. There are annual sacrifices lest they become angry (Gehman, 2013:125-127).

According to the Yoruba, spirits fall into two groups based on their functions: the benevolent and the malevolent. Benevolent spirits are presumed to bless people who keep and abide by societal norms and to assist people who respect the elders. Benevolent spirits also help diviners and people who practice medicine and magic. The diviners consult or invoke spirits for blessings on individuals and the community. A good example of the benevolent spirit among the Yoruba is called *Ere-Ibeji* – the carved wooden emblem of a deceased twin. The Yoruba believe that twins are spirits that can bring joy and prosperity to their family if they are well cared for; they can also bring a curse upon them if they are maltreated or ignored. In addition, they can cause infertility, sickness and poverty. One Yoruba adage says “*Ejire, omo o de ile alakisa so dalaso, wini loju orogun ejiworo loju iya re*” (twin spirits, the ones that raised a pauper to a king’s status, precious children in the sight of their mother) (Onimhawo, 1996:13).

Malevolent spirits are evil forces that hinder the progress of individuals and society. *Aje* (witchcraft) is an example of a malevolent spirit. *Aje* is an anti-social spirit among the Yoruba. The Yoruba believe that *aje* causes evil in society. *Aje* spirits cause accidents and misfortunes. Women are mostly associated with the *aje* spirits, while men’s anti-social spirit is *oso* (wizardry). The Yoruba attribute many illnesses like madness, mental ailments and setbacks to the activities of witches and sorcerers.

Repeated infant death in a family is attached to the spirit of *Abiku*: a stillborn, or a born-to-die child. The Yoruba believe that when death of a child repeats in a family, the *abiku* spirit possesses such a child. The *abiku* spirit is both stubborn and wicked, and it defies entreaties. A Yoruba adage says, “*Abiku so ologun di eke*” (Abiku turns native doctors to liars) because they cannot be easily cast out (Etuk, 2002:49-50).

The Yoruba, like many African ethnic groups, believe that the misfortunes that befall people largely arise from sins against spirit beings such as *Olodumare*, deities and the ancestors. However, it is believed that whenever good spirits like deities and ancestors inflict pain on the people who offend them, they do so as a corrective measure for the overall good of an individual and the community (Egbulefu, 1985:232-233). Gehman, an American anthropologist, argues “When the living fail to follow the customs of the fathers, it becomes the duty of the living-dead to correct their mistakes” (Gehman, 2013:125). However, the Yoruba believe that there are evil spirits who incite people to commit moral evil and these bad spirits do not mean any good for either individuals or the community. Oborji, a Nigerian Catholic priest and professor of missiology, argues that generally speaking, Africans look for an explanation for their challenges in life and consequently emphasize spiritual beings as the causes of physical evil. As a result, traditional Africans spend more time in dealing with the causes and effects of evil than with the origin of evil (Oborji, 2005:18).

Abimbola asserts that in Yoruba cosmology, there are eight spiritual agents of evil. These plagues that affect human beings are collectively known as *ajogun* (warriors against human beings) and they comprise *iku* (death), *arun* (disease), *ofo* (loss), *egba* (paralysis), *oran* (trouble), *epe* (curse), *ewon* (bondage) and *ese* (accident) (Abimbola, 2004:xix).

Olukoya, the General Overseer of Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, insists that every evil originates from the devil and his agents (demons). The evidence of this belief reflects in most of his prayer notes. He argues that there are satanic powers that harm, enslave, divert, mislead and kill people. He also holds that demons are held to be the causative agents of both natural and moral evils. He further argues that the strongman (the devil) works against individuals’ marriages, work, home, family, finance, business and progress (Olukoya, 1996:28-29). Furthermore, Olukoya claims to have discovered through counselling and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that ninety-five per cent of difficult problems that people encounter are rooted in their family backgrounds. Deliverance prayer is an effective weapon to fight these satanic agents (Olukoya, 1999:7). This fusion of the physical

and the spiritual to explain the reality of evil generally affects most churches in Nigeria and in Africa.

Aladura churches trace the root of all human suffering to the devil, demons and evil powers in general. These churches stress that broken relationships with God cause famine, disease, premature death, and that repaired relationships can only be attained through prayers. This idea is closely related to the Yoruba traditional beliefs. The main concern of Aladura churches is to liberate their members from evil powers and to maintain good health through intensive prayers (Peel, 1968:128-129 & 172).

The Yoruba view of the spirit world has many similarities with those found in the New Testament context. Abogunrin, a Nigerian theologian and professor of the New Testament, argues that “The majority of Africans still live in the world of the New Testament, where belief in demons and a host of unseen supernatural powers is still potent and real” (Abogunrin, 2003:39). According to him, most Africans trace reality of life to the spirit world. Abogunrin’s argument serves as an insight to this study (Abogunrin, 2010). The reality of the spirit world influencing societal behaviour is fully discussed at the end of this chapter. One major preoccupation of African scholars is the preponderance of the idea that the spiritual realm shapes human behaviours and that African culture serves as a vehicle to understanding of African Christianity.

2.5 ANCESTORS

Ancestors are the cardinal feature of African religion, the centre of the African spirit world. Ancestors are believed to look after their family's welfare, protection and provision. They have the power to help and harm their family and society. They are also viewed as closer to the world of spirit than their living relatives (Anderson, 1993:30-34).

The Yoruba view ancestors essentially as clan or lineage beings who play important roles in the well-being of individual communities (Bediako, 2004:22-33). Ancestors are not as important as the Supreme Being; but they are the medium through which the Yoruba approach the Supreme Being (Oborji, 2005:14-15). The Yoruba see ancestors as grandfathers (*Baba-nla*) and grandmothers (*Iya-nla*) (Dopamu, 1999:9). They are people who lived exemplary lives on earth. Though dead, they are

considered members of their families and society. Oborji describes them as “the elder members of the family” or “glorified living-dead members of the family” (Oborji, 2005:26-27). The Yoruba regard them as the leaders of their families and society because they participate in the affairs of their families through dreams, visions and divinations.

A Yoruba dirge says, “My Father or Mother has become a spirit of *Olu’fe*, who wears fronds. My Father or Mother has become a spirit of *Olu’fe*, who wears palm fronds as clothes”¹ The Yoruba pray to *Olodumare* through the ancestors and receive divine instructions through them for the progress of their family and the community at large. They are consulted by the Yoruba when they want to know the ancestors’ desires for the family and society. On experiencing any family or societal problem, the Yoruba consult the ancestors to discover the cause of their problems and to appeal to them for solutions through diviners. It is believed that the Yoruba attract blessings when the ancestors are venerated and respected; but they unleash the wrath of the ancestors when they disrespect them or when they break societal norms.

The ancestor cult is a moral institution in traditional religion. The ancestors are the moral authorities and the Yoruba look up to them (Sawyerr, 1970:56 & 105). They are the police of society because they enforce the societal laws. Any person who obeys the law of the land gets their blessings, while any person who breaks the law is punished. In other words, the ancestors favour the obedient and penalize anyone who disturbs the peace of the community. The ancestors have a keen interest in their families on earth; they protect their children against evil spirits or wicked people and serve as guardians, counsellors and advocates for their family. Sacrifices are performed to ancestral spirits to avert calamity (Imasogie, 1986:61).

The notion of ancestors as a cause of evil is crucial. The Yoruba believe in *egun idile* - ancestral or generational curses. It means that a person may suffer due to the misdeeds of his or her ancestors. These occur when family heads enter into alliances with traditional deities or evil spirits. These curses may be manifested in the form of

¹ Ile-Ife is the religious centre of Yoruba land. Yoruba traditional belief reveals that the aged who dies anywhere in Yoruba land must first report to Olu’fe for further orders. At Olu’fe, they join the ancestor cults.

calamities like failures, sicknesses, poverty, childlessness, strange deaths, marital challenges and others. Ayegboyin argues that there is a tendency to make out the devil with all his agents, including ancestors, as the sources of nearly all the misfortunes (Ayegboyin, 2005:38). The Yoruba perform sacrifices to *Olodumare* or divinities through ancestors to break generational curses (Imasogie, 1991:20-21).

This turns the discussion to another area that is a very important part of the Yoruba belief in ancestors, namely festivals in commemoration of the ancestors. The Yoruba have special annual festivals in veneration of their ancestors. Such festivals are *egungun* (masquerades), *oro* and *agemo* (Dopamu, 1999:9). The Yoruba see *egungun* as *ara orun* (beings from heaven). They believe that masquerades represent the dead. During the *egungun* festival, messages are sent to the ancestors and masquerades bless the family and society in the name of the ancestors.

The Yoruba also pray to *Olodumare* through their ancestors for communal and family needs. They believe that the ancestors have easier access to *Olodumare* and other divinities than the living. They also speak to *Olodumare* through their ancestors because they are convinced that ancestors understand both their language and the language of heaven. In addition, because of the presence of ancestors in the invisible world, the Yoruba believe that the ancestors know the rules and laws of the invisible world better than the living. They esteem, honour and respect *Olodumare* by not approaching him directly, but through their ancestors. For their trivial needs, however, they do not like to bother *Olodumare*, they rather directly ask their ancestors to assist them (Mbiti, 1975:62-64).

Abimbola (1976:151) groups ancestors with the good supernatural powers. He stresses that ancestors are held in high esteem in the Yoruba religion because they control people's day-to-day living. Sometimes, ancestors are angry with people who neglect their duties towards fellow human beings in society or towards supernatural powers.

The Yoruba do not worship ancestors; rather they venerate them as elderly members of their family. As members of the family, ancestors are invited to participate in many family affairs at festivals and ritual communion. They are the symbols of unity, peace, blessing and the progress of the family (Oborji, 2005:26-27). The Dutch

anthropologist, Hans Visser, and Gillian Bediako, a religious educator, argue that in the African life, the ancestors play a significant role; they provide identity and protection in family and community life. Nevertheless, early missionaries ignored them and condemned the rituals connected with them. Despite this condemnation, they continue to have a presence in people's lives, especially on important occasions (Visser & Bediako, 2004: xiv). Mbiti observes that as Africans respect their elders when alive, so also do they respect them after their death when they become ancestors. In his words:

“Respect given them is that of comrades and elder kinsmen who have as much interest in the welfare of the family as their living kinsmen. The form of the prayer is direct; the requests are straightforward as if to say it is also to their interest to grant them. The tone of submission and pleading of supplication which appears in prayers to God and the deities are significantly absent. They may be rebuked, insulted or even threatened” (Mbiti, 1991:68-69).

Not all dead people become ancestors, only those who lived exemplary lives. A person has to die at a ripe age to become an ancestor. He or she must have lived a life that is worthy of emulation and must have added social and spiritual value to his or her family and the community. He or she must have contributed to the development of the family, had to have received burial rites and had to have had children. Any man or woman who does not meet the above requirements by the time he or she died cannot become an ancestor. In support of the above argument, Omenyo, a Ghanaian specialist in African Pentecostalism declares, “For a dead person to be ancestor, the person must have lived an exemplary life, had children, died a natural death at a good, ripe age, and must have been given a proper burial and funeral rites” (Omenyo, 2002:27). Among the Yoruba too, for a dead person to be considered an ancestor, he or she has to meet the above conditions. Awolalu further maintains that people who had the above qualities, but who did not receive the proper burial ceremonies, would not be allowed to join the ancestors. Their spirits would be compelled to wander about without rest (Awolalu 1979:223). Lucas (1948:256) argues that one of these burial rites is *Adie Irana* (the fowl that buys the way or clears the way for the dead). Funeral rites, apart from its purpose of allowing the departed to join the ancestors, is also performed to make the dead comfortable in the spirit world. The Yoruba believe that neglecting one's ancestors brings ill-luck and

failure in life; honouring them, on the other hand, provides prosperity. As such the Yoruba believe that ancestors can be the source of trouble for the family and for society when they are offended (Etuk, 2002:33).

Yoruba names support their belief in the ancestral cult. After the death of a mother or father, the Yoruba name the next newborn baby *Babatunde* (father has returned) if it is a boy and *Iyabo* (mother has returned) for a girl. The adherents of the Yoruba religion do not believe that the gender of an individual can change on reincarnation. Therefore a dead woman returns as a female baby while a dead man reincarnates as a male (Olorode & Olusanyan, 2005:86). The Yoruba consult diviners when a child is born into a family to establish which ancestor has reincarnated in the newborn child (Etuk, 2002:105).

Rites of Passage

Rites of passage are special features in the African spiritual heritage because each stage of life is significant and relevant, carrying with it sacred responsibility for the role each confers on the individual. They are meaningful not only because they connect individuals to ancestors, but also because of the belief that there is an active interaction between the human and the spiritual community (Imasogies, 1985:54-58).

Birth rites are observed for a newborn baby so that he or she can be identified as a member of the family in the community, while “puberty rites is the transition between childhood and physical maturity and is therefore an occasion for considerable ritual” (Etuk, 2002:33). Funeral rites emphasize the division between the living and the dead and the initiation of the dead into the ancestral cult. They also show the connection between the dead and the living, which serves as protection and guidelines for the living (Parrinder, 1954:94). Meyer, a Dutch anthropologist, states that rites of passage are the ceremonies that show African beliefs in ancestors and serve as prophylactic rituals to prevent evil occurrences. Below are the rites of passage observed for the newborn, at marriage and for the dead.

On the eighth day after birth, a child undergoes a ceremony during which it is taken outside for the first time. During the outdoor celebration, the child receives its name

and is integrated with the father's family. The head of the family, who represents their ancestors, pours a libation for the ancestors and prays for the child's well-being.

Marriage involves a whole complex of rituals in which the families gather to bless the new couple. It is a sequel to the puberty rites and it is aimed at preparing people for their sex life. It is also a social affair revolving around families. The elders who represent the ancestors of the families of the groom and the bride bless the marriage.

When a person dies, a number of rituals are performed during the course of his or her burial. The main purpose is to make sure that the deceased's soul is able to join the ancestors in heaven and does not remain in the world as a spirit to trouble the living. One year after the death, a funeral feast is held. If everything has gone well, the deceased is said to have reached heaven where he or she purportedly turns into an ancestor. Most African ethnic groups venerate the ancestors, pour out libations and pray to the ancestors during major events (Meyer, 1999:72).

Some indigenous churches pray for the dead extensively. They offer these prayers, believing that their prayers would help the souls of the dead to rest in peace. This is an influence of African traditional beliefs on some indigenous churches.

A feature of Yoruba culture that is closely linked to their awareness of ancestors is their references to the old days as the best. Horton confirms that a characteristic of the African thought system is a backward-looking attitude. For Africans, the good old days are in the past, and the future holds nothing good. According to him, in African thought, the past is usually valued positively and rarely negatively (Horton, 1995:247). Unlike the African culture, in Judaeo-Christianity the best times are yet to come. This concept of time is fundamental to the Christian faith and is further discussed by the African theologian, John Mbiti. Chapter 5 expands on this matter.

The significance of ancestors in Africa is one of the contributions of African Christianity to global Christianity. African theologians have revealed the possibility of the ancestor model for an African understanding of the mystery of Christ, the Church, Christian relationship, family, communal life and morality. In some African cultures, theologians contend that the mediation role of African ancestors can serve as a basis for Christology in Africa (Oborji, 2005:26). Some African theologians consider Jesus

even as the first of all ancestors. Jesus' roles as ancestor include Mediator, Saviour, Redeemer, Liberator and Healer. He is the ultimate authority in moral-ethical issues. However, Stinton argues that such reimagining is rejected in some quarters because of the negative connotations attached to ancestor worship denigration of the practice by missionaries over time (Stinton, 2006:10). As good as an ancestor Christology can be in African Christianity, it is not a complete picture of Christology. It is a partial Christology that only clarifies one aspect of Christ's being (Appiah-Kubi, 1997:65-74).

The importance of ancestors in Africa is expressed in more general terms by the German Reformed theologian, Moltmann, who, without a thorough knowledge of African Christianity, has drawn attention to this idea. He affirms that ancestors are not dead in the modern sense of no longer being here. Rather, they continue to live in the realm of the spirit and appear so real to the living that they believe that they are sustained by and are answerable to them. Descendants live and make decisions with an awareness of the constant presence of those who have gone before them. Every important decision has to be taken before the ancestors, because decisions affect not only the living and unborn children, but also those that have gone ahead (Moltmann, 2004:132-133).

Without going into the details of all the rituals marking the different stages of life, one can in general say that masquerade festivals, libation before the ancestors, naming babies after them, invoking their names to settle family disputes and the thought of their continued existence keep the social structure together and shape societal behaviours in relation to the spirit world. The human reality of life is shaped by ancestors.

2.6 THE UNIVERSE

As mentioned before, the Yoruba believe that the universe is essentially spiritual rather than material and that human life is controlled by spiritual possibilities. Omenyo maintains that in Africa "the empirical and the meta-empirical are inseparable." Therefore, the emphasis of the supernatural is much broader in the African traditions than in any European context (Omenyo, 2002:29).

Burgess (2008:45) explains the Yoruba believe that there are several living beings, both visible and invisible, in the universe. Man, however, is the centre of the universe because he has the power to interact with the physical and the spiritual. The benevolent and malevolent invisible (*orun*) element constantly interacts with the visible material world (*aye*). The universe is a perennial battlefield where evil forces contend with people. The Yoruba say: *Ile Aye ile ogun* - the universe is a battlefield. Spiritual forces can affect human destiny either positively or negatively. Positively they can bless, protect and guide people who adhere to societal laws. However, they can cause premature death, failures, destruction, strife and interference in the welfare of individuals and society. According to the Yoruba heritage, *Ise ki se la san* - nothing happens accidentally or naturally in the universe. There is always a connection between physical evil and the activities of the evil forces. In an effort to avert calamities and misfortunes, the Yoruba perform sacrifices to deities and pray to God through their ancestors (Imasogie, 1991:20-21). Bediako (2004:28) further expands on the significance of sacrifice. He maintains that sacrifice is “a way of ensuring a harmonious relationship between the human community and the realm of divine and mystical power.”

There is further evidence of Yoruba beliefs about the universe in their creation story. Although there are various accounts about the origin of the universe, all of them feature the calabash, the chameleon, the pigeon, the hen and *Obatala* - the arch-divinity. According to the most common Yoruba myth about the origin of the universe, *Olodumare*, the Supreme God, sent *Obatala*, his arch-divinity, to perform the task of creating the universe. While *Obatala* was descending to the world to create the universe, *Oduduwa* was assigned to be his helper. They brought a calabash or a shell full of earth, a hen and a chameleon. As soon as *Obatala* arrived in the universe, he constructed the foundation of the universe with iron. He spread the earth on the waters and the hen and the pigeon spread the earth around him for four days with their feet until the earth dried. On the fifth day, *Olodumare* sent the chameleon to test the solidity of the land, whether it was good enough for habitation. The chameleon reported that it was good for habitation. According to this myth, the place of origin of the universe is *Ile-Ife*, and *Oduduwa* was the first king of *Ile-Ife* (Imasogie, 1991:30-31).

2.7 MAGIC, POWER AND MEDICINE

One of the reasons why Yoruba religion is still much alive is the practice of magic and medicine. Medicine men and women, native doctors, diviners and magicians are increasing in numbers because they enjoy patronage from traditionalists, Christians and Muslims (Dopamu, 1993:239-249). This is because the belief in sorcery and magic has not declined among the Yoruba, despite the influence of Christianity, modern education and technology (Assimeng, 1989:120-193). “For the Yoruba, the quest for power (*agbara*) to enhance life is the hermeneutical key to understanding their attraction to religion, including Pentecostalism” (Burgess, 2008:53). The Yoruba believe in mysterious powers such as *oogun*, *egbogi* or *isegun* (medicine) and *oogun ika* or *oogun ibi* (bad magic) (Dopamu, 1999:9). Idowu declares that “magic serves man’s egocentricity and serves as a shortcut to spiritual bliss” (Idowu, 1973:190).

Magic is a means through which people attempt to exercise spiritual control over their environment. It is man’s attempt to tap and utilize the supernatural powers of the universe for his own good. This can be done through manipulation or enforcement of supernatural blessings. Magic can also be defined as the constant and active manipulation of the supernatural powers to get power, wealth and money. Iheanyi Enwerem, a Nigerian religious scholar at the University of Ibadan whose current ethnographic study of magic money and ritual killings in contemporary Nigeria is topical, provides a historical perspective on magic money and the conceptual frame of economic occultism.

Magic is part of religion and not every kind of magic is evil in the real sense. Enwerem (2003:189-205) defines magic money as a means to pursue wealth, power and money through a supernatural process that involves the human body. He is furthermore of the opinion that magic is a conscious and active manipulation of supernatural power. Magic money is generated by removing certain body parts (breasts, eyes, heart and liver) thought to be particularly effective in money-making rituals. According to Enwerem, the issue of magic money is not only peculiar to southern Nigeria; it is practised in many religions. The wealth that manifests in churches, among politicians and among many wealthy people is a true picture of contemporary Nigeria. However, other reasons for wealth are poverty, government policy, corruption and the collapse in state structure in the Nigerian society.

Magic is practised in all religions because it addresses people's need for confidence in an uncertain world. Cumont (1956:185) says that "magic is religious in origin and always remains a bastard sister of religion." Yoruba religious and magical beliefs are closely related; it is impossible to mention the Yoruba religion without mentioning magic. Lucas argues, "So close is the association that in some respect religion and magic in Yoruba land seem to be indistinguishable...The offices of the priest and of the magician are sometimes held by one and the same person" (Lucas, 1948:267).

Magic has taken on a new dimension in the contemporary world because it protects the interests of some groups. While the European countries had put behind them the shame of witchcraft, largely because of their enlightenment, twenty-first century Africa still revives the belief, not only among village dwellers, but also among the elite and policy makers (Maduagwu 2010:3). Yoruba adherents of the traditional religion use magic either to harm enemies, protect themselves, or to acquire wealth, political power and favour in courts. These factors have led to a paradigm shift on magic and the occult, especially in urban areas. Responses to fear, suffering, inequality, frustration, moral perplexity and desire for meaningful living offer room for an increase in magic practices and the occult in modern times (Maduagwu 2010:50).

This development also gave rise to a security gospel that seeks to ward off the potency of evil magic. It preaches that man gets what he wants through magic and at the same time uses magic to do evil, depending on the intention of the user. Man can invoke supernatural blessings through magic on the one hand and on the other, he can use magic to cast a spell on his enemies.

Although socio-economic problems like poverty and injustice are reasons that contribute to the increase magic practices in Nigeria, magic is connected to the indigenous culture. The prospect of getting over poverty and obtaining wealth and power stimulates the interest of individuals in magic money, fraudulent activities, and the sale of human body parts, adherence to secret cults and the acquisition of wealth by illegal means that involve ritual workers. The practice of generating magic money with human parts on behalf of oneself is a deliberate act. If the actions to acquire wealth, power, fame or property are deliberate, it should not be attributed to the spirit world when the offender is caught. No matter what the reasons for the pursuit of magic money are, it should be considered as godlessness because the life of an

individual is sacred before God and the community. The magic money phenomenon keeps on growing because of the value that Nigerians place on material things and on an ethics of matter where an individual's worth is determined by his or her wealth, power and fame with no thought given to the source of his wealth (Enwerem, 2003:203).

The trade in human parts is a reality in contemporary Nigeria. However, this practice is not acceptable to all Nigerians. Mbiti (1989:60) mentions that to invoke special blessings among the Yoruba, "human beings were formerly sacrificed, and this has not even died out altogether to this day." This primitive cultural practice also manifests in the current Nigerian situation. Magic is one of the areas where the spirit world affects human behaviour on the reality of economy, because a Yoruba man can be financially blessed through magic (Oyaniyi, 2012).

Witchcraft

Witchcraft is another aspect of magic in African traditional religions. Geschiere affirms the practice of witchcraft during both pre- and post-colonial times in Africa. He gives reasons for the continuous rise of witchcraft in the post-colonial period. He argues that modern witchcraft is motivated by political ambition and social injustice. Since the essence of witchcraft is power, people who are thirsty for political, economic and mysterious powers join witchcraft to become "strong men", to protect themselves from jealousy, and to outdo rivals (Geschiere, 1997:69-96).

Economic depravity, poverty, limited job opportunities and survival of the fittest also contribute to the growth of witchcraft. According to Geschiere (1997:128-133), national and local politics is another factor that contributes to the rise of modern witchcraft. In politics, both the elite and the rural people work together to win elections. As a result, witchcraft serves as a link between the elite and the villagers. Modern witchcraft encourages equality, ambition and allegiance to the political party. He concludes that witchcraft constitutes a great danger to society because power-thirsty people endanger their lives by entering the cult of witchcraft to arrogate power for their own purposes.

Fear of death is another factor that leads to an increase in modern witchcraft. The fear of death is universal. Russell maintains that “the most important of these emotions is fear of death, which is instinctive and biologically useful” (Russell, 1970:195). The fear of death causes many people to join witchcraft for protection against premature death, or to turn to the use of magic to live a long life. Just like many urban people address the fear of death through subscription to insurance policies for their survivors in the event of death, many rural people use magic for the same purpose (Etuk, 2002:180). Charms against premature death are not only peculiar to the Yoruba. Citing Lucien Levy-Bruhl on his views on Australian culture, Hick (1976:21) writes,

“Levy-Bruhl has assembled evidence that among nineteenth-century savages in Australia death, however it came, was thought of as being due to the magical action of an enemy; and he adds that this attitude of mind is not peculiar to Australian tribes only. It is to be found occurring almost uniformly among uncivilized peoples who are widely removed from each other.”

The above statement posits that magical actions against enemies and protection are the marks of many primitive cultures. Indeed, the practice of magic for protection is also found among people in urban areas. It is obvious that through magic, human beings try to reach their own ends by means of the spirits.

Evil Magic

Examples of people who practise evil magic among the Yoruba are *Oso*, *Oloogun-Ika*, *Oloogun Ibi* (sorcerers and ruthless magicians who wield dark influences on people), *Aje* and *Oso-nga* - (witches and wizards), *aseni bani d'aro* (mischievous companions), *ota agbode gba* (collaborators of enemies) and *odale ore* (conspirators) (Ayegboyin, 2005:40-41). Because the Yoruba believe that the universe is full of mysterious powers that can adversely affect people, they use magic to protect themselves from external or internal attacks. Since the world is a battle field, man must use protective charms against any physical and spiritual attack and to fight his enemies (Imasogie, 1991:19-20).

Ayegboyin provides further evidence of Yoruba belief in bad magic. He stresses that virtually every unpleasant thing, whether crop failures, ailments, loss of lives, bad

omens and manifestation of evils in the community come from *Ota ile* (domestic enemies), who are usually allied with *Ota Ode* (enemies without). The Yoruba believe that *Ota* (enemies) can use *oogun* (charm, an amulet or magic) *ofo*, *epe and afose* (harmful incantations) and *ohun ija oloro* (dangerous weapons) to hurt or kill any person who is not vigilant. In challenging times, the Yoruba consult a *babalawo* (Ifa priest) to establish the cause or the person behind their sufferings. The Yoruba believe that the wicked ones in the community seek the aid of bad magic (Ayegboyin, 2009:32-33). Their adage says, “*San be sun, fa po rori, iwa omo ni mu omo sokigbe*” meaning, “though a person may sleep girdled with knives and though he may pillow his head on a quiver; his character may nevertheless, drive him to dabble into the magic of immunity” (Idowu, 1973:197).

Oogun (medicine)

Another aspect of magic among the Yoruba is *oogun* (medicine). Medicine is used for good health, wealth acquisition of preserving and maintaining good health. It is also a medium for the restoration of health, because health could be lost. The Yoruba, like many traditional Africans, believe that medicine is both preventive and curative. They say, *ilera loogun oro* - good health is the medicine of wealth. When a person is healthy, he or she is prone to wealth because he or she can work to get wealthy. Unlike the Western world that affirms that sickness may result from a poor environment, unbalanced diet, lack of rest, injury, drug abuse, hereditary problems or old age, the Yoruba believe that one does not just fall sick, some person or spirit must have caused it. Whenever a person is sick, the Yoruba try to find out who or what is responsible for the sickness. They visit traditional healers who would tell the victim the cause and solution to the sickness. Parrinder says, “A medicine man is a scientist in that he seeks to discover and use the law of the universe, not only of nature but also spiritual forces... believing there are hidden powers that can be tapped... in order to meet various ailments” (Parrinder, 1969:159). Among the Yoruba, the prescriptions and instructions of native doctors must be strictly followed for healing to take place. Sometimes, ritual gestures may be required, which may involve incantations and repetitions of certain offerings and of sacrifice (Idowu, 1973:197-200).

Yoruba use medicine to seek wealth or work. Early in the morning, a job seeker will rub the prepared medicine on his hands and swallow some medicine while saying these words, "I take this medicine to help me find favour with the employer when I meet him today." When he approaches the place of work, he will also rub powder on his hand and face, saying "I mix my words with the words of the employer like this powder in my hands." With these words, he believes that the employer will listen and agree to his request for a job (Gehman, 2013:77).

Osanyin is the principal divinity associated with "herbology" or magic. He is the local divinity appointed by the Supreme Being, *Olodumare*, to be his minister of health. Therefore, all health practitioners of the traditional religion must continually consult *Osanyin*, (who himself is the younger brother of *Orunmila*, the divinity of the repository of all knowledge and wisdom), and make appropriate sacrifices and seek help when necessary. According to Idowu, *Orunmila* is "reputed to be a great doctor. Therefore every qualified *babalawo* must know, not only how to practice divination, but also the elaborate set of herbal remedies connected with the *Odu* corpus" (Idowu, 1962:77). Annual festivals are held where the medicine men and the local people pay homage to *Orunmila* and *Osanyin* in order to receive the blessing of good health and fertility in the course of the year.

Many of the native doctors claim to have been taught the art of medicine by *Orunmila* and other spiritual beings in trances, dreams and meetings with spirits in jungles, while others inherited their profession from their parents (Raymond, 2009). The Yoruba believe that *Orunmila* has great insight and understanding of all human beings because he was with the *Olodumare* during creation. Native doctors and *babalawo* learn many things through this divinity (Gehman 2013:109). Native doctors, diviners and medicine men claim to obtain some of their traditional medical knowledge and insights from spirits (Mbiti, 1975:72). Most of the traditional healers claim to have powers to heal all forms of ailments because they are psychiatrists, paediatricians, gynaecologists and general physicians in the context of the Yoruba religion (Idowu, 1970:14).

Training people for the advancement of the Yoruba spiritual heritage was very important in pre- and post-colonial times. The Yoruba religion stresses the training of specialists who provide services to society. Jawoniyi, a Nigerian religious

educationist, looks at the development of the Yoruba religious education system in Nigeria from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial era. According to him, religious training in the pre-colonial era included training in native medicine, midwifery, the priesthood, and in crafts and blacksmithing. The methodology of the training consisted of instructional techniques, apprenticeship, riddles, and initiation of rites, dirges, folklores, proverbs and experimentations.

During the colonial era, the Yoruba system of religious education was relegated in favour of Western education. Jawoniyi (2009:63-86) criticizes the post-colonial school system because primary and secondary school curriculums do not include the Yoruba religion. He concludes that to reduce immorality in the Nigerian society, the powers that be should rethink and rebrand the religious curriculum in primary and secondary schools. Nigerian pupils have to be exposed to the worldviews of different religious traditions.

The training of specialists for specific duties is a major ritual among the Yoruba. Tunde Famoroti, an educationist from Nigeria, confirms this, especially the training of priests. According to Famoroti (2007), Yoruba pre-colonial training centred on the belief that the priests are the link between the community and the spirit world. The pre-colonial era is regarded as the era of the Supreme Being and ancestral cult, of “ancestral worship and the hereditary priesthood, where the priests held the rights to consult deities, and to being the intermediaries between the people and the gods” (Famoroti, 2007:49). Priests and priestesses were the official servants of gods and normally ministered at annual festivals. The Yoruba believe that they have been endowed with spiritual insight that enables them to foretell what would happen to an individual and the community. White is their favoured colour because the Yoruba believe that white symbolizes sacredness and purity.

Famoroti (2007) also highlights the importance of the spiritual heritage that prescribes the training of priests as custodians of the people’s spiritual heritage, customs and values. Priests used to adjudicate and enforce the laws on individuals and the community at large and worked to maintain peace and order in society. Their work improved the moral standard of society. The priests were trained to improve the moral life of the community and to develop and mentor important persons such as kings and war chiefs to shape their character towards socio-economic, political, and

religious interactions. Priests used spiritual heritage to transfer systematic knowledge of the Supreme Being, deities and heroes from one generation to another.

Among the Yoruba, sacrifices are very important as part of magic and medicine. Sacrifices are made to appease or please gods and the ancestors, while offerings are made to ask for the favour of spirit beings, to assist individuals to achieve their aspirations and to ask for forgiveness for sins committed. Basden, a British theologian who served as a missionary for thirty-five years among the Ibos, recorded his experiences among them. He describes that the Ibos believe in gods and they offer sacrifices to deities to gain their favour and to prevent them from the attacks of the evil spirits (Basden, 1938:91). Arinze, a Nigerian theologian, argues that the Ibos offer sacrifices to God, to deities, to spirits and ancestors for blessings and to protect them from the evil powers (Arinze, 1988:104). Sacrifices in Yoruba religion revolve around the shedding of the blood of human beings, animals and birds, while offerings do not involve blood, but items of food, oil, water, milk, honey and money (Oborji, 2005:19).

Magic and Social Insecurity

Due to the insecurity of life and property in Nigeria, individuals and groups have developed means of protecting themselves through magic. Harnischfeger, an educationist, social scientist and anthropologist, stresses in his article, *State Decline and Return of Occult Powers: The case of Prophet Eddy in Nigeria*, which many African countries, especially Nigeria, are moving towards state collapse. In Nigeria, life is becoming unbearable and there is social, political and judicial injustice everywhere. He explains that because of insecurity, many Nigerians have opted for magic and witchcraft as a means of self-defence and acquiring wealth. Each geopolitical zone has produced militant groups to defend the weak through magical powers. Among the Yoruba, there is the O'dua People's Congress, among the Igbo, the Bakassi Boys and now the Boko Haram among the Hausa. According to him, "in Igboland, as in other parts of Nigeria, no effective protection can be expected from policemen, military officers and the judicial system." This explains why many young people have joined together as militant groups.

He stresses that these militant groups, especially the Bakassi Boys, use diabolical means to fight the injustices that cannot be subdued by the police, the courts and the army. The militant groups are able to subdue wicked people who enjoy the support of the top people in government. People resort to magic because they lack effective mechanisms to fight injustice or conflict openly (Harnischfeger, 2006:63-68). The writer provides a vivid picture of the failure of the state structure in the sense that people cannot embrace their social rights unless they are connected to the people at the top. He further states that because of the lack of effective protection from the police, the judicial system and considering the incidence of illegal detentions, people use magic to protect themselves and to enforce their social rights. Students, for example, seek the help of native doctors to gain admission into tertiary institutions and to pass their examinations. People use magic to get employment and gain promotion. Business persons use magic to get customers and to subdue their opponents. Furthermore, the rise and fall of politicians can be traced to the use of magic.

The use of magic goes back a long way. Harnischfeger argues that ritual killings to gain the favour of the spirit world were accepted in pre-colonial times (Harnischfeger, 2006:72). During the Yoruba pre-colonial era for example, slaves were often killed or buried with their masters. Some Yoruba sources show that when an *Oba* (King) died, his heart had to be kept for the in-coming king to eat. If the successor had not eaten the heart of his predecessor, the kingship rite had not been completed. In some Yoruba monarchies, there were people who had to die with an *Oba* (*Abo'baku*). It was believed that the late king would continue to reign in the spirit world, so he needs people who can serve him.

The trust in militant groups to fight the injustices in society with neither fear nor favour also contributes to the use of magic. In other words, "while it is obvious that the rising concern about occult force has contributed to the decline of the state, it is not clear in what way state decline may have contributed to the renewed concern or obsession with the occult" (Harnischfeger, 2006:58-72). Magic in some ways has a paradoxical meaning. It is used to defend oneself and at the same time, it contributes to the decline of the state. The use of magic in contemporary Nigeria reveals the tension between African spiritual heritage and Christianity. This implies that some aspects of

African spiritual heritage, especially magic, have a negative impact on societal behaviours.

The practice of ritual killing for wealth or power has been a longstanding tradition among Africans. Smith, a political anthropologist at Brown University, Rhode Island, USA, also confirms the historical use of ritual practices for wealth, power and fame. Unlike in the post-colonial period where mainly strangers are killed for wealth, anyone who wanted to get wealth or power through a ritual in earlier times had to kill one of his or her relatives. At that time, the killing of a stranger for a ritual could not produce the desired result. The frequency of ritual killings for wealth was not high, because not only did people not want to kill their relatives, there was a cost implication to taking a human life (Smith, 2001:820).

Magic on the one hand serves as a way to ensure well-being, prevention of illness and restoration of health, and on the other hand the practitioners use it to cast spells on people. The above scholars though, have different views on to magic. However, they share common ground on the reality of magic in Africa, the reality of evil, on the fact that activities involving magic influence human behaviour. They acknowledge its potency to protect a person from enemies and to get favour from the spirit world.

2.8 THE YORUBA CONCEPT OF *ORI*

The Yoruba believe in predestination, the fore-ordination of everything by the Supreme Being. They express this belief in the concept of *Ori*, the “physical head”. As mentioned earlier, *Ori* stands for many things in the philosophy, religion, belief and practices of the Yoruba. It is the symbol of essential personality, the soul of each person, the unconscious self, the spiritual essence that influences man’s behaviours from birth to death. It provides the Yoruba with the explanation that their lives are predetermined by the type of the *Ori* chosen before their entry into the world. Furthermore, their failure or success in life largely depends on the choice they had made in heaven prior to their journey into the world. Still, the effort of man can influence success or failure (Labeodan, 2006:117-124). Imasogie affirms that *Ori inu*, the Alter-ego “is in a sense a duplication of the personality in heaven during the earthly pilgrimage of the individual.” Consequently, the alter-ego takes charge of an individual’s destiny and makes sure that it is actualized in the physical realm.

Imasogie strongly holds that *Ori inu*, the invisible head, influences the physical head. He further argues that alter-ego is the “real being” or “guardian genius” of an individual that represents a higher form of existence in the spirit world, but affects the physical man (Imasogie, 1985:51). A Yoruba man or woman subsequently prays, *Ori inu mi ma ba tode je*, meaning “my inner head should not destroy my outer head.” This reveals the connection between the physical world and the spirit world (Ojo, 2014:69-70).

The Yoruba concept of *Ori* emanates from *Olodumare*, who is the Great *Ori*. No one chooses an *Ori* without kneeling down before *Olodumare* with his or her *alter ego*, which is also referred to as *Iponri* or *enikeji* (the second counterpart). The Yoruba believe this entity stays in the spiritual realm and monitors the life of its earthly counterpart. This *enikeji* is believed to come in the form of a shadow to monitor people’s lives. The Yoruba hold that *Ori* influences the fate, behaviour, character and life of an individual on earth (Oyeshile, 2004:118-120; Idowu, 1962:172-173). Oduyoye (2008:27) argues that the Yoruba worship their *Ori* because their success or failure depends on it. In Yoruba traditional religion, an ill-fated person is called *olori buruku* (a person with a bad head), while a lucky man is called *olori ire* (a person with head of goodness). It is very difficult for an ill-fated person to be successful in life. He or she needs spiritual assistance to be successful in life (Adetokunbo, 2012.)

Ori represents *Olodumare* in human personality and serves as a connecting point to the spirit world. It is also regarded as the ancestral guardian soul that remains in heaven, doing exactly the same things in heaven that an individual is doing on earth. The choice of the type of *Ori* before *Olodumare* determines the fulfilment of the destiny of individuals in the universe. *Ori* is in itself an object of worship because it is the essences of personality; so it must be kept in good condition so that all may be well with the person. Every person must be on good terms with his or her *Ori*, so that it may favour him or her. In the light of this, the Yoruba say, “*Ori l’a b abo ti a ba f’orisa sile*”, meaning “it is rather *Ori* that should be worshipped and *Orisa* should be left out” (Idowu, 1962:172-173).

It must be noted that the Yoruba also stress the need for hard work to attain success. They talk of *ese* (leg) for instance, as an important ingredient of the human personality. *Ese* is the symbol of power and activity. It also symbolizes man’s

struggle to realize success in life. The Yoruba believe that for people to be successful in life, they should have chosen a good *Ori* and should then support it with good works (Abimbola, 1976:114).

They also believe that *iwa* (character) affects an individual's destiny and achievement. The Yoruba believe that if a person has valuable things without *iwa rere* (good virtues or character), the community will look down upon such a person. In addition, it is also said among the Yoruba that a person who has chosen a good *Ori* without good character, would soon lose all the valuables, because *iwa* would not allow him or her to maintain success. Consequently, the Yoruba believe that good conduct and hard work without a good choice of *Ori* does not automatically lead to a fruitful and blissful life on earth.

Among the Yoruba, the blessing or sorrow every person experiences is also expressed as *ayanmo* (destiny). This is a crucial insight for the purposes of this research. The Yoruba say, *ayanmo ko gboogun* (there is no charm to change a man's destiny), but paradoxically they believe that devilish people or forces can change a person's good fortune for worse. There is confusion about this belief, because it allows people to push their responsibility to the spirit world (Oyaniyi, 2012).

Many Yoruba love to tell people how they worked tirelessly to achieve their success; how they worked through thick and thin to reach the height they have reached. However, when it comes to ill fortune, they attribute it to *ayanmo*, *Ori*, or to a bad relationship between man and spirit beings. This is the Yoruba explanation for evil when they cannot trace anything in their antecedent actions that could have caused the ill luck. Buckley (1985:98) contends that the Yoruba worldview of evil, especially evil in the form of disease, holds that disturbed relations between man and God or divinities causes infertility and accidents. The same holds true for many Christians. Prosperity has everything to do with their efforts and poverty has to do with a divine curse.

The intent here is not to derogate the Yoruba character, but to point out how they are simultaneously pragmatic and dogmatic in interpreting the reality of life. The Yoruba perception of inequality in wealth is one of the main points explored in this study. The

Yoruba accept unequal distribution of wealth between the *olowo* (the wealthy) the *mekunnu* (the common people), the *talaka* (the poor) and the *akuse* or *otosi* (the very poor or wretched ones). The explanation for the variation in wealth includes destiny, mystical power, character, ancestral blessings and curses (Oladapo, 1992:44-45).

The Yoruba concept of *Ori* is a crucial part of the analysis of individual progress, failure and inequality. The *Ori inu* (the inner self) is believed to precede existence during life and continues to exist after death. An individual's life is determined by the choice of *Ori inu* (Olorode & Olusanya, 2005:31-32). As Akinwowo, a Nigerian philosopher, noted, the Yoruba believe that human beings and their reality of life are driven by two inter-related major elements. These elements are the tangible and the intangible, or the physical and the spiritual (Akinwowo, 1983:12-13).

Process of Obtaining Ori

Among the Yoruba, there are two myths about how man obtains his *Ori* in heaven before coming to the world. The first myth says that human beings are in heaven with *Olodumare*. Before man departs from heaven, he first goes to *Olodumare* to get permission. In the presence of *Olodumare*, there are several calabashes in which the nature of an individual's journey is gathered. Each man kneels down before *Olodumare* to choose an *Ori*. This is called *Akunle yan* ("That which is chosen while kneeling") or *Akunle gba* ("That which is received while kneeling", or "His destiny is affixed to him" (*Ayan-mo*)). The general believe is that on completion of the rite before *Olodumare*, a complete person has been created. Whatever is chosen will be his (*ipin*) lot, which is his destiny. It therefore follows that man's doings or behaviours on earth have been predestined by *Olodumare* and whatever is affixed is unalterable and becomes one's portion throughout life (Idowu, 1962:173-174). During this process, *Orumila*, the *Ifa* divinity of wisdom and knowledge and *eler-i-pin* (the witness of portion or lot) is there watching man's destiny. This is the reason why the Yoruba consult *Ifa* to know the destiny of a child whenever one is born into a family.

After the rite before *Olodumare* has been completed, the person embarks on his journey to the world. He arrives at the gates between heaven and earth and encounters the *Onibode*, the Gatekeeper, to whom he must answer the following questions:

Onibode: “Where are you going?”

Person: “I am going into the world.”

Onibode: “What are you going to do?”

Person: “I am going to be born to a man named X...”

Onibode: “To” (it is sealed).

Here, man’s destiny is doubly sealed; once by *Olodumare* and then by *Onibode*. It is interesting that the myth tells that by passing into the world, man forgets at once what has happened to him in heaven, including the contents of his destiny.

One of the Yoruba sayings to support this belief is: “*A-kunle-yan ni a-d’aiye ba; Akunle a yan’pin; A d’ aiye tan oju nro ni.*” (“That- which- is chosen - kneeling is that which is found- on getting -to the world; We knelt down and chose a portion, we get to the world and are not pleased”) (Idowu, 1962:174-175) .

In conclusion, the Yoruba concept of *Ori* provides a conceptual framework to trace human behaviours, success, failure and unequal wealth distribution to the spirit word. *Olodumare* not only created man, but also ordained and controlled the destiny of man in the universe. Whatever happens to a person, either success or failure is a fulfilment of what is chosen and ordained for him by *Olodumare*.

2.9 THE YORUBA CONCEPT OF MORALITY

Every community has a moral code that emanates from the need to differentiate good conduct from bad and to enhance harmonious living. Generally speaking, the Yoruba concept of morality is based on their understanding of *Olodumare*, the origin and creator of moral institution. The moral code comprises the core values on which ethics are based. Ethics is the study of the human conduct, human attitudes and the consequences of human behaviours. It centres on what humans do and should not do, and what becomes a norm in society (Van Wyk, 1986:2-3). It is both descriptive and prescriptive in nature. In its prescriptive form, ethics can never be neutral, because underlying the moral instructions is always be a philosophical, religious or ideological pattern. Consequently, one can conclude that ethics is the scientific

discipline that studies peoples' attitude based on a certain religious or worldview, and from this it then suggests norms for human morality. Vorster (2007:18) argues that attitude underlies human conduct. But what controls human attitude? Conducts and behaviours are also determined by worldview. The influence of worldviews on people's attitude becomes clear in their moral philosophy (Vorster, 2007:18). Consequently, the Yoruba spiritual heritage plays a significant role in their moral behaviours.

Morality not only encourages harmonious co-existence, but also ensures qualitative societal development. In other words, morality is concerned with right and wrong actions, judgements and beliefs about what things are right or wrong: praising or blaming people for actions and training people to behave in certain acceptable ways in society. The Yoruba religion, like any other religions, teaches what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is evil, what is a virtue and what is a vice, what is just and what is unjust (Oyesile, 2004:137).

Apart from moral values, there is social communication where people come together to pray, perform a ritual and make a sacrifice to deities for development of people's moral life in society. Imaekhai (2010:62), a Nigerian Anglican Bishop, argues that a part of any religious system is to add moral values to individual lives, families and institutions.

Whether in traditional or modern times, the concept of *Iwa* (character) is very important among the Yoruba. Etymologically, the word *Iwa* came from the root "wa" (to be and to exist) with the prefix "I". The original meaning of *Iwa* can be interpreted as "the fact of being, living or existence" (Abimbola, 1975:393-395). The second meaning of *Iwa* centres on character or moral behaviour. This emanates from the Yoruba idiomatic usage of the original lexical meaning of *Iwa*. Consequently, the Yoruba stress that *Iwa* is the essence of being because it is concerned with the ethical aspects of people in society. The Yoruba concept of *Iwa* is more pronounced in human behaviour or morality. It is the totality of what a person is as an individual in society (Labeodan, 2006:123).

The concept of *Iwa* does not only reflect in interpersonal relationships, but also in public and communal life (Oyesile, 2004:139-141). A Yoruba proverb says *Iwa rere*

leso eniyan (“Good character is one’s guard” or “The beauty of person inheres in his or her good character. Another Yoruba proverb related to *Iwa* says “good character must be the dominant feature of a person’s life.” It is also believed among the Yoruba that *Iwa lesin* (character is religion). In other words, character is essential in the worship of the divinities and *Olodumare*. This implies that the Yoruba regard good character as the essence of their religion.

The Yoruba words *Iwa* (character) and *ise* (behaviour) are used to describe the Yoruba concept of morality. The Yoruba trace the origin of *Iwa* to *Olodumare* and *ise* to *ori* (physical head). They believe that *Olodumare* is the embodiment of good character and behaviour and that he expects human beings to exhibit good conduct as well. The Yoruba myth also affirms that *Iwa* is the grandchild of *Olodumare*. *Iwa* is regarded as the most significant of all moral values and the greatest attribute of any person (Oyesile, 2004:139-143).

There are two ways of explaining *Iwa*, namely ontologically and ethically. Ontologically, it helps one identify a person’s qualitative existence as revealed by his or her behaviour or lifestyle in the community. Ethically, it means a qualitative judgement of good and bad behaviour in society (Labeodan, 2006:123-124). The evaluation of whether an action is good or bad does not only depend on the concept of right or wrong judgement, but also on the quality of the person who performs it. If the motives that produce it are selfish, it is considered as bad, if the motives are accepted in society, it is considered good. In other words, morality is a matter of customs and tradition, which have become essential aspects of life. Ethics is a pattern of behaviour stated in customary laws (Shields, 2004:15).

Behaviour or character is judged according to two categories. Good character is referred to as *iwa rere* (good behaviour) or *oni iwa pele* (gentleness), while bad behaviour is *iwa buburu*. The Yoruba believe that a person who has good character is *Omoluabi* (a gentle man or woman; a fine person) endowed with qualities accepted by the Yoruba community), while *eniyan buburu* (an ill-mannered person) is one without morals. *Iwa* provides a set of principles that regulates a man’s life to avoid collision with the spiritual powers and with his fellow men. The Yoruba regard *Iwa* as one of the purposes of human existence (Abimbola, 1975:393).

Love, care, respect, obedience, faithfulness, gentleness, devotion, loyalty, sacredness of life and honesty are considered good behaviours while callousness, deceit, pretence, disloyalty, disrespect, corruption and hypocrisy are considered bad behaviours. Parents are expected to teach their children good behaviours. Each person is responsible for his or her behaviours since good behaviours enable people to have a peaceful life as part of a community.

Furthermore, character and behaviour are traced to *Olodumare*. The quality of character manifests itself in *suuru* (patience), *iteriba* (respect) or *ifarabale* (self-control), *ife* (love), *ododo* (righteousness), while a bad character can be identified through *eke* (hypocrisy), *ibinu* (anger), *ikorira* (hatred), *ojukokoro* (greed) and *ipaniyan* (murder).

Another sign of good conduct among the Yoruba is the way a person addresses elderly people and strangers. Respect for elders is one of the pillars of Yoruba morality. A few months' seniority in age demands respect and it is forbidden for young people to disrespect an elderly person. This concept of respect is inculcated into children; any child who does not respect an elder is seen as untutored child or a child lacking in good conduct.

The issue of good behaviour is not limited to those who are ruled, but also extends to the rulers. The *ogboni* cult is responsible for the enforcement of moral laws. The *ogboni* cult forms a link between the religious sphere and the political sphere, and is essentially a secret body of elders in the community. They have the final say in the selection of *obas* (kings) and they have to advise the *Oba*. They could engineer his removal if his actions are unsatisfactory. They also make and enforce laws on individuals and serve as a check and balance in the Yoruba monarchical government. They derive their prominence from two sources. First, they control the political life of the community and second, they possess power sanctioned by the gods. The main function of the *ogboni* is to promote moral law and order in the community in terms of the laws of the gods.

In Oyo town, whenever the actions of the *Alaafin* became unsatisfactory and the community desired to dethrone him, the council of elders would gather to prepare

“the egg” in a white calabash for the monarch. As the ruler opens the calabash and sees the white egg, his life would end (Daramola, 1970:160).

The *ogboni* cult was also the main institution for enforcing law and order and promoting a peaceful co-existence before the arrival of colonial powers. However, Yoruba customary laws have become eroded as a result of colonialism.

2.10 ROLES OF MYTHS

2.10.1 Introduction

Knowledge of the Yoruba myths is crucial for an understanding of their spiritual heritage. Much of our knowledge of the Yoruba religion stems from their myths (Beier, 1980: xiv). The discussion first lingers on the role of myths as perceived by African and non-African scholars alike. The section thereafter continues to examine the sources of Yoruba myths, their functions and how these myths affect their behaviour.

2.10.2 Non-African Scholars' understanding of myth

In answering the above question, I review the following non-African scholars who are authorities in the field of mythology: Bultmann, Eliade, Groenewegen, Levi-Strauss, Gaines, Segal, Hick and Ricoeur. The analysis of their works guides the analysis of the roles of myths of the Yoruba.

Bultmann, a German New Testament scholar, argues that the New Testament contains different events and situations. There is no unitary theology of the New Testament, but many theologies, each with its own terminology and distinctive emphasis. He stresses that the heart of gospel of Christ is the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is understood as a spiritual community consisting of people who profess Christ and are obedient to God's will, which rules in their hearts. He claims that the concept of the world as it is presupposed in the New Testament proclamation of Christ, is mythological (Bultmann, 1958:19). He defines mythology as a primitive science with the intention of explaining reality by attributing strange, conscious, surprising, unusual or even frightening phenomena and incidents to supernatural forces. There are correlations between the Yoruba religion and the Jewish culture as

they both attribute natural events to spiritual causes. Bultmann emphasizes the necessity to demythologize for proper understanding of the Gospel message. He claims that to demythologize is not to reject the Scriptures as a whole, but the worldview (Bultmann, 1958:36-40).

He concludes that the only way to an authentic life and to being like Jesus is in the Word of God, which asks of man to take action. In most myths, man's actions and the events in the universe are not controlled by men, but by supernatural forces. For man to escape fear and anxiety, he proposes demythologizing. The Gospel has to be transposed to modern man and to remove primitive thinking and superstition that subject man to demons.

The relevance of this Bultmann's work is his emphasis on demons and spiritual powers, which dominate and influence human actions and behaviours. This emphasis is commendable, particularly for the understanding that in myth, spiritual forces influence human actions. His emphasis on history as the present disclosure of human possibility, however, warrants serious criticism. His concept of history does not correspond with the historical Jesus. If Christology is going to be of value in modern times, it must take seriously the historical Jesus. Christianity is a historical religion; Christ's coming into history is an event of great significance.

Myths are the major spiritual heritage of ancient peoples. Eliade, a Romanian professor of history of religion and oral literature, confirms this. According to him, pre-modern man saw myths as true stories, while modern man sees myths as fables, inventions and fictions. However, many twenty-first century scholars see myths as true, sacred, and significant stories that help people to explain their relationship with the spirit world. Eliade argues that the historian of religion, the ethnologist and the sociologist describe myths as "sacred traditions", "primordial revelation" and an "exemplary model" (Eliade, 1963:8-11).

He also stresses the nature and the functions of myths. He contends that myths are not only living legends because they supply models for human behaviour, giving meaning and adding value to life, but also that myths reveal that their actors are not of this world. Eliade groups myths into two, true stories that deal with the origin of the world by supernatural beings and false stories that involve the animal kingdom that

edify human behaviours or the physiological peculiarities of animals (Eliade, 1963:7-11). In Eliade's argument, there is a link between spiritual beings and human behaviours.

Myth is a spiritual heritage that serves as a collective mode of symbolic communication of the religion and culture of traditional people. It expresses ancient people's belief about gods, the superhuman, sacred events and places. It is also a product of the language of primitive peoples. Ancient peoples express their philosophy of life, the origin of things, goals in life, suffering and the mystery of life and life after death through myth. It is a mode of communicating religious and traditional truths, which science and secular history cannot provide. Africans, just like early cultures, do not only see myth as a mode of communication, but also as the unscientific expression of truth. Its unscientific nature does not make it less true. A myth conveys truths that are not subject to scientific verification. The truth of myth is subject to the true meaning of symbols and rituals (Groenewegen, 1983:152-161).

Groenewegen, a Dutch archaeologist and religious educationist, elaborates on this. He sees myths as ancient treasures of wisdom passing from one generation to another in the form of narrative stories. The scientific approach to truth will not convey the truth that myths express. He affirms, "While science depends on accurate observation and definition, myths rely on words and ideas not being defined and that is their greater strength" (Groenewegen, 1983:152-161). Unlike science, myth is based on evidence not subject to scientific verification or logic. As soon as we try to define the symbol, the full meaning of myth is lost. Myths answer why-questions. They give reasons for the chaos or evils in society. Myth addresses the paradoxes of life. This paradox is present in all facets of life such as sex, art, politics and the economy. According to Groenewegen, to define myth as fables is misleading. One can partially agree with Groenewegen in that some religious truths embedded in myths cannot be verified scientifically, yet they have a great impact on human behaviour. Defining myths as fables takes away people's understand of human behaviour, especially among the Yoruba.

Levi-Strauss, a French anthropologist and ethnologist, looks at myth from a structural perspective. He sees myth as a mode of human thought, a means of communication of religious ideas and as the creative thinking of ancient man to stress pairs of

opposites (Levi-Strauss, 1955: 431-443). Examples of binary opposites are “raw and cooked”, “fresh and corrupt”, “male and female”, “up and down”, “below and above”, “good and evil”, “life and death”, “joy and sorrow”, “sickness and health” (Kirk, 1970:47-79). In addition, myth stresses that man thinks in the form of classifications and pairs of opposites. Myths not only express oppositions that are contradictory, but resolve them. The purpose of myths is to provide solutions to the contradictions of human problems. Some myths, however, do not resolve the contradiction, but simply explain the origin of things (Levi-Strauss, 1955:443; Kirk, 1970:48).

Levi-Strauss also argues that myth is a major mode of human communication, especially in primitive cultures. It is a means of economic, political, social and kinship exchanges. It is also a means of understanding ancient history. It is a product of language, which finds its real meaning in the underlying structure in relation to other myths. Although there may be different versions of myths in a community; the features and basic relationships are always constant (Kirk, 1970:42-43). This is also true of Yoruba myths, as becomes apparent in Section 10 of this chapter.

Ricoeur also comments on the structural and kinship relationships inherent in myths. According to him, myths talk about kinship relationships. The authenticity of the meaning of myths is an element in relation to other elements as a whole. He maintains that the structural analysis of myth is very important and can lead people from a surface meaning to a depth meaning of realities of life. The structural analysis of myths is a necessary step between a naive interpretation and a critical one, between a surface interpretation and a deeper interpretation that can locate explanation and understanding at two different stages of a unique hermeneutical arc (Ricoeur,1976:86-87). Ricoeur, unlike Bultmann, who stresses that myths are not relevant in the modern world unless they are demythologized, argues that myths are relevant for all generations and cultures. Myths speak of a possible world and possible ways of orienting people that can create a new mode of being. Ricoeur declares:

“Are we not putting the meaning of the text under the power of the subject who interprets it? This objection may be removed if we keep in mind that what is ‘made one’s own’ is not something mental, not the intention of another subject, presumably hidden behind the text, but the project of a world, the proposition of a mode of being in the world that the

text opens up in front of itself by means of its non-ostensive reference” (Ricoeur, 1976:94).

Consequently, myths help people to enlarge their capacity of self- projection by giving a new mode of being.

Some authors talk about the goal and purpose of myths. Gaines, an American mass communications scholar, argues that myths are not only concerned with truths that are not scientifically or systematically narrated, but also with truths that are constructed in narrative form with the aim of explaining certain beliefs and practices of a community. He argues that the primary goal of myth is not to present the scientific history, but to express man’s knowledge of himself in the world in which he lives and how he perceives the reality of truth around him. A myth also articulates the relationship between all aspects of a sign system, ritual system and some cultural assumptions (Gaines, 2001:311-327).

The relationship between a myth and a particular community puts that myth in a particular context. An attempt to interpret it apart from its context results in a loss of its meanings and messages. Myths are unique and different from mere stories because they cannot be told anywhere; they can only be recited at a sacred place during a ritual, or at a specific function. The recitation evokes emotional attachment to supernatural heroes or gods. This implies that recitation brings into the life of the hearers the real experience of the hero or god in the myth (Gaines, 2001:339).

Gaines states that a myth evokes emotions in the persons who recite them. This affects their behaviour. However, as good as myth is, its weakness is that it is always looking backward and is not progressive in nature. It keeps people in what they are and does not make them responsible for their actions. Biblical myth is progressive in nature. There is ultimate fulfilment in Christ Jesus. Biblical myth connects the past to the present and the present to the future for the abundant life in Christ Jesus.

Myths can also be looked at from the ritual perspective. Segal, a professor of religion and philosophy from Chicago, sees myth as part of the spiritual heritage of ancient people. He observes that myth is a primitive science of religion, which links man to the spiritual world. He contends that without myth, it is impossible to know man’s relationship with the spiritual world. Segal emphasizes that myth and ritual are the

heart of religion, not only because they explain things beyond the physical, but also because they link the past to the present and bridge the gap between religious belief and practices. He concludes that myth and ritual strengthen culture, religion and moral values. Myth helps man to explain human experiences that cannot be explained scientifically. Segal stresses the application of myth to a particular person or culture. In Segal's argument, myth is not static; it has a relevant message for a particular culture. He argues that myths help people explain their behaviour beyond the physical (Segal, 1980:173-185).

Myths have some religious truth and can evoke human behavioural disposition. Hick (1989:347-360) argues that myths are sources of religious discussion and belief. He contends that mythological statements have some truth; they should not, however, be taken literally. For him there is a difference between "What happens to me is the work of the devil" and "the devil is at work." The former statement evokes human behaviour, but it is not literal, it is symbolic. Myth has positive and negative messages for a particular person in a particular situation. Mythological truths not only have moral lessons, they also help to answer questions relating to issues on the origin of man, creation and evil. Myth reveals, recognizes and teaches that good come out of evil. This is in line with a Yoruba proverb that says, "*Ibi wa ninu ire, ati pe ire wa ninu ibi*"; meaning that there is evil in good and good can emerge from evil. He concludes that sometimes, myth helps people depend on God, to trust and rely on Him rather than on themselves.

Myth gives people deeper insight into religious truth, wisdom and ancient values. It is this attitude that encourages mythmakers to project myth. As Hick suggests, some myths make human beings depend on God, so also myths encourage people to depend on the spirit world in explaining their behaviours in society.

The survey of the literature produced by non-African scholars on myth shows their differences in perspectives. All scholars reviewed, however, agree on the significance of myth for understanding religion and human behaviours in relation to the spirit world. This provides a theoretical framework to support the argument that myths affect human behaviours.

The authors reviewed address the positive aspects more than the negative. While there is no unifying thread in the contributions of the different writers, they all agree on the importance of myths as a communication mode in understanding the religion of a particular society. Eliade focuses on the historical development of myths, Segal looks at myths from a ritualistic perspective and Levi-Strauss uses the structural approach in his study, but they all agree about the central role of myth.

The non-African views of myths come closer to describing Yoruba myths. Yoruba myths reveal the religious truths of their ancestors, their paradox of life. They show how the spirit world influences their behaviours within their cosmological worldview. The work of African scholars is evaluated next.

2.10.3 African Scholars' Views on Myths

The importance of myths in African religions cannot be over-emphasized. African thought is dominated by myths. There are countless myths all over the continent that to explain creation, the first man, the “fall” of man, the coming of death, the separation of heaven and earth, and the origin of nations. Mbiti holds that anything considered authentic in African religion has to be seen in myth, proverbs and rituals (Mbiti, 1975:26). Myths are traditional narratives about something that happened in the past but that explain something in the present. They often involve gods and heroic figures (Kunhiyop, 2008:11).

The overview of African scholars' views on myths starts off with a Ghanaian theologian, Appiah-Kubi. Appiah-Kubi looks at myth from an existential perspective. He gives an elaborate discussion on myth and argues that everything that happens to an African is traced to these two questions: “how?” and “why?” *How-questions* can be answered empirically, but *why-questions* are attributed to spiritual powers that are explained by mythological thinking. As far as African people are concerned, disease, immorality, misfortune, accident, barrenness and all other adversities and vices, have a mystical cause (Appiah-Kubi, 1997:71-72). This belief evokes in human beings deep emotions and motivates them to depend on divine actions.

Myth serves as a source of theological reflection in African religion. Since there were no written documents among peoples of primitive culture, their theological reflection

occurred in oral form. The oral stories about legends, deities, beliefs and practices, became a very significant source of information for researchers. When people listen to and read myths, they are informed about the theology of the people among whom the myths emerged (Mbiti, 1975:26). Onwuanibe, a Nigerian oral linguist, contends that the African philosophy of humanity centres on the belief that the metaphysical realm is not completely separated from concrete experience. The physical and the metaphysical are aspects of the same reality. The two are related, interdependent and enumerated in myths. The Yoruba, like many other African societies, lack written record. They depend heavily on an oral history that is full of myths (Onwuanibe, 1983:134).

Myth in Africa functions as a history of thought and a philosophy of life (Oduyoye, 1999:21). It includes stories, the product of a fertile imagination, sometimes simple, often containing profound truths. Clarke and other African scholars strongly hold that myth serves as a source of theological reflection for Africans (Clarke, 2006:60). African myth teaches African beliefs in God, tells how the universe came to be what it is today, explains the origin of humankind, social order and the relationship between man and God and the relationship between him and his fellow humans. In myth, man knows his limitations and depends on God as his Creator and Controller. Through myth, we know that God loves man and creates relationships. The Yoruba, like many other African groups, do not see any separation between the sacred and the secular (Ogden, 1961:27).

Religious myth serves as a way to deal with religious and economic incongruity. It serves as a way of working with this incongruity (Smith, 1982:90). According to Smith, myth serves as a template for thinking about the religious, social, economic and political contradictions. It also deals with the conflict between ethical obligation and actual behaviour (Smith, 1982:62-63). Smith's argument is relevant to this study because it serves as an eye-opener about the fact that there is different between mythical obligation and actual behaviour in society.

Myths are symbolic communications that provide answers to some metaphysical questions. Leelamma Athyal, a prominent Indian feminist theologian, contends that myth and folktales are used interchangeably in Africa. Although they deal with the spirit world, they provide new possibilities if re-interpreted. She affirms that "modern

scholarship on myths asserts that a meaningful assimilation of them can bring about personal and social transformation” (Athyal, 2000:152). Myth therefore holds new possibilities.

Among the Yoruba, there are trickster stories that combine fables, myths and taboos. They deal with animals gifted at cunning and have a penchant for the rules set by the gods. Among the Yoruba, the trickster personage is the tortoise and the aim of folklore is to teach people that it is forbidden to break the religious and moral laws of the community. Any person who breaks the community rules and regulations would face punishment. The tortoise is a popular animal among the Yoruba and Africans in general (Mbitu & Prime, 1997:159-161). The societal lifestyle, strengths, weaknesses, manipulations and oppression are mirrored in this animal. Its behaviour is in the realm of human behaviours. Folktales and stories about taboos tend to add moral value, to give a sense of responsibility and to condemn laziness and immorality (McCarron, 1987:20-29). Tortoise stories are strength in some African myths, helping to control people’s behaviours. Fables impart moral lessons to children who later become adults. For instance, though the tortoise cannot communicate like humans as implied in fables, if such myths are re-interpreted in the modern-day understanding, they could be used to teach moral values in society.

Myths show that Africans are rational people who formulate myth to solve some perennial problems. Okpewho, a Nigerian professor of oral literature, examines the complex nature of myths in Africa. He looks at myths from a philosophic perspective. According to him, a myth is not a fiction or a fable, but a creative activity and quality of fancy that a creative mind employs (Okpewho, 1983:422-450). This implies that Africans have the ability to imagine, speculate and formulate myths to maintain law and order in society. The fact that Africans do not document most events in their lives, does not detract from their religious experiences. He stresses that early African scholars heard myths, but deliberately did not record them, and this has contributed to the lack of literature on African myths. The present-day documentation of African religious experiences by both African and non-African scholars has contributed to the growth of Christianity in Africa in particular, and in the world in general.

It is noteworthy that the reviewed African scholars are not uniform in their approach. Oduyoye argues from a functional perspective, while Appiah–Kubi studies myth from an existential point of view and Okpewho looks at it from a philosophical approach.

There are some points of intersection between African and non-African writers. Groenewegen and Appia-Kubi for instance, postulate that myths answer some why-questions and provide explanations for evil and some existential issues in society. Nevertheless, African writers in general are inclined to speak more uncritically and positively about myths than non-African writers. Many non-African writers argue that myths should be used selectively. The above scholars open the understanding that myths serve as a means of theological reflection and they influence human behaviours in society. Some Yoruba myths that influence human behaviours are discussed in detail later.

2.10.4 Sources of Yoruba Myths

Yoruba myth writers get most of their myths from the *Oriki* (genealogy) through the *Arokin*, the professional court historian, whose duty it is to recite faithfully the genealogy, the achievements of the ruling house, and the sacred oral history of the community (Abimbola, 1975:12-19). The *Arokin* is a well-trained palace officer whose position is invariably hereditary. The office of *Arokin* is still in operation in all palaces of the Yoruba king. An occupant of this office should not make mistakes when relating stories. When he does, he is liable to severe punishment, even the loss of his life. The *Oriki* is the Yoruba traditional or religious praise poetry, which is used as a salute to lineages, individuals, heroes, deities, animals, festivals and objects. Every Yoruba person is emotionally touched when his or her lineage is chanted. The *Arokin* deals with core matters of historiography and the identity of families, heroes and the communities. He does not merely tell the story of the past, he also states the significance of the history and how other performers inherited the tradition and faithfully maintained it. The *Arokin* has to be well versed in traditional songs, poems, proverbs, folktales and sacred stories (Folayan, 1975:93-94).

2.10.5 Functions of Yoruba Myths

The primary function of myth is to explain the origin of things and human relationships with the spirit world. Yoruba myth, like that of any other culture, is one of the ways of communicating religious ideas about the spirit world and linking human behaviours with spirit beings (Ogden, 1961:27). In Yoruba myths, the Yoruba actually learn much about the Yoruba worldview, the names of ancestors, sacred histories of divinities and basic religious truths (Beier, 1980:xiv). These myths generally express their belief in God, divinities and the spirit world and they declare their dependence on spiritual beings.

Apart from emphasizing man's dependence on the spirit world, myths also evoke deep emotions and eventually motivate adherents to take definite actions. Nabofa, a Nigerian anthropologist and specialist in African traditional religion, affirms that mythical rituals have the power to maintain order and coherence, to preserve religious knowledge and to communicate this to another generation, to express inner feelings and eternal truths. It is good for remembering significant events, for meditation, for spiritual growth and deepening religious experiences. By implication, myths are one of the essences of the Yoruba spiritual heritage, powerful instruments for indoctrination and tools for impressing religious dogma (Nabofa, 1994:13, 65-66).

Yoruba myths help the Yoruba to go beyond themselves, to develop a strong passion, and trust in spiritual beings through rituals and sacrifices. This implies that in myths, people perceive their history as full of "mighty acts" of divine power, and they celebrate this through rites and rituals.

The Yoruba teach their youth the art of developing a close affinity with spiritual beings through myth. For instance, during the initiation into the *Oro* cult, the secret names of *Oro* legends and traditional beliefs are taught. These teachings affect the behaviours of the youth. Myth is therefore a sacred heritage, sacred history and primitive catechism, which the younger generations learn by heart. Bastide, a French sociologist, argues that myths, which are compilations of words, produce actions (Bastide, 2003:49-54). Yoruba myths also evoke religious behaviours. When the names or the genealogy of a particular tribe is mentioned during rituals, the hearers

or the speakers often manifest erratic behaviour, a mark of their close connection to the original event.

Cultic myths give the Yoruba symbolic meaning as symbols are related to particular cults. For example, meteorites (*edun ara*) are closely connected to *Sango*, the thunder god. The Yoruba see meteorites as the weapons or bullets with which *Olodumare* expresses his wrath against the wicked. It is also believed that not only human beings are punished, but also trees, houses or objects used by mysterious powers as an abode for planning evil in society. *Olodumare* would strike down such places. When a tree or a house is visited by thunder and lightning as a mark of divine judgement against such a place or object, it evokes a religious experience in the mind of the Yoruba. Whenever the Yoruba see meteorite stones, they are very careful and think of the divine judgement, especially regarding any issue that is at stake at that particular time in society. Therefore, this belief promotes moral and ethical behaviours in society. Furthermore, when there is lightning in the sky, the Yoruba make three sounds with their lips to venerate *Sango*.

Yoruba myths remind them that there are mysteries of life around them that the scientific approach cannot solve. These mysteries often speak to their unconscious and oblige them to depend on spiritual beings.

Wuaku, an assistant professor of African and Caribbean Religions at Florida International University, gives a comprehensive summary of the anthropological functions of myths in all cultures. According to him, myths serve as a means of communicating sacred and moral stories about God, the gods and ancestors, the origin and organization of the universe, the origin of human beings and human society as a whole. They also reflect how communities make sense of their worldview, their origin, the nature and the origin of their social institutions, their moral values, and their norms. Myths shape the way people interpret, construct and present their experiences of the realities of life (Wuaku, 2012:244-245).

2.10.6 Selected Yoruba Myths

The Yoruba have many myths that deal with the origin of things, attitudes, predestination, paradoxes in life, causes of evil, necessities of life and relationships

between human beings and the spirit world. For the purpose of this study, seven myths are discussed because of their relevance to the study. These myths are popular among the Yoruba. Parrinder, Beier, Idowu, Imasogie and Abogunrin, who are authorities on African religion, have written on these selected myths. The discussion commences with the Yoruba myth of the origin of man.

The Myth on the Origin of Man

According to the myth of the origin of man, *Olodumare* assigned *Obatala*, the arch-divinity, to mould the physical features of man. *Obatala* carried out the assignment by moulding a lifeless human being. *Olodumare* completed the process by breathing into the lifeless body, and man became a living being. *Obatala* continued to mould physical bodies and *Olodumare* to give breath until the world was filled. The involvement of *Obatala* by Yoruba mythmakers is an attempt to exonerate *Olodumare* from the defects of the human body. According to the Yoruba, God is perfect and supreme and He can never make mistakes. Any deformity of the human body is not from *Olodumare*, but from *Obatala* (Imasogie, 1985:30-31.).

The myth also reveals that man was created from existing materials. The universe was not created out of nothing. Idowu argues that “What is now our earth was once a watery, marshy waste” (Idowu, 1962:19). This myth also stresses the corporate and communal life of Africans. The fact that *Olodumare* assigned *Obatala* the task to mould the physical features of a man is not an indication that he (*Olodumare*) could not do it alone. The mythmaker wanted to stress the cooperative work of *Olodumare* and *Obatala*. Their cooperation is the basis of community, the mythmaker wanted to reveal the communal life of the Yoruba. The conceptual framework of this myth corresponds with what Eliade says when he argues that major actors of myths are from the spirit world. The major actors in this myth are *Olodumare* and *Obatala*.

The Myth on Human Destiny

Another interesting myth is of the destiny of man. On receiving *Olodumare*'s breath after *Obatala* had moulded him, man approaches *Olodumare* in a bid to receive from him his destiny on the earth prior to embarking on his journey into the universe. The Yoruba call this “*Akun-le-yan*” –“Chosen- kneeling”. The Yoruba myth of destiny

holds that *Olodumare* determines man's destiny before his existence in the universe through the choice of *Ori*. However, man is unaware of his fate until events begin to reveal them (Oladapo, 1992:36-41).

The salient point of this myth, which is relevant to this research, is that the destiny of man is chosen before his entry into the world and nothing that happens to him is accidental. All has been ordained in the spirit world. This implies that the Yoruba trace the cause of any event, either positive or negative, to the spiritual world, though sacrifices can be used to avert negative events in a man's life. One needs to keep in mind that *Olodumare* not only created man, but also ordains and controls the destiny of man in the universe. As mentioned in the discussion on *Ori*, whatever happens to a person is a fulfilment of what was chosen and ordained for him by *Olodumare*. Eliade argues that myth provides a theoretical framework for the Yoruba myth on human destiny. He argues that myths serve as "sacred traditions", "primordial revelation" and an "exemplary model."

The Myth on Man's Alienation

The myth on the alienation of man is very relevant to this research. According to this myth, there was a cordial relationship between man and *Olodumare*. At this point, man could travel to *Olodumare* in heaven and ask for his blessings. *Olodumare* could also come down to have fellowship with people and to settle quarrels between them. The myth also states that the sky was very close to the earth, to the extent that people could easily touch it. Because of the divine relationship between *Olodumare* and man, people enjoyed blessings, prosperity and safety (Imasogie, 1985:32-33). Before man's alienation, there was no need for man to work, "God filled men's calabashes without working" (Parrinder, 1954:40). This relationship was damaged by man's disobedience and stubbornness. Man continued to break the laws that regulated the food in the calabash; they took more than their allocated share. *Olodumare* was not happy about the greed of his people. To make matters worse, a woman contaminated the sky by touching it during her monthly menstruation. *Olodumare* subsequently withdrew the sky beyond human reach and the free interaction between people and *Olodumare* became restricted. However, the fact that *Olodumare* physically withdrew from the universe does not mean that his presence could no longer be felt in the universe (Imasogie, 1985:20). The central point of this

myth is that there was a time when the relationship between man and *Olodumare* was good. The myth establishes that the cause of the alienation was not *Olodumare*, but human beings. There is a human propensity to disobey. Groenewegen's concept of myth is helpful here because he argues that myths are the unscientific expression of truth about the origin of things. This myth teaches the Yoruba about the cause of the alienation of man.

The Yoruba Myth on the Origin of Diseases

At the time when heaven and earth were within touching proximity, everybody was happy because the closeness of heaven brought prosperity and joy. Man could easily communicate with *Olodumare* and other divinities. People could even visit heaven by climbing a ladder. Because of the familiarity between man and *Olodumare*, man started to disrespect *Olodumare* and this displeased him. As a result of man's sin, *Olodumare* rained infections on the earth, which resulted in leprosy. Men, instead of praying to *Olodumare* for forgiveness and offering sacrifices to him, proved so stubborn that they touched heaven with their infected hands, turning it into a napkin. *Olodumare* was disappointed and felt insulted and withdrew beyond people's reach.

The unrepented sins of man broke their relationship with *Olodumare* and disease was his punishment. A sacrifice to *Olodumare* could have removed sin and could have restored the relationship between man and *Olodumare* (Hallgren, 1992:73). Embedded in this myth is that the cause of sickness is not physical, but spiritual. This is in line with Appiah-Kubi, who argues that Africans trace the origin of sickness to the spirit world.

Myth of Osun Oshogbo

Osun Oshogbo is the only female divinity among the seventeen divinities ruled by *Olodumare*. *Osun* was the wife of *Sango*, the god of thunder. She was barren and went to *Orunmila*, the *Ifa* oracle, to discover the cause of her barrenness. *Orunmila* asked her to offer a sacrifice to *Olodumare* for conception. *Osun* performed the sacrifice as prescribed by *Orunmila*. In the ninth month, *Osun* conceived and many women who were barren in the community conceived and together they gave birth to 124 000 babies. *Osun* is therefore regarded as "*Osun Oshogbo Olomoyoyo*"

meaning “*Osun Oshogbo* with children galore”. The Yoruba, especially indigenes of *Oshogbo*, believe that *Osun*’s conception and her sacrifice to *Olodumare* opened the way for barren women in the community. However, after some time these children started falling sick. When they deteriorated, the women consulted the *Ifa* oracle, who told them that the illnesses were due to their failure to appreciate *Osun*. He prescribed that they should offer a sacrifice to gain her favour. As soon as they offered the sacrifice, the children were healed.

In every first week of August, the Yoruba, especially indigenes of *Oshogbo* who claim that *Osun* was an indigene of *Oshogbo*, come from far and wide to celebrate *Osun* with the expectation of healing and blessings from the fruit of the womb. The Yoruba recognize *Osun* as the goddess of children and health. The lesson here is both that we must appreciate anyone who does us a favour and that children are important in the family system of the Yoruba. One can safely infer that the Yoruba believe that achievement without children is useless and meaningless. Lastly, the myth not only stresses that *Olodumare* is the ultimate Being who provides children, but also reveals the important role of women in the patriarchal society (Adeoye, 1985:203-214).

Gaines argues that myths are truths constructed in narrative form with the aim of explaining certain beliefs and practices of a community. The above myth is an example of this function of myth.

The Myth of Aiyelala

One myth that is used to instil fear, morality and justice in the mind of Yoruba people, is the myth of *Aiyelala* (the world is great) of Okiti-pupa in the Ondo State. *Aiyelala* is a societal goddess of morality. Her original name got lost because of her fame. She was an innocent slave who worshipped the sixteen divinities faithfully and sincerely. This woman was sacrificed to offer peace between the *Eson* (the camp of refugees) and *Ilaje* (the home of an adulterous man). *Ilaje* was under siege due to the sin of adultery. Her sacrificial death rescued the adulterous man, putting an end to the hostility between *Eson* and *Ilaje*. The sexual morality law was slightly modified in this narrative. Rather than the man being killed for committing adultery, he was asked to pay a penalty applicable to the act of adultery. This slave woman was, before her execution, upset by this bizarre sense of injustice. When she was asked to say her

last words, she was only able to say “*Aiyelala*”, meaning, “The world is great”, because women have to pay for the immoralities and foul play of men. Van Schalkwyk (2006:6) holds that in most of the African societies, “Women were viewed as the weaker sex. When they transgress, the burden is very heavy. Only the elective grace of God can offer them hope of redemption.”

Presently, the practice of *Aiyelala* is still very much alive. When a person is accused of immorality, the priest of *Aiyelala* would be consulted. He would warn the people involved to confess within seven days or they would not live to tell the story of their lives. After the warning, the priest would offer the accused sacred water from the shrine of *Aiyelala*. The belief is that anyone found guilty of immorality would die on the seventh day if he or she does not confess before drinking the water.

Aiyelala has shaped the moral life of the Yoruba. Whenever the name *Aiyelala* is mentioned, the accused would always consider the implication of drinking the water and rather own up to their sin. The practice of *Aiyelala* reduces the level of immorality and perjury among the Yoruba. It promotes justice, morality and faithfulness within the family and society (Awolalu, 1968:79-89). Levi-Strauss’ understanding of myth offers a conceptual framework to see the binary opposition of male and female in the above myth. The myth of *Aiyelala* stresses that the Yoruba have myths that not only express oppositions, but also resolve them.

Myth of Ela: “An Expression of Yoruba Christology”

Ela is a divinity and his name simply means “safety”. He is a saviour and a preserver who has the power to divide himself into several units and still maintain his entity. *Ela* is a means of solving difficult problems. He is the only son of *Olodumare*, who was with him when the universe was created. He was a model of *Olodumare* among men before heaven retreated. He was the one who pleaded with *Olodumare* that he should not destroy Satan when he rebelled in heaven. He asked *Olodumare* to give *Esu* (Satan) a second chance. However, immediately upon entering the universe, *Esu* plunged it into trouble. *Olodumare* then sent *Ela* into the world to restore peace, because he was the only one who knew the secret of *Esu*. *Ela* went in and out of the universe, doing good deeds. Eventually, *Ela* and *Esu* clashed one Friday and a serious battle ensued. *Ela* died in the street of *Okerekese*, in the Middle East.

On the following Saturday, the people of *Okerekese* passed three resolutions concerning *Ela*. One, they would keep a vigil, two, they would not allow him to rise again and three, if he arose; he would be prevented from ascending to *Olodumare*. This day is called *Ojo Abameta*, the day of three resolutions. The following Sunday, *Ela* rose up and the people could not contain him. *Olodumare* sent a chain from heaven to *Ela* and he rose up in victory to heaven. The day *Ela* rose is called *Aiku*, meaning “the day of resurrection.” The Yoruba believe that *Ela* will come back to the universe and until he comes, the universe will not have peace.

The myth of *Ela* not only reveals that the Yoruba have their own expression of Christology and the Trinity, but also that there is a link between the universe and the spirit world and the link is *Ela*. *Ela* is known as *Alatunse Aye*, the “one who sets the universe right.” Through him, the Yoruba link most events of their lives to the spiritual world (Idowu, 1962:102-106). Abogunrin argues that the myth of *Ela* is probably the influence of Christianity on Yoruba religion (Abogunrin, 1988:13-14). However, Idowu differs from Abogunrin and argues that *Ela* is the wisdom of *Olodumare* and that this concept had been in existence before the coming of Christianity. Idowu declares, “Before all things, was *Ela*, *Ela* was *Olodumare* and of *Olodumare* was *Ela*” (Idowu 1962:107). Idowu uses the formulation of the first chapter of the Gospel of John. He therefore clearly reveals that he sees the Yoruba spiritual heritage through his Christian spectacles. This is clear proof of what Horton wrote about his way of looking at Yoruba religion, calling Idowu one of the devout African scholars.

The myth of *Ela* is very close to the personality of Jesus. *Ela* is one of the divinities believed to link heaven and earth. He is safety, the saviour, preserver, and his ability to divide himself into several units and at the same time remain a whole unit, reminds of the Trinity and God’s ability to manifest in three personalities while remaining one. However, one should be very careful to draw parallels between *Ela* and Christ because it can be very misleading. In the process of looking for a dynamic equivalence, one may equate the Christian message to idolatry.

Though there may be some similarities between Jesus and *Ela*, there are great differences. *Ela* is not God incarnate, and as one of the divinities, he was not born of a woman as was Jesus in His human form. While he died because of his good deeds, his death was never a substitution. Jesus is not *Ela* and can never be *Ela*

(Abogunrin, 1988:13). Jesus is the Lord and the Redeemer of the entire creation. There might have been some Christian influence on the myth of *Ela*. Therefore, this myth serves as one of the means to theological reflection in Yoruba religion.

Conclusion of the Selected Myths

The Yoruba myth of creation shapes the group's political structures. Despite the fact that the Yoruba community is predominantly patriarchal, the myth gives women role so that they take part in the political administration of the Yoruba community. According to the Yoruba creation myth, *Olodumare* gave the seventeen divinities political or administrative offices. *Osun*, the only female divinity, was not excluded. This creation myth has a great influence in the political system of the Yoruba. Every council of Yoruba chiefs includes a female chief called *Iyalode*, who is the chief in charge of women's affairs. She is also in charge of the market women. As women leader, she acts as the external affairs chief, because she has the power to reveal the secrets of surrounding nations (Oduyoye, 1999:22-23). The above Yoruba myths show how myths shape the Yoruba political, social, religious and economic life.

2.10.7 Tension between Spiritual Causes of Evil and Personal Responsibility

In Yoruba myth, there is tension between spiritual causes of evil and the personal responsibility of individuals in society. Levi-Strauss provides a conceptual framework to investigate the binary oppositions and tensions within myths. Examples of binary oppositions are "male and female", "up and down", "below and above", "good and evil", "life and death", "joy and sorrow" or "sickness and health" (Levi-Strauss, 1955:443). The myth of *Osun* for instance reveals the tension between barrenness and marriage. The Yoruba regard children as important. Barrenness or a delay in having children is traced to offences against deities or ancestors and sacrifices to deities provide children. Human physical deformity is not seen as a congenital abnormality, but is traced to the spirit world. Therefore, the cause of sickness is not physical, but spiritual.

The myth of human destiny also reveals this tension, because the destiny of man is chosen before his entry into the world and nothing that happens to him is accidental,

but is pre-ordained in heaven. In other words, he is not responsible for his actions. Modern-day Yoruba Indigenous Churches also trace all evils to the spirit world. Tracing the realities of life back to the spirit world leaves room to escape responsibility. Chapter 4 deals with this matter in depth.

The Yoruba myth of man's alienation reveals some degree of a personal responsibility. The myth establishes that the cause of the alienation from *Olodumare* is not him, but human beings who disobeyed him. There is human agency. The myths of *Osun* and man's alienation reveal the tension between personal responsibility and the spirit world in Yoruba society.

There is also tension between the literal and symbolic meanings of Yoruba myths. According to Hick (1989:347-360), mythological statements have some elements of truth, but should not be taken literally. An example of one Yoruba mythological statement is *Esu l'o n see*. Literally it would mean "it is *Esu* who is moving him" (Idowu, 1962:83). Symbolically, it is *Esu* who is tormenting him. Hick suggests that some biblical myths ask human beings to depend on God, and similarly some myths encourage people to depend, trust and rely on the spirit world.

Ricoeur also affirms the tension between the surface and deeper interpretation of myths. His structural and symbolic interpretation of myth is also helpful. According to him, structural or symbolic analysis of myth is very important and can lead people from a surface meaning to a deeper meaning of realities of life. Structural or symbolic analysis of myths is a necessary step between a naive interpretation and a critical one, between a surface interpretation and a deeper interpretation (Ricoeur, 1976:86-87).

2.11 YORUBA SPIRITUAL HERITAGE AND SOCIETAL BEHAVIOUR

2.11.1 Introduction

This segment explores how spiritual heritage affects human behaviour among the Yoruba. For the purpose of clarity, the segment is divided into political, economic and social behaviours. Newspapers, weekly magazines and interviews are used in this sector because they reflect what is going on in society by reporting on police investigations, court proceedings in the High and the Supreme Courts of Nigeria.

2.11.2 *Political Behaviour*

Politics is like a war in the Nigerian context, especially among the Yoruba. It is a battle for leadership positions and power. In the old Oyo, the war chief was *Aare Ona Kakanfo*. This chieftaincy was neither hereditary nor honorary, but conferred by the *Alaafin* of Oyo on the best soldier, one who had a record of winning many battles and who was influential among his subjects. According to the myth of the *Aare Ona Kakanfo*, he feared neither foe nor friend. He did not even fear the king who conferred the title on him. During the initiation into this office, the occupant of the title would shave his head completely and 201 incisions would be made on his head. Each incision would then be rubbed with a concoction prepared and poured into 201 vials. This is believed to make him bold and courageous to face any battle, and prone to warfare with the determination to win the battle (Abiola, 2013).

In war, the *Aare Ona Kakanfo* must not lose any battle; he must either win or die in the battle. He must not come back with the news of defeat. This practice is still in existence. The last two *Aare Ona Kakanfos* were Chief S.L. Akintola, the 13th *Aare Ona Kakanfo* of the Yoruba and the Premier of the old Western Region of Nigeria. He died during the first military coup in Nigeria, on January 15, 1966. Chief S.L. Akintola had the opportunity of escape with his life, but partly because of the myth that the *Aare Ona Kakanfo* must either win or perish, he valiantly decided to die in the battle rather than flee. Chief M.K.O. Abiola, the 14th *Aare Ona Kakanfo*, was the winner of the 1993 general presidential elections in Nigeria. He was incarcerated for 1 473 days after the annulment of the free and fair general elections of June 12, 1993. He later died in prison partly because of this myth (Agekameh, 1998:19). In 1998, General Abubakar, the then Head of State, appealed to Abiola to renounce his mandate and get his freedom. He even sent Kofi Annan, the then UN Secretary-General, and Emeka Anyaoku, the then Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, to persuade him to drop his mandate, but he refused. His refusal was guided by the myth that it is forbidden for the *Aare Ona Kakanfo* to abandon any battle. Abiola could not renounce his political mandate, but rather died at the "battlefield". Other *Aare Ona Kakanfos* who died in battle were the *Aare Edun of Gbogun* and *Aare Kurunmi* (Anifalaye, 2006:18).

The belief that the *Aare Ona kakanfo* must either win or perish in battle affected the behaviours of the occupants of this chieftaincy. Consider the poem *Kakanfo*: “*Ohun meji lo ye Eso, Eso ja, O le ogun, Eso ja, O ku si ogun.*” This means, “one of two things befits the *Aare (the most powerful soldier) who is an Eso (a guard)*. The *Eso* must fight and conquer or the *Eso* must fight and perish in the war” (Agekameh, 1998:19).

The Roles of Women in Politics

The re-interpretation of the goddess *Osun* in light of the Gospel should empower women in all areas of life. In this myth, sixteen male divinities ignored *Osun*, the only female divinity. This caused a disturbance in the peace among them until *Osun* was recognized. This implies that until women are given the same recognition as their male counterparts, the entire society would not enjoy complete freedom.

In light of using women as political weapons since they have the ability to know the secrets of other nations, let us examine the myth of *Oluorogbo*. The myth of *Oluorogbo* among the Yoruba of Ile-Ife reveals the important role of women in society. Women are seen as very good instruments to achieve goals and reveal the secrets of heroes to bring them down. In this myth, Moremi was the wife of the king of Ile-Ife and had only one son, called *Oluorogbo*. At a particular time in the history of Ile-Ife, Ugbo people continuously raided Ile-Ife while wearing masks of palm fronds. Whenever Ife people saw them in masks, they would flee, because they thought that these masquerades were gods.

One day, Moremi allowed herself to be captured to discover the secret behind these masquerades. Ugbo warriors made Moremi the wife of the Ugbo king. She stayed there for some time and eventually discovered that the masquerades were ordinary human beings. She snuck out and came back to Ile-Ife. However, before she left Ile-Ife for Ugbo territory, she had made a vow to the goddess of the river *Esinmirin* that if she achieved the goal of her mission and came back in peace, she would offer to the goddess whatever first came to meet her on the way. Unfortunately, while on her way back, her only son was the first person to meet her, just like the daughter of Jephthah in the Bible (Judges 11:30-40).

The myth of *Oluorogbo* attributes power to women even in the midst of a patriarchal society. It implies that women could serve as a ploy to uncover the secrets of great men by using their romantic and enticing nature. Women are greatly feared in terms of bringing mighty men down (Abogunrin, 1988:12-13). Though men can overcome women with physical power, they mostly defeat men by non-physical means. The cult of witchcraft in which they arrogate power to themselves is associated with women. When women are physically overwhelmed, they use mystical or romantic power to challenge injustice in society. Experience has shown that great people in society fear women more than they fear their male counterparts (Oduyoye, 1999:31).

2.11.3 Economic Behaviour

Among the Yoruba, it is believed that the *Alapa* people in Ogbomoso in Oyo State must not kill certain animals. There is the belief that the descendants of the *Alapa* family must not kill snakes if they want to prosper in life. According to the myth that forbids the *Alapa* to kill or eat snakes, their great ancestor was offended and turned into a snake. The family of an *Alapa* therefore sees snakes as totemic animals. Any member of this family who eats or kills a snake would not become economically successful and would experience setbacks in his or her business. This family advises the younger ones to refrain from killing or eating snakes (Anike, 2007).

The Yoruba believe that the composition of the earth is beyond the physical; there are powers in the universe that one can use to enrich oneself. The success of a man does not only depend on human efforts, but largely on spiritual forces. Wellbeing is linked to the spiritual world; poverty or wealth is also linked to malevolent or benevolent spirits. Suffering, morality, prosperity, possessions, wealth and wellbeing are attributed to a malevolent or benevolent spirit (Howell, 2000:33). Senavoe notes that the level of poverty is very high in Africa and many Africans are looking for ways to get poverty behind them. He stresses that because of this disproportionate level of poverty in Africa, the major emphasis of most of the African preachers today is on the “quest for personal gain, health, money and travel visas” (Senavoe, 1993:3). As a result of the high level of poverty, some Africans use blood money. In some cases, people develop “white magic” to get wealth. Some even attend church to look for a spiritual solution for their poverty.

The Yoruba name for economic magic is *awure*. This magic is considered good because it enhances wealth. Prophet S.O. Otegbayo, an Associate Pastor at the Celestial Church of Christ, Surulere, affirmed that he performed the ritual of blessings (*ise aanu or ise ibukun*) for his clients to enable them put poverty behind them (Otegbayo, 2010). Traditionally, most of the rituals of wealth or blood money involve human blood and human parts. Money-magic activities involving human beings are largely shrouded in secrecy, though they can be watched on home videos and read about in books (Enwerem, 2003:196). Some people in search of wealth kill human beings like snakes are killed or weeds are removed from farms (Bujo, 1995:32-33). Many people in Africa today resort to a primitive means of making money. The editorial comment of *The Punch* of January 15, 2010 declares in part:

“It is sad that people who lack the basic knowledge of how to make money or create wealth still hang onto the primitive belief that human body parts can be used to summon gods or supernatural powers to make things happen in the physical world. In the absence of scientific knowledge, many believe that wealth, power or fame can be achieved through ritual sacrifices made with human body parts” (*Punch*, 2010:14).

In light of the above, we have to look more precisely at blood money in relation to economic behaviours in Nigeria. *Tell* magazine’s investigations revealed weekly cases of missing people in Nigeria. Although there are other reasons for the disappearance of people in Nigeria, the most frequent is that of kidnapping for the purpose of money rituals, especially during the weeks leading up to Christmas and the New Year celebrations. Aiyetan, a Nigerian investigative journalist, confirms that people sacrifice human beings to get money during festive periods (Aiyetan, 2003:26-27). *Tell* investigations also revealed that during the last six months of 2003, over 150 people in different parts of the country were caught with one or the other human body part. The arrested people confessed that they wanted to use these human parts for money rituals.

Human Parts for Wealth

There is a wide belief that some people’s wealth is connected to human sacrifice and that wealth can be “bought” with human body parts. Parrinder confirms that there is a general belief in the connection between killing rituals, access to magical powers, money magic and human body parts (Parrinder, 1969:134-135). Ritual killing for

wealth and power has become a commonly reported phenomenon in Nigerian societies. The historical sources on human sacrifices for wealth and power by Robin Law supply strong evidence for its prevalence in many Nigerian communities (Law, 1985:33-87). In Lagos, policemen have arrested people who were carrying parts of human bodies that they were transporting for commercial reasons. These men confessed that there is a market in Jankara, Central Lagos and the Alade market on Allen Avenue, Lagos, where human parts are sold. The wholesale price of human body parts ranged from N3000 to N5000, while the retail was N10000 or more, depending on the freshness of the part.² For any person to buy or sell from the above markets, he or she would have to understand the symbolic language of the market. For example, parts such as the heart, legs, tongue and eyes are called “*Monu*”, which means “sealed mouth” (Oyaniyi, 2012). Aiyetan declares that “many more Nigerians than ever before are declared missing, just as the incidence of ritual killings attains a worrisome dimension, yet the authorities appear helpless” (Aiyetan, 2003:28). *Tell* investigations also revealed that many who are arrested for the possession of human body parts are released with a token fine or given a light prison sentence. According to Ighodalo, a police officer, the people who are arrested with human body parts cannot be charged with murder because there is no evidence that they killed anybody. They are only charged with misconduct with regard to a corpse. This implies that the trader of human body parts relies on the legal shortcomings when it comes to legislation on human body parts.

Idowu Olaniyi, a Lagos lawyer, says that the culprits prefer to go to court because they know that there is a very light sentence for the crime. He mentions the example of two men on a motorcycle, Muideen Amusa and Abass Abdullah, 24 and 33 years old respectively, who were arrested in Lagos with human body parts in a nylon bag. They insisted on being tried in court, because they knew that the penalty would be very light and they could use magic to manipulate judgement to favour themselves. Also, two men arrested in Jos preferred to go to court, because they knew they would get away with light punishment. They could not be charged with murder since there was no evidence of anybody being killed. The offence is merely the illegal

² The exchange rate of Naira to Dollars was at June 23, 2014, at Sterling Bank, Willoughby Brank, Ebute Meta, Lagos 163.50 per Dollar. 5,000 is \$30.43 while 10,000 is \$60.86

possession of human body parts, which only attracts a maximum sentence of two or three years' imprisonment. Idowu Olaniyi argues that if a person found with human body parts were treated as a murderer and the punishment imposed on offenders were heavy, the rate of human body parts sales and buying would be appreciably reduced (Aiyetan, 2003:27-28). People are not held responsible for their actions, so the trade in human body parts has become a highly organized business with a ready-made market. There are people who specialize in kidnapping persons and there are mortuary attendants who turn morgues into investment houses for money-making through the sale of parts of corpses.

Tell investigations also revealed that there are special shops that sell human body parts for money in Lagos, Benin and Ibadan. An herbalist who later changed into a community leader and an activist in Ota, Ogun State, revealed these secrets to the *Tell* magazine investigator. He confessed that in the past, he had used human body parts to promote people's prosperity, but said that he had withdrawn many years ago and that he now restricts his practice to the curing of the sick.

Okija cult

The Okija cult is another way in which spiritual heritage affects the economic behaviour of some Nigerians, especially people from the Eastern part of the country. According to the *Ogwugwu* cult of Okija in the Anambra State, the god of Okija is concerned with the economic blessings of the people. Many wealthy people from the Eastern states visit the shrine because they believe that the god of Okija has the power to make them wealthy. According to *Tell* investigations, many of the patrons of this shrine believe that they would become wealthy after visiting the Okija shrine, which they believe, would empower them (Agbo, 2004:24). However, as good as they claim the Okija god is, terrible and barbaric behaviours occur during the rituals. In the shrine of Okija, there are several effigies of human beings, pots of human blood, feathers, and fetish materials for money rituals. When Tafa Balogun, the then Inspector General of Police, visited the place, he declared, "I feel a sense of shame. I feel a sense of repulsion, a sense of repugnance that in the 21st century, a group of people can so debase humanity as we have seen here in Okija. It is a big shame." He also contended that shrine of the god of Okija is wicked and the actions are illegal. He said, "Any deity that exhibits such wickedness is not only a barbaric deity;

it is also an illegal mythology.” Balogun promised to deal with the culprits involved in this shrine.

In the process of impounding the shrine, the police officers found thirteen (13) registers in this shrine that contained five thousand names of prominent Nigerians who were involved in horrendous transactions between the years 2002 and 2003 and who had gone there to swear an oath of allegiance for quick money or power (Oshunkeye, 2004:22-23). Oshunkeye stresses, “the Okija shrine is like a house of sand, the mythology of the dreaded *Ogwugwu* cult in Okija, Anambra State, collapses with its priests and adherents as the police begin what appears to be the biggest manhunt in Nigeria’s history for the shrine’s VIP patrons and accomplices”(Oshunkeye, 2004:18). Although the Inspector General of Police promised to deal with the offenders, the names of the prominent members of society found in the registers were not released to the public partly because of the personalities involved and because divulgence would affect the process of police investigations.

The collapse of the Okija cult had a negative effect on the economy of Nigeria, especially the banking industry. *Tell* magazine revealed that since police officers announced that five thousand names of prominent Nigerians were found in the registers of the Okija shrine, core wealthy Igbo people started withdrawing their money from their banks, especially those whose source of wealth emanated from the Okija shrine. In Port Harcourt, a suspected patron withdrew nine hundred million naira from a new generation bank. He was not alone. Others withdrew large sums of money, running into millions of naira (Agbo, 2004:24). After the Okija saga, most of the banks in the Igbo states experienced setbacks because huge sums of money were withdrawn. Most of the patrons withdrew money because they thought the Okija saga would affect their wealth and because they entertained the fear that law enforcement agencies would pounce on them. These withdrawals affected small-scale industries and bank loan seekers. At that time, the new generation banks were already facing the challenge of capital base requirement of twenty-five billion naira. These difficulties were compounded by the withdrawal of colossal amounts of money occasioned by the fall of the Okija shrine (Agbo, 2004:24).

Oosthuizen, a South African theologian, points out that there is a different way out of poverty in Africa, a continent that God endowed with minerals and natural resources. He feels that Nigerians have to move away from the old mythologies that restrain them from being actively involved in the utilization of natural and mineral resources. He contends that to eradicate poverty, people should be willing to accept responsibility, adapt to and change their attitude towards work (Oosthuizen, 1999:24). In agreement with Oosthuizen, Olusegun Obasanjo, the former President of the Federal Public of Nigeria, stresses that the poverty of many Africans emanates from their failure to utilize available opportunities and natural resources. Obasanjo is of the opinion that poverty in any form arises when people fail to take advantage of opportunities around them. Rather, they attribute their woes on the failure of others to come to their aid (Oyedele, 2006:1). One can concur with this, but one also has to add that the corruption makes it difficult for any individual to get out of poverty in Nigeria.

Wealth Acquisition and Distribution

Wealth acquisition and distribution is not solely based on hard work, but also on access to political power or connection to people in power. Nigerians clearly recognize the effect of inequality in all its forms. They recognize and condemn the new structures of power and accumulation of wealth, which leave room for inequality, but they paradoxically also implicate themselves by sharing the motives and supporting the very social changes that they condemn. The issue of corruption and witchcraft will remain problematic until the inequality is addressed. In addition, the ambivalence of the entanglement of class and kinship, military rule, patron clientism and the desires for riches with diminished social obligations must be addressed, because these do not encourage hard work as a means to address poverty.

A good example of erroneous economic behaviour is the life of a member of a Baptist church where a close friend ministers. The man, a driver with a family of five living in a one-room apartment, went to his pastor to pray for him because his children always got sick. He said that he felt that this constant sickness was a spiritual attack. He desired his pastor to pray for his family's deliverance. In the process of counselling, the pastor interrogated him on his job, accommodation and salary. The pastor concluded that the congestion and meagre salary were more likely the causes of the

sickness. He prayed that God should provide a better job so that his parishioner could get better housing. After four months, the boss of this driver became the managing director of the company and he invited the driver with his family to reside with him in one of the buildings provided in the company estate, and allocated to him a substantial salary. The driver moved from a one-room apartment to a two-bedroom flat.

Later, the driver came back to the pastor and acknowledged that his family's problem was not spiritual, but economic (Babatunde, 2009). From the above narration, it is clear that pastors have a responsibility to educate and enlighten church members and society on the subject of thinking rationally about their challenges. Proper counselling and teaching are the correct tools for transforming and liberating people from erroneous beliefs.

2.11.4 Social Behaviour

Taboo is one of the major areas where spiritual heritage affects societal behaviours among the Yoruba. A taboo is a sociological model for enforcing moral action on people. It is a set of dos and don'ts of society. It shapes the behaviour of people because it restricts people from certain areas, places, times and objects. A system of taboos maintains the law and order in a community (Bastide, 2003: xii). It is also a moral code that reflects social, institutional and customary behaviours, practices for harmony, the unity and peace of a given community. People fear to break a taboo because the ancestors or the spirit beings would punish any person who breaks them (Steyne, 1990:140-142).

Africans value their culture, especially the taboos. They are a means of enforcing law and order and function as the link between blessings and curses. Gausset, a French anthropologist, argues that Africans use taboos to keep African societies in harmony. According to Gausset, taboo is for instance a means of dissuading people from adultery and fornication, which helps with family planning (Gausset, 2002:629-653). Although there are no law enforcement agencies who enforce taboos on people, the ancestors and elders of the community serve as the agents of enforcement. Anyone that breaks taboos does not only threaten his success, but also the success of the community. Breaking taboos among the Yoruba has mystical effects on the persons

who breaks them, his or her family and the entire community. The Yoruba believe that breaking a taboo can cause physical ailments and keeping it can bring orderliness to society. The taboo is a means of motivating people to maintain harmony in society (Gausset, 2002:630-645).

Although taboos may not be scientific, they have social implications for human behaviours. They are the place where the spirit world meets social and religious customs. It is a prohibition against touching, saying and doing something for fear of being punished by the mystic powers associated with a particular object (Steyne, 1990:140). It is also a scheme of systematized fear that excites and promotes awe, respect and sacredness in society. It is one of the strongest checks on people's behaviours in traditional society.

There are certain activities that are considered forbidden among the Yoruba. For example, hunters or warriors are forbidden to touch their wives during their menstrual period, nor can their wives touch any of their weapons. If they did, their husbands would be prone to death or defeat in battle. There is no explanation of the rationale behind the link between a menstrual woman and hunting or battle, except for the pollution of the menstrual women themselves (Gausset, 2002:635). There are Yoruba traditions that ban women who are menstruating from the shrine (Onayinka, 1976:68).

It is a taboo for any person to beat the drum in the afternoon. If anyone did, he or she would be infected with small pox. Walking in the hot sun is a taboo for a pregnant woman. The Yoruba believe that such a woman may have a miscarriage or become sick (Adedeji, 2012:61-62). The above taboo is one of the areas where the Yoruba spiritual heritage influences the Yoruba Indigenous Churches. These churches do not only prevent menstruating women from entering the sanctuary, but also prohibit them from performing certain activities such as reading or touching the Scripture (Crumbley, 1992:505).

Another taboo is stubbing one's feet against stones while one is on a mission. Among the Yoruba, whenever a person is on a mission and stubs his or her feet against a stone, such experience allegedly has an implication on the psyche of the victim. If it were the left leg that a person bumped against a stone, it means that the

journey or mission would be fruitless and unproductive; if it were the right leg, the mission would be favourable and fruitful. Sometimes, a person who bumped his or her left leg on a stone may be discouraged from continuing on the journey. However, a person who hit his or her right leg would always be encouraged to continue, believing that the mission would be successful. Whenever a Yoruba person embarks on a journey, his or her behaviours would change as soon as he or she bumped his or her leg against a stone, depending on the leg that hit against the stone. This behaviour is especially prevalent among the illiterates.

The Belief on twins

Another area where spiritual heritage affects societal behaviour is in the Yoruba belief about twins. The Yoruba believe that twins have the power to bestow joy, health and prosperity on their family. They can also cause calamities, poverty and premature death of their parents if they are maltreated. According to this tradition, Taiwo, the first of the twins, arrives ahead to sample the universe, while Kehinde arrives after. Though Taiwo is born first, Kehinde is considered the elder because the Yoruba believe that he sent Taiwo to peep into the world. Their parents visit a Babalawo, the Ifa priest, to know about their future, taste, colour and food. The Ifa priest would predict the type of work their mother should engage in. He may tell their mother to carry them around, begging for their sustenance.

The Yoruba also believe that twins share one soul. If one dies, the life of the second one is pending. To avert the premature death of the second twin, a ritual follows and sacrifices have to be made with the wooden figure as a substitute for the soul of the dead one. The wooden image is called *Ere ibeji*, meaning the sacred image of twins. Failure to do this may lead to the premature death of the second twin or cause calamity for the parents. This image is believed to host the soul of the dead twin. Twins' mothers always treat the wooden image like the living twin. It is fed, washed and clothed regularly.

Another area where the myth of twins affects Yoruba societal behaviour is seen in this poem:

"Fine looking twins an indigene of Isokun;

Descendants of treetop monkeys;
Twins saw the wealthy house but did not enter there;
Twins saw the house personage but did not enter;
Instead, they entered the house of a poor man;
They made the poor to become wealthy;
They clothed the naked people” (Afolabi, 2009).

Another Yoruba twin song that expresses myth in relation to societal behaviour is:

“Majestic and beautiful looking twins, native of Isokun.
Let me find means of eating; let me find means of drinking.
Majestic and beautiful looking twins come and give me
the blessing of a child” (Olaleye- Oruene, 1980:121-128).

The Yoruba believe that the birth of twin babies is a mark of blessing for the community and their arrival in the family is worth celebrating. The above poems imply that the coming of twins to a poor family is believed to change the life of the family for the better if the twins are treated well. They do not see twins as ordinary children (Onimhawo, 1996:113). Although the impact of Christianity and modern civilization has reduced these beliefs and practices in most of the urban areas of Nigeria, they are still prevalent in most of the rural communities.

The Cult of Oro

The *Oro* cult is another area of spiritual heritage that affects Yoruba societal behaviours. While there are variants of the myth of the *Oro* among the Yoruba, the core remains the same. One major feature of the *Oro* myth is that women must not see the *Oro* and any woman who breaks this law must die. According to one version of the origin of the *Oro* cult, *Egungun* and *Oro* were close friends. They always did things in common. Each had a wife and they always gave their wives six hundred cowries each as food allowance. While the wife of *Egungun* was meticulous in

spending and saved part of the money, *Oro's* wife squandered everything. After a year, *Egungun* and *Oro* decided to organize a party. *Egungun's* wife went to the market and bought colourful clothes for her husband, but *Oro's* wife did not buy anything. On the day of the occasion, *Egungun* came out gorgeously dressed and people praised him and his wife. *Oro* came out naked and the people mocked him. He was ashamed of himself and went home furious. He drove away his wife and threatened to kill her. Until their death, they never saw each other again. Because of his nakedness, women ran away from him. He went into the bush and cut palm fronds to cover his nakedness. He decided to appear only at night and when coming out, he roars to scare women in order to scare them and cause them to flee (Oduyoye, 2001:11-15).

Oro later became a cult among the Yoruba with a seven-day festival. Any woman who comes out during the festival would be killed. There is a poem that goes as follows, *Awo egungun "lobinrin lese, awo gelede l'obinrin lemo, b'obinrin foju kan oro, oro a gbe"*, meaning "women can participate in the *egungun* cult, women can participate in the *gelede* cult, but when a woman sees the *Oro*, she must surely die." Any woman who broke the *Oro* taboo would die a natural death. A diabolic means or physical force could be employed to kidnap the woman, kill and bury her in a sacred forest. Virtually in all Yoruba territories, and especially in Iseyin and Ogbomoso in the Oyo State, and Abeokuta and Ijebu Ode in the Ogun State, women are in-doors every night for six days and on the seventh day, they must be in-doors until the noon of the following day during the festival. Oduyoye maintains that some myths in Yoruba cultural and religious hermeneutics serve as a means of oppressing women in society (Oduyoye, 2001:11-15).

During the *Oro* festival, the elderly men go out to discuss sensitive matters of society or about the king of the land or matters that affect the community, especially matters that do not require the presence of women and children. The *Oro* festival is an example of the assumed superiority of men. The *Oro* festival also serves as a means for community to call the king to order. During the *Oro* festival, the *Oro* cult members, especially the youth, use the situation to compose songs, chant incantations, adapt corrective measures and dance round the community to sensitize the community and call the leaders to order (Oduyoye, 1999:32-33).

The *Oro* cult has both negative and positive effects on women among the Yoruba. Negatively, the *Oro* festival allows the males to display chauvinism, and the fact of men's supposed power over women is inculcated in the younger generation. During the *Oro* festival, women see themselves as inferior to men. Among the Yoruba, men, no matter their age, claim superiority over women. This has a negative effect on contemporary women. Both in the sacred and secular, women are not treated equally to their male counterparts. Oduyoye contends that during the *Oro* festival, women are maltreated and threatened even by their own male relations, including husbands, sons or fathers who act for ancestral male spirits (Oduyoye, 1999:32).

Although women's movements are restricted during this period, they enjoy themselves because it is a period of relaxation, during which they rest and stay close to their children. Some men do come home earlier because the absence of women in the community forces them to stay in-doors with their wives and children. They use the period to pass moral instruction to their children. The *Oro* celebration does have some positive effects on individuals, families and the community. During the *Oro* festival, the community's social life is usually dull. Economically, there are low sales because of the restrictions on the women.

Tribal Mark

Lastly, tribal marking is another societal behaviour associated with spiritual heritage of the Yoruba. According to the Yoruba myth of alienation, when man sinned against *Olodumare*, there was confusion in the universe. As a result of the confusion, there were wars in various places and many captured people became slaves in other lands (Imasogie, 1985:32-33). This led to further confusion, as with the passing days, parents were no longer able to identify their children, nor could the children recognize their parents. The Yoruba then developed a strategy of identification by cicatrizing the faces of their people to denote their origin and to protect them from enemies. Although Christianity and civilization have made the tribal mark obsolete, it served as a mark of geographical identity in ancient days. Each town had a special mark that distinguished them from other tribes.

2.12 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The nature of the Yoruba belief in *Olodumare*, divinities, spirits, ancestors and magic all points unequivocally to one basic fact, that is, the Yoruba have a spiritual heritage that shapes their theology about the spirit world in relation to the reality of life. This belief has a great influence on their societal and individual behaviours.

The Yoruba religion is used here as an example to illustrate the religious worldview that forms the basis of the whole Nigerian community and which is an integral part of its social structure. This religion, like other African religions, concerns itself with the here and now. In view of the resilient nature of traditional religion, this fact is crucial for religious systems that make inroads into the Yoruba culture and for Christianity in Nigeria. Omenyo stresses the concept of salvation in the Akan religion that centres on the here and now. He argues that, “The Akan religion, which is a ‘world-affirming’ religion, has a concept of salvation that concerns itself with the ‘here-and-now’” (Omenyo, 2002:40). As stated earlier, there are cultural affinities in Africa and the Yoruba therefore shares their concept of salvation with the Akan.

Due to the collapse of the structural systems in Nigeria, the use of magic is on the increase. People use magic to get favour, wealth and protection from the spirit world. Although many Yoruba claim to be Christian or Muslim, the purported religions of “civilized people,” in their heart they are traditionalists moving in the sphere of the supernatural.

The totality of life of the Yoruba is influenced by the belief in the spirit world. This heritage can have positive effects such as keeping people to rules and regulations given by the ancestors and gods according to the tradition. Nevertheless, spiritual heritage can bring negative effects for the whole society if neglected.

The above presentation is not an exhaustive description of the Yoruba religion, it provides only an introductory background of the Yoruba religion. This chapter essentially described the Yoruba religion, the spiritual heritage that emanates from it and how it shapes societal behaviours. Most of the features of the spiritual heritage itemized in this study are shared by other African groups.

The Yoruba spiritual heritage enhances spirituality, maintains law and order for the development of society and creates a relationship between man and the spirit world. However, when spiritual heritage as a means of social stability is lost, the heritage becomes something to abuse.

The reviewed scholars show the Yoruba heritage, especially *Esu*, evil spirits, good spirits, magic, ancestors, human agencies and diabolical powers can influence human behaviours. The Yoruba emphasis on spiritual heritage as a means of shaping human behaviours is a crucial insight. The question still remains, when people turn to Christianity, does the strong emphasis on spiritual heritage led to a deeper and more authentic Christian life?

The continuing impact of traditional beliefs on the majority of African Christians begs the question: what do African traditions have to do with Christianity? This is in line with the question of Tertullian, a notable second century theologian in the early Greco-Roman period. Tertullian asked: what indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? (Tertullian,1969: 264). Tertullian's major concern was the relationship between Greco-Roman culture and Christianity. He maintained a deep and thoroughly motivated distance from the culture. Tertullian's emphasis was not so much on the question of how the Christian Gospel might be made relevant to the world, but on the question of how Christian truth could be protected from the world perceived of as "demon". Consequently, Tertullian's theological approach in terms of its cultural witness represents a defensive and negative response of Christians to cultural traditions. As the Ghanaian theologian Kwame Bediako states: "He is more concerned to protect the truth from being adulterated by the world, than to validate the relevance of the truth to the world" (Bediako, 1992:124). Tertullian focuses on becoming a radical Christian who is determined and guided by the rules of faith. The source of truth is God's revelation in the Scriptures. Tertullian strongly held that the truth of the Christian Gospel means that only such a response was possible and viable in a demonic world. His position can be situated among the exclusivist concepts of Christian truth and Christian life (Bediako, 1992:125-126).

Walls describes Tertullian's approach as "the pilgrim principle" which consists of defending Christian authenticity in terms of factors that lie outside of one's nature and society (Walls, 1981:45).

Responses to Tertullian's question always generate serious arguments among Christian theologians. Some theologians have engaged with the issue critically and constructively, some ignore it, while others approach it apologetically. This study critically examines the Yoruba spiritual heritage in relation to Christian life to address the problem of immorality and corruption. Gwamna argues that the relevance of the gospel is based on its ability to relate to current human experience in any society (Gwamna, 2008:15-16). The aim of the study is therefore to address problems of immorality and corruption in Nigeria by means of the gospel message.

The next chapter answers the following questions: to what extent has the Yoruba spiritual heritage influenced the African Indigenous Churches' theology, liturgy and practice? In what ways do the African traditions contribute to the rapid growth of African Christianity? How can we sustain good African heritage so that we have a greater impact on Christianity? The subsequent chapter provides some guidelines on how the Church should avoid the negative aspects of Yoruba spiritual heritage.

CHAPTER 3
THE INFLUENCE OF THE YORUBA SPIRITUAL HERITAGE ON
YORUBA INDIGENOUS CHURCHES

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The *Aladura* churches have attracted the attention of many religious scholars □ church historians, sociologists, theologians and anthropologists of religion. *Aladura* is a broad description for Indigenous Churches among the Yoruba as mentioned in Chapter 1. Scholars have written about African Independent Churches from various perspectives. Some wrote about them as they manifest in particular ethnic groups, while others did their research about the whole phenomenon on the continent. Certain scholars studied the historical development of African Indigenous Churches, while others concentrated on the biographies of their founders. Some scholars focused their attention on the different outlooks in their theologies, liturgies and doctrines. Scholars who have contributed immensely to the study of African Indigenous Churches include: Turner (1967), Peel (1968), Barrett (1968), Shorter (1985), Appaiah-Kubi (1987), Kalu (2000), Gifford (1993), Ray (1993), Adogame (1999), Ayegboyin (2005), Ayegboyin and Ishola (1997), Oduyoye (2008), Oduro (2009 & 2014), Asamoah-Gyudu (2005 & 2012), Oshitelu (2007), Oborji (2005), Abogunrin (2006), Fatokun (2009), Marshall (2009), Ojo (2006) and others. These religious scholars' works are relevant to this study their works serve as a background for this study.

The development of African Indigenous Churches has drawn attention to African Christianity more than ever. Hackett, a British female anthropologist, argues that "Nigeria has produced a myriad of new religious movements in the last one hundred and fifty years" (Hackett, 1987:1). Edward Fashole-Luke notes that, "Christianity in Africa is increasing by geometrical progression and the forecast for the future growth of the Church in Africa is bright" (Fashole-Luke, 1978:357). In the same vein, Ruth Marshall states that for the last twenty years, the African continent has witnessed and continues to witness a growth of religious effervescence through the emergence of

Indigenous churches (Marshall, 2009:17). Parratt also affirms that within the last hundred years, “Third World” Christianity has witnessed rapid growth, especially in Africa where more than sixty percent of the people claim to be Christians (Parratt, 2004:1).

African Indigenous Churches go under a variety of names, such as the Separatist Movement, Zionist or Spiritual Churches, Prophet-Healing Churches, Syncretistic Movements, New Religious Movement, Ethiopian Churches, the *Aladura* Movement, or Newer Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches (Oduro, 2009:18-21).

The goal of this chapter is to reveal some areas where the Yoruba spiritual heritage influences Yoruba Indigenous Churches. The examination of the influence of Yoruba spiritual heritage on African Independent Churches focuses on the Cherubim and Seraphim and the Celestial Church of Christ. These two denominations have been chosen for two reasons. Firstly, these churches were founded by the Yoruba and they are patronized mostly by the Yoruba. Their doctrines and theologies are influenced by the Yoruba spiritual worldview. Secondly, these churches represent a larger percentage of the Yoruba Indigenous Church. Although the Pentecostal and Protestant churches in Nigeria criticize these churches for accommodating African traditions in their worship, they are members of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), the highest religious body in the country. Birgit Meyer aptly argues that charismatic churches criticize Indigenous churches for accommodating local culture through Africanization and rebuke “spiritual churches” for drawing occult forces, making use of allegedly idolatrous elements such as candles, incense, iron rod, and in so doing, connecting with the powers of darkness (Meyer, 2004:447-474). Given these practices, both the Pentecostal and some mainline churches describe them as “dead churches.” In addition, due to their strong emphasis on evil spirits and exorcism, the mainline churches, whose views on exorcism are influenced by modernity, look down on them.

The chapter begins with a look at the factors that led to the emergence of these churches, scholarly debates and a brief history. Their characteristics shall be treated together because their mode of dressing, worship, theologies and doctrines are very

similar. The chapter furthermore examines the continuity and discontinuity of the Yoruba spiritual heritage in these churches.

3.1 FACTORS THAT LED TO THE EMERGENCE OF THESE CHURCHES

The Yoruba independent churches came into being as a result of a number of factors ranging from the spiritual to the cultural, political and social struggles. Politically, they emerged because of a desire for African self-expression and freedom from missionary control. The Indigenous church leaders wanted to enjoy leadership roles in their own churches. There was a nationalist feeling and an urge to lead their people according to their own culture. Consequently, *Aladura* church leaders reacted against the domineering and over-bearing attitude of the leadership of the missionary groups who were unresponsive to the yearnings and the expectations of the indigenes in the mission churches (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 1997:24).

Independence from the European culture is another reason for the emergence of these churches. Leaders of Indigenous churches rebelled against the Christianity that had become over-westernized. Many Africans desired to find a mode of religious expression that could give them psychological and sociological satisfaction. Most of the independent clergymen criticized the mission church leaders who □ they claimed □ put many obstacles in the way of the African converts. They agitated for an African church where the African culture would be recognized and respected. They asserted that any church that did not meet the Africans' daily life experience would be unable to provide their spiritual satisfaction.

Furthermore, the prohibition of anything associated with the African culture also contributed to the emergence of these churches. Most of the early missionaries had a negative disposition towards the African culture and they disciplined the contextualization advocates. In reaction to this treatment, the advocates of the African culture established some of their churches with the aim of freeing them from the domination of the mainline churches, which usually adopted negative attitudes towards the African culture. The African church leaders wanted to remove foreign elements from the African churches and establish the African culture in their worship as much as possible (Oshitelu, 2007:27).

The religious concern about life-threatening health issues confronting the people and the First World War were other reasons that led to the formation of these churches. Leaders wanted to find an antidote to the rampant epidemics. The vacuum created by the departure of the missionaries in the early twentieth century in the wake of the worldwide influenza epidemic, enabled Yoruba leaders to establish their Indigenous form of Christianity. The emergence of Yoruba Indigenous Churches took root after the events that followed the First World War (1914-1918), which produced a world economic depression. Nigeria, as a British colony, was dragged into this war like other British colonies in Africa. Several people lost their lives and many were either injured or maimed. The epidemics between 1918 and 1920 claimed about 250 000 lives in Nigeria alone. This begged the question: if God exists, why did he allow such a devastating war with its wastefulness both in terms of human and material loss? This question left many people, including the faithful, disenchanting. However, for the poor masses and the illiterate, the war had wakened their spiritual awareness and produced the feeling of dependence on God through prayers. It was against this background that the Cherubim and Seraphim Church emerged (Oshitelu, 2007:26-27).

The war brought feelings of disorganization, discontentment and hopelessness. In Nigeria, these factors served as the immediate cause of the rise of some Indigenous churches. Many Yoruba Christians expressed disappointment in the leadership of the mission churches that seemed to be helpless in the face of disaster. They started prayer and healing fellowships to fight the outbreak. This praying group eventually led to the formation of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church.

Economic factors also contributed to the formation of these churches. The economic depression forced many missionaries to leave Africa. These missionaries could no longer receive financial support from their sponsoring organizations due to the financial crunch in Europe. As the depression continued, the colonial administration began to close public institutions, mission churches and preaching stations. Some Indigenous leaders were disappointed by these “faithless” acts of the missionaries. Some Indigenous leaders began to hold prayer meetings in front of the locked churches to fill the hole that was left. This kind of experience led to the formation of

the Diamond Society, which eventually became the Faith Tabernacle Church (Ayeboyin & Ishola, 1997:24).

Some African prophets seceded from the mission churches because of their passion for a purer form of Christianity. They criticized ministers in the mission churches for their perceived failure to live up to the call of the Bible, pointing out the alienation of the church leadership from the spiritual needs of the indigenes. Some breakaway churches criticized the clergymen in mission churches for appointing well-known secret cult members into leadership positions because of their status in society. They also criticized pastors in the mainline churches who were consulting native doctors and even wore charms and amulets under their cassocks (Ayeboyin & Ishola, 1997:25).

Another contributing factor to the emergence of these churches was individual charismatic figures. There were gifted charismatic people who organized evangelistic crusades in several localities. They did not want to establish churches of their own; rather they perceived themselves as prophets of God to turn people to Christ. One such notable figure was Joseph Ayo Babalola. He led a great revival in July 1930 in Ilesa. There were testimonies of healing all over the city. He was excommunicated from the Faith Tabernacle Church for his use of the gift of prophecy, the insistence on prayer for healing and the use of water in prayer. His excommunication led to the formation of the Christ Apostolic Church (Ayeboyin & Ishola, 1997:73).

3.2 ACADEMIC DEBATES ON THE AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES

Negative Perceptions

There are various overlapping debates on these churches. Most of the early missionaries and some African trained theologians in mission schools categorized the Indigenous churches as syncretistic groups. They claimed that some customs practiced in these churches are not compatible with Christian doctrines and practices. These scholars found it difficult to recognize the African Indigenous Churches as having an equal standing with the Western mission-founded churches. Some gave them sympathetic recognition. After their emergence in Nigeria, these churches were scolded as “mushroom”, “hand-clapping”, “hand-beating” or “vision-

seeing”. All these descriptions point to negative feelings about AICs (Oborji, 2005:157). Nkpoidet, the Administrative Secretary General of the Eternal Sacred Order of the Cherubim and Seraphim, argues that presently most of the Pentecostal and some mainline churches have negative feelings or reservation about the Indigenous churches in Nigeria because of their affinity with the traditional African practices and customs (Nkpoidet, 2010).

The Ethiopian Secessionist Movement

Some scholars categorize African Indigenous Churches as an “Ethiopian secessionist movement” or “nationalist churches”. This is the first category of African Indigenous Churches that emerged towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century as breakaways from the established mission churches. Kalu argues that these churches were established as a rejection of European leadership, while at the same time maintaining the form and pattern of the mainline church. Chidester holds the same view. He further argues that the Ethiopian movement is “an innovation in African Christian leadership and theology that was outside the control of the European mission churches or colonial administration” (Chidester, 1996:224). The term Ethiopianism emerged from a combination of myth and history. The word *aithiops*, the Greek for “black face”, was mistakenly translated in the Septuagint as Kush. The Egyptians understood themselves to be part of Kush and applied the word Kush to their southern region, comprising Sudan and Ethiopia (Isaiah 18:1; Jeremiah 13:23). This movement emphasized an early expression of the interior African spirituality. Ethiopianism also emerged from the quest for spiritual power that manifested from the interior of the African religious genius. It occurred within a church to promote a Christianity of equality, a faith that was sensitive to the African environment and their dignity (Kalu, 2008:32-34).

Ethiopianism stands for Indigenous initiatives without any kind of support from foreign countries. Ethiopia is the only African country that was not colonized (Ayandele, 1966:177). This quasi-nationalist feeling is probably based on Psalm 68:31, which says, “Let Ethiopia hasten to stretch her hands to God.” There is a Yoruba example of such an Ethiopian church. The Yoruba laity of the Baptist Mission had led a

secessionist group in March 1888 in sympathy with Ladejo Stone, who was the first Native Baptist Church pastor in Nigeria (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 1997:13-14).

Ethiopianism was biblically rooted in an ancient prophetic promise. It helped the Blacks to regain liberty from European domineering posture. The Ethiopian concept motivated a nationalist feeling among the African elite, who fought for political and cultural liberty from the mission church. In Ethiopianism, some African leaders were loyalist, but affirmed their Africanness, while others expressed their discontent in a more strident voice while remaining in the mission church. Others left the church and formed their own churches. Those that left the church were referred to as separatists or secessionists. Ethiopianism had a multifaceted dimension that sought to express an in-cultivated Christianity. This concept is perhaps the most misconstrued aspect of the African response to Christianity, because it was the first form of response that occurred within a few decades of Christianity in Africa. Ethiopians were the people that promoted cultural nationalism with a religious tone (Kalu, 2008:32-35).

The Schism Movement

Although schism is not peculiar to the African Indigenous Churches, some scholars argue that African Indigenous Churches are particularly prone to it. Schism comes from the Greek word *schisma* – meaning a rent, division or dissension. It is an ecclesiastical term for division within a church. Schism cuts across all churches in every generation. Abogunrin, a Nigerian New Testament scholar, recognizes schism in African churches, but he argues that not all African Indigenous Churches are schismatic. This term cannot be a complete description of this movement (Abogunrin, 2006:366-367). Barrett, one of the scholars on African Indigenous Churches, argues that schism is very rampant in these churches. He identifies five thousand different ecclesiastical and religious bodies in thirty-four African nations. He mentions various reasons why these churches broke away from the mainline churches and accepts the term schism to describe them (Barrett, 1968:3). Adewale, a Nigerian church historian, affirms that the post-colonial era was purely a struggle of the Church in Nigeria for her emancipation and liberation from political domination and ecclesiastical bondages. This struggle contributed to an increase in schisms (Adewale, 1988:9).

The Separatist Movements

The early missionaries who wrote about these churches called them separatist churches. Their curiosity was excited by the spate of secession from the mission churches. They embodied a cultural protest against White hegemony in culture and church. They fought for self-rule in the church. A Ghanaian theologian, Baëta, claims that this term was given because some of the separated formations originated from schismatic processes within the mainline churches. Separatist churches are the sects that broke away from or sprang up in relative independence of mainline churches. However, Indigenous church leaders are not comfortable with this description because they hold that the missionaries pushed them out (Baëta, 1962:1). They also argue that the Indigenous churches are like the Puritan movement of the sixteenth century English Reformation that had the major role in purifying the Church of England and society (Noll, 2006:485-486).

Spiritual Churches

Another category of these churches may be termed “spiritual churches” or “a new religious movement”. “Spiritual churches” is a term of much wider use for these churches. Some of them are movements that are concerned with the renewal within the mission churches. They emerged between 1915 and 1963 and still continue to emerge. They are prophet-founded religious movements that draw their members from mission churches. The spiritual churches also emerged as a response to mission Christianity, especially based on an African experience of the Holy Spirit. Kalu describes them as “increasingly creative in their pneumatic emphasis, in the use of the Bible, in innovative gender ideology, African religion and culture” (Kalu, 2000:105). Gifford, a German religious scholar, calls them “new religious groups” (Gifford, 1993:1), while Walls (1997:113) calls them “para-churches” that do not claim to be churches, but do have church features. Turner refers to them as “Hebraist” (Turner, 1967:xiv). He uses this term to show a radical break of *Aladura* churches with traditional animism or polytheism and the associated belief in magic.

Turner argues that Hebraist movements owe so much to the biblical religion that they cannot be sharply differentiated from other groups classified as Christian. These

movements, however, make clear that they are breaking away from vital aspects of the old religion, but they do not give Christ enough of a place in their scheme to be recognized as a Christian body. Most of the independent churches began without a conscious effort to set up a new church. For example, Cherubim and Seraphim, a classical Yoruba *Aladura* church, emerged from the Precious Stone Society within the Anglican Church (Turner, 1967: iv-xv).

The Revival Movements

The African spiritual environment aided the growth of African Indigenous Churches. African spirituality aided African responses to the power of the Gospel. It is the root of the growth of Christianity in Africa. This led Africans to a deep commitment to the Holy Spirit and an embrace of the pneumatic tradition in the Bible, a fact the missionaries did not stress. Kalu stresses that the revivalist movement enjoyed this and wanted to demonstrate the power of the Holy Spirit over sickness and demonic activities. The revivalists had no intention to begin a new church of their own, but sought a space to express their joy, burden, and bonding freely. A major feature of revival is to accelerate the expansion of the church, to provide a new dimension of growth and to reshape the religious landmark. The revivalist leaders created mass conversion and enlarged Christianity in rural areas where mission churches did not exist. Each revival brings new faces and styles of leadership and may make or mar the quality of the biblical roots of the Christian theology. Some revivals have caused schisms and have led to a new religious movement (Kalu, 2008:24-27).

Puritans and Fundamentalists

The Puritans or Fundamentalists is another description of these churches. The puritans were initially the African members of mainline churches. They then challenged the regnant affirmation, seeking to enlarge the role of the Holy Spirit within the denominational members' faith and practices. However, the hostile responses of the mainline church leaders led to their exit and the foundation of the African Indigenous Churches. While some of these groups remained in the mainline churches as ministers for solidarity within the church, others started a new church because of doctrine, liturgy, polity and ethics (Kalu, 2008:30).

The Prophetic Movements

Right after the end of colonialism, a number of prophetic figures emerged in African countries. Examples of such prophets are Moses Orimolade of Cherubim and Seraphim (1927), Josiah Olounowo Oshitelu, founder of the Church of the Lord (1930), Ayo Babalola of Christ Apostolic Church (1942) and others. This prophetic movement laid the foundation of modern Pentecostalism in Africa. Prophets were charismatic leaders opposed to Indigenous goals, but yet critical of the evangelistic outreach as a replacement of culture. They recognized the power of the African spiritual forces, but confronted them with the power of Jesus. The Bible was the cardinal point in their ministration. Much emphasis was placed on prayers and healing. Some prophets were educated, while others were not. They attacked the symbols of traditional religion and nominal Christianity. Some of them faced persecution from missionaries and eventually started their own African churches. An example of this group is Joseph Ayo Babalola, the founder of Christ Apostolic Church (CAC). These prophets caught the joy of the Gospel, expressed it in songs, clapping, dancing and made tremendous efforts to share it (Kalu, 2008:35-36).

Emphasis on revival is a major feature of the prophetic movement. Sometimes prophetic movements are called revival groups. The groups made changes to their beliefs and practices as a result of intense Bible study. Their theology is similar to the Calvinistic theology because there are some aspects of Catholicism, Protestantism and Pentecostalism in their theological beliefs. Like the conservative groups, the native language is their means of communication. Most of these groups seceded from the conservative churches in protest against some beliefs and practices they considered non-biblical. These groups affirm the limitations of humanity and the supremacy of the Bible in their practices. They conform to the normative Christian doctrines and practices. However, they hold on to the relevance of the African culture for African Christianity. They are careful not to go to the extreme end of Western Christianity that is filled with Western culture or embrace totally the African culture in their Christianity. They stress the conformity of dreams, revelations and visions with the biblical doctrinal standard. An example of this group is the Christ Holy International, Nigeria (Oduro, 2009:18-20).

The Aladura Movements

Ray states that *Aladura* Christianity among the Yoruba is a distinctive form of religion with a full imprint of Yoruba traditions. The *Aladura* churches attribute some human problems to malevolent forces and solve these problems by invoking spiritual powers (Ray, 1993:1-3). Ayegboyin (2011:169) and Awoniyi (2011:155), Nigerian Baptist theologians, are emphatic about the bad spirits as the authentic source of evils in *Aladura* churches. Their arguments support the hypothesis that Yoruba tradition has affected the worldview of reality in *Aladura* churches.

Aladura churches have been prominent in Yoruba religious life since 1915 and have become a catalyst of social change in Africa, especially among the Yoruba. They are the catalysts of “culture contact” and spiritual revival through prayer (Peel, 1968:2). Peel points out the utilitarian attitudes towards prayer among the *Aladura* churches. He declares that “prayer may be supplication to God to fulfil the individual’s wishes and desires or else a way of getting guidance from God or, in religious terms, knowing His will” (Peel, 1968:52). These churches believe in the efficacy of prayer to meet both the spiritual and physical needs.

Turner focuses his research on the Church of the Lord while Peel’s research work centres on the Christ Apostolic Church and the Cherubim and Seraphim in Western Nigeria. They describe these groups as *Aladura* churches based on their strict adherence to prayer (Turner, 1967:8-9; Peel, 1968:119-122).

The *Aladura* movement emerged as a response to social and cultural constraints suffered by some Indigenous charismatic leaders. Principal churches in this group are the Christ Apostolic Church, the Cherubim and Seraphim, the Church of the Lord Worldwide and the Celestial Church of Christ. These churches have a strong belief in private and corporate prayers. Their members are encouraged to keep regular times of prayer every three hours during the twenty-four hours in a day. In the Church of the Lord, there is a strong emphasis on the earnestness, frequency, and importance of prayer. The church declares: “You must not be tired to beg something from God and God will never be tired to hear you and to render your request to you ... through the name of Jesus Christ” (Turner, 1967:69-70). Scholars who prefer the term

Aladura for these churches have to answer this question: can these churches claim the monopoly of prayer? The obvious answer must be: of course, not! Prayer is one of the cardinal activities of all Christians (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 1997:16).

African Pentecostal Churches

Another description of African Indigenous Churches is “African Pentecostal churches”. These are the African Indigenous Churches that have been greatly influenced by recent developments in international Pentecostalism. According to Asamoah-Gyadu, the prophetic movement was the early foundation of African Pentecostalism. Itinerant prophets moved from one place to another. Kalu argues that they were the soil on which modern African Pentecostalism is built. They were closer to African cultures, philosophy and Old Testament worldviews in their responses to the Gospel (Kalu, 2008:x). Olupona, a Nigerian theologian and religious specialist, categorizes this group as the charismatic founders, originators, leaders and custodians of African charismatic power (Olupona, 2002:12).

The neo-Pentecostal or the charismatic groups is a type of African Pentecostalism that has been prominent in urban African cities such as Lagos, Accra, Nairobi and others since the late 1970s. They are greatly influenced by American televangelism in particular and in general by the African worldviews. They attract the youth and educated people with extensive mass media technologies, internationalism, and a modern look, relaxed sense of dress code, prosperity theology and emphasis on the Holy Spirit (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2012:163). Kalu categorizes neo-Pentecostal churches as African Indigenous Churches. He argues that like the older African Indigenous Churches, they are initiated by Africans for Africans; they share a similar traditional worldview with the African Independent Churches in their theology of deliverance. Kalu holds that “both lie on the same side of the typology of Christian form,” and both draw from same issues raised in traditional religion (Kalu, 2000:105). The same idea is expressed by Akanji. He argues that most of the Nigerian Pentecostal groups emerged from the spontaneous prophetic churches (Akanji, 2011:245).

Although both neo-Pentecostal and African Independent Churches are rooted in a traditional worldview and the latter had reinterpreted Christianity in an African

traditional philosophy and developed new symbols, a conflict emerges in their response to traditional cosmologies. The former see African traditional philosophy as the source of their identity. In other words, while the neo-Pentecostal churches advocate a disengagement from the Indigenous past, the African Indigenous Churches embrace the past as the source of their identity (Nwaura, 2005:69-70).

The charismatic movement is full of emotion in worship and stresses the Holy Spirit as the source of the renewal, change and empowerment. The renewal group is within the mission churches with a strong emphasis on the significance of the Holy Spirit as God's agent of renewal and the source of grace (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013:7-11). They are evangelical and adopt radical spiritual conversion, speaking in tongues, deliverance, exorcism, miracles and divine healing.

Trans-denominational fellowship like the Full Gospel Businessmen and Women is another aspect of African Pentecostalism. This fellowship consists of lay people who stress "responsible church membership" with the mind-set of reviving the mission church. It should be noted that when this movement became a channel of revival in the mission churches, it also caused conflict and misunderstanding (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013:10). The vital emphasis of this group is transformation because the experience of the Holy Spirit is understood to go beyond the denominational walls.

The last description of African Pentecostalism that I shall mention is called "classical Pentecostalism." This kind of Pentecostalism emerged within the historical mission denominations. They developed into denominations quickly. Asamoah-Gyadu argues that neo-Pentecostalism tapped into the ancient religious traditions with one eye on the changing world of scholarship. The combination of the African religion with Western civilization has made the movement attractive to the people who relate to these worlds.

The African Indigenous Churches as Part of the Universal Church

Unlike the initial stage of the emergence of these churches, most scholars presently consider these churches as part of the universal Church. In his comprehensive and objective study of the Church of the Lord, Turner presents the history and liturgy of this church formation. He casts off his personal biases and conducts his investigation

with a scientific mind. After his field work in the Church of the Lord, he declared that the Church of the Lord, deserve fair treatment in the thoughts of the European missionaries. The *Aladura* churches, he opined, are not inferior to any branches of the Catholic Church of Christ in doctrine, discipline, liturgy, vision, mission and evangelism (Turner, 1967:315-332). He avoided the errors of building his research on the prejudices and dogmas that were acquired from the mission church background. He participated in the worship services of the Church of the Lord. This helped him see the church in action from the inside (Turner, 1967:vi). He concluded that with his personal participation in the life and worship of this church, the Church of the Lord was a legitimate branch of the universal Church and it was not inferior to any mainline church. He therefore classifies the Church of the Lord as a Christian church (Turner, 1967:322). Turner broke away from the school of thought that describes African Indigenous Churches as sects, separatist and inferior.

Masondo, a South African female specialist in African Indigenous Churches, emphasizes that African Indigenous Churches are recognized as authentically African Christianity. This identification is mainly attributed to their ability to bring the African traditional culture and practices into Christianity. As a result, many Africans patronize the Indigenous churches (Masondo, 2005:97).

Anyone who reads Harold Turner's works on the Church of the Lord would find it difficult to doubt the legitimacy of this formation as a branch of the universal Church. Ayandele, a Nigerian church historian, affirms that Turner refrains from outlawing or categorizing the church as a syncretistic group (Ayandele, 2006:401). The Church of the Lord throughout the world exists "for all Africans, for all Europeans and for all Americans." By extension, African Indigenous Churches are branches of the universal Church, they can be found in different parts of the world (Ayandele, 2006:397).

Although mission churches and African Independent Churches differ from one another in ethos, style, theological emphasis, worship and spirituality, they are all siblings in God's family. There is no way one can talk of world Christianity, much less of Christianity in Africa, without taking account of this genre of AICs (Pobee & Oshitelu, 1998:5). Walls argues that African Indigenous Churches are part of the

universal Church because they bring the elements of African religious consciousness into African Christianity (Walls, 2002:129).

Nevertheless, African Independent Churches (AICs) are not generally accepted as Christian bodies, particularly in Africa. An American contextual theologian and a missionary to South Africa for more than twenty-one years, Dean Gilliland, observes, “there is more enthusiasm for African Independent Churches outside of Africa than inside” (Gilliland,1986:260). He further argues that many African Christians who do not select these churches after comparing them with the mainline churches perceive them as “imitators of Christianity” who should not be taken seriously (Gilliland, 1986:262-264).

From the foregoing debates, it is clear that African Indigenous churches have generated either positive or negative debates among scholars, depending on the scholar’s perspective. When AICs started emerging, scholars considered these churches as branches of syncretistic, separatist and schismatic movements in Christianity. Presently, most scholars argue that whatever their shortcomings, they are considered as equally important next to the Western mission churches. They are a genuine and legitimate branch of the universal Church because they have contributed immensely to fellowship and to the growth of Christianity in Africa (Alayande, 2006:397). The limitations of these churches are spelled out at the end of this chapter.

There are different terminologies and typologies of African Indigenous Churches. There are also overlaps in their classifications. However, they share the African worldview in their liturgy and their leaders are Africans who share similar worldviews on African spirituality, emotion in worship, theology of causality of evil and they are greatly influenced by African traditional religions. For the purpose of clarity in this study, African Indigenous, Indigenous Pentecostal and African Charismatic Churches are all referred to as AICs because they are all influenced by the African spiritual heritage.

3.3 THE YORUBA INDIGENOUS CHURCHES

As indicated, many scholars have studied the emergence and development of Indigenous, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in Africa. The earlier mentioned scholars are now examined in more detail. Doctrinal analysis of *Aladura* churches is very important because most of their beliefs and practices are expressed in doctrines. Adogame examines the doctrines of the Celestial Church of Christ. He affirms the congruence and affinity of *Aladura* churches with the Yoruba religion and distinguishes the church as African Christianity because they bear the imprint of the Yoruba religion and structure. He therefore declares that AICs appear to be indebted to African traditional religion so that they are easily taken as practicing “pagans” with a “borrowed” Christian exterior (Adogame, 1999:3).

Peel’s contributions to African historiography and sociology are enormous and his methodology to solve the problem of reconstructing the past from the present is of great value. He examines *Aladura* churches from a sociological perspective and analyses the influence of the African traditional religion on this church. He provides insight into the pattern of religious change among the Yoruba. He stresses the similarity between some *orisa* such as *orisa Osun*, and deities from the Hellenized Roman religion. He declares that the Yoruba religion is polytheistic with many *orisa* with special portfolios, special emblems and shrines for worship (Peel, 1968:30-31).

In addition, Peel also employs the cost-benefit model in explaining the pragmatically-driven relationship between the missionaries and the Indigenous Churches during the flux of political and religious challenges. According to him, the peculiarity of *Aladura* churches in Nigeria is that they combine the attributes of a primitive religion with those of world religions by means of “a telescopic religious adaptation.” In his words, “the peculiar situation of the *Aladura* churches is that they combine the attributes of the change-over from primitive to world religions with those of the religious adaptation to the industrialization process which, in Europe, were a thousand years apart” (Peel, 1968:299).

The historical background of these churches is very important to some African theologians. Oshitelu, a Nigerian theologian and religious scholar, gives the historical and doctrinal background of *Aladura* churches in Nigeria. He stresses that the growth

of Indigenous churches is linked to the Yoruba spiritual hunger that seeks answers about life's destiny just like traditional religions do. He concludes that like traditional religion, *Aladura* churches make use of symbols in healing and in acts of exorcism (Oshitelu, 2007:106-108) .

Oborji states that politics and religion are the two factors that led to the emergence of the Yoruba Indigenous Churches. Political struggle was the major factor during the colonial period while religious and cultural awareness were responsible for the rapid growth of Indigenous churches in the post-colonial era. Another factor is the use of African language in worship. He stresses the anthropological African worldview regarding evil and good, unity and communal life. The poor economic situation in Africa and the charismatic gifts of their leaders contributed to the growth of these churches. However, he opines that "the ordinary people's lack of knowledge of the riches in Christ and in the Church contributes greatly to the growth of the independent churches in Africa" (Oborji, 2005:186). Oborji is very critical about the growth of these churches.

There are similarities and dissimilarities between *Aladura* Churches and new Charismatic Pentecostal churches in Africa. Ojo, a Nigerian Pentecostal scholar, compares the *Aladura* churches with the new Charismatic Pentecostal churches. While the *Aladura* stresses the role of the prophet as a healer, a diviner and a founder, the Charismatic church places much emphasis on the pastor who is the leader and founder. Most of the Charismatic leaders are elites from higher institutions who left secular jobs for religious activities. Nevertheless, both *Aladura* and new Pentecostal churches place emphasis on healing within their worship context and have long service hours interspersed with dancing and choruses. He maintains that while the Indigenous churches have concentrated on societal problems such as fear and epidemics, the Charismatic churches have placed more emphasis on the well-being of individuals in society in the areas of job opportunities, blissful marital relationships, academic attainments, spiritual growth and prosperity (Ojo, 2006:8-10).

Further evidence of the differences between the African Indigenous Churches and the new Pentecostal churches in Nigeria is confirmed by Fatokun, a Nigerian church historian. According to him, the Indigenous churches stress prayers, healing and

revival, while the new Pentecostal churches stress material prosperity over the spiritual. He argues that unlike the Indigenous churches, most of the new Pentecostal churches are now turning into family businesses. Fatokun is critical about the prosperity theology of the new Pentecostalism. He concludes that Indigenous churches stimulate the growth of the new Pentecostal churches. Most of the founders of the new Pentecostal churches and charismatic leaders were once members of the African Indigenous Churches (Fatokun, 2009:34-57).

AICs have a great influence on the African Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. Most of the African Pentecostal churches emerged from the African Indigenous Churches and there are many similarities between these churches. Leaders of African Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria are known to be very critical of the “old African Indigenous Churches” (AICs). The *Aladura* church (a foremost African Indigenous Church) is a spiritual church. Both the *Aladura* churches and the new Pentecostal churches stress the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit. The *Aladura* churches claim that prayer forms the bedrock of their faith and practice and that nothing is impossible with prayer. The same goes for the new Pentecostal churches. The two churches stress the individual’s prayer, loud prayer with enthusiasm and repetition of the name of Jesus and the shouting of hallelujahs (Ayegboyin, 2006:39-46).

Ayegboyin further confirms the dissimilarities between the *Aladura* churches and the charismatic movement. According to him, while the *Aladura* resort to palm fronds, water, candles, sponges and soap as faith extenders, the new Charismatic churches utilize computers projectors, optimal technologies, mass choirs and aesthetic sanctuary decorations in worship. Both the Charismatic and Indigenous churches emphasize the Holy Ghost, prayer and fasting, retreats, vigils and spiritual deliverance to provide solutions for the social and spiritual needs of the people.

He further stresses that many Yoruba Charismatic leaders had their background in Indigenous churches and most of the liturgies of the African Pentecostal churches, barring some modern innovation, are greatly influenced by Indigenous churches. The new charismatic churches do not deny the reality of the African worldview and the influence of Indigenous churches in their worship and theology, but the fact remains

that they seek new ways to minister to a sophisticated and enlightened society (Ayegboyin, 2006:37-54).

Two things become apparent from the above. One, both the Indigenous and Charismatic churches seem to proffer solutions to societal problems. While the Indigenous churches confront societal problems, the Charismatic churches provide solutions to problems of individuals. Secondly, both churches are influenced by the African spiritual heritage (Ojo, 2006:10).

Factors Affecting the Growth of African Indigenous Churches

There are many factors responsible for the rapid growth of Indigenous churches in Africa. These factors are enumerated below. One of the reasons why these churches flourish is the use of the native language in most of their worship services. As long as these churches speak the language that ordinary people on the street can understand, the church would not only survive, but would continue to blossom. The church would continue to attract more people because the Yoruba Indigenous Churches provide in their native language total solutions to the needs of their members. The Yoruba are more comfortable because these churches reflect emblems of the African personality and culture. They serve as a propagator of the undiluted Christian faith that is in conformity with the African worldview (Ayandele, 2006:397).

Healing is a major emphasis in AICs and it has contributed to the rapid growth of these churches in Africa. Healing is the most important reason for people joining AICs. Oduyoye and Amoah (1988:39) elaborate that the emphasis placed on the image of Jesus Christ as the great Healer in both Pentecostal and Indigenous churches contribute greatly to the rapid growth of African Christianity.

Healing ministries help these churches to grow rapidly, especially in Southern Nigeria where proliferation makes it impossible to keep track of their number. However, the healing ministries of most of these churches fall outside the biblical context. Though the healing ministry of Jesus is thoroughly presented in the New Testament within the context of mission, the healing ministries of most of these churches are purely intended to acquire power, wealth and fame. Oborji (2000:10-11) argues that these

churches have to take away from the so-called prayer and healing ministries some elements of the African traditional religion that are incompatible with the Gospel. The Christian faith is far more than providing solutions to the physical and psychological needs of people.

In addition, the emphasis placed on a utilitarian attitude to prayer, which invariably centres on their wishes, desires, aspirations, blessings, provisions, the knowledge of the future and protection, contributes to the rapid growth of these churches. Their emphasis on sickness, evil spirits, poverty, loneliness, barrenness, misfortunes, healing and wholeness of life in the African worldview stimulates the growth of both Indigenous and Pentecostal churches (Ayegboyin, 2006:39-46).

The African concept of life as stressed in the African Indigenous Churches contributes to the rapid growth of African Christianity. Stinton observes that “the African concept of life is fundamental to the ways in which Christians interpret and appropriate the Gospel” (Stinton, 2004:120). According to Stinton, the AICs strong emphasis on relationship and communal life is their major contribution to global Christianity.

A further reason for the rapid growth of AICs is confirmed by Appiah-Kubi. According to him, the strength of these Indigenous churches comes from their focus on the total need of man, both physical and spiritual. They encourage one another and sympathize with one another. They help and support members who are facing challenges in society. In other words, these churches have strong fellowships and relationships (Appiah-Kubi, 1979:118).

Another factor responsible for the rapid growth of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria in general and among the Yoruba in particular is the quest for power to undo the activities of evil. Burgess, a British theologian, argues that just as the Indigenous churches are influenced by the spiritual heritage, so are the Pentecostal, barring a few differences. Although the Pentecostal churches reject sacrifice and rituals, they, like Indigenous churches emphasize the quest for power, deliverance from the power of evil, healing and prayers, miracles, the communal life and the fusion of the spiritual and the physical in explaining the realities of life. The African worldview on peace

(Alafia), which connotes protection, practical guidance, health, fertility, success and material prosperity, is stressed in both Pentecostal and Indigenous churches. He, however, commends Pentecostal churches for their social ministries and the teaching of the Word of God, but criticizes them for their strong emphasis on a prosperity theology (Burgess, 2008:29-63).

One other reason why AICs continue to grow rapidly in Africa is their emphasis on “here-and-now” solutions to societal problems. Omenyo (2002:40) declares that AICs, as institutions which offer the best solutions to contemporary crises, attracts many Africans. Consequently, it can be affirmed that the major reason for the growth of AICs is the emphasis on people’s existential needs in the here-and-now and on Christ’s power and victory over evil spirits.

Another reason for the rapid growth of new African Pentecostalism has been its ability to adapt to different cultures and societies and giving contextualized expression to Christianity. Neo-Pentecostalism develops its own characteristics and identities in African Christianity without losing its global connection. The Pentecostal churches’ ability to adapt to a culture is easily accomplished in Africa where a spirit world exists. Healing and the supernatural are regarded as normal experiences of reality. In Africa, there is fusion of the secular and the sacred in explaining the reality of human existence. There is a strong belief that the spirit world has a great influence on the physical. Meyer contends that members of AICs share the understanding that individuals are connected with a higher spiritual power, either good or bad, which governs their lives and reality of life (Meyer, 1999:145).

There are some theologians who argue, however, that the “here-and-now” emphasis is not biblical, but an influence of the African traditional worldview that tends to link the good life and material blessings to the favour of the gods in this present time. Appiah-Kubi disagrees with this view as he believes that Africans respond to any religion that is down-to-earth. It proffers solutions for the existential needs of the people. He stresses the appeal that the Indigenous churches have for the people of Ghana where they “... have attracted many adherents among the Akans, who believe that for any religion to be meaningful, it must be practical, dynamic, and problem solving” (Appiah-Kubi, 1979:120). Moreover, AICs became popular churches in

African countries because they affirmed the reality of God through the power of the Holy Spirit and other supernatural entities within the African context to bless them and to give them solutions to their problems. Destructive spirits seek to destroy people, but the emphasis on Jesus' power to destroy and subdue evil powers does the opposite: it empowers them.

Prayer as a means of solving human problems contributes to the rapid growth of these churches. Akeem Lasisi, a Nigerian journalist, confirms this by saying that the special interest of Indigenous churches in solving people's problems of sickness, barrenness, poverty, unproductiveness and deliverance from satanic oppressions through prayer attracts many Africans to these churches. Although Pastor Adeboye of The Redeemed Christian Church of God did not disclose the problem that drove him to the Indigenous church, he affirmed that problems led him to join the church and that he got solutions to his challenges in the Yoruba Indigenous Church through the help of the late Joseph Akindayomi, the church founder. Lasisi, to corroborate Pastor Adeboye's claim, noted that through suffering, God brought the best out of Pastor E.A. Adeboye. He remarked that it was difficulties and their solutions that guided Pastor Adeboye into his spiritual greatness (Lasisi, 2012:7).

The liturgy of AICs also attracted many people. Mbiti argues that one of the significant aspects of these churches is that they point to a way in which African Christians seek to be or remain authentically African while at the same time being ecclesiastically universal (Mbiti, 1974:7). The African authentic way of life reflecting in these churches, contributes to their growth. Mbiti repeatedly holds that African "old" religions have been a major factor in the rapid spread of Christianity in Africa (Mbiti, 1976:125-135). Asamoah-Gyadu describes AICs and neo-Pentecostals in Africa as "Pneumatic Christianity" because of their strong emphasis on the Holy Spirit and the democratization of the gifts of the Spirit. He maintains that neo-Pentecostalism is not a denomination, but an "ecclesiological movement" because it brings together people with shared experiences of the Holy Spirit. The aim of the charismatic or neo-Pentecostals is renewal of world Christianity towards the restoration of the experience of the power of the Holy Spirit, interpreted as gifts of the Spirits, which

include speaking in different languages, healing, vision, and revelation. These are being relegated in the historic mission churches (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013:71-78).

Special emphasis on the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit is stressed in most of the Nigerian Churches. Akhilomen uses “Pentecostal Christianity” as a phrase in Nigeria to describe

“... all shades of Christian expressions, cutting across denominations and sects, which emphasize the abiding presence and efficacious employment of the gifts of the Holy Spirit manifesting in faith or spiritual healing, speaking in tongues, prophecy, seeing visions, etc.” (Akhilomen, 2004:171).

Akhilomen stresses the function of the Holy Spirit in all churches in Nigeria.

Preaching in Nigerian Churches

The content preached in Nigerian churches is essential in this study. Adeboye, a former Mathematics lecturer and the General Overseer of The Redeemed Christian Church of God, provides a picture of what many Pentecostal leaders preach in Nigeria. He feels that there is an overemphasis on the devil, demons and deliverance. Some preachers even see themselves as specialists in casting out demons. While he agrees that demons are real in Africa, he postulates that not every problem comes from demonic attacks; rather many problems arise from a lack of self-control, poor choice, lack of dedication and commitment to Christ. He argues that the Church in Nigeria should emphasize commitment, dedication, diligence, obedience, faithfulness, honesty and self-control. Adeboye is critical about preaching in Nigeria. His critical outlook also serves as a motivation for this study (Adeboye, 2005:316).

Adeleru, a Baptist theologian, elaborates further on the content preached in most of the Nigerian churches. According to him, the reason why preaching does not transform lives in Nigeria is that its emphasis in many Nigerian churches are not on the transformation of life, the salvation of souls, holiness and the redemptive works of Jesus, but on the demonstration of spiritual powers over demons and over all kinds of evil forces. The message preached is a motivation for raising funds through the manipulation of people’s fears. It assures the congregation of overseas travelling, victory over enemies, promises of prosperity, healing and miracles. In his words,

“today’s sermons promise prosperity to people who spend the largest number of hours at prayer vigils rather than at work” (Adeleru, 2010:55). People are encouraged to seek wealth while not working. Many preachers forget the admonition of Paul that says “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10) NIV. If they want to penetrate and transform the Nigerian society, preachers have to preach a sound biblical message that will lead to righteous living and struggling against sin. Adeleru is also critical about the preaching emphases in Nigeria. Both Adeleru and Adeboye call for balanced preaching that will transform lives.

Worship in AICs

There is the need to look critically at worship in new-Pentecostal churches. Fatokun, a Nigerian religious scholar, confirms this. He insists that in the new-Pentecostal churches, an obsession to draw and keep contemporary youth has caused the leaders to turn worship into mere entertainment, showmanship and celebration. In an attempt to retain the youth in the mission churches, mainline churches have been sucked into a race to keep their young people, setting aside focus on God, the confrontation of sin and the building of moral lives.

Despite modernization in Nigeria, Nigerian Pentecostal churches interpret Christianity from the African cultural perspective. Nigerian Pentecostals interpret Christianity through the lens of the existing religious formations in their worship. They particularly emulate the traditional churches’ liturgy pertaining to spiritual power, healing, prosperity and deliverance in societies such as the Yoruba. According to these churches, the thirst for spiritual power (*agbara*) to enhance life attracts them to all Christian churches, including the Pentecostal. The main reason for the rapid growth of churches among the Yoruba has never changed. It is among others the quest for both spiritual and physical powers as a means to solve their problems (Fatokun, 2009:34-57).

3.3.1 *The Origin of the Yoruba Indigenous Churches*

The Yoruba Indigenous Churches were born out of the historical circumstance at the end of the First World War in 1918. The year marked the great epidemic that plagued

the world. The epidemic was described as *Ila Olode*, (the small pox), that claimed many lives in Nigeria, especially among the Yoruba. Oshitelu, a Nigerian religious scholar, aptly states that the epidemic of the early 20th century contributed immensely to a spiritual consciousness. There was abject poverty and terrifying diseases. There was an acute presence of demonic attacks in society and the epitome of the demonic was seen in witchcraft (Oshitelu, 2007:26-27). Prayer was seen as the immediate way of combating this evil. We shall now look at the origin of the Cherubim and Seraphim and the Celestial Church of Christ.

3.3.2 *The Cherubim and Seraphim*

The Cherubim and Seraphim is the name of the oldest and most prominent Yoruba Indigenous Church in Nigeria. This church was founded and led by the Yoruba. It is found virtually in every area occupied by the Yoruba. It became a full-fledged prayer group in 1916 in Ijebu-Ode. Prophet Moses Orimolade, the founder of the Cherubim and Seraphim, was a prince of Ikare in the Akoko Division of Ondo State. He was born in 1870 with a physical disability in one leg. Prior to his ministry, he claimed to have seen a vision in which he was instructed to take water from the stream for divine healing. He obeyed the divine instruction and was partially healed, though he limped for the rest of his life. Due to this vision and the partial healing of his leg, his followers strongly believed that their church was not founded by an ordinary human being, but by the divine spirit (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 1997:81).

As a result of this divine instruction and healing, Orimolade became a travelling evangelist. He moved from one place to another for revivals that witnessed divine healings. He moved outside Yoruba territory to Ilorin, the present Kwara State capital, for revivals. There were great signs and wonders in Ilorin, but he was not allowed to plant a church there because Ilorin was predominantly a Muslim community. He proceeded from Ilorin to Ibadan, an important Yoruba city. In Ibadan, his ministry grew and whenever he led prayers, miracles followed. He established a prayer band in Ibadan and later moved to Lagos. He lodged with a sexton of the Holy Trinity, *Ebute-Ero*, Lagos in 1924. In Lagos, he was given the name "*Baba Aladura*", the praying father, because he went from house to house praying for people's needs (Omoyajowo, 1982:42).

During the course of his evangelistic work in Lagos, Orimolade had an encounter with a young girl called Christiana Abiodun Akinsowon, a citizen of the Benin Republic who was a domestic servant in the home of Mr and Mrs Hunny Moitte. On June 18, 1925, Abiodun with her friends went to witness the Catholic Corpus Christi in Lagos. At this occasion, she had an encounter with a divine power, and went into a trance for many days. She did not regain consciousness until they sent someone for Prophet Orimolade to pray for her. After Prophet Orimolade prayed, she recovered and narrated her divine experience. Her testimony attracted many people to her residence. This caused embarrassment for her master, who sent her back to Orimolade. In Orimolade's home, many people came for prayers and wanted to hear more about her testimony. Orimolade used this opportunity to establish a powerful prayer meeting in his home, which eventually resulted in the present Cherubim and Seraphim Church. Perhaps one of the greatest secrets of the growth of this church is the endowment of God's power in Orimolade that manifested in healing, prayer and evangelism (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 1997:82).

The name of the church came after a three-day fasting and prayer exercise. On the third day, September 9, 1925, a female member saw a vision with the inscription "SE" written in fire in the sky. The Reverend Barber of the United Native African Church (UNA), Lagos, interpreted the letter as SERAFU (Seraph, because these are the first two letters of the word seraphim). The whole congregation accepted this interpretation and the church adopted the name Egbe Serafu (The Seraphim Society). Later the Kerubu (Cherubim) was incorporated and the name became officially known as Cherubim and Seraphim. As a result of Abiodun's testimony and her other spiritual gifts, the church experienced tremendous growth. Orimolade and Abiodun were the two personalities that moved the church to greater heights. Orimolade recommended that the church continues to wear a white garment for worship. The comprehensive history of this church is beyond the scope of this study. However, this short account gives us a clue about the founder and the origin of the church.

3.3.3 *The Celestial Church of Christ*

The Celestial Church of Christ is another prominent Yoruba Indigenous Church in Nigeria. Pastor Samuel Bilewu Joseph Oshoffa, the founder of this church, was born on May 18, 1909 in a hamlet belonging to a village very close to Porto-Novo, Dahomey. Porto-Novo presently is in the Benin Republic (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 1997:98). Oshoffa traced his family background to Abeokuta, one of the major cities in Yoruba territories. It was from Abeokuta that his grandfather migrated to Dassa-Zoume, a village in Dahomey. All the children of his father were female, except Oshoffa, who was a covenant son. His father had prayed to God to give him a male child and had made a covenant that the boy would be dedicated to God's service (Olupona, 1987:45-46). Because of his father's covenant, when he was seven, his father put him under the tutelage of a Methodist minister in Porto-Novo and he served as a warden to Bishop David Hodonu Loco of the Methodist Church of Porto-Novo.

Oshoffa had the gift of music and later became a choirmaster in one of the Methodist churches (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 1997:81-84). He did not have formal theological education, but learned carpentry work. He received a divine call in May 1947 when he was lost in a forest for three months. As a result of his solitude in the forest, he was restricted to eating honey and drinking water, and he devoted his time to fervent prayer and fasting. During this wilderness experience, he claimed he received the divine call to become a worldwide evangelist, pastor, leader and founder of a new church (Olagunju, 1985:33-36). In this memorable time, Oshoffa allegedly saw great lightning coupled with a voice of assurance from an angel of God that the Almighty was in support of his ministry. Mrs Zvenue, one of his prayer band members, who went into a trance, confirmed this vision (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 1997:97-99).

Deji Ayegboyin notes that for the next thirteen days, Oshoffa was in high spirits; could not sleep, but heard and received revelations and doctrines according to which the church was to operate. The name given to the church was recorded by Mr Alexander Yanga, a member of the church as *Ijo Mimo Kristi lati Orun Wa* □ the Holy Assembly of Christ from Heaven. The Yoruba name aided the spread of the church in Yoruba territories. Many people moved from the Western established churches to

this church. Omoyajowo declares that this church formation with its Yoruba background is probably one of the fastest growing and most influential Indigenous churches in the world. The reason is that they would invite people with existential problems to come for solutions. In the process, they meet the spiritual needs of the underprivileged members of society (Omoyajowo, 1978:96). Because of the warm reception of the church in Lagos and opposition to Pastor Oshoffa in Porto-Novo, he left Porto-Novo in 1952 and finally settled down in Makoko, Lagos, Nigeria. The church was fully registered under the Land Perpetual Succession Caption of Nigeria on November 24, 1958. In 1977, the church established its International Headquarters at Ketu, a suburb of Lagos. Before Oshoffa's death in 1985, the church had grown into a well-established internationally recognized entity with headquarters in Lagos. Members of the church wear white garment apparel and go into worship barefoot (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 1997:99-101).

The rapid growth of the Celestial Church of Christ can be attributed to the charismatic gift of the founder, Prophet Oshoffa. The story of his call and his family background helped the growth of the church. Max Weber's theory of charismatic leadership gives us a tool for examining the beginning of this church and the authenticity of its growth, especially when it comes to the relationship between the founder and his members. Although Weber's theory of charisma focuses on organizational bureaucracy and legitimacy in relationship to leadership and followership, it can also be useful to examine a religious movement. Weber defines charisma as "the quality of an individual's personality by virtue of which he is set apart from other men and treated as empowered with supernatural, superhuman or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities" (Weber, 1947:358). Weber's theory of charismatic leadership and its application is therefore relevant to this religious movement.

The authenticity of the charismatic leadership of the founder of the Celestial Church of Christ was recognized by his followers. Adeoti Oshin, the younger sister of A.A. Bada, the successor of S.B. Oshoffa, recognized the grace of God in Oshoffa. Adeoti affirms that Oshoffa had the gift of healing. Members of this church did not only set the foundation for the healing ministry, they also enhanced the charismatic gift of the founder, who demonstrated the power of God in his private and public life (Oshin,

2011). It was his gift of healing, the accounts of his call and his personal encounter in the forest that made his members perceive him as a superman called by God for their generation. The founder's gift of healing and the power to cast out demons helped the Celestial Church of Christ to become the fastest growing Yoruba Indigenous Church.

3.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHERUBIM AND SERAPHIM, AND THE CELESTIAL CHURCH OF CHRIST

For us to understand the characteristics of these churches, their identity is important. The definition of an identity sparks debate among scholars of different fields. How can a person or a group of people be identified? Can a person be identified by what he thinks, feels, does and achieves or else, by his roles or relationships? (Dunn, 2003:615-616.).

In the same vein, how can we identify the characteristics of these churches? Is it by their being or their doing? Is it by their worships, roles or assignments committed to their hands, context or their worldviews? It is my argument that we need them all. Their characteristics can be identified by their being, their roles, worldviews, practices, context and liturgy.

The characteristics of the Cherubim and Seraphim and the Celestial Church of Christ include prayer, divine healing, the white garment apparel, use of candles, holy water, emphasis on evil forces, sacred objects and places, and the forbidding of corpses in their local assemblies. Of course, there are dissimilarities between them as well. Nevertheless, since their forms of worship are highly related and their beliefs and practices strongly influenced by the Yoruba spiritual heritage, it is advisable to examine their characteristics side by side as if they belonged to the same denomination.

3.4.1 *The White Apparel*

One of the visible marks of these churches is the white garments. The church members wear white garments and always remove their shoes before entering their sanctuary or mercy land. They maintain that no foot-wear of any kind is allowed into

the house of prayer (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 1997:95). They liken this to the experience of Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:5). According to members of these churches, it is a mark of honour to be barefooted in the presence of God. The white garment, they affirm, also symbolizes purity, sacredness and sanctification. They believe that *Olodumare* is holy and whenever they appear before him, they must wear white clothing. These churches believe that the white robe is an indication of a white heart and the oneness of heart.

Wearing white garments for worship is one of the areas where the Yoruba religion has influenced Yoruba Indigenous Churches. In Yoruba religion, *Orisa-nla* (arch divinity) is referred to a king in white clothing and his adherents often wear immaculate white dress. Members of Indigenous churches always wear the white garments on Sundays and at special worships because they believe they are coming into the presence of the *Olodumare* (Idowu, 1962:72). Members who are above twelve years, wear white garments during the Sunday worship, mid-week and special services such as funerals and harvests. Cherubim and Seraphim members remove their shoes before entering the sanctuary, whereas members of Celestial Church never wear shoes with their garments both in public and while on church premises.

3.4.2 *Divine Healing*

Divine healing is another characteristic of these churches. Members believe that success, achievement and good health are the result of divine favour and that suffering and sickness are the result of witchcraft, sinning against *Olodumare*, the ancestors, or breaking of the taboos. These churches also believe that divine healing through prayer is a means of proving God's faithfulness in their midst. They affirm that power to heal was directed not only at the Apostles, but to all believers in Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8; Ayegboyin & Ishola, 1997:22-23). Appiah-Kubi observes that the belief in divine healing has a great influence in many African Indigenous Churches. From his interview with members on why they joined these churches, he gathered that many had been sick for a long time, that they had tried all forms of treatment, but to no avail. They had then been advised by some friends to go to prophet so-and-so. They had been there and now they feel better. Appiah-Kubi further argues that many people join Indigenous churches because of the trace of African traditions, the

supernatural powers of the prophets and the healing miracles that counteract the force of evil, disease, suffering and witchcraft (Appiah-Kubi, 1979:120).

A visit was undertaken to the Sacred Cherubim and Seraphim Church, El-Bethel Shiloh Cathedral, Agege, Lagos, to witness a divine healing service. This church organizes special prayers for divine healing on Wednesdays and Fridays. During one of these prayer services, I observed that every member was expected to pray five times: at six o'clock, nine o'clock, twelve noon, three o'clock and six o'clock in the evening, with fasting. Prayers were said with much enthusiasm and confidence, and it sounded sometimes like the petitioners were coercing God to grant their request. The leader raised a prayer point and all members prayed aloud simultaneously. After a while, the leader rounded off the prayer by ringing the bell three times with the phrase "in Jesus name" and members responded "amen" three times. After the corporate prayers, individuals would disperse to pray alone and later converge to pray at the scheduled time. Sometimes, prayer became spontaneous and everyone burst into it. The members believe that healing can also take place during Sunday services and as a result there is an expectation of divine healing in every service. There is good reason at this point, to explore the theology behind divine healing more thoroughly.

Theological Reflection on Divine Healing

Divine healing occupies a prominent role in African Indigenous Churches. John Thomas, an American New Testament scholar, points out three general approaches to divine healing. Firstly, the group that acknowledges the devil and demons as the origin and spirit behind all ailments or illnesses and use exorcism as a means of deliverance. They affirm that Satan and his agents would come to steal, kill and to destroy, but that Christ would come to give life in abundance. This school of thought sees divine healing as part of the abundant life (John 10:10). Just as Christ casts out demons to set captives free from sickness, so also are the believers to cast out demons behind any sickness. However, the victims must believe in Christ and do away with sins (Thomas, 1993:1-25). The above mode of thinking is common among the Indigenous and Pentecostal churches in Nigeria.

Members of these churches believe that every suffering or success has a spiritual undertone. This is in line with the African traditional belief about the reality of good and evil. Leaders of these churches strongly believe that human destiny is regulated by spiritual beings. They claim to have a special knowledge of evil spirits that cause problems in the life of worshippers. Ayegboyin contends that the Cherubim and Seraphim church “claims to have conscious knowledge of the evil spirits which sow seeds of oppression, discomfort, set afloat ill-luck, disease, induce barrenness, sterility and the like to evil spirits” (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 1997:88).

The second school of divine healing is the group that upholds that Satan and demons do not cause all ailments. They hold that the origin of sickness is man’s disobedience to the divine instructions in the Garden of Eden. Sickness and suffering, they maintain, are the consequences of sin. Consequently, irrespective of one’s belief in Christ, ailments, pains and suffering would not be completely eradicated until the second coming of Christ. Shorter argues that suffering has spiritual value and sometimes bring the best out of the sufferer (Shorter, 1985:4). Lasisi, in support of this line of thought, notes that difficulties led Pastor E.A. Adeboye, the General Overseer of the Redeemed Church of God, into his spiritual greatness. As Adeboye was looking for a solution to the problems in his life, he joined the church and eventually became its General Overseer. Problems or suffering sometimes occur to bring out the best in people or in an organization.

Thomas describes the third school of healing as “functional deists.” This school believes that the devil causes sickness and suffering in human beings, but God has the power to heal. The school refuses to admit that it is God’s will to heal every sickness. Their beliefs emanate from the experience that sometimes they had faith for healing, but healing did not take place. They then conclude that it is not the will of God to heal all diseases. As a result, they place less emphasis on divine healing. Whenever their members fall sick, they pray for them and ask them to seek medical attention. Typical examples of this category of school are mainline and some Pentecostal churches (Thomas, 1993:1-25).

The theological reflection of Thomas on the source of sickness and healing serves as the conceptual framework to understand the causality of sickness and the healing

process among the Yoruba Indigenous Churches. According to Thomas, the origin of sickness and healing process in the New Testament has some spiritual undertones. In the New Testament world, the early Christians acknowledged that Satan and demons were the evil spirits behind all ailments or illnesses. They affirmed that Satan and his agents came to inflict pain on human beings, but Christ came to give life in abundance. Consequently, the Yoruba Indigenous Churches hold that Satan and his agents are the cause of sickness and divine healing through effective prayers in the precious name of Jesus brings healing. As Christ casts out demons to set captives free from all kinds of sickness, so also leaders of these churches can cast out evil spirits behind all forms of ailment. Hence, members of these churches believe strongly in prayers to undo all activities of Satan and his agents.

The members of Yoruba Indigenous Churches believe in divine healing with the use of water, oil, herbs and the name of Jesus Christ. The healing always follows the same process unless the Holy Spirit intervenes on some occasions. This includes the confession of sins by the petitioners; it is followed by the expulsion of the evil spirit, priestly blessings by sprinkling of holy water kept permanently on the altar and in the mercy land, and the use of holy names (Ayegboyin & Ishola. 1997:95).

These churches also believe in the efficacy of water and candle symbolism for healing and protection. According to these churches, water sanctifies members and purifies them of any harmful spirits. Water reveals the major spectrum of their religious activities, relationships and rituals. According to these churches, water symbolizes life, power, protection, victory, healing power, favour, strength and purification (Adogame, 2000:59-60). Members believe that no one can survive without water. Through water, every member is divinely connected to purification, healing and salvation.

This belief in the efficacy of water for purification purposes is not limited to this particular church. In fact, it is also reported by Meyer, who mentions an interview with one of the leaders of an independent church in Ghana. According to Meyer, Reverend S. Amedzro, the founder of the Lords's Agbelender Church, Peki, Ghana, said that the Church of the Lord Agbelender was one of the first African Independent Churches in Peki. Meyer argues that this church and most of the AICs believe in

water and candle symbolism. Amedzro explains the significance of water and candles: “if you drink it, the evil spirit comes out” (water); “no evil spirit or witch can touch you” (oil); “they drive away evil spirits” (candle); “it has healing power” (holy water) and “when the devil sees the cross, he won’t approach you” (a necklace with a big cross). These churches see prayers as spiritual powers and weapons to undo the activities of enemies (Meyer, 1999:113).

The Church of the Lord in Nigeria also shares these practices. In their prayers for healing and protection against enemies, they pour water into a new pot, they read Psalms several times with the Holy Name - JAH- JAHIEUJAH (Most Victorious King), bath in the water and there shall be healing. Turner recorded an example of prayer of protection in the Church of the Lord. This church declares:

“If enemies rise against thee, recite this Psalm (Psalm 7), standing facing the East in the midnight with the Holy Name - ELL ELLIJJONI. You will be naked. And the enemy will be defeated at will. ...ELL ELLIJJONI Most Great, Powerful, and Gracious God, change the hearts of my foes. Let them seek my good instead of evil they wish, as Thou didst unto Abraham in the past when he called thee by this name Amen” (Turner, 1967:74).

These churches use herbs for healing and the casting out demons. Many leaders combine the use of herbs with metaphysical powers derived from spirit beings. Sometimes, instead of casting out the evil spirit, they merely seek permission to heal their clients. They just negotiate with the evil spirits and make a deal with them. Occasionally, the people who come for healing are asked to live on the church premises for a specific period. They are also asked to perform rituals like walking naked in the night and bathing in the stream of rivers for cleansing (Adeyanju, 2009:155).

These churches believe that there is no separation between the sacred and the secular. Therefore, they begin the healing process with the aid of spiritual powers. They hold that whatever is damaged or repaired in the spiritual realm affects the whole universe and this would manifest itself in the visible world (Oguntade, 2013).

3.4.3 Women having Their Menstrual Period

Although there are many women in these churches, the church forbids women having their menstrual period to enter the sanctuary. Women in such a condition are banned from entering the church because it is believed that the angels would abandon the church at the hint of their smell. Any woman seen sitting down outside during the church service is regarded as unclean because she is going through her menstrual period (Imasogie, 1991:21). Crumbley, an American female anthropologist, argues that AICs do not only prevent menstruating women from entering the sanctuary, but also prohibit them from performing certain activities such as reading or touching the Scriptures (Crumbley, 1992:505). To the members of these churches, the church and the Scriptures are holy, but menstruating women are unholy. The idea of forbidding menstruating women from touching sacred things or entering the sanctuary is seen in the light of Leviticus 15. Most of their theologies and doctrines are greatly influenced by the Old Testament (Frimpong, 2011:17-77).

Not surprisingly, the founders of these churches adopted the idea of sacredness from the Yoruba spiritual heritage. Meyer reveals that among the Ewe community, menstruating women have to leave their compound and stay in a hut on the outskirts of town. Menstruating wives are not allowed to cook for their husbands (Meyer, 1999:4). Like the Ewe in Ghana, the Yoruba have special places such as three-crossed ways, mountains, rocks, waterfalls and animals that are considered so sacred that a menstruating woman must not move near or touch them. The corresponding places within the sanctuary of the churches that the menstruating women are not allowed to touch include altars, iron rod of power and certain colours.

3.4.4 Liturgy and Worship

From my observation of the churches I visited during the course of this study, there are two reasons for worship. Firstly, human beings worship divine beings for who they are in themselves and secondly for what they are to the adherents and to receive their favour. Worship is engagement with supernatural beings. In the AICs, there is greater scope for freedom of movement, spontaneity and expression of emotion than in mission churches. The expression of emotion in AICs worship is an

influence of traditional religion. The AICs incorporate African ways of worship into their liturgy. This is built around an ardent desire to communicate with and experience the presence of the supernatural. The incorporation of an aspect of traditional religion into AICs worship makes members feel at home in worship. Worship in the AICs is appealing and people are actively involved. Hymns and shouts of hallelujah or amen usually interrupt preachers' homilies. Their worship service is full of emotions, manifested in music, dancing, clapping of hands and local musical instruments. As Mbiti notes that music, singing and dancing reach deep into the innermost parts of African peoples, and many things come to the surface under musical inspiration which otherwise may not be readily revealed" (Mbiti,1989:67).

Worship takes long because of the belief that believers have to be sensitive to the move of the Spirit. Some of them start their Sunday worship by nine o'clock in the morning and remain until two in the afternoon. In the AICs, worship means that members come together to reflect on the goodness of God in all acts of service. They have created a system of worship that provides room for the active participation of all members. Usually the leaders start the worship by jingling a bell three times in order to invite God, Jesus and angels to join them in worship (Abogunrin, 1988:15). Their preachers begin the sermon by shouting "*Alleu O*" to which the congregation responds "*Allelu.*" This is repeated until there is a final "*Alleluia.*" The African Indigenous preachers tell stories and parables interlaced with testimonies and songs to strengthen their sermons. Piercing prophecies, songs with ecstatic noise, including speaking in tongues, may be heard during the service (Ayegboyin, 2006:49).

The atmosphere while giving offerings is that of celebration. The one who leads the collection of offerings starts with the phrase, "offering time is indeed a blessing time." Members are joyous and make their way to the front singing and dancing as they drop their offerings in the bowl. These songs are lively, short and rendered in a simple tune. They are repeated so that all the members can sing them effectively (Ayegboyin, 2006:50).

Testimonies also constitute an important aspect of their worship. A testimony is a public declaration of any favour received from God. Believers are willing to give a thanksgiving offering to God. These testimonies are usually about deliverance from

accident or illness or about success in the place of work. Members enthusiastically give testimonies and the others join them to praise God. Testimony is another influence of the African traditional religion on AICs.

At certain seasons when the Yoruba celebrate their festivals, it is customary on the anniversary day that offerings be made publicly to a deity in appreciation of his assistance in the life of the adherents. In Yoruba religion, ingratitude is regarded as a grievous sin, therefore the worshippers must express gratitude to the deity in a substantial way. Public testimonies have helped considerably to attract converts into AICs. Some of the testimonies are published in the church magazine.

Local musical instruments, especially the *Sekere* (a musical tool made with calabash and decorated with beads) along with talking drums are used in their worship. They motivate vision and trance through spontaneous singing of choruses and clapping of hands and through the provision of interpretations of dreams and visions (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 1997:103-104).

These churches have the Bible as translated into in their local languages, a grace that enabled members to have access to the Scriptures and interpret it through their cultural background. The reading of the Scriptures in the mother-tongue has helped the growth of these churches. The fact that God speaks to them directly in their own dialect is instructive. Bediako argues, "Each of us with the Bible in our mother-tongue can truly claim to hear God speaking to us in our own language" (Bediako, 1992:32). These churches argue that reading the Bible in their mother-tongue makes them feel at home in worship and at the same time helps them to hear God directly.

The expression of feelings or emotions in worship is another influence of the Yoruba spiritual heritage. They are unconstrained and emotional in worship, dancing and the clapping. Special note is given in praise and thanksgiving to honour God in a way similar to the Yoruba traditional religion. The Yoruba express their appreciation to God through praise, dancing and thanksgiving. It is the way they acknowledge their dependence on God and express their joy over God's providence. They express God's nearness in praise. When the Europeans brought Christianity initially, it was for most of the Africans a silent and dull experience, only hymns were allowed and

prayers were offered silently. This led to resentment because it deprived people of expressing their emotions before God. The Indigenous churches broke the yoke of silent prayers. People were able to sing spontaneous choruses and hymns, and dance to the accompaniment of the local drums. These innovations significantly account for their rapid growth (Oshitelu, 2007:121).

3.4.5 *The Praying Church*

Other peculiarities of these churches include praying with the aid of prayer paraphernalia such as fasting, water, candles, oil, incense and other physical objects. These churches emphasize much praying because they believe that nothing is impossible with prayers (Omoyajowo, 1982:42). They begin their prayers by invoking the name of Jesus three times. They use the Old Testament and imprecatory Psalms very often in their prayer services. They have some specific places for prayers such as mountains, riversides and beaches.

On a visit to the Ayo Ni Cherubim and Seraphim Sunday worship, I observed that the mind and attention of the *Aladura* members were generally alert during their services. Members prayed aloud. They prayed in response to the prayer points raised by the prayer coordinator. There were times that three or more people were requested to offer a prayer on specific points. This caused them to concentrate because anyone of them could be called upon at any time to lead the prayer.

In addition, this provided an opportunity for members to learn the art of prayer. In my observation, every member was involved in the prayers. This encourages the idea of the priesthood of all believers where both the leaders and the members alike participate in the worship. This is commendable in *Aladura* churches, unlike mission churches where the act of worship and services are the sole responsibility of officiating ministers. The expectation of many who attend their prayer meetings is to prosper, enjoy good health, long life and financial breakthroughs. Leaders always pray and lead members to pray for financial breakthroughs. Leaders pray for government workers to receive fat salaries and sizeable promotion, and for farmers to experience rainfall on their farms for greater crop output. They also pray for traders to obtain the capital to expand their businesses and to make profit, and for debtors to

be able to pay their debts. These prayers attract many people because they want to leave poverty behind them. In other words, praying for economic strength strengthens the growth of the Indigenous churches. At present, prayers for prosperity are not limited to Indigenous churches, but also extend to both mainline and Pentecostal churches who engage in the theology of prosperity.

Another emphasis on prayer service in Indigenous churches is the ritual prayer services organized for pregnant women. In ritual prayers for pregnant women, a candlestick, water and three stones are required in the Celestial Church of Christ. The leader would light the candle and place it inside a container with a little water until the candle burned out. He would then ask the pregnant woman to rub her belly with the three stones to avert or remove any evil power militating against the pregnancy. At the end of the ritual, the pregnant woman would take the water home for drinking and she would be asked to throw the three stones into a stream or to drop them at a three-cross road junction. When this ritual is observed, they believe that the pregnant woman would deliver a healthy child because the enemies have been burnt out or trampled upon.

3.4.6 *Ijo Elemi: The Spiritual Church*

The strong emphasis on the activities of the Holy Spirit is another feature of these churches. The *Aladura* churches are spiritual churches. *Ijo Elemi* (spirit possession) is another name for the *Aladura* churches among the Yoruba. According to Oborji, “spirit possession” is a distinctive characteristic of AICs. Spirit possession is considered as a sign that proves a person has been called to be a prophet or leader in these churches. A spirit-possessed person (*Elemi*) has the ability to see visions, have dreams, speak in strange languages, hear extraordinary voices, and receive the power of healing and casting out evil spirits. Any person who has the capacity to manifest these signs is considered to be a prophet or prophetess and shall be highly respected as “a man or woman of God” because God speaks through such a person (Oborji, 2005:146-147).

Furthermore, this name is also given to *Aladura* churches because they stress the role, the gifts and the power of the Holy Spirit. Ayegboyin affirms that the emphasis

on the role of the Holy Spirit (*Emi mimo*) is equated with the power of God. In the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit came on mortal men and used them to perform exceptional miracles. The leaders of AICs have positive appeal, because the concern of many Yoruba is to be delivered from all attacks of evil powers. In *Aladura's* theology, God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are working together in deliverance and redemption. Hence, in *Aladura* religious consciousness, there is no need to distinguish between the person of the Trinity, since the persons do not have different purposes. The three persons are credited with all that is good, glorious, wonderful, powerful and redemptive in creation as seen in their liturgy, preaching and songs (Ayegboyin, 2009:17-19).

One of the critical concerns in AICs is the spirit's influence in healing and deliverance. These churches believe in both benevolent and malevolent spirits that can favour or harm individuals and society. In African spiritual heritage, evil spirits are warded off through rituals and sacrifices to the deities in an effort to protect or preserve individuals and the community and to gain the favour of the spirit world. Consequently, to deny the existence of the spirit in the reality of life in Africa is a failure to understand a crucial element in African worldview. The early missionaries who refused to note of spirit causality of evil experienced many setbacks in their evangelistic approach in Africa. As observed, the AICs who took into account the spirit world's influences on people's behaviour in their theology and liturgy attract many people into their churches.

3.5 CONTINUITIES OF THE YORUBA SPIRITUAL HERITAGE IN AICS

The goal of this segment is to indicate some areas of continuity between Yoruba spiritual heritage and Yoruba Indigenous Churches. "Continuity" in this context refers to that which all religions in the world have much in common because the Supreme Being has disclosed himself to all people in their religions through nature and conscience. There are many points of contact between Christianity and other religions (Gehman, 2013:239-240). Turaki notes "Some elements of the African myths of creation and origins have their expressions in African Christianity" (Turaki, 2001:77).

3.5.1 Christology

The Yoruba believe in a hierarchy of powers. Where someone's power ends, someone else's begins. Where one person uses power to manipulate, another would employ power to set free. This is seen in the Christology of most Yoruba Indigenous Churches. They believe that evil powers exist, but that the efficacious power of the blood of Jesus and the authority of His name surpass all powers. Most of their songs, prayers and messages are replete with the mentioning of the powers of Jesus over the powers of Satan, witchcraft and demons. This concept of Christology is in line with the classical Christian idea of the supremacy of Christ, who is not only above all visible and invisible powers, but also the Liberator of Christians. Ephesians 1:19-21 and Colossians 1:16-17 are self-explanatory and have deeper meanings in *Aladura* churches. Obaje argues that the African concept of Christology speaks to burning issues that were neglected by the missionaries. These issues include "spiritual undernourishment, material poverty, suffering, corruption, disease, demonic oppression, witches, wizards, wickedness, ignorance and ..." In other words, he maintains that a relevant Christology must address the world of its immediate audience (Obaje, 1990:3).

Aladura churches recognize the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. They see Christ as Lord and Saviour, Healer, Mediator and Liberator. Oduyoye and Amoah emphasize the liberation role of Jesus Christ among African women. They contend that Christ transcends cultural boundaries, spirits and that therefore religious and cultural practices that suppress women have also been transcended in Christology (Oduyoye & Amoah, 1988:35-46).

The understanding that the *Aladura* churches have of Christology is spontaneous and closer to the "grassroots level" of the African life. Their Christology emanated from the cultural adaptation of their faith in the Yoruba worldview. Their Christology includes *Oluwosan Ode Orun* (the Healer from heaven), *Asiwaju* (Leader), *Olori ijo* (The Head of the church), *Alagbara* (All-powerful), *Olubori* (The Conqueror), *Oludande* (The Deliverer) and *Olufihan* (He who reveals) (Ayegboyin, 2005:11-21).

The idea of Jesus as a mediator is predominant in the Yoruba culture. Among the Yoruba, the King does not generally communicate directly with the people. The

people normally speak to the King through an intermediary. Hence, the mediator receives and transmits the message from the King to the people and vice versa. This concept makes the mediatory role of Christ in these churches meaningful and relevant in the Yoruba context. They believe that Christ plays the role of the traditional intermediary who preserves due order in man's approach to God.

The Christology centres on good health of individuals and victory over evil powers. In AICs, no talk of good health is complete without a victory over enemies. Good health is obtained in these contexts through appropriating the power in the name of Jesus Christ and the blood of Jesus Christ. In AICs, the name of Jesus Christ goes along with the usage of other healing things such as holy water, anointing oil, fruits, and other elements found in the locality.

The AICs adhere to a triumphant Christology due to Jesus's victory over death as popularly observed during the Easter celebrations. Robert Hood notes that:

"Christ's Lordship also includes triumph over demons, which, as we saw, were adopted by the New Testament from popular Judaism as manifestations of evil, and the causes for sickness and mental disorders, a belief also in African and Afro Caribbean cultures" (Hood,1979:165).

The significance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is brought to bear during the annual Easter celebrations when members of Nigerian churches hold processions through the streets of major cities in Nigeria, dramatizing the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ on the Good Friday and Easter Monday.

The *Aladura* churches regard Jesus as a Priest. Jesus' priestly role manifests itself in their terminologies. They see Jesus as *Omo Olorun* (Jesus, the son of God), *Apata aye r'aiye* (Rock of Ages), *Oga Ogo* (Lord of glory), *Oludande* (the Deliverer), *Olugbala* (Saviour), *Olutusile* (Liberator) (Ayegboyin, 2005:11-21). In Yoruba religion, a traditional priest is an intermediary between the spirit world and the natural realm. The priest is often referred to as an *Onisegun*, a herbalist, or a *babalawo*, a diviner in the community who sees into the spiritual realm and relates with spiritual beings that the normal eye cannot see. He is the judge who mediates between individuals, families and communities and applies correct sanctions where desirable. However,

the *Aladura* churches are reluctant in ascribing the image of the local priest, popularly called *babalawo* to Jesus because the *babalawo* are mere humans with limitations, and use all kinds of objects to aid the healing process. Unlike these traditional healers, the healing virtues of Jesus are supernatural and activated by faith.

In some African groups, the role of ancestors is prominent in the communities as predecessors or founders, protectors and guardians to whom the living owe allegiance through regular sacrifices and rituals. They are believed to be the living dead and in some cultures are respected because of their role and continuous presence. This is why some African theologians subscribe to the notion of reimagining Jesus as an ancestor in the African context because he is the founder, sustainer and provider for his family, the church and he lives with them constantly.

Van't Spijker, a Dutch theologian and anthropologist, argues that for the first generation of missionaries, the veneration of ancestors was the most difficult aspect of African tradition to unite with Christianity. In his words, veneration of ancestors "is perhaps the oldest, or in any case the most well-known of the themes... concerning the status of the reverence paid to ancestors. It also seems to be the theme that is most difficult to unite with Christian believes." However, he later accepts with limitations that an ancestor is a good image of Christ because ancestors are the custodians and moral authority in Africa. In other words, Christ is seen as the foremost Ancestor and can serve as a model for an African ethics and in this way function as a critical principle in African life (Van't Spijker, 1994:184).

Generally speaking, Brinkman argues that the Christological concept in AICs as stressed by Bénézet Bujo and Charles Nyamiti is powerful, immanent, and intricately part of the lives of His people. This Jesus through His death and resurrection became triumphant over the power of sin, death and the forces of evil waging war against the African continent. Christology in ancestral cult stresses the relationship between the living and the dead and Jesus is seen as the one who connects the living and the dead. Brinkman stresses, however, that all comparisons between Jesus and the African ancestors, priests, healers, prophets and others always remains just an analogy, and that means that there is only a similarity amidst greater dissimilarities. Jesus *is* never an African ancestor, healer and prophet. He can never without

restrictions be identified with them. Only in certain limited aspects can his role be compared with the role of the ancestor, healer, prophet and others (Brinkman, 2009:227-259).

3.5.2 Belief in Evil Spirits and Exorcism

Another equally important feature of these churches is the belief that behind every suffering or success is a spiritual power. In Africa evil spirits are viewed as independent and external entities that cannot act independently, but must be employed by spiritual and human agents (Mbiti, 1989:209). As mentioned, *Esu* is the spirit that is responsible for nearly all evil. It is strongly believed that *Esu* often employs human beings to make them behave maliciously against friends and neighbours. Among the Yoruba, human agents of evil are identified as *awon iya osorong*a or *awon aje* (witches), *awon oso* (wizards) and *emere* and *elegbe* (spirits of mischievous children).

Other human agents include *awon elegbe okunkun* (occultists or sorcerers) *oloogun ika* (ruthless magicians and spiteful persons who wield dark or evil influences on mortals), *lebo loogun* (demon-possessed fetish priests), *ara ile eni* (close relations), *odale ore* (conspirators) and *aseni ba ni d'aro* (mischievous companions). These human agents are believed to interfere with people's *ayanmo* (destinies) and wreck havoc on the lives of unsuspecting victims either due to personal hatred of the their victims, to avenge an evil earlier done to them, to test their power, or just for their pleasure (Ayegboyin, 2005:40-41).

There is a widespread belief in these churches that there are hindrances and obstacles to one's progress in life occasioned by the activities of cruel spirits and *Esu*. Ayegboyin (2011:169) and Awoniyi (2011:155), as noted earlier, are emphatic about the bad spirits as the authentic source of evil in *Aladura* churches. Obinna holds that there is a connection between Indigenous and Christian worldviews on the causality of evil. Obinna (2012:137) argues, "Several diseases are often seen as "attacks" from the devil, for which intensive prayers, sometimes with fasting, should be observed." According to these scholars, *Aladura* spirituality attributes evil and misfortunes to evil spirits. Meyer contends that the devil is held responsible for nearly

all kinds of sexual, culinary, material, anti-social and egoistic desires that entice people to forgo the heavenly kingdom. The devil, and not the individual person as such, is considered the cause of bad desires (Meyer, 1999:45). Meyer sheds more light on the belief that the devil is the cause of moral evil in these churches. She argues, “The existence of sickness and death, but also anti-social, immoral habits and behaviour such as greediness, were explained by reference to Satan” (Meyer, 1999:41).

Quayesi-Amakye, a Ghanaian Pentecostal scholar, argues that although some of the Ghanaian Pentecostal church leaders hold that God and human beings cannot be completely exonerated from the cause of human suffering in society, in general, many Pentecostal Indigenous Church leaders, especially the prophetic groups, have a strong belief that nothing happens accidentally. There is always, a connection between physical evil and wicked spirits (Quayesi-Amakye, 2014:257-259). To deal with human suffering, the prophetic churches employ several spiritual approaches to undo the effects of evil powers in the name of Jesus Christ. *Aladura* churches, like the Yoruba religion, trace nearly all human suffering to the devil and evil powers. Their main concern is to liberate their members from these malevolent powers through prayers. *Aladura* churches attract members because they assimilate traditional desires and integrate traditional patterns of values to African Christianity

The Yoruba belief in the reality of malevolent forces and ritual sacrifices to appease them is present in Yoruba Indigenous Churches. Members of these churches hold that the physical world is populated by multiple spiritual forces. In addition, they strongly believe that spiritual beings regulate human destiny. In order to know the spirit behind any problem, Drewal, an American anthropologist, claims that these churches invoke spirits from the four corners of the universe (Drewal, 1987:150). Invoking spirits here is not a contradiction of their belief in the Holy Spirit, because they believe that the Holy Spirit is the most powerful spirit, He is able to negate the activities of the evil spirits.

Exorcism

Exorcism is one of the major areas where the Yoruba spiritual heritage greatly affects the Yoruba Indigenous Churches. “Exorcism is a form of therapy for the unbalanced mind.” This is a healing process that presupposes the belief that some ailments or unwholesome conditions are caused by the presence of evil spirits that reside in the body of a patient (Nabofa, 2012:241). Exorcism is the process of casting out demons. Sometimes, church leaders would prescribe Psalm 35 to the victim, who has to read it three or seven times at midnight stripped of clothing (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 1997:87). The victim is occasionally beaten with a broom. In the Yoruba traditional religion, a broom is used for purification and exorcism. According to Yoruba belief, a broom has mystical powers that neutralize any negative effects for the victim or for a place. Anything that the broom touches would be cleansed. The belief of the Yoruba Indigenous Churches is that the mystical power in the broom could drive away evil spirits behind the suffering. In other words, the broom could be regarded as a psychic attack expeller (Nabofa, 1994:66).

Meyer presents the continuity of African religion in Pentecostal churches in the area of exorcism. She states that members of mainline churches who had tried in vain to find remedies for their troubles in the mission churches would often attend deliverance rituals. Each exorcist would lay his hands on a person to continue the work of Jesus on earth. The subject for deliverance, while calm under the exorcist’s hand, would be delivered and considered to be filled with God’s Spirit. Nevertheless, if the person started to move, this condition would be attributed to the presence of evil spirits disturbed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Often a person would fall down and start to vomit or move in a particular way that made it easy for the exorcist to gather the spirits that manifested through the subject. The person later may also become aggressive and assault the exorcist. Once a person appeared to be possessed, the exorcist would call upon his colleagues to drive out the demon that was considered to harm the afflicted person.

Symbolic separation (exorcism) is another distinctive feature of the *Aladura* churches. Symbolically cutting people’s family ties is a procedure aimed at subverting the bonds created and protected by the collective worship of particular gods. The aim of

these deliverance sessions is to turn people into individuals who are independent of and unaffected by family relations.

Meyer emphasizes that in spite of the fierce opposition against “tradition”, Pentecostal churches also incorporate traditional views. It should not come as a surprise therefore, that the Pentecostal and traditional dream interpretation fully converge in viewing dreams as indicative of the presence of certain forces or as omens foreboding an imminent occurrence. Contrary to Western ideas, dreams are regarded not as subjective projections, but as objective revelations of the presence of outside forces operating through a person without him or her being aware of it on a conscious level.

Despite the emphasis that Pentecostal churches place on rejecting “the past”, they impress upon people that “the past” matters, because it inscribes itself into their bodies. As “the past” does not work through consciousness, but rather uses other non-discursive means such as dreams, images, bodily pains or possession to assert its presence, it can only be cast out in the context of a prayer session.

Meyer concludes that it would be too simple to attribute the popularity of Pentecostalism in Ghana solely to its emphasis on breaking with “the past”, the birth of a new type of person, and to progress. In this way, members are able to focus on the ambiguity of the modern Pentecostal notion of progress that presupposes freedom from the cultural heritage and at the same time, asserts the practical relevance of these cultures (Meyer, 1998:316-349). Exorcism in AICs is an act of separating individuals from the past, from evil spirits and generational curses through probing the victim’s family background before deliverance takes place. Consequently, it is *impossible to break the past from the new in AICs*.

3.5.3 Healing

Jesus as a great healer is another major feature of Yoruba spiritual heritage that manifests itself in these churches. The role of Jesus as healer is close to the heart of many Africans and is seen as the most powerful, convincing image of Jesus. Healing is the main function of religion in Africa and it includes rituals, incantation,

prescription of certain activities and sacrifices to the gods and ancestors. All these aspects of the healing system emerge in the healing processes of many Indigenous Churches where rituals and prayers with the help of herbs, oil, soap and perfumes for success and deliverance are used for healing (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013:130-131).

Among the Yoruba, the methods the traditional medicine men use include natural materials and incantations that are put to defensive and offensive use in dealing with the evil spirits. Incantation includes the use of “powerful imprecatory spoken words called *ogede* in the Yoruba language” (Adamo, 1999:72). The medicine man functions as a diviner and teaches the person who comes to seek protection with proper potent words to attack the perceived enemy by casting a spell that will render his powers impotent. According to Yoruba tradition, when one identifies an enemy and does not have the potent words or medicine to deal with such an enemy, a medicine man (*babalawo*) is consulted for a proper solution. In conjunction with other preparations, the client is taught the use of incantations that are charmed which are sent to ensnare the enemy and destroy his plans or purposes. In most cases, the enemy is made mentally unfit. These words must be recited exactly according to the instruction of the diviner otherwise it may not be effective (Adamo, 1999:72).

The same holds true for Yoruba Indigenous Churches. Leaders are known to recommend the use of imprecatory Psalms as a potent weapon to destroy the activities of their enemies. Such practices they justify as appropriate since it is an Old Testament practice. Casting a spell on enemies and imprecatory prayer are allowed in the Old Testament. A good example is in the encounter between Balak, king of Moab, and Balaam the prophet (Numbers 22), where the former asks the prophet to cast a spell on the Israelites. It is a practice similar to what occurs in many African cultures. Diviners, like the prophets, are believed to have supernatural powers to cast a spell upon people that inevitably will affect their fortunes. Psalm 35 is a popular Psalm in these churches. This Psalm is always read to invoke the Spirit of God against evil spirits.

The concept of traditional healing in these churches can be considered as “raw material” that attracts outsiders to their churches. Taylor observes that presently in Africa, it appears as if the incalculable Holy Spirit has chosen to use the Independent

Church Movement for another advance. This does not indicate that their teaching is essentially true, but it displays that they have the “raw material” out of which a missionary church can be made impulsive, expressing total commitment, and giving the basic response that arise from the depths of life (Taylor, 1972:54).

Healing as a main function of religion is strongly stressed in Yoruba Indigenous Churches. Religion has the tools and expressions that “provide their followers with the weapons of spirit they need to fight back against the forces of evil as they manifest themselves in disease and discord.” Yoruba Indigenous Churches in their emphases on healing, provide a setting in which the African conviction that spirituality and healing belong together, can be enacted. Healing in these churches is more than bodily illness, it covers all areas of life (Cox, 1995:246-247). Medicine for healing is “not only to cure bodily ills but also to improve their trade or the growth of their plants, to become invulnerable in war, or to provide protection against evil inflicted upon them by others” (Meyer, 1999:70). Turner argues that healing in *Aladura* churches is both soteriological and pneumatological. He declares:

“The first basic emphasis is pneumatological, for the Godhead is envisaged as present and powerful through the Holy Spirit, who discloses the will of God and the destiny of the individual, is a guide through dangers, and fills men with new powers of prophecy, utterance, prayer and healing. The prophet has these captivations in a special degree. The second basic emphasis in the realm of belief, this may be called soteriological. Those who have rejected both the spirits and deities of the traditional pantheon, and the medicine man with his magical powers and techniques, have turned to the Christian God for their salvation when in trouble and for their protection from the host of evil forces that surround them” (Turner, 1979:98).

The concept of total healing in these churches contributes to the growth of African Christianity. The quest for healing serves as a vehicle for the rapid growth of African Christianity (Appiah-Kubi, 1979:121). Jesus is perceived as a healer *par excellence* who has the power to heal all diseases, including psychic afflictions and all impediments to absolute well-being. A Ghanaian specialist in African Indigenous Churches, Thomas Oduro, cited the testimony of Bishop Swelindawo, *a Zionist Bishop of Southern Africa*, that healing becomes a strategy of mission and evangelism in

African Indigenous Churches. According to Thomas Oduro, Bishop Swelindawo declares:

“Outsiders are attracted to services because they have heard that it is possible that they might be healed there. The signs of Zionist healing – such as the healing of all forms of illness, childlessness, madness and possession by demon or spirit - become known among people who draw newcomers to our church. In return, these people give thanks for their healing by telling others about it” (Oduro, *et al.* 2008:108 & 2014:88).

Healing Mental Diseases

Healing of the insane is another area where the Yoruba religion affects the Yoruba Indigenous Churches. The Primate Ifamuditimi, the leader and founder of *Ore-Airi* Cherubim and Seraphim Church, Ajangbadi, Lagos, claims to be a spiritual healer. Worshippers with problems always went to him for a cure. He had a yard where people with psychiatric problems were kept. This yard also served as a hospital environment to admit people with other illnesses. He organized time for special prayers for specific illnesses and encouraged his followers to come to the prayers with fasting.

In an interview with him, he said that patients with psychiatric problems belong to two categories: those who inherited their problems from their parents and those who are under the attack of evil powers. Traditionally, the belief is that no one with inherited psychiatric problems could be cured completely. This category of sufferers can be recognized when there is a new moon. They would be aggressive as the new moon appears and that is why they refer to them as lunatic patients. They are also called *alaso* (a clothed mad person). People are wary and vigilant not to get too close to them during a new moon as they become most aggressive. Some of them become moody or withdraw from people. When this kind of behaviour manifests itself, the Yoruba would say, *O ti de si ara ile wa, e se pele pelu re, nitori pe osu re ti le jo*, meaning “Be careful with your lunatic neighbour, because he or she is just entering another month.”

The second category of mad people, persons highly endowed with spiritual powers, can be cured through exorcism. These patients were subjected to fasting; they were

tied down so that they would not go outside the yard. The Primate claimed that he stopped practicing as a traditional psychiatrist because there is a myth that the spirit of madness could in the future affect traditional psychiatrists or their relations. He stopped his practice after his son eventually went mad in 1994 (Ifamuditimi, 2007).

The belief in a new or full moon is not peculiar to the Yoruba. It is also seen in other cultures. Owen, in her psychiatric investigation of the full moon and lunar effects contends that there is a major superstitious belief in the effects of the full moon. Some cultures link aggressive mental illnesses and mental disorderliness to a full moon. She points to the fact that the word “lunacy” comes from the Latin word “moon”. Owen contends that though there is a notable belief in the full moon and the lunar effect is strongly upheld among African ethnic groups, no significant relationship has been established between the level of violence and aggression and the position of the moon (Owen *et al.*, 1998:496-499).

In contrast to Owen, Iosif and Balloon cite the song: “I see the bad moon rising, I see the trouble on the way, I see the earthquake” (Iosif & Ballon, 2005:173). This song reflects people’s belief in the effect of the new or full moon. The Yoruba believe that the new moon has much impact on societal behaviours, especially in relation to psychiatric patients. During the new moon, traditional psychiatric doctors, nurses, orthodox doctors and ordinary people are very careful in dealing with psychiatric patients. The new moon is believed to influence societal behaviours both within and outside the Yoruba Indigenous Churches.

3.5.4 *The Fear of the Unknown*

Fear of death, failure and attack of enemies is prevalent in these churches like in the Yoruba society. The fear of death is universal. Lord Russell in his argument on emotions underlying certain beliefs about death says that “the most important of these emotions is the fear of death which is instinctive and biologically useful” (Russell, 1957:90). Members who have no money to take out a life insurance policy go to the church to pray against premature death. Members visit their spiritual leaders for protective prayers.

They also visit their leaders to know the will of God before embarking on any mission or travelling as traditional Yoruba people always do. Prayers of safety before travelling and of thanksgiving to the “Divine Driver” after safe arrival, are a regular practice in Yoruba religion (Turner, 1967:71). A Yoruba traditional person embarks upon every event of his life only after due consultation with diviners to ascertain the support and direction of the spirit world. Before members of these churches embark on any major life event, such as travelling, building a house, house warming, starting a business, choosing a life partner and taking a new job, they go to their elders or leaders for prayers to know the outcome of the event. In the process of consultation, the leaders pray for them, see visions and prescribe some spiritual exercises for the success of such events.

The fear of the unknown also contributes to the use of imprecatory Psalms in their prayers. In their prayers, members use for instance Psalm 5:10-12; 35; 58:6-11 and 137:2, three or seven times around midnight; they appear naked as they read the Psalm (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 1997:87). They heap or place curses on enemies of their progress: *ota lle* (human beings) or *ota ode* (wicked spiritual beings).

The fear of the unknown also leads them to develop a theology of angelology. They believe in holy angels whose principal functions are to bless them and avert the evil on their way. Michael is the angel in charge of protection, the guardian, the upholder of a just cause. The Angel Gabriel is in charge of the western hemisphere and the carrier of good news. The Angel Uriel is the guide and collaborator of the saints and he is in charge of the northern region, while the Angel Raphael is in charge of the southern region and the facilitator of healing of all forms of ailment. Lastly, they believe in personal angels who protect them against any enemies and evil. The church members believe in the existence of these angels and they offer prayers to God through them, especially the angel Michael, the Archangel, to stand against enemies. With dance and clapping of hands they sing the following chorus before they pray: “*Oli Mikeli wa lo ‘da, Baba wa lo’da. Emi mimo wa lo ‘da, Baba wa lo’da.*” It means: “Holy Michael, use your sword, Father, use your sword. Holy Spirit, use your sword, Father, use your sword” (Ayegboyin, 2009:33-35).

The belief in holy angels in these churches is probably the influence of the Egyptian magic book called *The Six and Seven Books of Moses*. This book contains the purported secrets behind the powers of Moses, the prophets and various angels. There, one can learn how to communicate with various angels, the Hebrew and other esoteric names of God (Abogunrin, 1988:15). Material from *The Six and Seven Books of Moses* appears in many local West-African publications. These materials can be traced in the catalogue of Nigerian “healing homes” which sells charms, brain powders, potent candles for prayer, books of secret prayer and others. J.J. Akande, the Most Senior Pastor of Cherubim and Seraphim Church in Ogbomoso, promotes the use of this book with Psalms for effective prayers for protection and victory over witches and the wicked people on earth. According to J. Oshitelu, the founder of the Church of the Lord, argues that using the esoteric names of God in this book with the aid of Psalm 7 and prayer is effective. An example of such prayer is stated by Turner as follows: “For the cure of lunatic, get water into a new pot, read this into the water 7 times with the Holy Name – JAH – JAHIEUJAH (Most Victorious King), bath the lunatic with the water, and he will be cured”(Turner, 1967:74).

3.5.5 Strewing of Money

Strewing of money at ceremonies to display one’s wealth in public is another Yoruba spiritual heritage manifested in these churches. The Yoruba do not only show their solidarity with celebrities by strewing them with money, but demonstrate their opulence in society. Strewing of money simply refers to a widely practiced tradition where friends or relations show admiration by placing paper money on the foreheads of recipients. People always strew money on the bride and groom or the children of a deceased person as they dance. This is also extended to musicians to appreciate their performance.

The researcher experienced money strewing during the final burial ceremony of his late father who died at the age of 88 on January 28 and was buried on March 18, 2011. The efforts of relatives and church members to reject this practice were futile. The people who strew the money saw it as a way of providing support. Apart from seeing it as an act of admiration and support of the celebrants, it can also be considered as a means of drawing public attention to the strewers. Prior to the day of

the ceremony, the person would go to banks and get new bank notes to strew. At times, some people come to the ceremony to sell new currency notes for strewing. Sellers of new bank notes would ask anyone who wanted new notes to exchange N1000 for N900 of new notes.

In the process of strewing the celebrants, the dance steps of the person is noticed, admired and attention is wholly given to the quality and quantity of the currency strewn. The one who strews a large sum of money is highly esteemed by the crowd. People do not bother about the source of the income. This shows that strewing of money also creates as much admiration as it does resentment (Smith, 2001:822).

In some African Indigenous Churches, the practice of strewing money is allowed in most of their festivals such as harvests, New Year thanksgiving or Christian wakes. Most of these Indigenous churches do not see anything wrong in spraying money because they believe it is a way of showing solidarity to the celebrants or of expressing gratitude to God. In other words, their worldview gives credence to their actions.

Giving is an important aspect of religious negotiation at traditional shrines. In African worships, ancestors and deities are fed frequently as a way of sustaining cultic relationship that enables the benefits of health, prosperity, longevity, and various blessings to flow from the spirit realm towards the human realm (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013:81). Asamoah-Gyadu describes this type of giving as “transactional giving”. He argues that although giving is biblical, it takes on added meaning within the African context.

In African traditional religion there is the notion that the gods reward adherents with material blessings. Judaism also believes in a reward for the righteous in the form of material blessings and God punishing the wicked with hardship and sufferings in the present life. Transactional giving is another influence of traditional religion in African Pentecostalism and Indigenous churches. Africans give offerings and sacrifices to gods to get their favour, to remove evil and to create the auspicious circumstances for the realization of every practical existential need. In other words, people give offering to gain control over their environments.

The idea that giving attracts blessing is biblical, but transactional giving is not biblical. It relegates the sovereignty of God. It enriches the preachers at the expense of the poor members. After all, some faithful givers are still poor. Transactional giving encourages members to give quantity offerings without considering the source of income. People with questionable characters give to churches and men and women of God (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013:95-96).

This may be one of the reasons why men and women of God are flourishing in Africa. Churches establish universities and hospitals with very costly services. From the economic point of view, these churches have contributed to the development of society because they engage people to work in their institutions. However, transactional giving has to be discouraged if the church has an impact on the moral life of Africans. Giving without a relationship with God is not unto God, but to preachers that may not attract divine blessings (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013:95-99).

3.5.6 Polygamous Marriages

Marriage among the Yoruba centres on the patriarchal structure where a man can marry as many women as his wealth allows. This luxury goes to those with wealth and prestige. A man might have his wives and children assist him on the farm. The more wives a man has, the more likely his wealth and prestige would multiply in society.

Members of these churches see polygamy as a component of social life. The leaders of these churches marry many wives and encourage members to do the same. However, they must provide for the needs of their wives and children. For instance, Oshitelu, the founder of the Church of the Lord, married seven wives (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 1997:157). Oshitelu claimed that he got the revelation to marry more than one wife from God (Turner, 1967:248). Ayegboyin and Ishola cited the leader of The Musama Disco Christo Church of Akan, Ghana, an Indigenous church that condones polygamy. According to the church practices cited by Ayegboyin and Ishola, this church practises “controlled polygamy”, but teaches against any form of divorce. The church rules say, “Everybody is to marry according to God’s will. We believe that as

an African church, polygamy is not a moral sin ... an open marriage is more divine in Christian life than secret concubinage” (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 1997:122).

Among the Yoruba, marriage is not merely an affair between a man and woman who fall in love and plan to spend the rest of their lives together. It is an event where both families are deeply united. Marriage, therefore, is a communal affair. A marriage ceremony in these churches is conducted in the African traditional way. Most of the time, the traditional wedding is conducted at the home of the father of the bride. Sometimes, it is conducted in the church, depending on the interest of the bride’s parents. If the bride’s parents choose a church wedding, it is mostly slated for Saturday so that relations who are civil servants can attend. Traditionally, the wedding was celebrated over two days. The first day is called *Idana*, “engagement”, where family members of both the bride and the groom are formally introduced to one another. The second day is the *Igbeyawo*, “wedding”. Many modern families celebrate both on the same day, the engagement first at home of the bride, followed by wedding in the church.

During the engagement, the church leaders use coconuts and oranges to symbolize maturity and God’s secret blessings for the couple. They believe that just as no person knows how the milk gets into the coconut, so should God’s blessings imperceptibly fall on the new couple. Just as the orange is sweet, so the life of the new couple should be sweet. Honey is given to the new couple and this symbolizes a sweet marital life devoid of bitterness. The bitter cola nut is also given as a symbol of a long life, wisdom and knowledge of God in marriage. Salt is important in the Yoruba traditional marriage. It is introduced with the prayer, “you are the salt of the earth, and you shall not lose good taste.” These ideas are the influences of the African traditional religion in AICs (Appiah-Kubi, 1979:124).

3.5.7 Expenses of Funeral Ceremonies

Another area where there is continuity between Africa tradition religion and Yoruba Indigenous Churches is in funeral ceremonies. Members of these churches have lavish and expensive funerals like the funerals in the African tradition. There is psychological and social significance to the funeral expenses. Members spend huge

amounts of money on funerals because they believe that they should give befitting burials to the dead. Like the African traditional rites for the dead, the Celestial Church members give a befitting and expensive funeral to their dead because they believe that the dead have helped them and will continue to help them even in the spirit world (Noret, 2011:172).

The above section addressed the continuities between the Yoruba spiritual heritage and the Yoruba Indigenous Churches. The discussion now turns to the discontinuities. Generally, Yoruba Indigenous Churches accept the authority of the Scriptures, which is different from the Yoruba spiritual world view that “focuses on the world of the Old Testament, accepting its patriarchal polygamy and legal taboos as divine dispensations” (Baur, 2009:409).

3.6 DISCONTINUITIES BETWEEN THE YORUBA SPIRITUAL HERITAGE AND YORUBA INDIGENOUS CHURCHES

“Discontinuity” with the Yoruba indigenous beliefs in this context means that church members hold the belief that Christianity is unique; it cannot be compared with other religions because there is a great difference between Christianity and other religions. Christ is the special and final revelation of God, and is the measure of all truth (Gehman, 2013:239-240). There are discontinuities between elements of the Yoruba spiritual heritage and the Indigenous churches where this research took place. These include ancestors, *Esu* and burial rites.

3.6.1 Ancestors

Some African theologians have proposed the title Ancestor for the risen Christ, while others have strongly rejected this idea. For example, Stinton and Ayegboyin argue that the title of ancestor for Jesus Christ has some limitations. According to indigenous standards, Christ cannot be an ancestor. For one, he was a very young man. Someone like Jesus, who did not marry and had no biological children, cannot be an ancestor. He also had no blood relationship to his believers. These are critical challenges to the concept of ancestors in African Christology. Culturally speaking, an ancestor is someone who died a “good death” at a ripe age. A young Yoruba man

who dies will not be considered an ancestor, as in other African ethnic groups. Historically speaking, Jesus died in his prime (Stinton, 2006:186-187).

Certainly, the role of ancestors is very important in the Yoruba religion. The *Aladura* churches in Nigeria, however, are reluctant to ascribe the title of an ancestor (*Iserun* in Yoruba) to Jesus. They propose that such a title belittles His divine nature as the Son of God as they understand him to be (Ayegboyin, 2005:13). Although some of the *Aladura* churches do venerate the ancestors, these churches in general strongly reject this practice (Anderson, 1993:26-29). They hold that Jesus is greater than any ancestor; therefore it is an insult to ascribe this concept to the risen Jesus. They also hold that Jesus' short life on earth did not fit into the requirement of the Yoruba concept an ancestor.

Most members of Yoruba Indigenous Churches reject the veneration of ancestor and all ritual rites associated with it. These churches affirm that ancestors exist, but that Christians do not need to do anything with them because ancestors hold no power over the Christian. Christians have the greater power of the Holy Spirit who counsels, guides and protects them against all satanic powers. This is confirmed by the Belgium anthropologist, Noret, who argues that the majority of the African Independent Churches consider ancestral worship as “demonic”, “pagan” and “evil” (Noret, 2011:160-163). Joseph Quayesi-Amakye also affirms that “in peripheral prophetism, the ancestors do not enjoy high-profile treatment as spiritual members of the family, clan, or community.” In other words, “their irresponsible alliance with evil forces brought untold hardship on the human descendants, and for that reason they are repudiated” (Quayesi-Amakye, 2013:253-254).

These churches hold that a believer who is “saved” should not have anything to do with an ancestral cult. Their Christology includes: Jesus as the Liberator, Victor, Saviour and Redeemer. According to these churches, the fact that the Holy Spirit has taken over most of the responsibilities of the ancestors, makes the role of ancestors irrelevant. The function of the Holy Spirit has become relevant in African context because the Spirit has become the Counsellor and Guide as portrayed in the Scriptures (Anderson, 1993:36).

Furthermore, Yoruba Indigenous Churches like Ghanaian Pentecostals reject ancestors in their liturgy because they have a strong belief that ancestors are not effective and cannot save human beings from the existential challenges of life. Members of these churches also hold that ancestors are dead and are not capable to help their families. Hence, it is not the ancestors who deliver the living from the challenges of life. Jesus manifests his supreme power over the ancestors and death by his resurrection and exaltation to heaven (Quayesi-Amakye, 2013:255).

3.6.2 Burial rites

In the Celestial Church, there has been a strong desire for a radical break with the lineage rites since the origin of the church. The church has a document called “Testament”, which has been designed to organize burial rites by the Celestial Church in Benin. In this document, members are allowed to write down their wish to be buried according to the rites of the Celestial Church rather than traditional rites. This document serves as a legal tender during the meetings for the funeral preparation (Noret, 2011:160-161).

There is a difference between traditional burial rites and the way the Celestial Church leaders do it. This is confirmed by the Belgian anthropologist, Noret, who did his research on the funeral ceremonies in the Celestial Church in Republic of Benin. According to him, the majority of the members of the Celestial Church oppose traditional lineage burial ceremonies. This implies that the celestials’ opposition to “traditional” lineage burial ceremonies creates a tension between African Christianity and traditional religion.

In resolving this tension, there is always a compromise in which the children of the deceased and parishioners solemnly ask the traditional lineage authority to let the church bury the dead. Hence, the children of the deceased pay huge amounts to the lineage authorities for the traditional rites as compensation for allowing the church to bury the corpse in with celestial rites. The two parties compromise and manage to keep part of the rites that seem important to them and at the same time they forgo other essentials (Noret, 2011:171-174).

3.6.3 *Esu*

Another discontinuity centres on the Yoruba concept of *Esu*. Yoruba Indigenous Churches completely reject this idea. *Aladura* churches believe that every evil is traceable to *Esu* and his followers. They do not see anything good in *Esu*. According to the members of these churches, *Esu* is wicked, evil and dangerous. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, *Aladura* churches also hold that *Esu* causes human beings to sin against God and ancestors. They connect lies, corruption, selfishness, stealing, killing, greed and others to *Esu*. Any person found guilty of any of these immoralities is considered *elemi Esu* - a person possessed by Satan.

In other words, *Aladura* churches display in their faith and practices both a continuity and discontinuity with Yoruba spiritual heritage. The idea that *Esu* has some good aspects, as the Yoruba believe it, is completely rejected in their churches. They see *Esu* as a perpetual enemy of God and his children. Their understanding is in line with the Biblical concept of Satan. The Scripture clearly presents Satan as tempting, misleading, tormenting, trapping, manipulating, hindering and deceiving Christians. The mission of *Esu* is to steal, kill and destroy, but Christ comes to give life in abundance (John 10:10). Consequently, in most of their songs, prayers, sermons, and practices there is the recognition that evil powers lie behind their existential problems. Consequently, one needs God's favour and power to break through Satan's orchestrated barriers in order to enjoy the good and prosperous life. The Bible says:

"And his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way" (Ephesians 1:19-23) NIV.

One can gather that the devil's power is inferior to Christ's. Christ bestows this power on believers. In Christ, Christians can subdue all activities of *Esu* that threaten human life. This makes Christ the all-sufficient Saviour of humanity.

Consequences for Christology

It is evident that Jesus is at home in the *Aladura* churches. *Aladura* churches place much emphasis on a “high Christology” that expresses the divinity of Jesus, the all-powerful Son of God who is in touch with the experiences of his children and able to deliver them from all oppression, enemies, infirmities, fears, anxieties, and death (Ayegboyin, 2011:19). They emphasize the power of Jesus above all powers. In the Christology of the Yoruba Indigenous Churches, African Christianity finds an authentic transmission of the gospel that is rooted in Christ and expressed in their cultural vitality. The Christology of the Yoruba Indigenous Churches shows how these believers respond to Jesus Christ in their societal challenges. In this sense, they show a new type of Christianity, Christology and salvation. Salvation is seen in terms of power, healing and victory over all deities, ancestors and evil spirits through Jesus’ power. This new emphasis is in line with biblical Christology where Christ’s power is supreme over all powers (Colossians 1:15-18). They do not equate Jesus with ancestors. They hold that Jesus is greater than any ancestor.

They believe that Jesus is the Saviour, Healer, Liberator and Mediator. Jesus’ power is seen in victory over evil and enemies. His power is superior to that of *Esu* and ancestors. They reject completely the belief that *Esu* has anything good to offer. Their concept of *Esu* and their refusal to equate Jesus with ancestors show the influence of Christianity on African traditional religions.

3.7 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF YORUBA INDIGENOUS CHURCHES FOR AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY

The Yoruba Indigenous Churches have contributed immensely to African Christianity in Nigeria and beyond.

3.7.1 Positive dimensions

Leadership

The Yoruba Indigenous Churches produced great charismatic leaders and movements. Notable among them are Ayo Babalola of the Christ Apostolic Church,

Moses Orimolade and Captain Abiodun of the Cherubim and Seraphim, S.B. Oshoffa of the Celestial Church of Christ and Oshitelu of the Church of the Lord. Yoruba Indigenous Church leaders have directly and indirectly created leaders of new Pentecostal churches. Daniel Olukoya, founder of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, was a member of the Christ Apostolic Church. Pastor Josiah Akindayomi, the founder of The Redeemed Christian Church of God, the largest Indigenous Pentecostal church in Nigeria, was a former member of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church. His successor, E.A. Adeboye, the General Overseer of The Redeemed Christian Church of God, was a product of African Indigenous Churches (Fatokun, 2009:52-53).

The growth of these churches reposes in the charismatic leadership style, giftedness and spiritual authority of the leaders. Leadership in these churches is neither determined by academic qualifications nor by theological training, but rather by commitment and a deep religious experience built on personal meditation, visions and dreams. Members who aspire to leadership devote their time to the church and the leaders. In the Church of the Lord and the Celestial Church, the offspring of the founders sometimes emerge as leaders. This sometimes helps the children to be more committed to the church life and to ensure continuity in the church administration. However, children of founders who join other denominations are not allowed to succeed their parents.

Bridging the gap

One of the greatest contributions of Yoruba Indigenous Churches to African Christianity is that they bridged the gap that formerly existed between the African spiritual heritage and Christianity. In contrast to Western Christian theologies that seem on the whole to be a system of ideas, traditional religion is generally perceived “as a system of power of living religiously as being in touch with the source and channels of power in the universe” (Bediako, 1995:106).

These churches brought socio-economic relief to people. They preach the power of Christ to deliver people from the spirit of poverty, sickness and to supply the needs of His people. Prayer and deliverance sessions are organized for people who are caged

by the spirits of unemployment and poverty. They encounter the hand of Christ in blessing his people with material provisions according to their basic needs (Fatokun, 2009:49).

The Yoruba Indigenous Churches' use of the Scriptures to speak to the basic needs of people in the African context is a critical issue. The church leaders discover in the Bible experiences that are related to their African cultural context, especially in the areas of power of evil and the triumph of good over evil through the power of Jesus Christ. They recognize this dimension of power in both the Old and the New Testaments. They affirm Jesus' victory over Satan, demons and infirmities. They bring it in line with African traditional religion, where the intervention of the powerful deities in times of crises is utilized. Turner argues that it was never perceived that "animistic" Africans would be among those who would have the most significance response to the Gospel message. This response emanated from their African traditional religious backgrounds (Turner, 1977:27-37).

The Old Testament is particularly attractive to the leadership of these churches, especially the prophet-healing movement. Among the Yoruba, many AICs pattern their religious practices and leadership after the Old Testament prophets who were filled with the Spirit of God and had power to undo the activities of the Satan and demons.

Self-governing, self-financing and self-propagating

These churches, like the churches in China, are self-governing, self-financing and self-propagating (Brinkman, 2009:76 & 105; Mbiti, 1989: 229). They invariably motivate their members to generously give to their works because they have no financial backing from the Western missionaries. Oduro maintains that African Indigenous Churches are typically poor financially. However, they are evangelistic and mission-minded. They step out in faith and send their missionaries in faith, believing that God will provide the necessary financial support. AIC congregations are found in Ghana, Cameroon, Belgium, France, United Kingdom and other countries. AICs demonstrate to the entire Church that God's mission proceeds well

without money. In mission, AICs emulate Jesus Christ and the Apostles with approaches that are innovative and contextual (Oduro, 2014:87).

Prayer as a strategy for mission

A comprehensive summary of AICs' theology of prayer shows that it is their strategy for mission. In AICs, "prayer is perceived not just as a liturgical activity, but also as a tool for doing mission." AICs believe that Jesus Christ is not only the Saviour, but also a prayer-answering God who provides for the needs of those who call on him. They dare God answer their prayers as a means to prove his faithfulness. They pray expectantly and relentlessly, trusting that God will grant them their desires. With the belief that God will grant their petitions, they invite people to come to Jesus with their challenges. Consequently, healing through prayer is a great tool of mission and evangelism in AICs. Outsiders are fascinated by their services because they have heard that it is not impossible that they may be healed there. The understanding of healing in the African context, such as the healing of illness, childlessness, madness and demon possession, became known among people and draws newcomers to the churches. In return, these people give thanks for their healing by telling others about it (Oduro, 2014:88-89).

Worship and Healing

The testimonies of individuals who claim to have experienced divine healing in their lives are one of the central tactics of these churches. The comparison of their former state of health to their present state of health convinces others that these churches are powerful and it is worthwhile to become members (Oduro, 2014:148).

Worship is another significant contribution of AICs to global Christianity. The nature of their worship is celebrative. Their corporate worships are full of the expression of joy in the spirit, healing, prophetic messages about victory over evil spirits, revelations concerning impending dangers and deliverance from different forms of attack. There is room for free movement and spontaneity in worship. There is a certain democratization of charisma, because under the influence of the Spirit, all worshippers can enjoy full participation. Singing, clapping of hands and dancing and speaking in tongues empower the individual. Although this concept of worship is in

the Bible, it has been greatly influenced by African traditional religion where emotions are greatly utilized.

The expression of feelings or emotions in worship is another influence of the Yoruba spiritual heritage. They are unconstrained and emotional in worship. This is expressed in dancing and the clapping of hands. Special note is given to praise and thanksgiving to honour God in a way similar to the Yoruba traditional religion. The Yoruba express their appreciation of God through praise, dancing and thanksgiving. It is also a way to acknowledge their dependence on God and express their joy over God's providence. They express the nearness of God in praise. When the Europeans brought Christianity initially, it was a silent and dull experience, only hymns were allowed and prayers were offered silently. The Indigenous churches broke the yoke of silent prayers. People are able to sing spontaneous choruses and hymns and to dance to the accompaniment of local drums. These innovations significantly account for the rapid growth (Oshitelu, 2007:121).

Sharing of life

Communal life in worship is another significant part of AICs. The Yoruba Indigenous Churches teach communal life, which is an integral part of the African life. Unlike in the Western culture where the individual life is stressed, Africans have a penchant for the communal life, and this trait has given rise to African solidarity (Ayegboyin, 2006:39-50). Africans place more emphasis on solidarity and the corporate life than on the activities of an individual. The idea of the communal life in Indigenous churches came from the African traditional religion and philosophy. Hence, the concept of solidarity is a strong bond in these churches. The members are united and identify with one another and share their lives together.

AICs attach great value to the sharing of life. Sharing of life is fundamental in the Yoruba community and in these churches in particular. The Yoruba express their sharing of life in all relationships. They see themselves as the various parts of an organism. When one part of the body is sick, the whole body is affected. When a member of these churches becomes sick, the whole congregation is affected. Every member is indeed part of the joy or sorrow of the others (Ruch & Anyanwu,

1984:143). This sharing of life is in line with Paul's analogy of the body of Christ (Romans 12:4-5).

Furthermore, in the Yoruba setting, the wearing of the *aso ebi* (cultural uniforms) is a demonstration of the church as family of God. *Aso ebi* literally means corporate wear. It refers to clothes worn by members of a kinship, group or family during a celebration. It demonstrates oneness, the group's *esprit de corps* and rapport. In *Aladura* churches, all members are expected to wear a white garment or prayer gown during Sunday worship and special services on weekdays. This closes the gap between the rich and the poor. The belief is that all wearers of the prayer gown are equal at least for that occasion and this promotes a momentary feeling of equality. Nevertheless, everyone flows back into society from Monday to Saturday. In this external setting, the members see each other's real life at home or at the place of work, where the rich can do whatever they like and oppress the poor with their riches. It is not then the garment worn during the worship service that matters, but the act of encouraging the rich to support the poor as best as they could.

Emphasis on the Holy Spirit

AICs have also contributed to the interpretation and understanding of the nature of the Christian faith, especially in the area of the spirit world. One can appreciate the fact that many of the AICs tune in to the spirit dimension. This is very important to the African person. This impact of the spirit in the body is seen in their modes of worship where the body is put in motion by the spirit through singing, clapping of hands, drumming, dancing and spoken out prayer (Oborji, 2005:206).

In addition, the strong emphasis on the works of the Holy Spirit in AICs is a fundamental contribution to global Christianity. The activities of the Spirit stress dimensions of relationship between the Christians and God on the one hand, and with their fellow humans and the Christian community on the other. The feature of the Holy Spirit in their midst generates a close affinity with God and creates favourable conditions for creativity and liberty in the body of Christ (Oborji, 2005:206-207). In ecclesiology, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit gives children of God a better relationship with the Trinity. The Holy Spirit intercedes for each member (Romans

5:5; 8:9, 14-16). It is this indwelling Spirit who bestows gifts on each member of the church for equipping and building up the church (1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12:4-8).

A strong Christology

The potency of Jesus Christ in AICs is never in question as he is always the “object of trust and the ethos of everlasting life” (Burgess, McGee & Alexander, 1988:476). Ogbu Kalu argues that AICs have a strong Christology because it is an experience of a new relationship with Christ as sanctifier (the Holy Spirit) and sustainer of the hope of glory (Kalu, 2008:6). As was previously mentioned, AICs see Jesus Christ as *Oluwosan Ode Orun* (the Healer from heaven), *Asiwaju* (Leader), *Olori ijo* (The Head of the church), *Alagbara* (All-powerful), *Olubori* (The Conqueror), *Olugbala* (The Deliverer) and *Olufihan* (He who reveals) (Ayegboyin, 2005:11-21). Their messages communicate Christ and their adherents are encouraged to trust in his power. A British theologian and specialist in African Pentecostalism, Anderson, notes that Western theology has generally not satisfied the African yearning to be protected from the evil forces that they feel (Anderson, 1993:26-29). However, most of the members of the AICs understand divine healing and embraces the desire for a divine intervention in effecting and remedying physical, mental, spiritual, financial, political, marital and other social and existential problems.

It is certain that the Christological emphasis of the AICs is best applicable to the African Christian context and not to the Western-oriented mission churches. One of the major reasons for the growth of AICs over and above the mission churches in Nigeria is the emphasis on the basic concerns of the people, and the Christological emphasis on the power and victory over evil spirits. Kalu notes that this stream of Christianity is good for Africans because it is “a dimension of the Africans’ allure to the pneumatic ingredients of the Gospel that resonate with the power theme in Indigenous religions, the power that sustained the cosmos, the socio-economic and political structures, the power that gave meaning to life’s journey from birth through death...” (Kalu, 2008:6).

African zeal in religion

The Indigenous churches with their dynamism and genius merely express the traditional African zeal in religion. It takes an understanding of the African worldview to appreciate the appeal of African Indigenous Churches. Before the advent of Christianity and Islam, Africans did not concern themselves with metaphysical issues such as the omnipotence, omnipresence, transcendence and providence of their gods. For Africans, religion had a pragmatic purpose, aimed at the here and now, health and welfare, personal success, relationship, protection from evil powers and a happy and fruitful marriage (Brinkman, 2009:210). There is correspondence between African traditional religion's notion of the gods rewarding adherents with material blessings and Judaism's view of reward of the righteous with material blessings and the punishing of the wicked with hardship and suffering in the present life.

3.7.2 Weaknesses of AICs

Next to the above-mentioned positive elements of the AICs, it is expedient to enumerate some weaknesses of these churches. The AICs hardly engage in critical theological issues, neither are they concerned about what an appropriate Afro-Christology should be. Their major concern is how to explain the works of Jesus in their context and appropriate the blessings and power made available through the cross of Jesus Christ. Most members of AICs understand salvation only in terms of deliverance from demonic powers, cures and protection at the expense of the notion of the salvation of the soul. Most of their leaders do not explain to their followers that salvific dimension includes suffering. Their leaders do not explain to their members that physiological sickness is part of the reality of life. When a person is sick or has some difficulties with employment, marriage, barrenness or cannot give birth to a male child, this does not mean that an evil spirit is persecuting that person or family. These are some facts of life that should inspire the Christian to greater faith in his religion (Oborji, 2005:204).

The role of "false prophets" in these churches is a major weakness. Although there are false prophets in mainline churches, the number of false prophets in the AICs is much larger. In these churches, unemployed youths become members as soon as

they leave secondary school with a view to becoming prophets. No wonder that within a short time, they claim to be called by God to start a new church. The “local prophets” with little or no theological education are a challenge to African Christianity. Oborji (2015:147) maintains that many of the leaders in these churches, especially the “false prophets”, are thirsty for wealth and power rather than spiritual development of the Church. He argues that in recent times, these prophets have come under suspicion. *Aladura* prophets have been accused of immoral practices, including adultery and fraud. Some, on spiritual grounds, have been alleged to have blended magico-traditional powers with genuinely Christian spiritual powers. However, he maintains that one can find some sanity and sincerity among them (Oshun, 2014:267).

Emphasis on exorcism

AICs do tend to dilute the Christian faith to only exorcism, spiritual battle and meeting of physical needs. Their members believe that Christianity is all about exorcism and demanding of Jesus to meet their needs and to benefit them as much as possible. There is the continuous fear of enemies, witches, witchcraft, demons and other malevolent spiritual powers and the subsequent need to protect oneself from these evil spirits. They do not seek to enrich the lives of others through aspects of discipleship. They demonize virtually all human experiences and proffer spiritual solutions only in exorcism and breakthrough. They abuse and inflict both physical and psychological pain on children under the pretext of exorcism.

The work of Christ on the cross has been reduced by the emphasis on exorcism and what the individual can do for him- or herself through prayers. In AICs rituals and sacrifices are still prescribed and performed as in the traditional religion. Members spend much money on candles, incense, sponges, soap, oils and on *fifi mariwo se isegun* (the ritual use of the palm frond) that not only makes prayer efficacious, but also drives away evil spirits and attracts angels and good spirits (Abogunrin, 1988:15). Some of the AICs who use these prayer aids in sacrifices and purification rites have lost youths to the Pentecostal churches because of the modern technology and mass media (Ayegboyin, 2005:54).

Emotion is abused during the worship services. Their praise and worship sessions merely make people comfortable and affirm happiness. Many pastors are interested in only making members feel good as long as they bring money into the church (Malloy, 2010:439-453).

The emphasis on healing encouraged many people to seek refuge in the churches when they first emerged as a Christian alternative to traditional healing in the shrines. Prayers as a major solution to sickness, evil spirits, poverty, loneliness, barrenness, unproductiveness, misfortunes, healing and wholeness of life as seen in the African worldview aids the growth of the church. However, the healing ministries of most of these churches fall outside the biblical context. Much emphasis has been laid on healing, to the exclusion of Christian doctrine of holiness, sanctification and a moral life (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013:131).

3.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has elucidated the origin, classification and characteristics of Yoruba Indigenous Churches. The chapter has also shown some areas of continuity and discontinuity between African spiritual heritage and the Yoruba Indigenous Churches in particular and African Independent Churches in general. It concludes with an enumeration of their strengths and weaknesses. The AICs' strong emphasis on practical salvation, the ability to work within the African worldview of mystical causality of evil, the integration of charismatic experiences into Christian worship, the use of oral theological discourses, the innovative ways in which the spiritual gifts of members are recognized and utilized and the critical roles of the Holy Spirit in the rise and function in AICs, saved Christianity in Africa (Asamoah- Gyadu, 2013:168). These factors do not only save African Christianity, but also promote the rapid growth of Christianity in Africa.

However, the rapid growth of AICs has not posed any systematic attack on the problem of corruption in Nigeria and has not taught people to take responsibility for the wrongdoings in society. The gospel preached and practiced in these churches circles on personal salvation. These churches have not developed a social ethics, and as such have no vision for urgent problems within the Nigerian society.

In an attempt to contextualize Christianity in Africa, the AICs have uncritically appropriated certain extreme traditions. These traditions have led to the abuse of spirituality. Some AICs continue with African traditions to the extreme. They often fail to distinguish between good and bad cultural practices and they adopt African traditions wholesale into their liturgy. Such practices include animal sacrifices, polygamy by leaders, unwholesome healing practices that involve walking naked in the night and bathing in streams and rivers for cleansing, inflicting pain in the process of exorcism, angel worship, the calling of extra-biblical names in prayers and tracing nearly every evil to the spirit world. As a Protestant pastor, I consider these practices abusive to the cause of Christ. While the contextualization of the Gospel is significant for the growth of African Christianity, there are limitations to this course. African Christianity should always be ready in all situations to distinguish between good and bad traditions. It should uphold the positive ones, while the negative traditions should be removed.

Two things emerge from the foregoing analysis. Healing and the quest for power to undo the activities of evil spirits are the two major concerns in African societies. AICs draw greatly from the African spiritual heritage where there is a strong emphasis on good health, well-being, the influence of the spirit world and peace with oneself and the community.

The next chapter introduces the theological thoughts of Kato, a Nigerian conservative Evangelical theologian who has proposed a critical model to evaluate African traditional religion in Christianity. Kato's position represents the conservative Evangelical Church. His argument is used to illuminate the structural abuse of spiritual heritage and theological pitfalls in Africa. Kato declares that the Evangelicals reject adoration of African traditional religions with the intention to safeguard the sole Gospel of Christ, which alone provides the way to salvation. However, he argues,

“Cultural heritage which is compatible to Christianity can be baptized into Christian enrichment. The Gospel content, of course, needs no addition or modification. It is because of this irreducible message that Christianity has produced the third race comprising men and women from all races” (Kato, 1975:177).

In other words, the relevance of Kato's position is to stress that Africans are not required to abandon all aspects of African spiritual heritage and do not have to embrace Western interpretations of the Christ-Events as a necessity to become genuine Christians. However, Christ-Events (the birth, ministry, death, burial and the resurrection of Jesus) should be a light to "illuminate" and transform African spiritual heritage in relation to Christianity.

In the light of Kato's theology, I point out some abuses of the spiritual heritage in the next chapter. Furthermore, in pointing out the uncritical relationship between African traditions and Christianity, Horton's critical approach cannot be ignored. He rebukes the greater number of leading African scholars in comparative religions and social anthropology of being too reliant on their beliefs that religion represents a phenomenon in itself.

In the light of Kato and Horton's arguments, answers to the following questions form the focus of the next chapter: Can spiritual heritage be abused? How do people abuse it? Has African theology's strong emphasis on spirits as the causality of evils not led to the abuse of spiritual heritage?

CHAPTER 4

MISUSE OF YORUBA SPIRITUAL HERITAGE

4.0 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 elucidated the origin, classification, characteristics and of AICs. It also showed the continuity and discontinuity of African traditions in the AICs, and their strengths and weaknesses. This chapter looks at the ways people make use of traditional beliefs that challenge the Christian faith. Bishop Desmond Tutu cautions African theologians not to incorporate all aspects of African culture into the Christian faith, because some aspects of the African culture are dehumanizing. In his words:

“Indigenization encourages a too facile and cheap alliance between culture and Christ. It is true that Christ comes in fulfilment of all the best aspirations of African culture, but equally he stands in judgement over all that is dehumanizing and demeaning; and several elements in the African Weltanschauung can be so labelled” (Tutu, 1978:368).

In line with Bishop Tutu, Udo Etuk, a Nigerian Professor of philosophy, highlights the pitfalls of the Yoruba culture in the pre-colonial era. He maintains that the practice of the slave trade and of human sacrifice, especially of the slaves during the coronation and burial of kings, was common. The killings of children from multiple births were rampant, inter-tribal wars and epidemics were societal pitfalls. Etuk endorses emphatically that the social characteristics of the Nigerian culture before the arrival of the missionaries had backward effects and were full of mythological thinking (Etuk, 2002:22-23).

In the light of Tutu and Etuk’s arguments, this chapter enumerates eight major areas where people abuse the Yoruba spiritual heritage in Nigeria. These include spiritual heritage as a means of escaping responsibility, of gender discrimination, of oppression, of inflicting pain, of child maltreatment, of extortion, of corruption and magic as a means to abuse spiritual heritage.

The abuse of spiritual heritage embodies the negative aspects of the traditional religious worldview that have not been affected and conquered by the Christian faith

in the twenty-first century. These traditional religious worldviews form the basis of the Nigerian society and are an integral part of its social structure. Both the church and society share in this abuse.

Before discussing the abuse of escaping responsibility in spiritual heritage, it is good to clarify the meaning of the word “responsibility” in this context. Responsibility is a role or duty given to a person to take care of something so that one may be reproached if such a thing goes wrong or praised if it goes right. It is the readiness to be blamed or praised for an act and holding people accountable for their actions. Where any action by an individual goes contrary to reasonable expectations and it is liable to the charge of the individual, there one may speak of attempting to escape responsibility. Below are examples of people who did wrong things. In an attempt to escape the repercussions of their actions, they attributed those actions to the devil or spirit world in order to elicit society’s sympathy or to escape judgement.

4.1 SPIRITUAL HERITAGE AS A MEANS OF ESCAPING RESPONSIBILITY

A remarkable incident where people used divine powers to escape the consequences of their behaviour was the pipeline explosion of December 26, 2006 in Lagos. According to media reports, there was scarcity of fuel at this period and transport charge was very high. Unfortunately, there was a pipeline leakage at Abule Egba, a suburb of Lagos. According to the Punch investigations, the people around this place saw the pipeline leakage as a divine favour; they regarded it as their “Christmas bonus”. Many people therefore went there to scoop the leaking fuel. Some even invited their friends to come and scoop fuel to sell. In the act of scooping the fuel, there was an explosion that led to the instant death of several hundreds of people. Two-hundred-and-sixty-nine bodies were burnt beyond recognition and were given mass burial. Several hundreds were injured and some eventually died in various hospitals. Ajuonuma, the spokesperson for the Nigerian National Petroleum Company, said that the victims of the pipeline explosion were “criminals” who vandalized pipelines to steal and sell petrol (Olugbile, 2006:1 & 5).

Although poverty is a major problem in Nigeria, this does not give people license to engage illegal activities. In addition, attributing fuel leakage to a divine act designed

to ameliorate people's suffering is nothing else than avoiding the consequences of their actions. Trying to get things gratuitously is very common among Nigerians.

Another story was reported of a man, Bolade, who beat his wife, Bimbola, the mother of his two children, to death on Wednesday April 26, 2007 in Ogun State, Southwest Nigeria. Their son, Tunde, said that his late mother was locked up in a room and his father began to beat her. In the process of being beating, his mother fainted and eventually died. His neighbours also testified that it was a common thing for him to beat his wife and they all wondered why she had not divorced him. Bimbola had always claimed that it was the work of *Esu* (Satan). When Bolade was asked the reason for his action, he claimed that he loved his wife but that the incident was the work of the devil and the enemies of his family. Should we agree that beating one's wife is the work of the devil? The media reported that after the death of his wife, Bolade ran away and it took four hours of searching to find him (Agoro, 2007:3).

Another one of Bolade's habits, apart from beating his wife, was drinking *paraga* (a local gin) sold by the roadside. The wife had told her neighbours that she prayed for him, but the more she prayed, the more he drank and he then resorted to beating her up. She claimed that there was a spirit behind the drinking. Although one can agree to a certain extent that the devil might be at work, there are some decisions that one needs to make to prevent the devil from manipulating a situation. If Bolade had not given to drinking, he might not have become the satanic agent for beating his wife to death. Therefore, Bolade tried to escape the consequences of his actions by attributing it to *Esu*. Bolade's case is still pending in court.

Another good example of the misuse of spiritual heritage of a different nature is the saga of Emeka Ezeoko, alias Rev. King, a Pentecostal pastor and General Overseer of the Christian Praying Assembly, Ajao Estate, Lagos. The Police officer who arrested Rev. King later charged him with attempting to murder five of his members because of sexual immorality. Prior to this incident, Rev. King had been accused several times of beating up his members because they had sinned and were possessed by evil spirits. He claimed that his actions were divinely guided. According to media reports, one of the five victims openly confessed: "When the Rev. King accused us of fornication, we denied it but he insisted that God revealed everything

to him". She further said that the Rev. King sent a woman to get a jerry can of petrol. With this, he sprayed the five women and he then struck a match on them right behind his house.

Before this act, he had ensured that the gate was locked. One woman escaped miraculously through a second gate. She went to a nearby hospital where she was treated. When the medical doctor in charge of this hospital heard of her ordeal, he reported the case to the police authority. The police arrested Rev. King and later charged him in court for murder (Adegoroye, 2005:4). At the initial stage of his trial, the Rev. King boasted that his action was divine and even vowed to burn others if inspired to do so. Ketefe and Attah, *The Punch* reporters who witnessed the court proceedings, declared that the Rev. King said he would not hesitate to burn seventy-five people to death if he were directed so to do (Ketefe, 2007:1). Justice Olubunmi Oyewole, the presiding judge of the High Court, Ikeja, Lagos, dismissed the Rev. King's evidence and described it as a ploy to escape the consequences of his actions. In his judgment, he stressed,

"I reject his testimony as filled with lies and fabrication to save his skin when the enormity of his action and the attendant consequences dawned on him" (Ketefe & Aborisade, 2007:4).

The judge further said that he considered all the circumstances of the case as religious fundamentalism of the basest type, which had given rise to the offences of which the accused was guilty, and which had never done any society any good. Therefore, the Rev. King, self-acclaimed leader and inspired pastor who set his members ablaze on the grounds of adultery, was finally sentenced to death by hanging.

Many Nigerians welcomed this judgment because they believed that the sentence would serve as a deterrent to others who hide under the guise of spirituality to perpetrate wickedness. It is interesting to note that the Rev. King, who boasted about his singular action nearly, collapsed when he heard his death sentence. He was observed to be sweating profusely and speechless after the judgement. The Rev. King was very sober when he was pronounced guilty of his action because he knew he could no longer hide under the cloak of spirituality.

Blaming spiritual powers for one's crimes or misbehaviour

The above episode is related to Yoruba spirituality in the sense that the Yoruba hold that spiritual powers can influence people's actions positively or negatively. They believe that evil spirits motivate evil actions. Meyer opines that anti-social and immoral behaviours are explained by reference to Satan or the devil. For people to be culpable for their actions, the Gospel message should go beyond this dualistic teaching of God and Satan and bear less emphasis on Satan (Meyer, 1999:41).

Closely related to this is the case of Mustapha Mohammed and Aiyegbami, who killed Oladipo Fashola for a money ritual on August 11, 1995. The accused pleaded for mercy after being sentenced by the high court. When the high court turned down their plea, they appealed to the apex court, claiming that their actions were not deliberate, but the work of the devil. The apex court confirmed their sentence of death by hanging. The apex court judge based his judgement on the exhibit that proved that the duo's actions were intentional and deliberate and on the fact that Mohammed, one of the accused, took the police officer to a bush where they had buried the headless corpse of their victim (Soniya, 2007:1).

Further evidence of spiritual heritage as a means of escaping responsibility is seen in the testimony given by a girl in a church at the Sabon-Gari area of Oturkpo, Benue State. According to a *Tell* magazine witness, this girl came to the podium with a thunderous "Praise the Lord!" She took the microphone and gave testimony about a secondary school examination paper she wrote at the Saint Paul's Secondary School, Oturkpo. She declared, "I want to thank God for seeing me through in the papers I have done so far. Do you know, I did not read anything, but the Lord was just bringing 'expo' on my way! For each of the subjects they were just coming." "Expo" refers to an examination malpractice where a person supplies answers to a candidate inside the examination hall. Most of the worshippers present in the service were in jubilation, except for a few God-fearing people who were very sad that fraud could be celebrated in the church.

Though we admit that God helps people in diverse ways, any testimony that lacks ethical morality and hard work is not of Him. The girl escaped her responsibility of taking the pain to study before sitting for the examination. The fact that some

members were jubilation with her reveals the level of immorality and corruption in society. One would have expected that members of the church would be disconcerted with the testimony; only a few did not support it. *Tell* investigators claimed that many students are assisted by their parents to rely on fraudulent means to get their certificate, thereby giving little or no credence to hard work. This anti-societal behaviour leads to the reign of empty heads and worthless certificates in Nigeria (Fashua & Oseghale, 2005:25).

By this singular act, the girl had dragged God's name through the mud. It is obvious that God is holy and He will not take any gratitude for fraud. In addition, the testimony of this girl, coupled with the jubilation of some people in the church, may have a negative impact on the academic life of the present and coming generations. This may further lower the standard of Nigerian education and raise questions about the authenticity of Nigerian certificates internationally.

Examination malpractice is not peculiar to this girl; it has become common practice. In Lagos on May 17, 2005, some secondary school students were seen jubilating and thanking God immediately after they finished their Geography examination because a few days before the examination, copies of the original examination questions had been sold for five thousand (5 000) naira each and they had been able to buy these papers before the examination (Fashua & Oseghale, 2005:25).

It is pertinent that the church must not only stress the importance of hard work, but also condemn fraudulent academic achievements. As a moral voice in society, the church should speak out and take a stand against these social, moral and economic anomalies. The Church of Christ has to project herself as a solution to societal problems and a credible representative of Christ. In this light, the church as the presence of the incarnate Christ must witness for Christ by fighting for social justice and moral integrity.

These abuses of spiritual heritage are not limited to Christendom. They are also present in Islam. There is a report of some students who killed one of their teachers, Oluwatoyin C. Oluwaseesin, a contract staff member of the Government Secondary School, Gandu, Gombe State in Nigeria, for purportedly desecrating the Quran. They accused her of throwing away a Quran, stripped her naked, beat her up and burnt

her to death. However, *Punch* investigations revealed that she had merely prevented the pupils from engaging in examination malpractices. The culprits should have been brought to book because failure to do so in a competent court would not only encourage fraudulent education, it would also encourage perpetration of more crimes (Kolawole, 2007:16).

Further evidence of spiritual heritage as a means of escaping responsibility manifests in the belief of the Yoruba about the high rate of road accidents during the festive season of Christmas and New Year. At this time, there is an unusually high incidence of crime and road accidents in Nigeria. The Yoruba, like other Nigerians, attribute these road accidents to evil spirits. During this period, families intensify their economic activities to generate enough income to meet their living expenses. Such expenses include travel to their native homes, burials, marriages, clothes and the celebration of Christmas and the New Year. Consequently, it becomes the peak time for commercial vehicle operators and road transporters as they convey thousands of travellers living in the cities to their home towns.

Both commercial drivers and private vehicle owners drive recklessly in a hurry to reach their villages. Many of these commercial drivers drive through the night without a break only to embark on yet another long journey the following day, all in a frenzied bid to maximize returns. Osita Chidoka, the Corps Marshall and Chief Executive of Federal Road Safety Corps of Nigeria remarks:

“A driver who overloads his vehicle, drives at top speed regardless of the nature of the road, disobeys traffic signs with impunity, in all sincerity, cannot blame God (or evil spirits) if he lands himself in a crash that claims his life and the entire family members”.

Chidoka furthermore says:

“the pitiful reality of the apathy of Nigerian drivers who deliberately jeopardize their lives through acts of commission or omission but come back to blame God or attribute auto crashes to evil spirits, in that they desperately seek a means of escaping responsibility” (Odesola,2009:7).

It is true that the rate of accidents is still increasing, but indeed not because of the influence of evil spirits, but because of reckless driving.

Wole Soyinka, the Nobel Laureate and famous playwright, condemns the attitudes of most Nigerians who, rather than to fight for a better society or defend their constitutional rights or ask questions and get appropriate answers from the government, consider their suffering or predicaments to be the act of God or *Ayanmo* (destiny). In his words, “Complacency often makes Nigerians to attribute the problems of the country which affect their daily wellbeing to an act of God” (Oloja & Onuorah, 2010:2 & 4). He argues that Nigerians should change their attitude of docility and take up their responsibility.

Another example of this lack of taking responsibility is the life of Adeniyi who defiled an under-aged girl. Reports have it that Adeniyi believed that his action with this girl was masterminded either by the neighbours or by the devil to frustrate and disgrace his family. In his words, “But it surprised me that the little girl insisted that I tried to defile her. It must be the devil trying to set me up, but much as I am innocent of this allegation, I know the God I serve will deliver me.” According to the girl, Adeniyi was not truthful in his confession because he asked the girl to close her eyes as if he was going to pray for her. Pelumi, the victim, said:

“He first put me on his lap and later put me on his bed. Then, he asked me to close my eyes. I did but I quickly opened my eyes and screamed as he tried to insert his penis into my vagina. He used his organ to push my pants aside and tried to force his thing in; it was painful so I shouted” (Aborisade, 2010:7).

It is noteworthy that Adeniyi’s problem was lack of self-control; he was unable to control his sexual urge. Instead of admitting his weakness, he sought an escape route. As the sons of Eli abused their sacred office by engaging in promiscuous sex with women in the temple, some Christian leaders also abuse the priestly offices by exploiting the trust reposed in them by sleeping with members of their congregations. *The Sunday Punch* of 18th June, 2006, reported on a pastor who engaged in sex with his members. Sleeping with women outside marriage is a sin that should not be perpetrated among Christians, let alone among the religious leaders. Religious leaders must be seen to be committed to correcting their followers. For this reason, church leaders in Nigeria should be reminded that their primary function is to glorify God in their lives and to lead their congregations to live a holy life.

4.2 SPIRITUAL HERITAGE AS A MEANS TO MISUSE AUTHORITY

Another area where abuse of spiritual heritage is obvious is that of exploitation or oppression. In examining this issue of exploiting people in society, the story of a Lagos-based business person who was duped of millions of naira by two pastors and an herbalist serves as an example. According to *The Punch* investigation, the business person lost large amounts of money in an attempt to revive his weak sexual organ. Festus, a friend of this man, introduced him to Pastor Emmanuel Bello, the self-professed senior pastor of the Power of Christ Evangelical Ministry, Ibadan, and Pastor Adeoye Kujore, who also professed to be an evangelist. In the process of praying for this business person, they evoked spirits from the four corners of the world and prophesied that three witches were responsible for his predicament. In order to deliver him from the witches, they demanded a ram and the sum of twenty-two thousand (22 000) naira. The business person provided the cash and the ram with joy and eagerness. Thereafter, the pastors brought in a herbalist to support them in the process of exorcism, which eventually involved a large sum of money.

The business person confessed that he lost much money to these self-professed pastors and herbalist. His problem was not solved, his situation worsened and these people had succeeded in impoverishing him. The business person reported the case to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, (EFCC) a body set up by the Federal Government of Nigeria to look into cases of financial crimes. The business person claimed that he was duped as a result of his belief that witches were responsible for his ill luck (Olufowobi, 2007:3).

Another area of the misuse of authority can be seen in family life. Although the family is the centre of harmony and unity in the African culture, the head of family, highly respected as patriarch, could become tyrannical if not checked. He could become rich at the expense of others through the appropriation of family property to himself and his immediate family. In other words, a family life that arrogates power to the head of the family without checks and balances can cause deformation rather than transformation of the system. In addition, family ties cause some members of the family to prey on the rich person within the family. It is certain that the tendency of total dependency on the affluent in the family, breeds laziness, which eventually affects the economic strength of many.

Communal life is greatly emphasized among Africans. However, the level of poverty is affecting this heritage. It is evident that with the level of poverty in Nigeria in particular, and Africa in general, an individual finds it difficult to sustain his or her immediate family, let alone the extended one. The reason for the poverty is partly the greed, selfishness and lack of vision of many African leaders who collude with foreign partners to defraud their country. With the collaboration of foreign partners, funds realized from export goods are diverted into the personal accounts of political leaders and this affects the financial position of many African nations. Some of these political leaders embezzle money and store their loot in foreign banks.

What many political leaders and their foreign partners are doing is nothing short of modern enslavement. They are indirectly practising eighteenth and nineteenth century slavery in a contemporary way (Abogunrin, 2003:47). Therefore, for the sustenance of the African communal heritage, both the political leaders and their foreign partners need to stop looting government treasury directly or indirectly. As a result of abject poverty, many Africans are migrating to the West in search of greener pastures and in the course of time, abandon their extended families (Oborji, 2005:108-116). Rather than blaming many political leaders who are greedy, many Nigerians attribute their poverty to the spirit world as earlier stated in Chapter 2.

4.3 SPIRITUAL HERITAGE AS A MEANS OF GENDER DISCRIMINATION

In *Aladura* churches, gender discrimination is common. Although they allow women to participate fully in their worship, menstruating women are strictly restricted from entering the sanctuary, touching sacred objects or performing any sacred activity, even if they are ordained. These churches hold that, "Menstruation and fornication are deadly enemies to the angels; they fly away at the slightest smell of them" (Turner, 1967:43). This implies that menstruation and fornication make women unclean.

Women are generally relegated in most African countries. Phiri argues that except for a few, the majority of African Indigenous Churches resist women in leadership positions. The main argument for this is not theological, but cultural. The argument is that the African cultural heritage does not allow women to lead men. This argument seems contrary to some African cultures where women are allowed to be leaders at

shrines as priestesses and chiefs. In all Yoruba political structures, there is always a female chief in the council of chiefs called *Iyalode*. Examples of *Iyalode* are Efunsetan Aniwura of Ibadan and Simbiatu Abiola, *Iyalode Egba*.

Exempting women from leadership positions in the indigenous churches is an apparent contradiction and this is against the biblical teaching of the equality of all humankind in Jesus Christ (Phiri, 2001:52). It therefore stands to reason that culture or superstition should not put any restriction on women as far as worship of God and leadership positions are concerned. Fabella, an Asian female theologian, does not argue against the maleness of Jesus. She sees Jesus Christ as a liberating figure that came to liberate human beings from all kinds of oppressions and suppressions. Therefore, men should not discriminate against women in the church and in society (Fabella, 1993:212).

Myths and folktales on gender

Mercy Oduyoye, a Ghanaian Methodist theologian and a specialist in African feminist theology, speaks on the injustices meted out to African women through myth. She argues that the impact of myths and folktales contribute to gender discrimination in Africa. She holds that the African spiritual heritage, especially myths continue to shape the social, behavioural, political, economic and religious life of Africans. Myths inform us of the worldview of the Africans and serve as sources of information for research. Oduyoye affirms that “African myths are ideological constructions of a by-gone age that are used to validate and reinforce social relations” (Oduyoye, 1999:35). She contends that some African myths manifest in postmodernity and if they should be re-interpreted, they would lead to gender justice and equality.

Nigerian women are still at a disadvantage because of the myth that presents men as superior to women in most African societies, both in the sacred and the secular. Allele Williams, the first female Vice Chancellor in Nigeria, argues that though the United Nations have done much to improve the status of women universally, economically, women are disadvantaged in the sense that most of the financial institutions are reluctant to give women loans without the support of their male counterparts. This disadvantages the majority of women in business ventures.

Besides, women's rights are infringed upon in the place of work because of the unpleasant spiritual heritage that stresses that a man is superior to a woman. Women are disfavoured and exempted from taking active roles in some lucrative jobs that are considered time-consuming. This way, men have the upper hand both in the area of politics and religion. Williams argues that the creation of myths in a majority of African societies gives men power to dominate major aspects of decision-making, both at home and in public matters (Aborisade & Osaghale, 2002:13). She then encourages women to continue to strive higher through their academic endeavours and to be ready to take up the challenges of leadership in society.

Further evidence of spiritual heritage as a means of gender discrimination manifests in buying and selling among Yoruba rural women. As traders, the Yoruba believe that one's first customer in a day would determine how one would be patronized the rest of the day. They call some people *olowo aje*, meaning people with prosperous hands. They believe that males attract more prosperity than females. Therefore, if a woman comes early in the morning to buy a certain commodity from them, they would rather call a man or a small boy to collect the sale money from the female buyer on their behalf. This practice reveals their belief that an initial male customer, not a female, guarantees bumper sales that would boost their sales returns for that day. This belief has, however, reduced greatly in urban areas (Oyaniyi, 2012).

The abuse of spiritual heritage such as to occasion gender discrimination also manifests in infertility problems. The Yoruba, like many African societies, believe that a marriage without children is a total failure. In most cases, the women take the blame for the infertility problems and their marriages are threatened. This is why women tend to be the ones moving from place to place seeking a solution for infertility in the family. They go to hospitals and to Prayer Mountains for solutions.

Tunde Okewole, a Nigerian expert in in-vitro fertility and the Chief Medical Director of St. Ives Specialist Hospital, Lagos, observes that "over 50% of problems associated with infertility are from men". Most of the time when cases of infertility are brought to him, the problems are associated with the man's low sperm count. The most worrisome part of the problem is that men are usually reluctant to go to a medical centre for treatment. He observes that with problems of infertility, a man is the last

person that would come to the medical centre, even after his wife had undergone an array of tests. The perplexing thing about these women is that in attempting to find a solution for infertility, they tirelessly subject themselves to both orthodox and unorthodox medicines. Sometimes, such women hitherto unencumbered, pick up physical and emotional problems from their harried quest. Nevertheless, their husbands and relatives blame them for the infertility. This is nothing less than gender abuse. Okeowo's research reveals to us that either one of the couple could be the cause of infertility. Men should subject themselves to medical investigations and treatments just like their wives (Balogun, 2009:16).

In addition, some women among the Yoruba take the blame for giving birth to female children. Husbands sometimes marry a second wife because of the significance attached to a male child. Giving birth to a female in the Yoruba culture sometimes threatens the position of a woman in the family; even though it has been proven scientifically that a child's gender is determined by the man's X-bearing or Y-bearing sperm cell. Unarguably then, the gender of an offspring is determined by his or her father's fertilizing sperm cell (Iheancho, 2009:56). Women must not suffer for something they have no control over. After all, Christians believe that both males and females are the children of God. It matters not at all whether a child is a girl or a boy. Both have equal potential if they are adequately educated and given the necessary exposure.

4.4 SPIRITUAL HERITAGE AS A MEANS OF INFLICTING PAIN

Exorcism among Yoruba indigenous churches is one of the major means of inflicting pain on innocent people. Akhilomen argues that *Aladura* churches in Nigeria abuse and inflict both physical and psychological pain on children under the pretext of exorcism. In these churches, children accused of being possessed with demonic spirits such as *Ogbanje* (mermaid) spirit, witchcraft spirit and the like are sometimes subjected to flogging, beating, scolding and maiming. Children are also subjected to rigorous fasting and punishment, all in the name of casting out the demons purportedly tormenting them. Akhilomen declares, "An extreme form of child abuse which seems prevalent among the *Aladura* type of churches is the physical abuse of children on the grounds of exorcism" (Akhilomen, 2006:204).

Rachael Olanrewaju, a member of Grace Baptist Church, Ajangbadi, Lagos, recounted the ordeal of her son, whom an *Aladura* Church accused of possessing an evil spirit. She claimed that her son, Jide, a seventeen-year-old boy, was very stubborn and frequently ran away from school. Her friend offered to take the boy to an *Aladura* church in Badagry, a suburb of Lagos. At this church, her son was chained on both legs and hands and subjected to a twenty-one-day fasting and prayer. During this period, the boy began to emaciate, dehydrate and eventually lost strength and weight. When she discovered that her son was losing excessive weight and strength, she called it to the attention of the shepherd of the church, who claimed that the boy's weight loss and stamina were due to the withdrawal of the evil spirit in him. The boy died on the seventeenth day and was buried in the bush behind the church. His mother claimed that she regretted taking him to the church (Olanrewaju, 2007).

Another such example is the actions of Segun Olawale, a pastor of *Aladura* Sacred Order Church, Sabo, Ijebu-Ode, who was accused of raping a church member on Monday, August 11, 2014. According to *The Punch* investigation, a 32-year-old woman was persuaded by her mother to meet her pastor for counselling and deliverance. This woman yielded to the advice of her beloved mother. During the counselling period, the pastor counselled her, gave her anointing water, prayed for her and had sex with her in his office. The victim told her mother about the incident and then informed the police.

Olawale, the 42-year-old accused pastor, was arrested and investigated. During the police investigation, he confessed that while the prayer session was going on, he could not explain how he stripped the victim naked and forced her to have intercourse with him. He claimed that he had prayed for so many women and that their problems had been solved. He only wanted to solve the problems of this young woman, but he ended up compounding them. The Ogun State Police Command, Muyiwa Adejobi, said that it was disheartening that some religious leaders, rather than solving problems, were using their positions and influence to take advantage of their members by inflicting more pain on the innocent. Olawale attributed his ordeal to the devil's work and pleaded for mercy. The officer in charge said that it was quite

embarrassing to see a pastor engage in such a dirty act, and that the police would do everything possible to make sure that justice is done (Alagbe, 2014:26).

4.5 SPIRITUAL HERITAGE AS A CAUSE OF CHILD MALNUTRITION

Among the Yoruba, certain foods are prohibited for pregnant women because of taboos. These taboos have negative effects on the health of the people, especially children and pregnant women. These beliefs increase the prevalence of infant and maternal mortalities; contribute to low mental performance and intelligence quotient (IQ) of children below the age of five, and to a reduced lifespan. These taboos relate to certain foods forbidden to pregnant women such as:

- Snails: the belief is that the unborn baby may suffer uncontrollable salivation. However, nutritionists state that snails contain protein and calcium that would help promote the baby's health and the growth of strong bones.
- Okra: the unborn child would suffer from mental retardation and the baby will experience sluggish movements.
- Plantains: the keeping of this taboo would ensure that the baby would not develop varicose veins on his head. The Yoruba call this *Oka-ori*.
- Bush meats like the grass cutter, the giant rat (Okete) and the antelope: The baby may be too big to pass through the birth canal during delivery if this taboo were to be ignored.

Nutritionists, dieticians and medical experts however, assert that all these nutritional myths and African taboos have no scientific basis. Such beliefs, they say, are contributing to malnutrition, stunted growth of children and even to maternal and infant mortalities in the country (Adeniyi, 2008:2-3).

Mrs Olufunmilayo Unuigbe, a human nutritionist at the University of Ibadan, explains that malnutrition contributes over 50% of the mortality rate amongst children below five. She adds that the 2003 National Demographic and Health Survey indicates that 29% of Nigerian children below five years of age were considered underweight. Some people hold the belief that foods like fried rice, salads, fruit juice, and eggs are meant for the children of the affluent, whereas there is no taboo or myth attached to

foods like *fufu*, *garri*, *amala* and *tuwo*, the staple foods of the masses. Most of the prohibited foods are essential nutrients needed by the organs, tissues and cells for optimal growth (Adeniyi, 2008:2).

4.6 SPIRITUAL HERITAGE AS A MEANS OF EXTORTION

Extortion of members is an epidemic in the church today. This is not unique to the Indigenous churches. Certain Pentecostal churches are answerable to this charge as well. Some church leaders neglect building church members' spiritually, morally and physically, and instead extort them with subtlety. Some preachers claim that they have a special anointing for fundraising. After preaching motivational messages, they conclude with the slogan, "sow your money into this ministry today and you will reap bountiful harvests of blessings. Miss this opportunity and you may never receive the miracle you need" (Johnson, 2005:13). Nimi Wariboko, a Nigerian theologian and professor of Christian ethics describes this type of giving as "quasi-magical" in the hope that they will reap God's prosperity (Wariboko, 2012:13). Hearers of these messages give to the church partly because they are looking for rewards and partly because they fear that failure to give at such a moment would cause God to withdraw His blessing from them.

An American Evangelical pastor, G. Johnson, declares that "People are intimidated through fear, manipulated by emotion and threatened by the Word of God to give their money right now or suffer the consequences" (Johnson, 2005:13). This method of collecting money from members is neither godly nor legal. Legally, extortion is defined as collecting money or goods from another person through manipulation, intimidation, threats, and without any ammunition or dangerous weapons. Therefore, pastors who collect money from members by force or verbal threats abuse these members and play upon their ignorance of the Word of God. In addition, the Bible is replete with accounts of people who gave to God willingly and freely from the heart. Anything given to God out of compulsion or begrudgingly may be accepted by the church, but not by God.

Another means of extorting from church people is through testimonies. Some preachers arrange for people to give testimonies about their giving to the preacher's ministry and the rewards they got from such giving. They also recount many

testimonies to back their preaching on giving. The slogan of such preachers is “sowing and reaping” or “sowing opens door.” They emphasize that people should sow to their ministries and reap substantial financial benefits and breakthroughs. These examples of extortion reveal the pastor’s abuse of authority. Traditionally, messengers of the Holy, mediators between God and man, bear authority. Pastors are often considered to have a divine authority. If they abuse this for their own well-being, there is abuse of traditional values and worldview (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013:80).

4.7 SPIRITUAL HERITAGE AS A MEANS OF CORRUPTION

It is incontrovertible that the vices of corruption, injustice and inequality are major societal menaces in Nigeria. In line with the problem statement in Chapter 1, the rise of spirituality in the midst of crises, corruption and violence is a paradox in Nigeria (Olupona, 2008:xvii).

Corruption is present in all institutions, all ethnic groups, among rulers, public officers, politicians, the police and religious institutions. Through corruption many have acquired wealth while others become poorer a daily basis. According to Umejebi, as a result of these factors, many Nigerians are living in poverty despite the fact that Nigeria has earned over six hundred billion US dollars from oil revenue since 1960.

Nigeria is among the world’s poorest countries, with over 70% of her citizens living on a dollar per day (Umejebi, 2007:92-94).

Religion has become the camouflage for different moral atrocities in Nigeria. Adeleke, the Vice-Chancellor of Ladoké Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso, observes that “Despite the increase in the number of churches and mosques, many Nigerians are becoming less honest, less loving, less trustworthy, less considerate and less God-fearing.” Adeleke stresses with a tone of remorse that in spite of increase in the number of churches and enormous resources in human power and the endowment in mineral resources, Nigeria remains a poor country in which 80% of nearly one-hundred-and-fifty million Nigerians live below one dollar per day as the minimum income for the poor (Adeyanju, 2008:11). In line with Adeleke, Ayo Ogunkunle, the former Deputy Vice Chancellor of the University of Ibadan, posits that the major problem in Nigeria is corruption and that church people commit most of the immoralities and atrocities that plague the nation (Adeleke, 2009:33).

This moral decadence of the Nigerian society has also eaten deep into indigenous church leaders. As P. Olabisi, observes: “*O ga o! Bi Soosi ti n po si, beni iwa ibaje n gbile*”, meaning “This is terrible! The more churches we have, the more immorality” (Olabisi, 2008). Fakeye, the Pastor of the largest Cherubim and Seraphim Church in Nigeria, argues that the immorality is not only among church people, but also among church leaders. He stresses that corruption and immorality are found among the leaders of the Christian Association of Nigeria, the highest Christian body in Nigeria (Fakeye, 2010). The implication is that people with questionable character are comfortable in church services as a result of the corruption of some leaders. This is a serious challenge to the teaching and preaching of the Gospel in Nigeria.

The increase in the number of churches with low ethical influence on society is not only the concern of academics and theologians, but also that of politicians. The late President Umaru Musa Yar Adua remarked that corrupt practices had gone beyond financial dealings, penetrating into various activities of Nigerians. He declared, “Most Nigerians are corrupt in their daily activities which go beyond financial dealings upon which people try to situate corruption in the country” (Mede, 2008:3). Sunday Makinde, the former Prelate of the Methodist Church of Nigeria, gives a wider definition of corruption. In his words, “Corruption cuts across the board. Injustice is corruption. When you tell lies, you are corrupt. When you falsify your age, you are corrupt. When you rape people, you are corrupt” (Ben-Nwankwo, 2012:20-21).

Presently in Nigeria, churches are filled with different types of false preachers and strange doctrines. False preachers give false hope to their members. They preach messages for financial gain, and refuse to rebuke the nation. They teach their members that material prosperity is possible by giving money to the church or to preachers. Subsequently, church planting is a vibrant business enterprise. Ministerial respect is now based on the type of car the minister drives and the type of house he lives in. Consequently, Christians who have financial problems see themselves as misfits. Many people want to be rich at all cost. This is a major reason why church people get involved in massive fraud and ritual murders (Akinboye, 2012).

As a result of prosperity syndrome, many preachers cannot preach about Christian character and holiness in their services; the few holiness preachers are unpopular in

Nigeria. The prosperity syndrome makes many preachers abuse the spiritual authority vested in them. Rather than speaking the truth and the mind of God on morality and holiness, they preach messages for their financial gain. Many of them are very rich, drive luxurious cars and have private universities at the expense of their poor members (Oladimeji, 2007:121-123).

An evangelist in Ondo state, Nigeria, was arrested for fraud. This Evangelist stole musical instruments worth three million naira and reportedly sold them at the Alaba international market, Ojo, Lagos. While asking for forgiveness, the evangelist claimed that it was the work of the devil. However, the former Lagos State Commissioner of Police, Mr Innocent Ilozuoke, maintained that the evangelist was a criminal who hid under the umbrella of religion to steal (Ogedegbe, 2007:200; Imaekhai, 2010:72).

Another example is a young hotel worker who stole millions of naira from his employers and donated this to one of the African Pentecostal churches in Lagos for the purpose of becoming a multi-millionaire. When the police arrested him, he confessed that he donated the money to his church to receive a hundredfold from God. The church pastor agreed that the church received the money because it was a voluntary donation. The church pastor refused to return the stolen money because the donor was not forced to give. The young man's family, based in the US, had to refund the money to prevent the young man from going to prison (Olaoye, 2009).

Closely related to the above is the story of Okeke Eddy Nwagu, who was regarded as a great "man of God" in Anambra State. He claimed to possess supernatural powers and wealthy military officers and politicians patronized him. Because of his so-called miracles, he was known as the "*Okala Madu Okala Nmo*" – "half human and half spirit." His followers considered him as "god in the form of man, a modern day Jesus Christ." However, unlike Jesus who died for the sins of humanity, Okeke was killed by the Bakassi Boys. They alleged that Okeke had killed innocent people for money rituals on November 9, 2000. The Bakassi Boys are militant youths who fought against what they considered social injustices in eastern Nigeria between 1996 and 2004. Before his death, Okeke confessed that he had killed 93 people to prepare charms for top government officials, business persons, politicians and military officers (Obi, 2000:31-33). The Bakassi Boys did not report him to the police

because they insisted that the police would set him free because of his influence in society. Before his death, he sent messages to some pastors and native doctors saying, "Let all pastors and native doctors operating under my anointing close up." Despite a confession on tape and video, there is still unhappiness about his death, partly because of the jungle justice by the Bakassi Boys, and partly because the channel for ritual money had closed for many persons (Obi, 2000:32).

Many AICs, mainline and Pentecostal churches in Nigeria have been accused of passivity, lack of a social Gospel and not having a strong stand against corruption (Nwaura, 2005:80-81). AICs in often pray against corruption. Emmanuel Adeleke Adejobi, the first Apostle in the Church of the Lord and the successor to Ositelu, observed the widespread of corruption in Nigeria and declared that:

"...the more Church Houses, Mosque and other Houses of Worship are opened, the more we achieve high posts... and increase of salaries, the more we have official corruption growing wings and feathers in almost every department. ... Let us do battle strongly with faith and prayers to stamp out corruption... by honest living" (Turner, 1967:87).

Though prayer can go some way to attack corruption, it is not sufficient. Prayer itself, when it is not accompanied by actions, is dead (James 2:14-17). Anti-corruption campaigns require a multi-sectoral approach, involving not only individuals, communities, governments and organizations, but also the church of God.

Preachers are God's mouthpieces to challenge immorality in society. They should not compromise the truth for financial gain. They have to receive the true message from God and be ready to proclaim it and, if needed, suffer for it like prophet Jeremiah.

After delivering God's message, the king's officials responded, "This man should be put to death. He is discouraging the soldiers who are left in the city, as well as all the people, by the things he is saying to them. This man is not seeking the good of these people but their ruin" (Jeremiah 38:4) NIV.

4.8 MAGIC AS A MEANS OF THE ABUSE OF SPIRITUAL HERITAGE

As stated in Chapter 2, some Africans use magic to get wealth, to manipulate justice and to harm other fellow human beings. The Yoruba believe in *oogun ika* or *oogun ibi* (bad magic) (Dopamu 1999:9). This can involve the manipulation or utilization of

supernatural powers. Bad magic can be used to kill, harm or destroy life or property, to make a happy destiny an unhappy one, or to destroy the wellbeing of an individual or society. The Yoruba curse their enemies with bad magic called “*epe*” – curse. With *epe*, a person can become insane, misbehave, lose all things or commit suicide (Awolalu & Dopamu, 1979:246-247). Through bad magic, the spirits of human beings can be sent out of the body on errands to cause havoc for other persons in body, mind, and business (Idowu, 1973:175).

Magic serves as the constant and active manipulation of supernatural powers to get power, wealth and money. Through magic, some Yoruba pursue wealth, power and money in ways that involve the human body. Although, these practices have died down drastically in urban areas due to the influence of Christianity and civilization, they are still in operation in remote villages.

Before the advent of Christianity, human blood was used for a sacrifice during situations that threatened the existence of society. These kinds of challenges included drought, epidemics, war, raids, calamities, floods and insect pests (Mbiti, 1975:59).

Among the Yoruba, human sacrifices are offered to *Sigidi* to harm or cause havoc to enemies. *Sigidi* is a rude figure made of clay and decorated with cowries and feathers. It is believed that *Sigidi* is a spirit that the Yoruba send to fight their enemies. When sacrifices and incantations are made, the spirit is believed to go directly to the enemy and stifle him; but if the enemy has a more powerful medicine, it will return and cause great havoc to the sender. The *Sigidi* spirit is also used to protect the households of people that have it (Parrinder, 1949:176).

Eating a predecessor’s heart or shedding the blood of human beings because of a dead king and during serious situations is an abuse of spiritual heritage. It is an abomination before God and humanity. These practices must be completely eradicated in the twenty-first century.

The prospect of escaping poverty and getting wealth and power, stimulates an interest in magic money, fraud, the sale of human body parts, adherence to secret cults and ritual killings. The practice of magic money with human body parts on

behalf of oneself is a deliberate act. Therefore, if the actions of getting wealth, power, fame or property are deliberate, it should not be attributed to the spirit world when the offender is caught. No matter the reasons for magic money, it should be considered as godlessness, because the life of an individual is sacred before God and the community.

4.9 IN SEARCH OF A RESPONSIBLE THEOLOGY

This chapter considered ways in which people abuse the Yoruba spiritual heritage. This abuse has negative consequences for both the church and the Nigerian society. In order to offer a balanced critique on this subject, the next chapter explores some positive contributions of inculturation theologians who stress the positive aspects of cultural heritage. How do African theologians adapt their theological methods to reconcile Christianity and African tradition? Has inculturation theology, especially its emphasis on the value of the African religion as a model of African theology, led to a sincere commitment to Christ in Africa? African theologians have constructed various theological models in response to these questions. Their responses are the focus of the next chapter.

Christianity discovered and is still discovering its uniqueness in relation to other religions. Christianity established its identity in its beginnings in the context of Judaism, the religion of Samaria, and Greco-Roman religions. In twenty-first century Africa, it is emerging its full potential in the contexts of indigenous religions, Islam and other religions (Ezigbo, 2012:186).

In 1966, the All-African Conference of Churches, established in Kampala in 1963, organized a conference in Ibadan, Nigeria. This conference was crucial in the search for a Protestant African theology. It was attended by West African Protestant theologians. Several papers were presented, and the main speaker was E. Bolaji Idowu, the chairman of the conference. His presentation centred on *Olodumare*, God in Yoruba belief. He stressed the monotheistic concept of *Olodumare*, whom he identified with the God of the Old and New Testaments. The sole question of the conference was: "To what extent does continuity exist between African Religion and Christian belief?" At the end of the meeting, the participants declared their resolution as Protestant theologians in Africa as:

“We believe that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Creator of heaven and earth, Lord of history, has been dealing with mankind at all times and in all parts of the world. It is with this conviction that we study the rich heritage of our African people, and we have evidence that they know of Him and worship Him” (Idowu, 1969:16).

Since the declaration of this meeting, inculturation of African religions into Christianity, which was formerly considered idolatry, has become a stepping stone for Christianity and has made Christianity into a more dominant religion than during previous centuries. Have the protagonists of an Africa contextual theology overlooked the negative aspects of African religion? This is investigated fully in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

INCULTURATION THEOLOGY

5.0 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 raises the following questions: has the strong emphasis on spiritual heritage in African Christianity brought positive or negative behaviour? Has the quest for spiritual heritage in African Christianity led to deeper commitment? In answering these questions, this chapter starts with a definition of inculturation theology and its presuppositions. Inculturation can have both positive and negative sides. It may, however, be too simplistic to refute every aspect of its negative tendency. In an effort to come to a balanced conclusion on the dual role of traditional heritage and inculturation theology in churches, an attempt is first made to analyse inculturation theology and to distinguish its uses and functions.

Many African theologians have been dealing with inculturation theology in Africa. For the purpose of this study, the work of five theologians is critically examined. They are chosen because of their relevance to this study. Idowu, Imasogie and Kato are Nigerians, and therefore familiar with the Nigerian context. Mbiti and Bediako have both developed theoretical frameworks that have been taken up by others. Mbiti's position on the reality of evil in Africa is helpful to this study, while Bediako has a consistent argument on the significance of grassroots theology. Bediako's strong emphasis on grassroots theology has aided the examination of the grassroots theology of Yoruba indigenous churches found in this study. Kato is most notable as the dissenting African theologian in the discussion of positive evaluations of African traditional religious heritage in relation to Christianity. He persistently affirms the centrality of the Bible in African theological enterprise.

Mbiti, Bediako, Idowu and Imasogie argue that Western theology is inadequate as an African theology because it arises from a different context and deals with issues that are quite different from those that are significant in Africa. They further argue that European theologians lack the personal experience of "Africanness", which is a basic prerequisite for this theological enterprise (Parratt, 2004:142). Oduyoye further

contends that “all who aspire to active involvement in this creative phase of African affairs must take Africa’s cultural heritage seriously” (Oduyoye, 1990:11). Mbiti argues that African sensitivity to the spirit world enriches African Christianity and serves as a preparatory ground for the Ultimate reality (Mbiti, 1989:271). These theologians further argue that God discloses Himself to some degree in every culture and religion. Therefore, the cultural and religious heritages are good sources of meaningful and relevant theology in Africa. Most of the African theologians see African religion as a sort of “preparation for the Gospel” in the sense that it exposes the spiritual needs that may be answered in Christ Jesus (Parratt, 2004:146-147).

5.1 DEFINITION OF INCULTURATION

Inculturation is as old as the Gospel; it is present in the Bible and in the histories of many denominations. Church historians have been and are still grappling with the two opposing tendencies of Gospel and culture. The Gospel reveals to us that salvation comes to man exclusively on the grounds of Christ’s work. African theologians who study inculturation stress this position further by saying that God accepts each person as he is into His kingdom. This implies that God accepts man with his culture because man is conditioned by a given time, place, family, group and society, called “culture”. In other words, God accepts man into His family by Christ-events through a particular culture. Andrew Walls remarks:

“Church history has always been a battleground for two opposing tendencies; and the reason is that each of the tendencies has its origin in the Gospel itself. On the one hand it is of the essence of the Gospel that God accepts us as we are, on the ground of Christ’s work alone, not on the ground of what we have become or are trying to become. But, if He accepts us ‘as we are’ that implies He does not take as isolated, self-governing units, because we are not. We are conditioned by a particular time and place, by our family and group and society, by ‘culture’ in fact. In Christ, God accepts us together with our group relations; with that cultural conditioning that makes us feel at home in one part of human society and less at home in another. But if He takes us with our group relations, then surely it follows that He takes us with our ‘dis-relations’ also; those predispositions, prejudices, suspicions, and hostilities, whether justified or not, which mark the group to which we belong” (Walls, 1997:7).

Inculturation is defined as “the tension between continuity and discontinuity” (Brinkman, 2009:26). Certain concepts undergo certain changes in a new context

and that these concepts in turn hold new possibilities in their new context. It also means that a concept derived from a specific context can also have a wider context. Therefore, Brinkman stresses that inculturation presumes a “double transformation” in the sense of the above-mentioned two-sided transformation. When a concept is transferred from a particular context to another, both the giver and receiver experience changes. The concept receives a different meaning and at the same time, it gives something new to the new context. In Jesus’ case, every culture adds new meanings to Jesus and transforms Him a bit. However, the impact of Jesus Himself is so strong that He transforms also every culture into which He is introduced (Brinkman, 2009:20).

Brinkman opposes the idea that the process of inculturation is a post-biblical phenomenon. He stresses that it occurs in the Bible itself (Brinkman, 2009:24). Though inculturation looks simple, it is a complex term. Theologians are still not clear on its subject and object. There are two questions relevant to inculturation: “What?” and “Who?” “Who?” refers to the subject (culture, but also Jesus) and “what?” refers to the meaning culture attributes to Jesus, but also what Jesus gives to culture (Brinkman, 2009:32). In a certain sense culture “transforms” Jesus by giving him new names in every new context, but the power of the Gospel is so strong that it transforms (changes) cultures as well. So, it is never a one-way road.

Theologically, inculturation acts between two poles: the pole of the incarnation and the pole of the cross and the resurrection. The incarnation of the Word means that God wants to reside among the people. This implies that the divine wants to take on cultural garbs. The incarnation of the Word (John 1:14) represents the fact of the assumption (the confirmation), and the cross and resurrection represent the nature of the negation. In the sacrament of baptism, the cross and resurrection teach us that we have to die and rise with Christ. This means also that our cultural life first has to “die”, before it can rise again with Christ. Brinkman declares,

“Baptism thus always refers to a critical process of purification, a catharsis. Whereas incarnation stands for confirmation and affirmation, the cross and resurrection stand for denial, negation and finding oneself through losing oneself” (Brinkman, 2009:34).

The above statement describes the two-sided transformation, because incarnation can never take place without the experience of the cross and resurrection and the indwelling can never occurs without change on the entering (Jesus) and the receiving (the believer) (Brinkman, 2009:33-34).

Ezigbo, a Professor of Contextual and Systematic Theology at Bethel University in the USA, argues that the essence of the Gospel message of Christianity is the Christ-event. This event should be a light to liberate and transform all religions and cultures (Ezigbo, 2012:197). This implies that inculturation is a process in which the Gospel penetrates a culture and transforms or liberates such a culture.

Inculturation is the meeting of the Christian faith and other cultures, and the phenomenon itself is deeply rooted in the Bible (Mbiti, 1976:131-132). It can also be defined as the continuity between for instance the African concept of God in culture and the God of the Bible (Kibicho, 1978:373-380). Another definition of inculturation is the interaction between Christian faith and African traditional religion in this case. Inculturation theology in Africa will be incomplete if it does not include a dialogue with the African traditional religions (Oborji, 2005:33). It can also be defined as method through which African scholars have incorporated African religions into the New Testament interpretation (Togarasei, 2012:214). It is a process of the incorporation of African social structures and religious practices into Christianity (Oduyoye, 1990:73).

Inculturation is a process through which the message of the Gospel takes root in the local or traditional values of a given people. It is concerned with how the Gospel message is authentically rooted in a given culture (Stinton, 2004:114). It refers to a process of applying the Gospel to sanitize and transform the culture of a particular people (Shorter, 1988:14). This is confirmed by the Roman Catholic theologian, Burke, who argues that inculturation is “the process by which the gospel takes root in local values, discovering and using their riches, as well as purifying their differences” (Burke, 2007).

Inculturation is a model of preaching the Gospel to the present generation while remaining faithful to the contexts of the people and that of the Bible. The same idea is expressed in more general terms by the Roman Catholic scholar Shorter, who affirms that inculturation is an inseparable and integral aspect of evangelism that

confirms God's supremacy over the entire universe. It is in a true sense a model of presenting and re-expressing the Gospel in forms and terms proper to custom, tradition and heritage of a given people without being unfaithful to either one (Shorter, 1988:14). Ukpong, a Nigerian Biblical scholar, maintains that inculturation is:

“...a hermeneutical methodology that seeks to make any community of ordinary people and their social-cultural context the subject of interpretation of the Bible through the use of the conceptual frame of reference of the people and the involvement of the ordinary people in the interpretation process” (Ukpong, 2002:12).

In this method, the African context and tradition provide a necessary channel for biblical interpretation. In other words, God permits all nations to walk in their own cultures and He never leaves without revealing Himself to them in their culture.

African inclusivist theologians who study inculturation theology stress two basic poles of meaningful and relevant theology in Africa: The African tradition and the Christian tradition. These inclusivist theologians argue that there is a relationship between Christ and culture and that there is revelation and salvation in the African religion. However, the “highest revelation” and the “fullest salvation” are in Christianity. They hold that even though the work of Christ is the only means of salvation, it does not follow that explicit knowledge of Christ is necessary to be saved. They also argue that an implicit faith response to general revelation can be salvific. God expects from man a response proportional to the light given to him. Mbiti is an example of this school of thought from East Africa, while Imasogie exemplifies this school in West Africa (Wijsen, 2000:50-51).

Walls endorses the view that each culture has to recognize in Scripture that God speaks to its own situation. It also means that every culture approaches Scripture wearing cultural masks, with assumptions determined by its own time and space. He declares, “No group of Christians has therefore any right to impose in the name of Christ upon another group of Christians a set of assumptions about life determined by another time and place” (Walls, 1997:8). Consequently, theologians who are positive about African culture in Christianity have to be faithful to the Jesus' tradition, at the same time remaining true to (in this case) the African religion.

The aim of inculturation is to express important aspects of one's own faith by means of the possibility of translation into another culture. It is a means of looking for a dynamic equivalence of an aspect of one's own faith in that of another. The goal of inculturation, therefore, is a sole cultural entity that is at once a culture transformed by faith and a faith that is traditionally re-expressed (Shorter, 1988:14). Cardinal Arinze argues that in looking for a dynamic equivalence, African theologians should also point out the negative elements that may be found in African traditional religion (Arinze, 1983:55). One can summarize inculturation as the synergy, complement, and relationship between Gospel and culture aiming at a deeper Christian experience in Africa.

The above statement summarizes the position of African theologians who deal with inculturation theology. God reveals Himself in every culture and religion to a certain degree. These theologians argue that it is impossible to separate an individual Christian from his or her social relationship and culture. However, the issue of inculturation and the Gospel remains discordant in the Christian faith. To live as a Christian and yet remain a member of one's community is a challenge for the church. This had led to several crises in both the early and the contemporary church.

Ukpong's description of inculturation is most relevant and informative to this study because it is a hermeneutical methodology that talks about the social and cultural context of a given people, the subject of interpretation of the Bible and the involvement of the ordinary people in the interpretation process. This definition leaves open the possibility to involve and contribute to inculturation scholarship in Nigeria; it is helpful because it stresses the interpretation of the Bible in Yoruba culture for a better understanding of Christianity.

5.2 PRESUPPOSITIONS OF INCULTURATION THEOLOGY

Theology cannot be practised in a vacuum; it occurs in the context of people with given presuppositions, and these presuppositions have to be addressed. Presuppositions are sources and norms. The sources are the formative factors that shape a given theology, while the norms of a theology are the contexts that the sources address and that will eventually determine the usage of the sources. The Nigerian philosopher and theologian, Osadolor Imasogie, whose reflections are

examine extensively in this chapter, suggests the following formative sources for Christian theology: the Word of God as mediated by the Holy Spirit, the Word of God as recorded in the Bible, the theological heritage of the Church and the culture and the worldview of the target audience. Most theologians agree with the first three factors, but Imasogie adds the fourth, the culture and worldview of the target audience (Imasogie, 1976:3-4). The worldview of Africans is evident in African traditional religion, culture and philosophy. Since African religion and philosophy reflect their culture and culture is the norm of inculturation theology, we now look at the definition of culture.

Culture is a set of institutions and ways of thinking. Niebuhr remarks, "Culture is the artificial secondary environment which man superimposes on the natural. It comprises language ,habits, ideas, beliefs, customs, social organization, inherited artefacts, technical processes and values" (Niebuhr, 1956:32). Theologians who stress the positive aspects of culture in Christianity argue that Christ is for culture and not against it. Since culture is a model and vehicle for preaching the Gospel, they strongly hold that cultures are the means of evangelism in which the Gospel transforms cultures (Niebuhr, 1956:2).

Besides, culture is a traditional institution that holds a community or society together, giving them a common framework of meaning and understanding. Culture includes the way of life of a particular people, their modes of dressing, beliefs and values that are preserved in language, thought patterns and symbols. It constitutes the collective heritage that is handed down to coming generations. In other words, culture is the way of life of a society that reveals itself in various institutionalized behavioural patterns (Oshitelu, 2007:113). This definition stresses the worldview rather than colour or ethnicity. Cultural theologians argue that culture holds people together. The Gospel must therefore be preached in the context of the people for deeper commitment to Christ.

Theologians who place special emphasis on culture in relation to Christianity usually hold on to the tenacity and authenticity of the Bible as a major source of their theology. They accept the historic confession of church tradition and the Holy Spirit mediating the Scriptures. However, they believe that God through the Holy Spirit

speaks to every generation. No generation is a slave to other generations, because every generation has access to God (Enyinnaya, 2009:453-454).

There are differences between the anti- and pro-culture schools in relation to the Gospel. The anti-culture school holds that God is against culture because culture is evil and Christians have to withdraw and isolate themselves from culture. They feel that Satan makes use of culture for his ends. The anti-culture school stands against culture as a vehicle of the Gospel message. They regard culture as evil, which is not compatible with the Gospel. Christians should be very careful about the relationship between the Gospel and culture. The British anthropologist Kraft argues, "To those who hold this view, the essence of 'culture' is the evil that they see around them, and the way to holiness is to escape from and condemn the world" (Kraft, 1980:104). Therefore, man has to withdraw and escape from culture. However, the pro-culture school holds that God is in culture because He created man to live within a particular culture. Man is a product of culture and when God implants in man the desire for culture, God is in support of it. After all, Christianity emanated from the Hebrew culture and Jesus Christ emerged from this culture. God chose a particular culture to penetrate the whole world.

The researcher's position is that man cannot escape culture because culture is a significant part of human existence. God created man with the capacity for culture. He implanted within man the necessity for culture for his well-being. Therefore, I subscribe to the idea that man cannot isolate himself from culture and still embark on a meaningful and relevant theological enterprise.

Culture and worldviews are the norms of the African. Therefore, every relevant and meaningful theology must be conditioned by the culture and worldview of the theological context. An attempt to neglect culture or relegate it would lead to a superficial commitment to Christ in Africa. Every culture has basic needs for which only the Gospel provides an appropriate response. These needs manifest in different ways in different cultures and theologians should provide answers to these needs (Imasogie, 1976:3). However, theologians must at the same time be critical about the relationship between culture and Christianity.

5.3 AFRICAN INCULTURATION THEOLOGIANs

This section presents the five mentioned African theologians that have had a great impact on the development of inculturation studies in Africa and beyond. They are Mbiti, Bediako, Idowu, Imasogie and Kato.

5.3.1 John Mbiti

5.3.1.1 Biography

Mbiti, theologian, author, teacher, pastor and the father of contemporary African theology, was born on November 30, 1931 in Mulango, Kitui, Kenya. He is the son of Samuel Muturi Ngaangi of the Akamba people. Mbiti had his primary school education in Kitui and then went on to the Alliance High School (1946-1949). Upon finishing high school in 1949, he went to study at the Makerere University College, Kampala, Uganda, which had just become an external college of the University of London. He majored in English and Geography, with additional courses in economics, history, sociology and fine arts. He did not study religion because there was no course in Religious Studies. As a student, he played a very active role in the Christian life of the university community. It was during this period that he received the calling to take up the sacred ministry.

After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1953, he taught for six months in Kenya. He then travelled overseas to study theology at the Barrington College (now Gordon-Barrington College, New England). Here, he obtained another Bachelor of Arts degree in 1956 and a Bachelor's degree in Theology in 1957. After a period of two years working as a teacher and an itinerant preacher, he went back to Kenya and was offered the William Paton Lectureship. Based there, he worked as a visiting lecturer between 1959 and 1960 at Selly Oak College, Birmingham, England.

Mbiti went on to do his doctoral studies in New Testament Studies with the Cambridge University, and obtained his Doctor of Philosophy in 1963. While at Cambridge, he met his wife Verbena Siegen Haler from Switzerland, who was there to study English. They were married in 1965 and God blessed their marriage with four children. The Oxford University Press published the results of his research in

1971 as *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background: a Study of the Encounter between New Testament Theology and African Traditional Concepts*.

He was ordained into the Anglican order in 1963. John Mbiti served for fifteen months at the St. Michael's parish at St. Albans near London. For the next ten years (1964-1974), he was a lecturer and later a professor at the Makerere University, Uganda, teaching New Testament Theology, African religion and other world religions. He also assisted in the chapel ministry. Over the course of his academic and church work, his knowledge of various languages increased, including German, French, Greek, and Hebrew.

Mbiti, true to his inquisitive nature, read up the little that was available on African religion and supplemented his knowledge with extensive research and fieldwork, often with the help of students. His skill as researcher and author resulted in his well-known *African Religions and Philosophy*, first published in 1969. A revised and expanded edition appeared in 1989 (Mbiti, 1989:1-288). He produced a large number of publications that have made an impact on the African theological scene. Apart from his well-known books, he had published over 350 items including books, articles, essays, poems and book reviews in the field of Christian Theology, Biblical Studies, Christian Ethics, Ecumenical Literature and African Religions and Philosophy. In 1973, he wrote an interesting book on love and marriage in Africa (Bediako, 1992:312-322).

From 1974 to 1980, Mbiti served as director and professor at The Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches at Chateau de Bossey in Geneva. He then took up a full-time parish ministry in Bergdorf in the Reformed Church of Bern, Switzerland, where he served from 1981 until he retired in 1996. From 1983 to the year 2003, he taught on a part-time basis as a Professor of the Science of Mission and Extra-European Theology at the Faculty of Theology, University of Bern. He has been a visiting professor at various universities and seminaries in Africa, Europe and the United States (Bediako, 1992:301-302).

5.3.1.2 *Mbiti's Inculturation Theology*

Mbiti, having studied three hundred tribes in Africa, calls for more attention to the relationship between the Gospel, local culture and traditional religions. He strives to establish empathy and relevance for the person of Jesus Christ in an African setting that is both traditional and open to the modern life. He maintains that Africa cherishes the Gospel message of personal joy and spirituality that gives hope and healing to the sick person, society and land. He emphasizes the value and place of the Bible in the development of theology and practice of the Christian life. For his life and work, Mbiti gives grateful acknowledgement to the Christian home in which he grew up in Kenya and to his wife, Verbena for her encouragement and support in his academic and church work (Bediako, 1992:303).

Mbiti strongly condemns European theology because it fails to make use of African tradition as a stepping-stone for practicing a relevant theology in Africa. He furthermore declares that “mission Christianity” eventually produced “a church that exists without a theology” and “without theological consciousness and concern” (Mbiti, 1973:51). He argues that the early missionaries neglected the African heritage and that this is the reason why African Christians are not fully committed to Jesus. He supports his argument by giving the ontological and typological views of African theology from the worldview of African traditional religion and makes it a foundation for practicing a relevant theology in the African context. He argues:

“It is my contention that, even though officially Christianity either disregarded African religion altogether, or treated it as an enemy, it was in fact African religion more than anything else, which laid down the foundation and prepared ground for the eventual rapid accommodation of Christianity in Africa, and for the present rapid growth of the church in the continent. Without African religiosity, whatever its defects might be, Christianity would have taken much longer to be understood and accommodated by African peoples...” (Mbiti, 1973:86).

Mbiti sees inculturation theology as an encounter between the Gospel and culture. Therefore, inculturation theology in Africa will be incomplete if it does not include the dialogue with the African traditional religions. According to Mbiti, African Christians must be united with Jesus, and at the same time embrace their culture, because African heritage is a fertile land for the Gospel (McMahon, 2010). Though Mbiti is

aware that Africans lack written documents on their religions and traditions, he argues that Africans are not ignorant of the Supreme Being or spirit beings. Their theology is alive and practised in all facets of their lives. In his words, “It is in the open, from the pulpit, in the market-place, in the home as people pray or read and discuss the Scriptures... African Christianity cannot wait for written theology to keep pace with it” (Mbiti, 1986:229). The above statement is very important in the sense that to understand African theology, one must understand the African cultural heritage.

Mbiti stresses the nature of African traditions and its relationship of continuity in Christian belief. He demonstrates that the African traditional experiences and heritage are not illusory and they should have formed a good background for preaching the Gospel message in Africa. He argues that African spirituality is fertile and prepared ground for evangelism in Africa (Mbiti, 1972:86).

His theological agenda is concerned with the communication of the Gospel in Africa. He maintains that the communication of the Gospel should reflect a cultural appropriation in African terms. This implies that since theological self-consciousness is an important mark of the church in any culture, a church that is “trying to exist without a theology” is an anomaly, and “indicates its uncertainty regarding its own self-understanding and its own identity”. For consciousness of identity, Mbiti’s principle of spiritual liberty has special significance. His argument on theological self-identity implies that a theologian has freedom to discern his own questions, to express clearly those questions and to seek appropriate answers to them, and to do it all within the freedom of the Gospel (Bediako, 1992:307).

Mbiti suggests an “African theology” for identity in Africa. He rejects the term “indigenization of Christianity” as proposed by Idowu. He claims that indigenizing Christianity gives the impression that Christianity is a ready-made commodity that has to be transplanted to a local area. This is the assumption of many local theologians. Indigenization can serve as a major obstacle to mission and evangelism in the African context. He also rejects the related idea of indigenization of theology; for theology is always indigenous, resulting from the effort to articulate the meaning of the Gospel in a particular cultural context in response to the realities of that

worldview. Consequently, he proposes “African theology.” Most of the African theologians prefer this description because it opens up the possibility of African worldview in theology and philosophy (Bediako, 1992:275-276).

Mbiti maintains that African theology is fitting for Africa because African churches should reflect theologically on its evangelistic activity. Therefore, Mbiti’s positive evaluation of the connection between the Gospel and African cultures helps African theology. Consequently, the task of constructing an African Theology on the basis of African experience and communication of the Christian Faith can proceed without anxiety or self-justification. This will help African Christianity to separate the very essence of Christianity from its peripherals (Bediako, 1992:312- 313).

Mbiti presents a more settled and balanced approach than the theological legacy of the early missionaries. He is equally eager that an authentically African appropriation of the Christian Gospel should take place; his literary output has been in the direction of an elucidation of the theological meaning of the African traditional spirituality as an integral part of the African Christian consciousness. In his argument that African spiritual heritage constitutes a *praeparatio evangelica*, Mbiti is able to root the unity in African experience not so much in the African traditions and its possible affinities with Christian ideas, as in the unity and “geographical” universality of Christ (Bediako, 1992:xvii). His “Biblical theology” maintains that any meaningful theology should reflect the situation and understanding of a given people and must be connected to an original contribution to the theology of the Church universal, is remarkable.

Mbiti’s position within “African theology” is strong. He is still influential in contemporary African Christian thought. His writings on liberty in the context of the quest by African theologians for an appropriate sense of identity are commendable. He puts African theology in the “mainstream of the ecumenical and apostolic heritage” and the “Catholicity of the Church” (Mbiti, 1971:189).

5.3.1.3 *Critical Examination of Mbiti’s Theology*

Mbiti’s emphasis on the uniqueness of Jesus and African traditions in relation to Christianity is commendable because it endorses the relevance of African culture as a prepared ground for evangelism. The proclamation of the Gospel is the ultimate

goal that transforms traditions. He argues, "I considered traditional religions, Islam and the other religious systems to be preparatory and even essential ground in the search for the Ultimate. But only Christianity has the terrible responsibility of pointing the new to that ultimate Identity, Foundation and Source of being" (Mbiti, 1989:271).

The relevance of Mbiti's inculturation theology to this study concerns especially the spirit world. He holds that in Africa, there is contact between human beings and ancestral spirits, among many other spirits. He argues that the New Testament worldview is full of spirit beings in the form of angels, demons and unclean spirits. In all categories of spirits in the New Testament, only angels are considered good, others are malicious and opposed to the Kingdom of God. Here, Mbiti's argument stresses that in Africa, there are spirits who have regular contact with human beings. The ministry of Jesus Christ involves the realm of spirit beings. Consequently, the eschatological and Messianic duties of Jesus are to overthrow Satan and his legions. Malicious spirits are real, but Christ's power is superior (Mbiti, 1971:271).

Mbiti strongly emphasizes the African traditional spiritual context as a fertile ground for Christianity in Africa and the uniqueness of the Christ-event in transforming all religions. He states that African traditional religions hold the greatest potential to meet the existential challenges of modern Africa, and to reach a full integration of the humanity of individuals with societies. However, their very best teaching and ideologies are not offering anything radically new to, and different from, what is already embedded in Christian faith. The uniqueness and strength of Christianity lies in the fact that its teaching, ethics and practice are superior to all major elements of the other African religious ethics and practices (Mbiti, 1989:271). The paradox of African cultural identity in Christianity is captured by Mbiti as follows:

"Cultural identities are temporary, serving to yield us as Christians to the fullness of our identity with Christ. Paradoxically, culture snatches us away from Christ, it denies that we are His; yet when it is best understood, at its meeting with Christianity, culture drives us to Christ and surrenders us to Him, affirming us to be permanently, totally and unconditionally His own" (Mbiti, 1973:94).

Consequently, for culture to draw us to Christianity, Jesus Christ is the essence. He is the test for the compatibility of traditions with Christianity. He is the obstacle of all ideologies and religious traditions. His Person is greater than can be contained by

any religion. He is “the Man for others”, and yet beyond them. He is the only one who deserves to be the goal and standard for individuals and communities in every culture and generation (Mbiti, 1989:271). Jesus is the final test for the meaningful and useful theological contributions of any religion. Mbiti holds that “Since His incarnation, Christian theology ought properly to be Christology, for theology falls or stands on how it understands, translates and interprets Jesus Christ, at a given time, place and human situation” (Mbiti 1971:190).

Mbiti also argues that critical inculturation admits the strengths and weaknesses of traditional religion in Christianity. According to him, inculturation provides a promising and fruitful area of comparative studies between African and the Old Testament cultural and religious backgrounds. However, the New Testament is a completely different world with major themes for which there are no parallels in the African religious background. These major themes include resurrection, newness in Christ and eschatology. According to him, these themes are forward-looking (Mbiti, 1971:183-184). Unlike the New Testament world, the weakness of the African spiritual heritage is backward-looking and cannot disclose a new possibility.

Mbiti stresses the reality of spirits in Africa, but he argues that Africans have gone far in the belief in spirits. He declares:

“I do not for a moment deny that there are spiritual forces outside man which seem sometimes to function within human history and human society. But the belief in the mystical power is greater than the ways in which that power might actually function within the human society” (Mbiti, 1989:204).

This is relevant to this study because denying the reality of spirits among the Yoruba can be misleading, but often the belief in their potency is exaggerated and this leaves room for escaping responsibility as mentioned in Chapter 4.

From the foregoing, Mbiti’s critical inculturation is helpful because it shows that there is too much emphasis on the spirit world influencing human behaviours in Nigeria. This offers a theoretical framework to formulate and examine the concrete critical theology of indigenous churches in Nigeria in view of the tremendous influence of corruption and immorality in the Nigerian society.

5.3.2 Kwame Bediako

5.3.2.1 Biography

Professor Manasseh Kwame Dakwa Bediako (1945-2008) was a renowned African scholar, one of the most remarkable of the African theologians. He built his scholarship on Mbiti's work on the significance of African traditional religion in Christianity. He goes a little further in inculturation theology than Mbiti because he stresses grassroots theology and endorses more aspects of the African spiritual heritage in African Christianity.

He was the son of a police inspector and the grandson of a Presbyterian pastor. He was from the Central Region of Ghana, but lived in Accra, the capital city. He had his primary and secondary school education at Mfantsipim Secondary School, a British Methodist School along the Cape Coast. He was an exceptional student and the Head Prefect of his secondary school. He gained admission into the University of Ghana at an early age. At university he learned French language and became an eloquent orator. In pursuit of academic excellence, he gained admission into the University of Bordeaux for his master's and doctoral degrees. It was in France that he was born again and began to develop himself in the Christian faith. He became a Presbyterian pastor in 1973.

He married Gillian Mary, who was a great supporter of his ministry and academic life. After his study of French, he moved from literature to theology. Furthermore, because of his keen interest in the Christian faith, he obtained another doctoral degree from the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. His wife, Gillian, was a student at this university doing her Masters of Arts in religious studies. Both of them obtained their degrees of Doctors of Philosophy at this university and contributed greatly to the Christian faith, both in Africa and beyond.

5.3.2.2 Bediako's Inculturation Theology

Bediako wrote his dissertation on the conflict between the Hellenistic culture and the Christian faith. His research question centred on how theologians in the Greco-

Roman world dealt with questions that arose from the Hellenistic culture; how they viewed their cultural ancestors and their pre-Christian intellectual, literary and religious heritages? Was it possible to be both Greek and Christian? He used the correlation method to answer the above questions and subsequently applied this to the correlation between Christianity and the African religion and philosophy (Walls, 2008:1-3). According to him, if the Hellenistic Christians were both Greek and Christians, this implies that Africans also can both maintain their culture and at the same time be truly Christian. He argued that Africans of today are the product of past traditions and their past created their identity and shows them who they are. They cannot abandon or suppress their past or substitute it with something else or leave their past untouched by Christ. He also stresses in his theological approach that conversion does not imply that culture must be replaced or suppressed by another culture. Therefore, becoming a Christian in Africa should not warrant the forfeiture of the African culture or its replacement by Western culture. Conversion must lead to the renewal and advancement of the African culture through the Gospel message (Walls, 2008:3).

Bediako's vision on culture and the Christian faith led to his appointment to teach a course at the University of Aberdeen on the relationship between the African cultural heritage and the Christian faith. His academic career equipped him to form the Akrofi-Christaller Institute for Theology, Mission and Culture in Ghana, where he became the Rector. The school offers studies in the fields of Mission and Theology, and Religious Studies at the Masters and Doctorate levels. The philosophy of the school is to produce committed African scholars who will not only affect African theology, but also contribute to Christian theology in general. This school is fully accredited by the National Accreditation Board of the Ministry of Education as a tertiary institution with a Presidential Charter to award degrees. It is a research university promoting African innovation, excellence and dedicated to the study and documentation of Christian history, thought and life in Ghana and in Africa as a whole, in relation to their African setting and to world Christianity. The school's objective is to strengthen Christian witness in the modern Africa and world context through Christian scholarship.

Since the death of Bediako, the school has continued to produce African scholars in the fields of traditions that combine piety, creativity and academic excellence in the furtherance of the witness to the Gospel in Ghana and across Africa (AfrofiChristeller, 2014).

Bediako stresses that the African theology, though not written precisely because it is a grassroots theology, is an integral element of all theologies and essential for academic theology. In his words:

“Indeed, academic or written theology cannot replace this spontaneous or grassroots theology, because the two are complementary aspects of one reality, and the ‘spontaneous’ is the foundation of the ‘academic’. Without this vital contact with the spontaneous and grassroots theology, academic theology anywhere can become detached from the community of faith and so be not much more than an exclusive conversation carried on among the guild of scholars, and incapable of communicating life in Jesus Christ to others” (Bediako, 2004:17).

Bediako emphasizes the relationship between the Gospel and the African culture for theologians of his generation. His passion to unify African Christians to affirm their Christian identity was a unique way not only of contributing to African Christianity, but also overcoming some legacies that cause neglect of the African culture in practising Christianity in Africa. He remarked that one of the reasons why many Africans participate in and are committed to Christianity is because the Africans began to practise grassroots theology. Making use of the African traditional heritage to reach people in their language and worldview helps in teaching and doing evangelism in Africa. He remarks:

“I believe that if African Christian theology retains and maintains a vital link with the Christian presence in Africa, it will be poised to contribute significantly to shaping the church for the coming century by recalling for Christian scholarship in our time, the perennial challenge that it is mission and faith in Jesus as Lord that give birth to theology: and that the supreme task of theology is witness: to “Cry Jesus!”, so that men and women may know, and respond to, the love of God for the world, shown in Jesus Christ” (Bediako, 2004:18).

He strongly stresses the significance of grassroots and academic theology. The grassroots theology that is in oral form is relevant to Africans, and leads to the

academic or the written theology. He holds that written theology must not replace grassroots theology, but should complement it, since it sheds more light on the grassroots theology. He argues further that the African culture that is highly religious contributes to vibrant Christianity in Africa and forms the true basis of the African theology that provides clear evidence that Christianity in Africa is a truly African experience (Bediako, 2004:17).

The prophetic movements are successful in Africa because they take the primal imagination (grassroot theology) regarding spirits as the causality of evil seriously. They affirm the reality of God through the power of the Holy Spirit and other spiritual entities within the traditional context in which they work and preach (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2012:171). The preaching of prophets that deals with the negative effects of evil and protection of people by prayers contributed to the rapid growth of African Christianity. The same idea is expressed in more general terms by Dickson, who notes that the physical and spiritual environments have a special meaning for the Africans; Africans love their environment, they fear it, and they sense something mysterious about it. The elements, plants and animals, the land and all that is within and on it play a vital role in the African's comprehension of the reality of life (Dickson, 1984:48).

5.3.2.3 *Critical Examination of Bediako's Inculturation Theology*

Bediako's logical argument of separating local traditions from the Gospel message is highly commendable, especially in the experience of pluralism. Unlike Western culture where separation between religion and culture became a critical discussion, many of the African Christian communities had been living, learning and witnessing to survive and grow in the context of religious worldviews. Therefore, it is noteworthy that theology practised in the same way in which it has been in the Western European tradition. Consequently, there is no relevant theology in Africa without the study of African traditions. In support of Bediako, Hastings declares, "No self-respecting theological institution in Africa can now avoid the study of African traditional religions, for it is they which "are now the very centre of the academic stage" (Hastings, 1976:183).

Bediako advocates and supports grassroots theology in African Indigenous Churches. His emphasis on grassroots theology has given me the courage to study the grassroots theology of the Yoruba indigenous churches. In these churches, there are several dangers that Bediako has overlooked in his grassroots inculturation theology. These dangers are spelled out in Chapter 4.

Bediako's argument is helpful in the sense that the prophets in AICs take the presence of evil and its causality seriously as noted in chapters 2 and 3. He affirms that African Indigenous Churches attribute the cause of evil to a spirit world and that the spirit views shape the reality of life among the Yoruba. However, in my view, the problem of evil is not properly addressed by these prophets.

Bediako successfully uses the early Hellenistic Christian thought in comparison with the contemporary African context to arrive at a possibility of a relevant African theology that seeks a synthesis between Christian faith and cultural continuity. He holds that in the early Church, there was a great variety of approaches: Origen, Tatian and Tertullian are quite different in their appreciation of Hellenistic culture. However, the early Church did not completely reject Hellenistic cultures in Christianity, so the African Christianity should not completely reject African traditions. Therefore, every Christian theology is a synthesis of Christian traditions and the valuable traditions of the hearers of the Gospel. Bediako's position is helpful because he argues that not everything in Hellenistic culture was accepted in the early Church, so not every custom in the Africa cultural heritage is compatible with the Christian faith.

Bediako's relevance to this study is in his concluding remarks in his book, *Culture and Identity*. He argues, "African theology has now overturned virtually every negative verdict passed on African tradition by the ethnocentrism of Western missionary enterprise in Africa" (Bediako, 1992: 439).

The question still remains: has African theologians' strong emphasis on the significance of African traditions in African Christianity overturned every negative element of African tradition in African Christianity? This research is an attempt to answer this question and to develop a more critical theology as a necessary complement to the grassroots theology. Chapter 4 looks at eight areas of abuse of spiritual heritage in the grassroots theology of the two indigenous churches

examined. Bediako, in his academic position, has not uncovered these negative aspects revealed in this study.

5.3.3 Osadolor Imasogie

5.3.3.1 Biography

Osadolor Imasogie, a distinguished Nigerian philosopher and systematic theologian was born on June 28, 1929 in Benin City, Nigeria. He attended the American Baptist School, Benin City in 1946 and later proceeded to the Baptist College, Iwo, to be trained for the teaching profession. God called him to the ministry and he entered the Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, for his Bachelor degree in theology from 1952 to 1955. As a result of his thirst for knowledge, from 1961 to 1963 and between 1963 and 1964, he attended Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, USA and the Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, for his Bachelor of Arts and Masters of Divinity. He earned his doctoral degree in 1972 at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, USA, and his post-doctoral degree at the Vanderbilt University of Divinity School, Nashville, Tennessee, USA, with a specialization in theological methodology. His Ph.D. dissertation is titled *Langmead Casserley's understanding of Christian philosophy as a basis for Apologetics*.

He taught at the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, from 1966 to 1993. He also taught as a visiting professor of Religion and Philosophy, at Belmont University, Nashville, Tennessee, between 1977 and 1978. Imasogie held several significant leadership positions in ecclesiastical bodies at the national, continental and international levels. He served as the President of the Nigerian Baptist Convention from 1979 to 1985 and as the first native president of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, Nigeria from 1979 to 1993. He was a member of the General Council of the Baptist World Alliance, the Moderator of Theological Education of the World Council of Churches from 1984 to 1991 and a member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, from 1983-1990. He was also a member of The Commission of Ethics of the Baptist World Alliance from 1980 to 1985 (Ishola & Ayegboyin, 2009:489-499). Imasogie published eighteen books and wrote thirty-three articles in both local and international journals.

5.3.3.2 *Imasogie's Inculturation Theology*

Imasogie is a staunch supporter of inculturation theology who believes that any meaningful theology cannot be practised in a vacuum. His theological methodology is evangelical. His goal is to make the Christian faith more meaningful to Africans, while maintaining the Christian tradition and African culture. He holds that systematic theology must be conditioned by two factors: Christian tradition and cultural traditions. He suggests three major ways for an effective theology in Africa. One, a new appreciation of the efficacy of Christ's power over evil forces; two, a new emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit and the present mediatory efficacy of the living Christ Jesus, and three, a new emphasis on the omnipresence of God and the consequent sacramental nature of the universe (Imasogie, 1986:79-85).

Imasogie maintains that an African man can find his real fulfilment in life only in relation to his human and spiritual communities (Imasogie, 1986:75). According to him, since the worldview of Africans is full of spiritual forces, most of which threaten the existence of man in the universe, the best entry point of Christian theology in Africa is the recognition of the supreme power of Jesus over evil forces. He argues that this is in line with the biblical approach in the sense that the worldview of the first hearers of the Gospel, especially in the Gentile world, was full of fear of evil spirits and demons. Gone are the days when many African theologians trained under the tenets of Western theology, discarded the notion of evil spirits as a superstitious imagination of uncivilized Africans. He argues that this myopic view held by the exponents of European theology has led to superficial commitment by African Christians (Imasogie, 1986:68-89). Imasogie, like many African theologians, stresses that "theology that is not done in the context of the people is a defective theological methodology" (Imasogie, 1986:11).

Secondly, he stresses the significance of the Holy Spirit and the present mediatory efficacy of the living Christ. According to him, Africans feel at home in Christianity when they come to a vital appreciation of the Holy Spirit as a unifying force in the Christian community. He blames the Western Christian theology in Africa for neglecting the role of the Holy Spirit and advocates for a new emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit. In view of the spirit world, Africans love to relate with the spirits

through rituals and sacrifices as a way of maintaining a balance in their world. Indeed, the average African Christian who encounters pressures resorts to those practices that reassure him during the trying moments of his life. He further stresses that a new emphasis be placed on the mediatory role of Christ. This would enable African Christians to appreciate the essence of Christ's sacrifices at Calvary (Imasogie, 1986:81-85).

Thirdly, he argues that a new emphasis should be placed on the omnipresence of God and the consequent sacramental nature of the universe. In traditional Africa, there is no clear separation between the sacred and the secular. Whatever a person does or whatever happens to him, is done in the presence of God as represented by his spiritual agents. According to Imasogie, Christian theology teaches Africans to regard this belief as superstition, and this has led to a situation where without compunction, the African now violates moral norms. He strongly recommends that Christian theology should build on the close relationship between the sacred and the secular. He holds that if these principles are applied to African Christianity, African Christians would be committed and dedicated to the Gospel. In his words,

"It is hoped that if these guidelines are taken seriously by theologians in Africa, the African Christian will come to appreciate Christ as the universal Saviour, the "very God of very God" in whom and through whom the whole universe came into being and has meaning. The African will also come to realize that there is no area of human experience that lies outside of the knowledge and power of Christ. With that understanding, the African will have no urge to look elsewhere for security when faced with what he interprets as a metaphysical problem inasmuch as Christ is seen to be all-sufficient for his every need" (Imasogie, 1986:85-86).

5.3.3.3 *Critical Examination of Imasogie's Inculturation Theology*

From the foregoing analyses of Imasogie, three things are obvious in his inculturation theology. Firstly, the strong emphasis of the activities of the spirits is a starting point for evangelism in Africa, because Africans are sensitive to the spirit world in their understanding of the reality of life. His emphasis that the Gospel message has power to undo the activities of the evil spirit is commendable.

Secondly, Imasogie appreciates the significance of the Holy Spirit and the present mediatory efficacy of the living Christ. In the Holy Spirit, Africans find their fulfilment in relation to God, Jesus and spiritual communities.

Thirdly, his appeal that any Gospel message that denies the reality of evil spirit is not authentic in Africa is also remarkable for all theologians in Africa. To deny the existence of the spirit in the reality of life in Africa is a failure to understand a crucial element of the African worldview. The early missionaries who refused to take into account the views of the spirit causality of evil experienced many setbacks in their evangelistic approach in Africa. As noted earlier, many African theologians who trained under the tenets of Western theology discarded the notion of evil spirits as a superstitious imagination of uncivilized Africans. Therefore, pointing out the belief in the reality of the spirit world is a critical theology of inculturation.

The inculturation theology of Imasogie is helpful and relevant because it aids a balanced appreciation of the Nigerian indigenous churches. His theology is much more concrete and helpful than Bediako and Mbiti, who speak in more general terms and do not elaborate on the power of numerous spirits. Imasogie is more relevant because opens one's eyes to the reality of evil in the Nigerian society that theologians have not been dealing with.

Contrary to Imasogie's position that failure to engage African traditional religions in Christianity by the early missionaries has led to superficial commitment to the Gospel, my position is that some aspects of African spiritual heritage mentioned in Chapter 4 lead to superficial commitment to Christ. I hold that strong emphasis on the reality of evil caused by spirits leads to superficial commitment. Consequently, the spirit causality of immoralities in Africa has not been properly dealt with by Imasogie; he has overlooked this major concern in his inculturation theology.

5.3.4 Bolaji Idowu

5.3.4.1 Biography

Bolaji Idowu, a staunch proponent of inculturation, the doyen of West African academic theology and the third indigenous leader of the Methodist Church Nigeria,

from 1972 to 1984, was born on September 28, 1913 in Ikorodu, Lagos. His parents, Ogunbanke and Oke Bandele, were traditionalists. However, his grandmother had a stronger influence on his spiritual life than his parents did. She was very devoted to the African traditional religion. She was aware of the Supreme God and inculcated this into the psyche of Idowu. Idowu received a sense of the divine presence from his grandmother and from his father he gained artisanship.

He started his elementary school at the Anglican and Wesleyan Methodist School, Ikorodu, Lagos. He had his secondary school education at the Baptist Boys' High School, Abeokuta and proceeded to Wesley College Ibadan for his theological training. After his pastoral training, the school posted him to Ogere Remo, Ogun State. There he worked as an assistant pastor and the headmaster of the primary school. In 1942, he went back to Wesley College for his divinity studies, which gave him the opportunity to be ordained. After his ordination, he ministered in the Trinity Methodist Church, Tinubu, Lagos, between 1951 and 1957. During these years, his parents converted to Christianity. The Rev. Evan. E. Williams greatly influenced him during his pastorate at the Trinity Methodist Church.

In 1945, Idowu went to England for further studies at Wesley House Cambridge and Wesley College Headingly, Leeds. He came back to Nigeria thereafter and worked briefly before he went to Germany to provide practical solutions to the problems that confronted Asian and African students. He came back after this successful assignment and in 1958 joined the staff of the Department of Religious Studies of the University of Ibadan as a professor. He became the Head of the Department of Religious Studies in 1963 and retired in 1976.

Idowu married Elizabeth Yewande Thomas in 1949 and God blessed his marriage with six children. He was a devoted family man, a caring husband and a dutiful father. He shared his provisions with the common people. He was generous and donated large sums of money from his retirement benefits to students and workers of the Department of Religious Studies (Abogunrin, 2011). He was elected president of the Methodist Church on October 4, 1972. He helped the church grow spiritually and numerically. He initiated several reforms as the president of the Methodist Church and reviewed the constitution of the church. He stressed the importance of an

indigenous church and contended that Nigerian churches needed autonomy and indigenization. Idowu died on 27th November, 1993 and was buried in Lagos (Awolalu, 2014:1-4).

5.3.4.2 *Idowu's Inculturation Theology*

Idowu is critically examined in Chapter 2, so this section pays systematic attention to his work. Idowu argued that most African theologians lived mainly on European theology. He saw this as an inadequate and incomplete theology in Africa. He declared:

“Theologically, (the church in Nigeria) has been spoon-fed by Europeans all along. Her theology is book theology; that is, what she read in books written by European theologians, or what she is told by Europeans, is accepted uncritically and given out undigested in preaching or teaching. What this reveals is the sad fact that Christian Nigerians have not yet begun to do their own thinking and to grapple spiritually and intellectually with questions relating to the Christian faith” (Idowu, 1965:22-23).

Idowu blames Western missionaries' theology of abstraction from real life and therefore opts for the use of African traditions, especially mythology, because the African worldviews on most of their societal events are full of the spirit world. Idowu, as an African theologian whose aim was to construct a theology for diverse religious and cultural contexts, said that a meaningful theology in Africa must be prepared to enter into the arena of African traditions. He claims that there is continuity between African traditional religions and Christianity. Idowu logically argues in his book, *Olodumare, God in Yoruba Belief*, that African tradition, especially the concept of the Supreme Being, is not foreign to the Yoruba.

Idowu designs a theology of religion for Nigeria. He claims that a theology meant for Nigerians should “bear the distinctive stamp of indigenous originality” and must also motivate Nigerians to imagine “who Jesus is, what he has done and is doing for them corporately and individually, and what he means to them as the absolute Lord of life – the whole of life – within the context of the world in which they live” (Idowu, 1965:23). This implies that the theologian's task is to differentiate the Christian message from its transmission vehicles, which are culturally burdened.

His methodological approach to Yoruba religion was purely theological. He saw the history and ritual of the Yoruba religion from a theological rather than an anthropological perspective. He canvassed for the use of the African cultural heritage for a meaningful Christian growth in Africa. He condemned much of the foreign theology and opted for African tradition as the basis for African theology. He contended that whatever theology the early African church practised was a prefabricated European theology written and interpreted by European theologians without considering the African traditions (Idowu, 1965:6).

Idowu further argued that any preacher or theologian who wanted to practise a proper theology in Africa had to be well versed in the African traditional religions and be ready to make use of African traditions as a foundation for applying a relevant theology and evangelism in Africa. He argued that in Africa, any theology and evangelism not contextualized in the Africa worldview would lead Africans to a superficial commitment to Jesus. He remarked that one of the reasons why early African Christians practised syncretism is that the early missionaries taught African Christians their own European culture and condemned the African culture. In His words:

“Evangelism has certainly failed where people call themselves Christians, set up edifices where they congregate for worship, and yet cannot say from their heart and in their own words who Jesus is, what He has done and is doing for them corporately and individually, and what He means to them as the absolute Lord of Life – the whole of life – within the context of the world in which they live” (Idowu, 1965:23).

In above statement, Idowu argues that it was a big mistake that the mission churches did not take the traditional beliefs and customs of Africa into account when she began her work of evangelism.

Other African theologians who have been dealing with inculturation strike the same note as the three theologians hitherto examined. Gallagher stresses that the proclamation of the Gospel without any connection to grassroots poses a serious problem for theologians who express the Gospel message in another context other than their own (Gallagher, 1995:241).

The most relevant aspect of Idowu's work to this study is in the area of the Supreme Being who is *Olodumare* in Yoruba religion? As I noted earlier in Chapter 2, *Olodumare* is the controller of all things, including human behaviours and destiny. Idowu insists that there is one God, one universe and there was a certain point of dispersion of members of the single family of human beings. This has been extensively discussed in Yoruba myth of the origin of the universe in Chapter 2.

Idowu insists that in Yoruba religion, divinities are the ministers of *Olodumare* functioning in his theocratic government. Divinities are brought into being to serve *Olodumare* in the maintenance of orderliness in the universe. They also serve as intermediaries between human beings and *Olodumare*. They receive sacrifices and the Yoruba pray to *Olodumare* through them (Awolalu & Dopamu, 1979:70-73). They bless their followers and harm anyone who dishonours them. They influence, especially *Orisa-nla*, human destiny. Therefore, the Yoruba attribute nearly all experiences of life to *Ori*, or *a-kun-le-yan*. As earlier mentioned, in the matter of taking the destiny and fulfilling one's destiny on earth, the Yoruba believe in *ori* or *Iponri*. *Ipin* (portion or lot) means the portion that the *ori* kneels down and chooses before coming into the world. Therefore, the Yoruba song says: "*Ohun ori wa se; Ko ma ni s'alai se e o*", meaning "What the *ori* has come to fulfil; It is vital and compulsory that it fulfils it" (Idowu 1962:171).

Idowu goes on to explain the derivative power of divinities in relation to the Supreme Being and the ministerial duties that reveal that "in fact they have no absolute existence and that the African world is under a unitary theocratic government" (Idowu, 1973:168).

5.3.4.3 *Critical Examination of Idowu's Inculturation Theology*

Idowu did relevant and meaningful work, especially against the backdrop of the early missionaries' emphasis that Africans did not know God. He did a remarkable job in liberating African theology from the shackles of "European theological Imperialism". Idowu's earliest theology of religion appears to be Christological, but the later part of his theological enterprise centres on inculturation theology. He maintains that although Nigerian Christianity must draw insights from African spiritual heritage for its

theological vocabulary, she “must preserve full allegiance to the Eternal, Cosmic, Unchanging Christ, who is her only Lord”. He stresses that Jesus Christ is unique in human salvation history. He declares:

“Christianity is a Universal Religion instituted of God through Jesus Christ the Saviour of the whole world; it came into being in consequence of the invisible love of God for the world which He created and in which His redemptive purpose has always been at work” (Idowu, 1965:7).

Idowu contributed to the process through which African tradition was liberated from European cultures. As a result African tradition is recognized as an authentic culture that contributes to the rapid growth of Christianity in Africa. Therefore, the precise nature of the African traditions continues to be explored by African scholars in the field of religion (Bediako, 1992:292-293). Idowu appears to be the father of African theologians who affirm the continuity of African concept of God into Christian faith.

Idowu is also commendable because he has provided a classical text for understanding Yoruba religion. In his book, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*, he significantly advances the knowledge of Yoruba spiritual heritage. Therefore, he has left behind a durable and classical text for Yoruba religion that can stand the test of time (Olupona, 2014:19). Because of his contributions to the development of a systematic study of the Yoruba religion and the primal religions of the Africans, he is considered as one of the African Church Fathers of the 20th century (Ekebuisi, 2014:235).

Another significant contribution in Idowu’s theology is found in the Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies – *Orita*. *Orita* in the Yoruba vocabulary literally means a junction “where the ways meet.” The cover page shows a circle that represents the “intersection” of three faiths (symbolically, African Indigenous Religion, Islam and Christianity) interacting with each other in one cultural context. This symbolic cover page reflects his theology and philosophy of religion. This cover page conveys the message that each of these religions is unique, valid and capable to lead its adherents to God. There is the presence of the centrality of God in these religions. This reveals that although these religions are unique, they are compatible with one another. Adherents of the one can learn from one another (Ezigbo, 2012:191-192). Idowu is known as a staunch advocate of a theology who bears the stamp of original thinking and meditation of Africans (Idowu, 1973: xi). Bediako maintains that Idowu is

probably the one who has made particularly his own the plea for an authentic African churchmanship, having devoted his entire book, *Towards an Indigenous Church*, to the subject (Bediako, 1992:267).

The whole essence of Idowu's later argument is to establish the legitimacy of an African concept of God and to denounce the European belief that God in Africa is a foreign God. He claims that Africans have the experience of Supreme Being before the of the Europeans, he declares: "... in Africa, the real cohesive factor of religion is the living God and that without this one factor, all things would fall to pieces. And it is on this ground especially – this identical concept - that we speak of the religion of Africa in the singular" (Idowu, 1973:104). Idowu makes an important contribution to the study of African's religious traditions as a subject for profound academic discussion on the concept of God, because this belief runs throughout the continent. Idowu emphasizes the relationship of the Christian faith to the African spiritual heritage which it inherits in Africa in an entirely new light, and affirms that African religions constitute a good background for African Christian theology (Bediako, 1992:293).

His submission on the relevance of traditional religion is also commendable because Jesus recognizes Jewish traditions. Jesus did not see anything wrong with men being his disciples and at the same remain adherents of Judaism. He did not request his disciples to abandon their religious tradition as a requirement for becoming his followers. To require such a condition is tantamount to denying the significance and relevance of pre-Christ revelations of God as articulated in Judaism. Idowu is right in saying that it is an error to ask Africans to abandon all aspects of their traditions and embrace Western interpretations and appropriations of Christology as a major requirement for becoming genuine Christians. Christology includes the birth of Jesus, his sinless life, his death for the sins of the whole world, burial, resurrection on the third day, ascension to heaven and His second coming to the world. It also means that a person who believes and follows him, irrespective of his or her background, is saved (Ezigbo, 2012:196-197).

Idowu's Uncritical Inculturation

As earlier mentioned in Chapter 2, Robin Horton condemns Idowu's approach. He accuses Idowu of being too "devout" or theologically biased to be objective in studying the idea of *Olodumare*. He stresses that the religious and social background of Idowu may have contributed to the formation of his academic views. According to Horton, the ontological subordination of all other spiritual forces to the one God by Christians down the ages had caused Idowu to provide an adequate translational understanding of most African religions. Idowu, through the Yoruba belief, philosophy, theology and tradition, affirms the originality of Yoruba monotheism.

Idowu's monotheism is nothing but looking at the Yoruba religion through the eyes of Christianity. His concept of monotheism is contrary to the concept of biblical monotheism where it is forbidden for Christians to have any other god besides the living God. In Idowu's concept of monotheism, there is a tension between a biblical understanding of God and the worldviews of others cultures, especially the Yoruba concept of *Olodumare* where gods are never forbidden, but considered to be the servants of the Supreme Being.

Idowu describes Yoruba religion as monotheism and if monotheism is the belief in one God, it then follows that Idowu owes us an explanation of his monotheistic description of the Yoruba religion, because the significance of a religion is not necessarily based on its name, but on the attitude of the worshippers to the object of worship. If Idowu recognizes the existence of divinities as one of the beliefs of the Yoruba religion and if belief is defined as a habit of mind where the devotee puts confidence in some persons or things, it stands to reason then that the Yoruba do not only believe in divinities, but also worship them. How then could the Yoruba religion be monotheistic? Idowu recognizes the pitfall of polytheism and suggests "modified monotheism". Whether *Olodumare* is described as "modified monotheism" or not, the claim to monotheism seems to contradict the importance of the *orisa* in Yoruba religion.

Belief within a religious context implies a statement of faith or creed that is inseparable from actual worship. Therefore, belief in divinities and spirits is an essential component of African traditional religion. The Yoruba religion cannot be

called a monotheistic religion if its adherents believe and repose their confidence in other spirit beings. For this reason, Idowu's monotheism is a contradiction.

Idowu also declares "In (Yoruba) our account of the creation, we have met Him as the "Prime Mover" of things, by Whom the origin of our inhabited earth was commissioned" (Idowu, 1962:32). "Prime Mover" is a philosophical concept coined by Aristotle in his metaphysics as the unmoved mover of all the motions in the universe. Thomas Aquinas also took from Aristotle's concept and described God as *Prima Causa*. He asserts that God is the ultimate cause of all things (Nichols, 2002:80-82). It appears that Idowu was greatly influenced by the Greek culture with regard to his concept of *Olodumare* as the "Prime Mover". Therefore, Horton is right in saying that Idowu is biased in his Yoruba concept of God (Horton, 1995:190). Horton contends that Idowu's Christian faith provides him with broad overall backing for his concept of *Olodumare*.

It appears that Idowu's approach to the concept of *Ela* is also influenced by the European theology, using the characterization of *Olodumare* as *Ela*, a term from Greek philosophy introduced into Western theology. Idowu declares, "*Ki iwa to o se ni Ela naa si wa pelu olodumare, lati inu Olodumare si ni Ela naa* - "Before all things, was *Ela*, *Ela* was *Olodumare* and of *Olodumare* was *Ela*" (Idowu, 1996:107). This is a formulation taken from the Gospel of John to describe Yoruba deities. The Yoruba myth of *Ela* is very close to the personality of Jesus. *Ela* is one of the divinities believed by the Yoruba to link the earth and the heaven. His name, as earlier affirmed, means safety, saviour, preserver, and his ability to divide himself into several units and at the same time as remaining a whole unit, evokes the Trinity and God's ability to manifest in three personalities while remaining one.

In the myth of *Ela*, one needs to be very careful of contextualization because it can be easily misleading. In the process of looking for a dynamic equivalence, a close resemblance of the Christian message in another culture, one may be prone to the danger of equating the Christian message with idolatry. It concerns just an analogy, a similarity among dissimilarities. Though there may be some similarities between Jesus and *Ela*, great differences remain. *Ela* was not God's incarnate, but one of the divinities, he was not born of a woman as was Jesus in His human form. Jesus was

immaculately born of a woman, lived in Nazareth and died for the sins of humankind on the cross. While he died because of his good deeds, his death was never a substitution. Jesus is not *Ela* and can never be *Ela* (Abogunrin, 1988:13). Jesus is the Lord and the Redeemer of the entire creation. Concerning the myth of *Ela*, I admit that there is a possibility of the Christian influence on it.

Finally, Idowu consistently affirms the continuity of *Olodumare* from Yoruba spiritual heritage into Christian faith. One can appreciate the evangelistic intentions of Idowu with his fierce indigenization and churchmanship. His logical presentation of monotheism contributes to the study of African religions. However, he has overlooked the negative aspects of Yoruba spiritual heritage. This is a pitfall of his theology and leads many African Christians to live a superficial life.

5.3.5 Byang Henry Kato

5.3.5.1 Biography

Byang Henry Kato, a Nigerian Evangelical theologian (1936-1975) from the Evangelical Church of West Africa was born in June 1936 into the family of Heri and Zawi in Sab-Zoro, Kwoi of Kaduna State in Northern Nigeria. His father was a traditionalist and he dedicated his son to traditional priesthood. Therefore, at the age of ten, Kato underwent a traditional *Jaba* initiation rite to become a traditional priest (Kato, 2014).

He had early contact with missionaries in his village and completed his primary education in 1957. He was assigned to teach at a Bible School in his Village, Kwoi. In his quest for scholarship, he took correspondence courses from England in preparation for his Secondary School and Advanced General Certificates in 1961 and 1963 respectively. He bagged his first degree in Theological Studies in 1967. He proceeded to Dallas Theological Seminary, USA, and got his Ph.D. in 1974 with his thesis titled, *Universalism and Syncretism in Christianity*. As a result of his excellent academic performance with moral integrity, he was appointed as the first African to hold the post of the General Secretary of the African Evangelical Association. He was

also appointed as the Executive Secretary of the Theological Commission of Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA).

Kato was led to Christ by Ms Elsie Herderson. After his public confession of Christ, he was persecuted for his faith even by his father, who denied him of food and clothing. In 1948, he was baptized by the Reverend Raymond Veenker, who gave him the name Henry. He later went to Bible School in Igbaja, Kwara State for his theological studies.

He got married to Jummai in January 1957. His marriage was blessed with three children. Kato and his family placed much emphasis on the Bible and prayer. They allowed the Scriptures to guide their actions.

Kato, being a great Evangelical preacher and an African Evangelical theologian of outstanding merit, was frequently asked to preach and to teach locally and internationally. He served as a member of the Lausanne Continuation Committee of the World Evangelical Association, a member of the Executive Committee of the World Evangelical Fellowship and the Chairman of its Theological Commission.

Although Kato was unique in his approach to African traditional religions in relation to Christianity, everything he wrote was a reaction to African theology (Bediako, 1992:386). He had the shortest career of all African theologians studied here. On December 19, 1975, Kato, a swimmer, drowned in Mombasa River under mysterious circumstances. The people of Kwoi, his kinsmen, believe that someone attacked him; others thought that witchcraft or evil powers were behind his untimely death. Others held that he might have died of exhaustion while swimming.

5.3.5.2 *Kato's Response to Inculturation Theology*

Kato was most notable as the dissenting African theologian who affirmed that African traditional religion should not be integrated into Christian faith. His position was guided by his Evangelical tradition. His position represents conservative Evangelicalism. He argues that there should not be continuity of African traditional religions in Christianity because there is no theological validity for the integration of African theology with Christian faith (Bediako, 1992:390). In his words, "Christianity

cannot incorporate any man-made religion” (Kato, 1975:17). Kato holds that the primary reason for studying African traditional religions is to uncover its idolatry and to reduce its hold on the culture of the people. He argues that the sole aim of the African religions is “well-being here and now” at the expense of eternal heaven and hell, while the sole aim of Christianity is eternal life in heaven through faith in Christ Jesus. Therefore, African traditional religions should be completely rejected in Christianity (Kato, 1975:144-145, 158).

Kato declares that the Evangelicals reject adoration of African traditional religions with the intention to safeguard the sole Gospel of Christ, which alone provides the way of salvation. However, he argues that,

“...cultural heritage which is compatible to Christianity can be baptized into Christian enrichment. The Gospel content, of course, needs no addition or modification. It is because of this irreducible message that Christianity has produced the third race comprising men and women from all races” (Kato, 1975:17).

5.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS ON INCULTURATION THEOLOGY

In spite of the fact that the five African theologians have different approaches to inculturation, they share common ground on the reality of God in Africa, the reality of evil, activities of the spirit world influencing human behaviours and the potency of African traditions in African Christianity. While Mbiti adopted a theological approach of transposing the Christ-events as narrated in the Bible into the African context, seeking to elucidate on the words and works of Christ by looking for cultural resemblance in the African context, Bediako adopted comparative religion to state the relevance of African traditions in grassroots Christianity. Imasogie used a philosophical method while Idowu adopted a theological method, proceeding from traditions to Christianity. Kato was most notable as the dissenting African theologian who kicked against positive evaluations of African traditional religious heritage in relation to Christianity, especially in area of salvation and revelation. He was persistent in the affirmation of the centrality of the Bible in the theological enterprise in Africa.

5.5 TOWARDS A CRITICAL THEOLOGY OF INCULTURATION

5.5.0 *Introduction*

Having dealt with leading African theologians, the discussion now turns to findings on the abuse of spiritual heritage with their inculturation theology. The section examines in what way these five theologians are helpful for a theological reflection on concepts like ancestors, African communal life, myths, *Ela*, divinity, *Olodumare* and spirits as the causality of evil. The limitations of inculturation theology should not be overlooked, because they pose dangers to Christian faith in Africa.

5.5.1 *Challenges of Inculturation*

Bediako observes that from an intellectual point of view, the cult of the ancestors belongs to the category of myth. It is the product of the imagination of mythmakers in the community. However, its being myth does not detract from its reality or sacredness. The cult of the ancestors as a myth stresses the harmony, unity and sense of belonging in the family. He observes,

“The cult of the ancestor as myth points to the role of the cult in ensuring social harmony, by strengthening the ties that knit together all the sections and generations of the community, the present with the past and those as yet unborn” (Bediako, 2004:30).

The mythmakers have taught Africans to believe that the ancestors can protect and reward them. Though one cannot deny the spiritual forces behind the ancestral cult, my argument is that ancestral spirits, just like human spirits who cannot protect themselves from the power of death, cannot be said to act in the way the mythmakers describe them (Bediako, 2004:30).

It is widely known that ancestors were once human beings, so they were created with Jesus as the creator of ancestors. Stinton and other Evangelical African theologians subsequently maintain that Jesus cannot be called one of the ancestors. Ancestors are “dead and buried”, while Jesus is “alive”. Jesus’ resurrection makes him greater and more important than any ancestor that can be imagined in Africa (Stinton, 2006:186-187).

Furthermore, many African theologians agree that ancestors are not worshipped, but are venerated. Bujo and many other African theologians see Jesus as the Mediator and the great Ancestor (Bujo, 2006:111-116). Although there are similarities in the roles of ancestors and Jesus, the similarities are not sufficient to compare them. It is risky to compare ancestors with Jesus. However, the roles of the saints in the Roman Catholic Church could be compared with the ancestors, but it will be dangerous to picture Jesus as one of them.

Jesus is much more than what ancestors are professed to be. He is all-inclusive as Lord and Saviour of all, including the ancestors. I am aware that in systematic theology, theologians have the right to use non-biblical and non-ecclesiastical terms to analyse the task of grassroots theology if it could serve and add genuine value to the spiritual community of the given context. Tillich declares that in church history, “the adaptation becomes an unlimited accommodation” (1963:187), which implies that a theologian can accommodate new words to explain his theological task. He further holds that in “the past centuries, the struggle between verity and adaptation continued with undiminished force and it is one of the most actual problems even today” (Tillich, 1963:186).

Tillich, however, gives words of caution about using cultures and traditions in preaching the message of the Gospel. He declares, “Missionary accommodation which surrenders to the principle of verity does not conquer the demonic powers, whether they are religious or profane” (Tillich, 1963:187). The principle of verity in this context is cultural equivalence. Though Tillich stresses the significance of the context of the hearers of the Gospel, the process of adaptation and accommodation of culture into the Gospel message posed danger to the early church. In his words:

“Without these adaptations the missionary work of the early church would have been impossible; but in the process of adaptation the content of the Christian message was in continual danger of being surrendered for the sake of accommodation. This danger of forsaking the pole of verity for the pole of adaptation was so real that most of the great struggles in the first millennium of Christian churches can be seen in the light of this conflict” (Tillich, 1963:186).

In light of the above quotation, the issue of dynamic equivalence not only poses danger for the early church, but is also a contending factor in the twenty-first century.

Bediako admits that one of the most significant developments of the post-colonial era is religious awareness of the African religion and culture. This awareness has led to the emergence of African theological literature by Africans and non-Africans alike. In the early sixties, African theology found its place in the historical movement of the church. African Christianity began to grow in numbers. Bediako argues that African “paganism” or African heritage has been one of the most fertile places for the Christian Gospel (Bediako, 1992:251). He can be commended for stating that African paganism has moved into the fertile land of Christianity. Walls argues that Christianity is more than multiplication of church. He maintains, “Christian mission is not simply about the multiplication of the church; it is about the making of disciples from all nations” (Walls, 1997:85).

In line with Walls’ position, I affirm that as much as numerical size is good, it may not be sufficient to claim that Africa is fertile ground for Christianity. The impact of this growth is not felt in the moral life of many African countries. After all, the Great Commission is not predicated upon the increase in the number of churches alone, but also upon the making of disciples for Christ in all the nations (Matthew 28:19-20). Again, the Great Commission is about the penetration of cultures by the spoken and the Living Word.

Though numerical growth is significant, it must correspond with moral growth as well. What one observes in many communities and most African Indigenous Churches is numerical growth drowned out by scandal and abuse of the Christian faith. This abuse is inconsistent with the doctrine of church and it poses a great challenge to African Christianity.

I appreciate the promotion of the African communal life in indigenous churches. All members participate in worship through the clapping of hands, music, drumming and dance (Oborji, 2005:208). This is partially understandable because the emotions are fully engaged, albeit at the expense of the mind. These churches should balance the emotional and the intellectual aspects of worship. If the emotional and intellectual aspects of worship are balanced, qualitative and quantitative growth of the church would follow, and whenever numerical growth is in a direct relationship with the moral standard of society, real Christian life has developed.

Imasogie's argument that the absence of inculturation has made the African theology superficial is challenging; because my hypothesis is that the abuse of African culture in the twenty-first century in Christianity allows many people to escape responsibility and therefore creates a superficial Christianity.

Imasogie also holds that the African worldview is charged with spiritual forces that are inimical to Africans. Mbiti corroborates this view further by saying that "In nearly all African societies, it is thought that the spirits are either the origin of evil or agents of evil" (Mbiti 1989:199). Imasogie declares that the most viable entry point for Christian theologians in Africa is the recognition of this worldview. He holds that this is in line with the biblical worldview of the first hearers of the Gospel, especially in the gentile world that was full of fear of evil spirits and demons (Imasogie, 1986:79). He stresses that the superficial commitment witnessed in African Christianity emanates from the missionaries' failure to recognize this worldview. I hold a different view. I hold that the fusion of the physical and the spiritual in explaining the reality of life is an aspect of denying responsibility as stated earlier. Imasogie's argument, rather than leading African Christians to more commitment to the Gospel message, leads them to a superficial commitment, especially at the times they face problems.

Furthermore, Idowu declares that in Africa, the only true cohesive factor in religion is the living God and that without this one factor; all things would disintegrate. Idowu holds that it is on this ground especially that we "can speak of the religion of Africa in the singular" (Idowu, 1973:104). If it is true that Idowu's submission on the existence of divinities is meaningless outside *Olodumare*, to whom they are responsible and from whom they take instructions that affect human behaviours (good or evil), it then follows that *Olodumare* himself is not completely exonerated from adverse human behaviours in society. Again, if the Supreme Being is the Creator and is in control of everything in the universe and if he assigns to every man his destiny prior to birth, it then follows that man is not that responsible for any action because his actions are controlled by the spirit world. This is another way of pushing responsibility to a spiritual being.

Horton reproaches Idowu about his concept of *Olodumore*. Although Horton agrees that there is a Supreme Being who created the universe and sustains it, the Supreme

Being in African tradition is at the margin of people's consciousness, and their attitudes towards him are indifferent. The more he moves to the centre of awareness, the more attitudes towards him differ, ranging from pleased tolerance to fearful respect, as in the case of the lesser god, the non-ancestral spirit. Horton further rebukes Idowu and other African scholars who hold that the God of the Bible is the same God who reveals himself in traditional religion. According to him, the overall purpose of religion in Africa as expressed in beliefs and rituals, is not adoration or celebration, but explanations, predictions and control of events. Therefore, the overall aim of African religions negates the African concept of the Supreme Being in Christianity. He contends that attributes of the Supreme Being in Africa are often very different from its Judaeo-Christian attributes, which are associated with moral values (Horton, 1995:166-170). In other words, the Judaeo-Christian concept of God is morally good, while the African concept is not.

Many African theologians overstressed the significance of African traditions in African Christianity. Idowu was emphatic that the truth of Christianity is to fulfil the aspirations of African traditional religions. African cultures exist as a preparatory ground for evangelism in Africa. Ezigbo declares, "One of the theological errors of the early theology of Idowu is his understanding of Christianity as that which fulfils the aspirations of African Indigenous Religions" (Ezigbo, 2012:197). Idowu did not realise that the "Truth" (John 14:6) is Christ Himself, because no religion has absolute capacity for the Truth. In this light, Jesus is the Revealer of all truths in both communications and interpretations of human existence (Ezigbo, 2012:198).

A good example of Jesus as the Revealer of the Truth is seen in his dialogue with the Samaritan woman. In John 4:4-26, Jesus' conversation with a Samaritan woman near Jacob's well in Sychar reveals two different religious contexts, namely Judaism and a religion of this Samaritan woman. This woman in her response to Jesus says: "Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem" (John 4:20) NIV. Jesus's response to this woman reveals his position as the Truth himself and not religion or traditions. He makes two theological observations (John 4:21-24). One, He tells the woman that God's presence is neither entrapped in Jerusalem, nor in Mount Gerizim. Two, He

discloses to the woman that since God is spirit, God's true worshippers must only worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Jesus' response implies that He does not accept that God is localized and entrenched in a given religion or culture. He sees the attempts of the Jews and Samaritans to entrap God in their religions. For Christ, both the Jews and Samaritans are guilty of unbalanced theology of perceiving God in ways that strips Him of the ability to concurrently interact with and distance his Self from human religion. Jesus' response reveals that the true worship is not in any tradition, but in himself (John 4:26). Christ alone is the one who embodies God's presence and final revelation.

This also means that Jesus Christ is the Truth (John 14:6) and He is the only one who can efficiently, successfully and ultimately act on behalf of God. In the same manner, African Christianity and African traditions should be subject to the truth of Jesus' identity. African Christianity must be subjected to Christ-events. Jesus has to be the final text of all cultures (Ezigbo, 2012:197-198).

Abogunrin, like many African religious scholars, points out that many Africans believe in the existence of demons and supernatural powers. He declares, "the majority of Africans still live in the world of the New Testament, where belief in demons and a host of unseen supernatural powers is still potent and real" (Abogunrin, 2003:39). According to him, the New Testament worldview that is strange to the Western culture of today is not alien to the African worldview. He further stresses that any Gospel message that does not deal with the supernatural in Africa will be meaningless in the African context. In as much as I partly agree with Abogunrin that the Gospel has to address the needs of people, I slightly differ from him in the sense that much emphasis on supernatural beings will make people escape responsibility.

Again, in the Yoruba myth of creation, the *Obatala* is in charge of moulding men out of existing materials. This is contrary to creation story in the Bible where God created things out of nothing. The Yoruba myth of creation stresses that *Obatala* came down from heaven with sand, a hen and a pigeon. These existing items suggest that materials existed somewhere. The creation story in the Bible reveals that God created the universe out of nothing. In the event of any myth contrary to the biblical story, it is imperative to re-interpret it from Christological point of view.

For the re-interpretation of myth for the modern man, in line with Bultmann, I suggest re-mythologization instead of demythologization, because demythologization suggests a complete removal of myths from the Bible. Bultmann stresses that mythology is an element of primitive science, which is not possible for modern man to believe with his intellectual power. In other words, the task of demythologizing would involve transposing the Gospel message from the primitive worldview of the Scripture to the scientific mind-set (Cairns, 1960:85-86).

Furthermore, sacrifice is an integral part of African religion. "Sacrifices involve the shedding of blood of human beings, animals or birds" (Oborji, 2005:19). Human sacrifice is both unethical and unscriptural. God forbids human sacrifices (Psalm 106:37-38). Indeed, it should not even be mentioned in the twenty-first century. However, some communities in Africa still practise this barbaric act in order to get wealth and power. As noted in the previous chapter, *Tell* magazine investigations revealed weekly cases of missing people in Nigeria, especially for money rituals. This is much pronounced during the weeks leading to Christmas and the New Year celebrations (Aiyetan, 2003:26-27 & Ajuwon, 2011).

Human sacrifice is against the teachings and the practices of the Gospel. I strongly condemn this. Furthermore, the death of Jesus on the cross is the greatest sacrifice for human atonement. Since Jesus died on the cross and paid the price for our sins, there is no more need of shedding any blood, whether of animals or of humans. Jesus' death on the cross is for all nations and it covers every generation and culture. (Hebrew 13:20).

5.5.1.1 *Stepping Stones for a Critical Theology of Inculturation*

Having summarized the views of five African theologians and pointed out some areas of their uncritical inculturation, I propose a more critical inculturation approach as a way forward. I follow here Mbiti and Kato as a framework in explaining a more critical inculturation. Mbiti argues that critical inculturation admits the strengths and weaknesses of traditional religion in Christianity. According to him, inculturation provides a promising and fruitful area of comparative studies between African and the Old Testament cultural and religious backgrounds. African cultural heritage

serves as preparatory ground for Christianity because there is revelation and salvation in African religion, but the “highest” revelation and “fullest” salvation is in Christianity (Wijsen, 2000:51).

The New Testament is a completely different world with themes for which there are no direct parallels in the African religious background (Mbiti, 1971:183). The New Testament themes include the birth of Jesus, his life, his ministry, his death and resurrection, the Church and eschatology. I agree with Mbiti, who holds that some spiritual heritages are not compatible with the Christian faith. Mbiti asks if it is possible for African languages to sustain theological concepts from the New Testament? He maintains that the answer to the question is both “yes” and “no”. The “yes” response affirms that one can use the good spiritual heritage in Christianity and the “no” response means that one has to discard every spiritual heritage that is not compatible with the Christian faith. He argues:

“The answer to the problem is both “yes” and “no”. On the conceptual level we have seen that, at least, eschatological concepts are not easily assimilated, apart from the literal understanding of the eschatological symbols. These eschatological symbols are certainly a vivid and rich method of conveying what otherwise is beyond physical realities. But the symbols are vehicles of theological meaning, and this is what the Akamba have failed to grasp on the conceptual level. Instead, they have come out with a purely materialistic image of eschatological realities, which in turn create a false spirituality in Christian living” (Mbiti, 1971:183).

Mbiti also draws our attention to the fact that African religions centre on the past and the present, but there is no such a form for the future. He declares that in African eschatological concept, there is no reference to the future. He argues, “both linguistically and mythologically there is no notion in traditional religion thoughts that the world will ever come to an end” (Mbiti, 1971:183-184). This means that the eschatological concept of traditional religion fixes people to the past unlike the Christian beliefs that are progressive in nature. Mugambi criticizes Mbiti’s concept of eschatology by saying that the dedication to the past means to the Africans that the things they do in the present should guarantee a future structure of the community, which has a continued relationship with the past. This commitment is fully integrated and incorporated in the African understanding, experience and expression of God, Man and the Universe (Mugambi, 1987:23). So, Mugambi is less negative about the

African heritage and is nuancing the view of Mbiti, but maintains the idea of the importance of the eschatological vision of the Christian faith in the African context.

In line with Mbiti's argument of critical inculturation, a more critical inculturation neither proposes wholesale merging of the Yoruba spiritual heritage with Christian theology, nor does it suggest a total excising of spiritual heritage from Christian theology for theology cannot be propounded in a vacuum. A more critical inculturation therefore, depicts a process where the Gospel message filters out "impure" elements from spiritual heritage to make way for the Gospel to have an impact. In his plea for a two-sided transformation, Brinkman speaks here of "a critical process of *purification*, a catharsis" (Brinkman, 2009:34). With such a process in force, a deeper commitment to Christ in both the church and the wider society would be assured.

A more critical inculturation is also a process of connecting a tested spiritual heritage to the Christian faith. It involves vesting spiritual heritage in the mind-set of Christology. This will provide a new comprehensive Christian life in society that would not only remove cultural ambiguity in the community, but could also play a more positive role within church and society. In other words, in the process of a more critical inculturation, a positive and tested spiritual heritage is retained and maintained following the removal of the negatives of the heritage that move people to escape responsibility. In testing any culture or spiritual heritage, a more critical inculturation affirms the absoluteness of the Gospel in every culture.

Critical Inculturation of Kato

Chapter 4 argued within the frame thought of Kato, who stresses the theological pitfalls in Africa. I pointed out eight major areas of the abuse of spiritual heritage that are uncritical to Christian faith practised in Nigeria in Chapter 4. In examining Kato's theology in light of critical inculturation vis-à-vis cultural heritage in relation to the Christian faith, I submit that a more critical inculturation postulate agrees with Kato's theology that rejects man-made religions such as the African traditional religion as a basis for African Christianity and gives preference to the Bible. Adeyemo affirms that African Christianity must guard against the pitfalls of African religion and African theologians must tenaciously hold to the primacy of God's Word. He also argues that

God's eternal unchanging Word must remain supreme in the matter of faith and practice (Adeyemo, 1984:19).

Kato rejects the African traditional religion as a major basis for African Christianity and gives preference to the Bible. Our more critical inculturation approach, however, differs from Kato's viewpoint in the sense that a positive evaluation of cultural heritage can be a stepping-stone to responsible African theology. Kato rejects the African traditional religion outright and expresses his displeasure at the enthusiasm of African theologians who utilized the African traditional religion as a vehicle of meaningful and relevant African theology (Kato, 1974:5). I plead for a more balanced and critical position that leaves room for positive evaluations of certain aspects of the African religious heritage.

A more critical inculturation affirms the uniqueness of the Bible. It holds that African theologians have to recognize the uniqueness of Jesus in every area of African theology. Therefore, all traditional religions are subject to Jesus Christ. Inculturation takes place between confirmation and denial. It implies a critical exchange of cultural and biblical concepts (Brinkman, 2009:33-34). A more critical inculturation holds that a theology divorced from ethical demands would have little relevance in African. It has to stress the necessity and awareness for ethics of the redeemed (Oduyoye, 1990:96).

The summary of a more critical inculturation theology is that Christ is superior to any culture; any cultural heritage that does not promote the Gospel should not be brought into Christian faith. The appropriations of the spiritual heritage should be re-imaged in light of the person and ethics of Jesus Christ. I strongly agree with Walls, who affirms that the Gospel is a liberator of culture and that any culture serving as a vehicle of relevant theology needs to be liberated and transformed by the Gospel message (Walls, 1997:3).

Lastly, a more critical inculturation differs from uncritical inculturation in the sense that it does not accept wholesale the status quo of the African cultural heritage as propounded by the afore-mentioned African theologians. The main thrust of the more critical inculturation approach, in the final analysis, is that all positive aspects of the

spiritual heritage of the Yoruba be retained and maintained, while the negative aspects that make people want to escape responsibility be severed.

The positive aspects of the Yoruba spiritual heritage are communal life, reality of demons, respect for elders and check and balance of the *obas* through the cult of *Ogboni*. The negative aspects of our spiritual heritage includes escaping responsibility, oppression, gender discrimination, inflicting pain, maltreatment of children, extortion, corruption and money rituals. The negative use of spiritual heritage must be more explicitly abandoned in favour of the positive.

Having looked at the abuse of spiritual heritage in the Yoruba society and examining some Yoruba indigenous churches and the need for a more critical inculturation, a more critical theology of inculturation should address the following:

Firstly, since the theological seminaries are the “think tanks” of every denomination, a critical theology of inculturation advocates for the need for a stricter theological education of all ministers of the AICs. I am aware that there are some well-known African indigenous theological institutions in several African countries. For example, John Pobee, a Ghanaian theologian, was a famous lecturer in Nairobi on behalf of the Association of Independent Churches. Several theological institutes in South Africa and Nigeria could also be mentioned. However, among the Yoruba indigenous church pastors, the level of formal theological training is very low. Among these pastors, there is a notion that there is no need for theological training for whomsoever God calls into the ministry. They often argue that if there would be any theological training, it should be under the leadership of just an elderly pastor, like the Apostles were trained by Jesus. Therefore, many of these churches prefer to train their ministers under senior pastors, claiming that prophets, such as Samuel and Elisha in the Old Testament, were trained under senior priests.

They may be correct to a certain extent in their argument; a more critical theology of inculturation affirms that this model of training was appropriate for the ancient days. The educational system of the then world allowed teachers, religionists and philosophers to train their students throughout their life cycle. In spite of the nomadic life style of most of the people in the Old Testament, there was already a school of prophets. Therefore, when ministers in AICs are trained in a formal theological

school, they would be exposed more seriously to the challenges of the twenty-first century and would be better equipped to interpret spiritual heritage in light of the fulfilment in Jesus Christ, just like most of the Jewish and Hellenistic cultures were interpreted with the help of an outspoken Christian mind-set.

Sound theological training is needed in these churches for upholding their doctrinal stand. A sound knowledge of faith is needed for a correct interpretation of the Scriptures. A sound theological education would not only reduce the misinterpretation of the Scriptures and the confession of faith, it would also improve the equipment of the younger generation of ministers to assess in a more critical way their own spiritual heritage.

Some of the AICs have seminaries that should be upgraded to more adequate standards. Lecturers at these seminaries should undergo further training to meet present-day challenges and their pastors should undergo refreshment courses at least once in a year to update their knowledge in pastoral ministries.

Secondly, a more critical inculturation should look into the model of healing and imprecatory prayers. The emphasis placed on divine healing is commendable. The efforts of these churches to obtain a deeper religious understanding and making use of some aspects of African traditions can be justified. The attention paid to the Old Testament is intriguing here. Many AICs pay more attention to the Old Testament mode of worship than to the New Testament, especially in the use of imprecatory Psalms. Imprecatory prayer is defined as an invocation of divine judgement to cause calamity or curses to one's enemies (Laney, 1994:30). It is also viewed as "prayer of anger" or "prayer of wrath" (Bullock, 2001:22). Imprecatory Psalms are confrontational, they negate the New Testament injunction to love one's enemies and to bless those who persecute Christians (Matt. 5:44-45; Romans 12:19-21). These churches should give much more attention to New Testament teachings that emphasize the cross of forgiveness and Jesus' lifestyle. Contrary to the New Testament where Christians are admonished to pray for their enemies, these psalms leave room for Christians to invoke judgement, calamities and curses. Favourite imprecatory Psalms include: Psalms 5:10; 10:15; 35:4-6; 40:14-15; 58:6-10; 69:24 and 109.

Thirdly, a more critical theology of inculturation advocates that the re-interpretation of the Yoruba cultural heritage in the light of Christ's cross and resurrection should not only persuade Yoruba Christians to overcome the fear of demonic and witchcraft threats, but also encourage them to live a fulfilled life in Christ. Though demonic forces are an indisputable reality in Africa, Jesus has overcome them. Therefore, their nefarious activities should no longer obsess the Yoruba in particular and Africans in general.

Fourthly, a more critical inculturation theology advocates for women's dignity in society. The re-interpretation of the Yoruba myth in the light of Christ should no longer make women subject to intimidation and should change their second-class status. Women need the same recognition as their male counterparts because Christ died for both men and women. A more critical theology of inculturation argues against gender discrimination, both in social and religious circles. As long as women are denied involvement at all levels of church government and decision making, churches will not have moral right to fight for the development of women's rights in society. For example, the popular say among the Yoruba that "*Oro Obinrin ko se tele*", which means, "it is not wise for a man to follow a woman's advice or act on a woman's suggestion", implies that woman's ability to reason logically is impaired. As such she cannot be given a reasonable place in leadership. This is a cultural school of thought under whom the male's superiority is affirmed over female in the issue of leadership because the male is more rational and less emotional than female. On this cultural ground, women are treated in social and religious circles as inferior, junior, lowly, mean, menial, cheap and unimportant to men (Ayantayo, 2005:118-119). In African Indigenous churches, man is given superior right of leadership over woman. A more critical theology of inculturation fights against the violation of women and advocates for the raising of awareness for the harmful predicaments of many women in Nigeria. Churches should be the major agents on behalf of the vulnerable.

Lastly, a more critical theology of inculturation advocates that the church must discourage the habit of cheap success. The church as a living organism and the representative of Christ in the community must not fail in this area. She must be a witness of truth and faithfulness. She must reject any testimony that is not morally sound. In order to reduce the substantial crime rate in Nigeria, the church as a major

institution must be an outstanding moral institution as well. With the support of other institutions, she must stand against immorality and injustice in society.

5.5.1.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, I tried to answer the question: has inculturation theology, especially with its emphasis on the value of the spiritual heritage as a model of African theology, led to a sincere commitment to Christianity in Africa? My conclusion is that in its justified emphasis on the accessibility of the Gospel for African people with the help of the traditional African worldviews, inculturation theology has overlooked the negative aspects of this worldview. Therefore, the emphasis on the rich African heritage may become a setback, if this theology does not reflect on the dynamic Christian message to attack cultural attitudes and traditions of immorality.

Therefore, I propose a more critical inculturation theology that provides answers to the weaknesses of inculturation theology that have been neglected by the “old” inculturation theologians who praise the African religions and traditions in African Christianity. It might be that such an appraisal was needed as a first step. But a second step is urgently necessary to address the weaknesses we are confronted with. As earlier mentioned, such weaknesses include: a limited concept of salvation, the absence of the notion that suffering is a part of human and Christian life, exorcism, violation of children and women’s right, the presence of false prophets, the dangerous practices of magic money, the silence or lack of interest on question of corruption in society, the practice of animal sacrifice, angel worship and attributing most of the moral evil to the spirit world. Therefore, a more critical inculturation theology is required in order to criticize the above mentioned practices.

This chapter analyses the concept of inculturation theology. A survey of the literature shows that many African scholars are positive about African culture. They affirm that the African spiritual heritage is a stepping-stone towards a relevant and meaningful Christian theology in Africa. The review also shows the different views of scholars on the developmental stages of the African spiritual heritage. Despite these differences, all the scholars reviewed suggest the significance of the African traditional religion in understanding the Christian faith, societal behaviours and their relationship to the

spirit world; only a few scholars dealt with consider the spiritual heritage as an incompatible element with Christian faith. Most of the inculturation theologians did not investigate how far the misuse of the spiritual heritage served as a means of escaping responsibilities.

Some positions of inculturation theologians who over-stress the importance of the African culture to undertake meaningful and relevant theology in Africa are challenged. Having stated their theses and antitheses, I synthesized their positions and proposed a more critical inculturation and sound theological education. I deal here with the theologies of John Mbiti, Kwame Bediako, Osadolor Imasogie, Bolaji Idowu and Byang Kato.

The previous chapter indicated that members and the clergy of indigenous churches are motivated by spiritual heritage and are more inclined to follow old traditions that give them room to escape responsibility. Our question now is how these wrongs can be corrected? A more critical inculturation has been proposed as a way forward.

The next chapter explores in more detail how the moral life of members of these churches can be improved in society through the Jesus' lifestyle, the theologian's lifestyle, preacher's lifestyle and church members' lifestyle. The next chapter focuses on the development of a church model with an outspoken Christian lifestyle that would not only transform society, but also purify the Yoruba spiritual heritage that could reduce gender inequality, injustice, corruption, and inflicting pain, violations of women and children's rights and extortion.

CHAPTER 6

THE ETHICAL ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN SOCIETY

6.0 INTRODUCTION

The study has discussed the negative impact of the Yoruba spiritual heritage among Yoruba indigenous churches Chapters 3 and 4, especially in the areas of myth, gender discrimination, child abuse, ancestral traditions and spirit causality of evil. On the grounds of myths, women are treated in social and religious circles as inferior, lesser, lower and second class to men. Previous chapters have shown that members and clerics of these churches are motivated by spiritual heritage and are more inclined to follow old traditions that give them room to escape responsibility. The question now is how could these wrongs be corrected? This is in line with the research question: How can the church most effectively correct the negative aspects of the societal impact of the Yoruba traditional spiritual heritage? The larger part of this question has been answered in Chapters 1 to 5, while the remaining part is dealt with in this chapter.

David Enweremadu, a Nigerian economic strategist maintains that in all anti-corruption campaign policies in Nigeria, the church is not involved. The government anti-corruption campaign has not yielded much result (Enweremadu, 2012:174). The thesis is that if the people and government that have been fighting corruptions do not consider the factor of religion in anti-corruption crusade, they may not be successful. Anti-corruption campaigns should be embraced by Nigerian churches. The church as an influential institution should show more effort to liberate the Nigerian society from corruption and immoral behaviours because Jesus in African theology is a liberator, healer and victor.

The chapter explores in detail how moral life of members of these churches could be improved in society which will eventually transform society.

As earlier mentioned, the Nigerian theologian, Cardinal Arinze, who is a specialist in the dialogue between African traditional religion and Christianity, affirms that the

primary motive of a meaningful African inculturation theology is to stimulate theologians, evangelists, preachers and missionaries to work out an African-oriented model that would lead the adherents of African traditional religion to believe in Jesus Christ and be committed to him. He declares, “The better ATR is understood by the heralds of the Gospel, the more suitable will be the presentation of Christianity to Africans” (Arinze, 1988:103). He further argues that in their presentation of the Gospel, African theologians should point out the negative elements that may be found in African traditional religion (Arinze, 1983:55). In line with Cardinal Arinze, after pointing out some negative elements of spiritual heritage, the goal in this chapter is to suggest some ways in which the church could improve the moral life of members through the lifestyles of preachers, theologians and members. The chapter is divided into two parts: the role of the church in society as a model of Jesus’ lifestyle and the communal life of the church.

Before the researcher begins to discuss the role of the church in society, he considers it appropriate to make a few pronouncements about the meaning of the church and ethics.

6.1 CHURCH

The Church is not a building or just any gathering of Christians simply because those assemblies call themselves a church. It is an assembly of the believers in Christ for the right purpose and has the right authority. It is an assembly of born-again, the redeemed believers in whom Christ dwells by the Holy Spirit, and an assembly that exists for the glory of God, under the discipline of God’s Word and spiritually prepared to carry out the Great Commission (Towns, 1985:366-367). The Church can also be described as the workplace of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit equips, enables and energizes the believers with the necessary gifts to perform their activities in the expansion of the reign of God. The Spirit also comforts the children of God and guides them in the fulfilment of their calling (Van Niftrik, 1961:266). The Church is a community of the baptized people who are bound together by faith, hope and love (Gula, 1997:143).

The word Church from the Hebrew perspective is *edah* or *qahal* and from the Greek word is *ecklesia*. The word *edah* means the congregation or an “organic unity”

whereas *qahal* refers to assembly of people. The two Hebrew words mean the congregation of the Israelites. These words are used in Exodus 12:6; 16:1-3 and Numbers 14:20. The etymology of the Greek word *ecklesia* derived from *ek*, “out of” and *kalein*, “to call.” The idea of being called out of the world by God is more acceptable as the meaning of the Church (Garrett, 1995:459). Taking into consideration, the Hebrew and the Greek understanding of the Church, it can be defined as the gathering of people of God or the assembly of the Israelites for worshipping God who revealed Himself as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Garrett, 1995:458-459). It can also be defined as God’s spiritual family assembled before the Lord for religious commitments. The Church consists of the local assembly of the redeemed of all ages (Clouse, 2006:182-183). It includes those who have died and those who are still living. Mbiti argues that “the Church is the Christian family, in which all are related to one another through faith and baptism in Jesus Christ” (Mbiti, 1975:190). Idowu describes the Church as “a living and dynamic organism, sufficient for the present needs of each nation in every age and generation” (Idowu, 1965:13). In other words, the Church is universal even though it has local expressions all around the world. The Church is the community of God’s people rather than an institution and should not be identified with a particular culture, social and political system, or human ideology (Rainer, 1973:79). Vorster has this to say on the Church:

“The Church is both the universal community of believers, and the local church. The local church bears all the attributes of the people of God. It is an *ecclesia completa*. It has the same responsibility, namely to embody the reign of God and everything it represents such as love, hope, peace and joy. The Church is also called to reveal and promote the reign of God. The essence and calling of the Church must therefore be defined within the broader concept of the kingdom. The Church is subservient to the kingdom and every aspect of church-life is determined by this fact. The Church should proclaim the authority of Christ over all spheres of life, and Christians as stewards in the Kingdom should manifest this authority in daily life” (Vorster, 2007:260).

Biblical Metaphor of the Church

Going through the pages of the Bible, many metaphors are used to describe the Church in the biblical times. Some of the images were used to form a prescriptive mode or a paradigm to suit the problem of a time. Dulles has done a very wonderful

research on the phenomena of church metaphors. He differentiates between several models of the Church, which flows from the historical outlooks of the different metaphors of the Church in the New Testament. Each model has its main basis and is in itself an expression of the New Testament doctrine of the Church. Nevertheless, these models can be one-sided and their extreme can prevent the effectiveness of such model (Dulles, 1987:34-102). The discussion now turns to the Church as the people of God.

The People of God

God's relationship with His people is the main focus of the Old Testament that is constantly expressed in the Bible as, "I will be your God, and you shall be my people" (Exo.6:7; 19:5; Lev.26:12; Jer.30:22; Hosea 2:23). The concept, the people of God continues in the New Testament (Miline, 1982:210). Kung approaches the metaphor of the Church from a Trinitarian viewpoint. He speaks of the vital structure of the Church that is determined by the metaphors "people of God" "body of Christ" and "creation of the Spirit" (Küng, 1992:105). The expression "people of God" emanates from the Old Testament. This metaphor depicts the Church as a unique community of believers because of their exclusive relationship with God which implies a particular way of living (Deut.14:2; 26:16-19). The Israelites are called to be holy just as God is holy. In line with Miline, Küng argues that the concept, "people of God" in the Old Testament influences the New Testament notion of the Church (Küng, 1992:107). This relationship with God is articulated by the metaphor of a king and his subjects. God was the Supreme King of Israel and the kingdom was a theocratic government. The King ruled with his decrees and commandments and the people had the absolute obligation to be obedient to the will of the king. The same standard is sustained in the New Testament with regard to the universal Church. The Church is seen as the people of God - a spiritual entity under the reign of Christ (Gassmann, 1968:290).

The Church as the body of Christ

The metaphor "body of Christ" is frequently used in the New Testament (1Cor. 6:12-20; 10:14-22; Col. 1:15-20; 24-27). Christ is the head of the Church; the Church is the body while each believer is a part of His body just as the head or the eye is an

organic part of a human body. The head and the body function according to the example of a human body. The head is the regulatory point of all activities of the human being. From the head flows the neuron that controls and stimulates the body. Without the head, the body is useless and the members of the body cannot relate symbiotically. Christ governs all other relations in the Christian community, such as the matrimonial relations, family relations, employment relations, leader/follower relations and believers' relations within and outside the church (Vorster, 2007:333). The Church as the body of Christ stresses mutual relationship between Christ and His people; His being the head implies that all church life and her nourishment flow from him, believers live for him, from him, through him and unto him (Miline, 1982:211).

Creation of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit played a significant role in the formation of the church. In the Old Testament, the tabernacle is an emblem of the presence of God among the Israelites (Ex.4:34). This meaning has been transmitted to the temple in Jerusalem. In the New Testament era, the church is called the temple of the Holy Spirit, and this expression shows that God is present in His church just as He was present among his people in the Old Testament. Therefore, the Church is a representation of the future dispensation after the second coming of Christ (Guthrie, 1981:748). The Holy Spirit epitomizes part of the future that is already present. Consequently, the Church as the dwelling of the Spirit is a unique community of faith in Christ guided by the Holy Spirit and for the manifestation of God's glory in the world (Cullmann, 1956:117). The Spirit is the divine witness in the world to God, His commandment and His redemption in Christ (Miline, 1982:207). He is the "advocator" who authenticates the Church's witness. The Spirit unites believers to Christ and He is very active both in individual Christian experience and in the corporate life of the Church (Garrett 1995:179).

The above Trinitarian perspective of the Church highlights features of the Church as the people of God, the body of Christ and the institution created by the Holy Spirit. In this light, The Church is a new community within society. As the people of God, the redeemed people, the body of Christ and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, the

Church has the responsibility to act as an exemplary community- a model of love, stewardship, self-denial and supreme obedience to God (Vorster, 2007:337).

6.2 ETHICS

Ethics centres on what all human beings do and should not do. Ethics is the scientific study of the human conducts, behaviours, attitudes and the consequences of their acts. It prescribes norms in order to build a certain ethos in a community (Van Wyk, 1986:2-3). Vorster defines ethics as “the scientific discipline that examines people’s attitude as their way of thinking and their behaviour from a certain religious or ideological perspective, and then proposes norms for human morality” (Vorster, 2007:3). Mbiti affirms that ethics is a part of religious system which regulates and harmonizes human life. It is an integral part of a religions “which tells us what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is evil, what is just and what is unjust, what is a virtue and what is a vice” (Mbiti, 1975:199). Encarta Dictionary defines ethics as a “system of moral principles governing the appropriate conduct of individual or group.” Subsequently, no society can exist or survive without morals because it builds relationships between people and the world around them.

Christian theology is critical to the expansion of Christian ethics. McGrath argue, “To lose sight of importance of doctrine is to lose the backbone of faith and to open the way to a spineless ethics” (McGrath, 1994:83). Ethics is part of theology; and if we admit this, it then follows that faith and action are inseparable. Christian ethics is basically theology and not simply a Christian version of applied general science like psychology, sociology and philosophy. Christian ethics depends on God’s revelation on the basis of His Word through the guidance of the Holy Spirit for moral living (Haselbarth, 1976:2-3). Shields argues that Christian ethics is God’s standards for human behaviour find in the Scripture and how to apply those standards to individual Christians and the body of Christ in society (Shields, 2004:21).

Vorster corroborates this by saying that Christian ethics begins from the God’s revelation; in his acts in nature and history, and especially in his self-revelation of His eternal Word, God laid down the deepest principles for moral conduct. From these principles, norms can be derived for human lifestyle. God created the sense of morality in every person and enriched this gift with the moral teachings of the

Scripture (Vorster, 2007:4). Van Wyk surveys various schools of ethical thought in recent times. He differentiates between positivist, rationalist, vitalist, existentialist, intuitionist, pragmatic, desirist, actiologic, volunturist and Marxist ethics. Each of these sprang from a different background. The above examples demonstrate that no ethics is free from an underlying worldview, and consequently cannot claim neutrality of religion or ideology (Van Wyk, 1986:4). Christian ethics emanates from the biblical revelation and holiness of God from the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

According to De Bruyn, there are three major groups of ethical norms. They are: “autonomous, heteronomous and theonomous”. Broadly speaking, norms reveal how decisions and choices are made in society. While autonomous norms are the norms that people can establish on their own authority, the heteronomous norms are established by an instance other than man himself like church, state or society. The theonomous norms are the norms that God offered to humankind from the Bible and the teachings of Jesus Christ for moral living (De Bruyn, 1998:2). These three norms are to protect human dignity; to provide harmonious life and to teach humankind what to do and what he should not do. Christian ethics is rooted in God the Father as the norm, Jesus Christ as the model of ethics, the Holy Spirit as the power of ethics and human beings as the recipients of the ethics.

Christian theologians affirm that there are two sources of Christian ethics – general and special revelations. While general revelation deals with God’s revelations of himself through nature, history and human conscience, the special revelation reveals God’s self-disclosure through the Scriptures. The ultimate special revelation is in Christ Jesus and his teachings (Kunhiyop, 2008:45-55). In other words, Christian ethics is rooted in Triune God, the Scriptures and Jesus’ teachings.

African Ethics

African ethical principles and rules of conduct have been conserved over the ages in various customs and traditions that provide explanations of the reasons, motivations, values and purpose of behaviours. Unlike Western ethics which is rooted in Western philosophy, African ethics is rooted in custom, oral traditions, liturgies, stories, proverbs, taboos and myths (Kunhiyop, 2008:25-27). African ethics is “intensely personal, communal and religious”. It is personal in the sense that it profoundly

rooted in the being of the person, affecting not only the mind, but also the heart, body and the spirit. It is also communal because it seldom thinks in terms of individual ethical judgements that do not affect other person. Whatever affects individual also affects their immediate family and their distant relatives, both the living and the living-dead. Richardson argues that “community is the central concept in African ethics, the central experience of African morality” (Richardson, 1996:37). Mbiti also argues that the significance of African morality or ethics is more “societary” than “spiritual” (Mbiti, 1989:209). In other words, the vital aspect of African morality is communal because Africans emphasize interpersonal relationships more than individual satisfaction. In this light, society shapes and regulates moral life and behaviours of Africans.

It is religious because the Supreme Being, divinities, ancestors and good and evil spirits have a prevalent influence on the morality of the people (Kunhiyop, 2008:xv). Kunhiyop holds that an African cannot be moral without a strong belief in the supernatural, which includes belief in the Supreme Being and other deities such as spirits and ancestors (Kunhiyop, 2008:25). The arguments in Chapters 1 to 5 affirm that the belief in supernatural powers in relation to morality poses a serious challenge in the twenty-first century.

In summary, African ethics stresses communal ethics rather than the individual morality. However, individuals are not ignored; they are expected to fulfil their responsibility in a way that fits with the ethics of their society. Therefore, communal morality regulates and controls their conduct (Kunhiyop, 2008:5).

Having described the Church and ethics, the role of the Church is now be used as a framework in explaining the ethical model of the church in Nigeria so as to promote and encourage a new lifestyle of Christ that will eventually influence the moral life of Nigerian society. In other words, the roles of the church in Nigeria is the answer to the question, in what way can the church contribute to the moral standard of the Nigerian society? These roles are grouped into two: the role of the church in society and within the church. The next section addresses the church’s role in society.

6.3 THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN SOCIETY

The local church is always to some degree influenced by society and cultures within which it functions. To deal with her environment, a local church tends to formulate certain models of ministry that can answer the existential needs of her people at a particular time (Vorster, 2007:323-324).

There are two types of churches in society. Hauerwas and Willimon, American theologians and ethical scholars call them the public and the private church. The private church consists of conservative evangelicals who stress that the primary business of the church is the salvation of the lost souls; this category essentially upholds spiritual matters. The public church on the other hand, is concerned with social agenda and the organization of social structures to make a better society. The public church can also be referred to as “activist church” because it is more concerned with the building of a better community than reformation of the church. Therefore, through humanization of societal structures, the activist church glorifies God (Hauerwas & Willimon, 1991:44-45).

The public church criticizes the private church that stresses the fact that the church being a spiritual organization needs to be concerned more with the salvation of the individual than with the social character of society (Hauerwas & Willimon, 1991:30-31). These scholars sound like Aristotle, who saw the church’s primary assignment as that of making society better through the gospel message. The church can make society better through gospel message - the life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. This implies that the church has to influence society positively because she is in society. It evolves squarely in society and so has a calling to make the world a better place. Consequently, the church should not be concerned with operating without the world, but her concern should primarily be to evolve within the world and engage the world with the Gospel (Hauerwas & Willimon, 1991:38-43). The researcher holds that for the church to have a great impact on society, she has to be involved in both private and public tasks.

6.4 CHURCH AS A MODEL OF JESUS’ LIFESTYLE IN SOCIETY

The church is the community of those that profess Christ Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. She is the body of Christ in society whose major task is to make disciples for

Christ in all nations. For Christians to have a positive influence in society, their identity is of utmost importance. As stated earlier in Chapter 3, one may ask, how can a person or a group of people be identified? Can a person be identified by what he thinks, feels, does and achieves or else, by his roles or relationships? In the same vein, how can Christians be identified in society? Is it by their being or their doing? Is it by their relationships, roles or assignments committed to their hands or their achievements? The Christians' identity can be known by their beings, their roles and their relationships with the Lord Jesus. Just as Christ was aware of His being, relationships and responsibilities, so also Christians or disciples have to know their being, relationships and roles within and outside the church. Speaking about the identity of the church or an individual Christian in Africa raises the question in how far being African should be part of that identity. This is one of the basic questions of African theology.

The Church as the body of Christ has the responsibility to behave like Jesus Christ in every area of her life. The church should realize her personal identity and preserve it in society. For the church to know her identity and preserve it, she has to make the Bible the sole authority of her faith and practices. If church members live their lives in conformity with the Scriptures, they will not live contrary to Jesus' lifestyle. The church by example of her righteous living becomes a pacesetter for the nation when her members live according to the biblical instructions during weekdays (Dunn, 2003:615-616).

Besides, the church has a message of consolation and encouragement (Isaiah 40:1). It should function as a mother for her children, especially her children who live in error. A natural mother can discipline in love and impact also to her children about what she inherited from her parents and indirectly from earlier generations. The church as mother speaks also about her values and morality received from the centuries to the contemporary church. Graaf stresses that the church influence on society has become weaker in recent times. The church's major role in society is to protect the human freedom and equality of gender in multi-religiosity and multiculturalism (Graaf, 2006:4-6).

Furthermore, for the church to have an impact in society, there is need for the fusion of faith and work. Demonstrating Christian virtues outside the four walls of the church building will help Christians to stand out in society as a community of Jesus. Church members as an example of a holy community have to live a holy, committed and dedicated life in their vocations. This commitment will not only please God, but will have its impact upon society. When church members live according to biblical instructions and ethical standards of Jesus, the moral standard of the Nigerian community will improve.

Hauerwas argues that the church does not “have a societal ethics” but rather “is a social ethics”. The church should be an example of morality in society. The church teaches society a “social-ethical-example” so that the moral value system of society mirrors the Scripture ethical worldview. The church has to be an opinion former both in the testimony and example of a worthy society (Hauerwas, 2002:341). Vorster corroborates this further by saying that the responsibility of the church is primarily to carry a scriptural testimony into society (Vorster, 2004:155). Hauerwas and Willimon, also declare, “The church doesn’t have a social strategy, the church is a social strategy.” The church should not be concerned about whether to be in the world; she has to be worried on how to be in the world, in what form, for what purpose (Hauerwas & Willimon, 1991:22). This implies that the church has a significant role to play in contributing to the moral standard of her society.

Chapter 1 established that the impact of the church is not felt in the societal behaviour of Nigerians. It appears that some churches have become social clubs where people talk more of prosperity, socialization, protection from evil spirits and means of knowing important personalities in society. The church should be a place of righteousness, holiness, dedication, impartation of moral values and winning lost souls to the kingdom of the Lord. Bringing lost souls to the church and teaching them to become mature in the Lord will reduce the crime rate in society. In effect, Jesus commissioned the church to depopulate the kingdom of darkness and populate His kingdom (Matthew 28:19-20).

Besides, the primary assignment of the church is to teach members to seek first God’s kingdom and His righteousness so as to add to such practitioners all other

things. The reverse is the case in many Nigerian churches where “other things” are first before God’s kingdom. The church that will transform her members to become agents of transformation must emphasize holiness, hard work, sound doctrines and balanced biblical teachings. Any church that teaches these and members put these teachings into practice will have an impact in enhancing the moral standard of society. Nigerian churches should learn from the church in China. The growth of the church in China is not on the outside; it emanates from the heart and affects every area of the lives of the members. The church in Nigeria should see her faith as a way of life and not a mere religion where outward physical activity is done with selfishness and personal gain (Ogunkunle, 2009:5-6).

The best way to describe holiness of the church is to be different from worldly, not in a pietistic sense such as in Pentecostalism (Packer, 1988:314) but in the dynamic fulfilment of other principles and norms than those controlling modern society. The call to be holy assists Christians to be active in the sanctification of society through the power of the Holy Spirit. The holiness of the church does not transfer Christians to another realm of the world, but implies a deep participation in society in order to change society for better and with the basis of Christian virtues and norms (Vorster, 2007:336). If churches and ministries in Nigeria stress holiness within and without, the church would become one of the nation’s builders.

6.4.1 Church Lifestyle in Society

The church has to know and be aware that she exists in order to become a living witness of Christ within society. She does not exist by herself and for herself but she exists for mission and evangelism. Therefore, “the church exists primarily for the sake of its mission of proclaiming the Word” through the lifestyle of her members (Macquarie, 1955:218). Church is a living and faithful witness of Christ in the world not only by what she teaches or preaches but also by what she is. Leonard remarks that “the church itself is a preacher” (Leonard, 1986:69). Scott corroborates this further by saying, Preaching is essential to Christianity; without it, a necessary part of its authenticity has been lost (Scott, 1982:15). The Church must be a true witness to the truth by living according to the biblical preaching and teaching. The church acts out this mandate in every facet of her existence in the world by living according to the

dictates of the Word. She speaks authentically in the world by means of the stand she takes on political, social and economic issues. The church speaks and stands for the truth because she exists within society and cannot escape the problems confronting it; she is to engage in it with Christ's message so that society will see Christ as the solution to societal problems. For example, the church should confront injustice, corruption, laziness, child abuse, gender discrimination and ritual killing in society.

The church has to discourage African extended family system that gives room for dependence on the bread winner, who happens to be a rich person within the family, to attend to requests for help each day from every other member of the family. This dependency can lead to laziness (Ela, 1986:86). She must witness for Christ by fighting against laziness. She must make sinners uncomfortable in the church and emphasize that God is the God of justice and righteousness who desires justice from both individuals and communities. Prophet Amos and other Prophets spoke against social injustice in Israel. It was for the sake of justice that God delivered the Israelites from Egypt. The church should do everything within her power to fight injustice, tribalism and religious riots (Collins, 1993:12).

The church has to demonstrate to the entire world that she is the body of Christ Jesus. (Root, 2010:357-375). The church as the incarnate of Christ must witness for Christ by fighting for social justice and, reemphasize that God as a God of justice, desires justice not only in the church, but also in communities (Collins, 1993:12).

In addition, the witnessing aspect of the church can also be visible in social services. Since the Second World War, the church has become one of the ways through which individuals have often joined forces with Christians to assist the vulnerable in society. Individuals and associations give their money, possessions, and offer their services and time to meet the existential needs of the indigent and less privileged. Hammond called this aspect of evangelism "collective expressive" witnessing in which involvement of members is largely voluntary. He stresses that evangelism is better understood not as an individual expressive phenomenon but as a collective expressive phenomenon (Hammond, 1981:5).

The early missionaries in Nigeria performed outstandingly in the social ministries. They built across-the-board schools, hospitals and churches. The first generation of elites in Nigeria attended missionary schools. Regrettably, today, most of the schools and hospitals owned by the missions in Nigeria are too expensive for the common people to patronize. The researcher challenges Nigerian churches to learn from the early missionaries so that churches in Nigeria would have a lasting impact on the Nigerian communities. If education and medical facilities were less expensive, the minds of the people would be renewed. The church of Christ can also engage in social gospel by providing water and other social amenities for her neighbours. Doing social evangelism will make the church contribute to the development of the community.

Another role of the church as a community of living witnesses of Christ is to evaluate government policy critically. For the church to affect and transform society, she needs to participate in the debate over national policies and educate people on how to make a godly choice and implement it. In addition, the church has to express her opinion on a policy before its implementation. The church has to realize that she alone cannot transform the entire community; she needs to join and support other legitimate institutions in society for amendment and improvement of government policies designed to enrich the masses. When the church does this, she has witnessed for Christ and served as a watchdog for the community (Koopman, 2010:41-56).

6.4.2 *The Preacher's Lifestyle as a Model in Society*

A preacher evolves in two different worlds. One of the essential marks of any Gospel preacher on the one hand is God's call upon him and on the other, his effectiveness in the hands of God. Each preacher must be sure that God has called him or her. As a preacher called by God, he does not only represent God, the church and society, but also his preaching, teaching and counselling must reveal the call of God. A preacher's life must reflect Christ's lifestyle. Any preacher who surrenders absolutely to Jesus must be able to mould the lives of church members and people of the community. David Mark, the former Senate President of Nigeria admonished Nigerian preachers. In his words, "The time has come for the Clergy in Nigeria to change their

ways and use their positions to minimize the growing anti-social behaviour in the country” (Akowe, 2009:1 8). This implies that Nigerians see preachers as agents of transformation. Their ways of life, messages and teachings must transform first their members and then society.

The community’s expectations of preachers are very high. People expect them to be a model of moral rectitude. They expect pastors and their families to exhibit a pleasant personality that would enable them and their families to develop constitutionally, morally, socially and emotionally. The preacher’s life has to be attractive, accessible and benevolent to members and neighbours alike. They look up to the preacher for an example of respect, love, faithfulness and honesty in all areas of life. Members and non-members alike see preachers as models in the community whose actions have to match their preaching and teaching. The behaviour of preachers must speak in volumes.

Indeed, it is no more fashionable for preachers to keep silent about the political situation of the country. Preachers could no longer sit and fold their arms while the country continued to nosedive. It would be a sin for preachers to keep quiet about the injustices and corruption in their community. Preachers have to speak out on healthcare, education, secular rights, and social amenities with the Christological mind-set. Olonilu argues that from healthcare and education to communication, transportation, food and security issues, Nigerians are yet to guarantee the provision of the necessities that constitute the bedrock of a stable nation (Olonilu, 2010:39). Preachers’ messages should not only concern the spiritual needs of their flock, but should challenge the government to provide existential needs for the masses. Jesus met the existential needs of his hearers after preaching (Mark 6:37-43). The abundant life that Christ provided includes both the spiritual and the physical well-being of people. When preachers champion the cause of the masses peaceably in preaching and standing for the truth, the hope of the masses would be bright.

Integrity is another area where a preacher’s lifestyle serves as a model in society. Where the preacher’s actions consistently bear out his messages, the people would most likely emulate him and accept his word as the gospel truth. His integrity in society depends on his personal or vertical relationship with Jesus, the Owner of the

Church. When a preacher's lifestyle is in consonance with the ethical standards of the Christian ethics, such preacher's lifestyle would be a witness within and outside the church (Afolabi, 2014).

Furthermore, in order for the preacher's lifestyle to be worthy of emulation, he or she needs to position himself or herself as a leader of repute. He or she needs to sit where leaders sit, interpret and proclaim God's Word to people in clear terms that are easy to grasp. Idowu states that in Nigeria, preachers still have to discover the minds of their hearers and learn their native idioms and proverbs in order to speak to them intelligently. Idowu further describes what a lasting message in preaching will entail among Nigerians. He argues that for the successful evangelizing and edification of the church, it is very important for the preacher to be aware that there are certain theological perceptions which must be conveyed to the hearers in appropriate languages if they are to be appropriately understood. There should be an easy flow and liquidity of communication, a thorough awareness of Nigerian expression, with their religious traditional background (Idowu, 1965:18).

The preacher's lifestyles and messages must transform both the members and society. This feat is achieved when the preacher studies the Bible and uncovers his hearers' situation through an inclusive exposition of the text he has chosen to teach or preach. When a preacher fails to align his text to the situation of his hearers, such a message is not likely to transform the members' and society's lifestyle. The reason for non-transformation of lives is that the exposition has not met the hearers' existential needs. Preachers have to explain the Bible to their hearers and expose them to sound doctrine that will not only transform but also meet their needs (Yamsat, 2010:19). Vorster highlights some issues that a topical Christian preaching should address the in following areas in worship:

- The Christian preaching should disclose the moral principles and norms of the kingdom of God. That is, people should be convinced to live in consonance with the attitude of Christ in every area of life.
- Preaching should instruct and motivate people on how to build the nation by promoting the principles and attitude of forgiveness and repentance.

- Preaching should define the moral development for responsible redress in the social inequalities of society.
- Preaching should foster respect for human rights, especially in a culture of respect of the human rights and dignity of women and children.
- Preaching should address social injustices in the community (Vorster, 2007:340).

Preaching messages that stress the above-mentioned issues with the help of the Holy Spirit and the supreme obedience to these teachings and application in every area of life will have a positive impact in society.

6.4.3 *The Theologian's Lifestyle as a Model in Society*

The primary task of a theologian is to translate the biblical context and dogma into appropriate modern forms. In performing this task, he is using the theological system to satisfy two basic needs: one, the truth of the Christian proclamation; two, the interpretation of this truth for his generation. He is also making theology to move between two roles – the eternal truth of its foundation and the temporal context in which the eternal true message must be received (Smart, 1963:56). As he performs this role faithfully, he is witnessing to the truth and his lifestyle becomes authentic to both himself and the church in the community. As a witness in contextualizing the gospel, he brings theology into a living experience that is clearly understood by members.

The theologian is the intermediary between the church and society. He speaks for the church. He tells society the stand of the church on particular issues. In addition, he analyses and interprets government policy for the church. In so doing, he is the agent of light and life in society (Obaje, 1993:47-49). Theologians are to expose the deeds of government officials, individuals and organizations in the community. They must be bold to expose malpractices in society. Exposing corruption is witnessing for the truth. The tasks of theologians to both the church and the community are enormous (Otijele, 1990:50).

6.5 COMMUNAL LIFESTYLE OF THE CHURCH DEPICTING A NEW COMPREHENSIVE LIFE

6.5.1 *The Communal Life through Baptism*

Baptism is an initiation or rite for all people who have received Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Therefore, it is a gateway into the church in which an individual believer is received into the body of Christ (Macquarrie, 1955:228). It is also an initiation that serves as the public acceptance of members into the Christian community. In baptism, members are admitted into God's family in which they publicly announce to the world that they belong to Jesus' community. A member having repented and renounced sin undergoes baptism as an external manifestation of an internal commitment to Jesus Christ. It is a demonstration of one's willingness, obedience and readiness to be admitted into the Christian faith and practices (Küng, 1976:149). By their baptism, all Christians are ordained to share in Christ's work in the universe (Hauerwas & Willimon, 1991:113). It is a test of a believer's commitment to the command and obedience to Christ. In other words, baptism is also a public act of declaration of a believer's entry into the body of Christ (Morden, 2010:393-397).

The symbolic meanings of baptism have something to do with the Christian moral life. It enables the baptized members to live a holy life and closely connected to Christ. In baptism, through washing, cleaning and sharing, there is a real connection between salvation and life. Believers have to recognize this symbolic meaning in relation with their daily behaviours. Every act of baptism contains a clear reference to life. Consequently, the genuine observation of baptism should reflect a true-to-life relation daily. It allows Christians to participate in a life dominated by renewal, forgiveness and redemption. Symbolic baptism enables believers to embrace moments of joy and sorrow as realities of life; it encourages them at challenging times (Brinkman, 1999:94). Unlike myths that fix people's behaviour to the past, baptism is a marking point between the past and the future. It is the memory of the covenant and the hope of the kingdom of God (Brinkman, 1999:93). It is not only the holy sacred symbol of the church, but also a sign of hope in the midst of multiple experiences of life.

The water at baptism is a symbol of cleansing, forgiveness and renewal of life. The cleaning aspect of water is expressed in numerous baptismal liturgies in imitation of

Paul in the image of “casting off” the old life and “putting on” the new. During the first century and occasionally even today, particularly in Pentecostal churches, the act of taking off old clothes at baptism and putting on new ones has the moral significance of a personal change in attitude and character. The baptized must also show a change in his relationship with fellow men. At this time, it is customary for names to be changed but a change of name or adoption of foreign or Christian names without a corresponding change in character is superfluous. Emphasizing the ethical implications of baptism without dedicating oneself to the cause of reconciliation, justice and peace is unequivocally meaningless. Nobody can have a baptism experience unto forgiveness of sins without learning to render account of the need for a new life in Christ ((Brinkman, 1999:92-94). Symbolically, baptism can be interpreted as “the reality of the new life given in the midst of the present world.” It shows the strict relationship between Christian ethics and the church liturgy. Baptism has been experienced as community-building and action-oriented signs of Christianity. The church considers baptism as a correction to any individualistic and ritualistic doctrine of sacraments.

Through baptism, converts are nurtured to understand the kind of new life that the church expects them to live – a burial with Christ and a rising with Him through faith. It is an entrance into new possibilities and a new being in Christ. In other words, baptism serves the same function as the proclaiming and hearing of the Word in symbolic form (Warren, 2002:120). In baptism, the converts receive through faith the gift of grace and they become full members of the visible church. In baptism, the individual in a Trinitarian model does not stand for hierarchies but for participation and sharing of powers and responsibilities. This has an implication for the communal life of church members. It means that all members have to participate in developing and equipping one another. Baptism also teaches that although there are three personalities in the Trinity, they are related in functions. The connotation is that all members need to work together to have a mutual relationship and to co-exist in the church irrespective of tribe or gender (Oduyoye, 1982:49-52).

6.5.2 *The Communal Lifestyle through the Lord's Supper*

The Lord's Supper is one of the church's ordinances in the Christian faith. It is a way of proclaiming the Good News in which the element of bread and wine and the ritual acts have their place along with the spoken Word. In the Lord's Supper, the polarities of the believer's life are exhibited. The consecrated elements are given to members after they have received them by faith. In the Lord's Supper, an individual accepts and identifies with Christ and the benefits of His cross and resurrection. Every member and the entire congregation is in fellowship with Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the Church. In taking the elements, believers proclaim the risen Christ, giving thanks and appreciating individually and corporately the blessings they have received from God through Christ Jesus. In the Lord's Supper, members examine their lives individually and collectively, and consecrate themselves before taking it (Brinkman, 1999:95). Members renew their lives before God and develop a deep relationship with Him and fellow believers; this action serves as a lesson of harmony and unity for the community of faith (Oduyoye, 1990:143-144). Through the Lord's Supper, the communal and the individual lives of members is strengthened.

Ethically, the Lord's Supper implies that no one can participate in the Lord's Supper without dedicating his or her life to the cause of reconciliation, justice, peace, unity and nobody can partake in this sacrament without learning to render an account of the need for a new life in Christ (Brinkman, 1999:95).

Furthermore, there is a moral implication of the Lord's Supper among Christians. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is pregnant with meanings. The bread and the wine have implications of sharing, unity, solidarity and participation in the death and the resurrection of Jesus. Wine is associated with joy while bread symbolizes nutrients. Brinkman argues, "The Lord's Supper, par excellence, is the symbol of the pars pro toto, of the one thing for the whole: the one small piece of bread for a whole body, a whole community, a universal church, an all-embracing kingdom of God" (Brinkman, 1999:92).

The Lord's Supper also adds multiple and ambivalent meanings to the church life. The church celebrates the Lord's Supper to range over as many aspects of life as possible under the sign of salvation in Christ. Christians do not dish up instant

salvation, an easy “cheap” acceptance of life as it has been. Their costly solidarity with the Lord Jesus constrains them to participate in a transformed way of life diametrically opposed to their former life that had proved inimical to their well-being. The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper should be close to a day-to-day reality of life, for it is a sign of renewal of lives and a marking point between the past and the future.

The Lord’s Supper also has a specific meaning in the memorial of Jesus’ death and resurrection for every believer. A broader socio-ethical dimension to it makes it a loving “event of sharing communion”. As a result, the document, *Costly Unity*, talks about the intrinsic relation of faith and the social life. “The Lima Liturgy” of the World Council of Churches under the caption “Baptism - Eucharist – Ministry” document declares:

“The Eucharist embraces all aspects of life. It is a representative act of thanksgiving and offering on behalf of the whole world. The Eucharistic celebration demands reconciliation and sharing among all those regarded as brothers and sisters in the one family of God and is a constant challenge in the search for appropriate relationships in social, economic and political life (Matt. 5:23 f; I Cor. 10:16 f; I Cor. 11 :20-22; Gal. 3:28). All kinds of injustice, racism, separation and lack of freedom are radically challenged when we share in the body and blood of Christ” (BEM, 1982:12).

The purpose of Baptism and Eucharist is to encourage ways of worship in which people can be made sensitive to the social challenges in a community and for the fulfilment of their calling in this regard (Vorster, 2007:341)

6.5.3 *The Communal Lifestyle through Worship*

One of the major tasks of the local church is to worship God, the creator of the heavens and the earth. In worship, Christians celebrate the Lordship of Christ over their lives. Vorster defines worship as “a meeting between God and his people, as covenantal communion, as a feast and as communal worship (Vorster, 1996:85). Macquarrie (1955:230) holds that in any genuine church worship, Christ is always present in it. In worship, Christians are gathered in order to acknowledge God through Christ, express their desire to be holy and to grow morally. In worship, the Lord calls Christians from the world, families and the community, to constitute themselves into a community of holy people capable of praising God. Christians learn

different ways of serving the Lord, different ways of thinking about the world, about living abundant life and their relationship with God and fellow worshippers. In worship, Christians greet one another in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. This has a moral implication in the sense that the Christian moral life begins and ends in God. Worship must be set into the whole pattern of loving and praising God; worshippers must aspire to become like Jesus in every area of their lives. In worship, worshippers confess their faith by reciting the Creeds and confessing their sins. Such confession and forgiveness provide an opportunity for moral and spiritual growth and better interpersonal relationships (Hauerwas, 1995:157-160).

Believers honour and praise God in worships in their singing, prayers, testimonies and confession of faith. They also obtain guidance by listening to the instructions of God through the preaching of the Word. They can intercede in prayer for the authorities and the needy or the vulnerable (Vorster, 1996:85). For any church to be relevant and effective spiritually, socially and morally, there must be regular worship services. Any church that faithfully offers worship to God attracts the presence of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In worship, there is awareness that within the corporate body, each member relates to God individually. In addition, believers relate as one family of God in worship. They socialize and learn how to love God and become like Jesus Christ in all their actions and behaviours that serve as a model within the community. In worship, believers enter into a vertical relationship with God and proceed to enjoy lives of freedom, hope, joy, peace, holiness, love and fellowship (Macquarrie, 1955:215-216).

6.5.4 *The Communal Lifestyle through Nurturing*

Church membership comprises both mature and young believers. In the communal life of the church, the mature members have the role to nurture the new converts or younger believers. The mature Christians have to encourage, mobilize, educate and enlist the younger ones for spiritual and moral growth. The younger believers are encouraged to move closer to the older Christians in order to learn from them. In doing this, spiritual growth takes place in the life of the entire congregation.

The church also nurtures her members through the discipleship class, Sunday school and the small group fellowship. Church members are also nurtured through preaching and teaching of the Word which could reduce immorality both in members' lives and in society. This process of nurturing members spiritually, morally and socially can make the church and society to experience quantitative and qualitative growth. Quantitative growth of the church has to do with numerical strength and geographical extension of God's kingdom in the world, while qualitative growth entails the spiritual and ethical development of every member, which over time leads to absolute commitment to Christ and an improvement of the societal life (Peter, 1960:21-23).

In addition, because members join the church at various stages of maturity, some are still infants, dependent on spiritual milk while others are mature enough to disciple these spiritual babies. As a result of this mismatch of membership, date and level of reception and utilization, the church has taught members the sound and undiluted Word so that they can stand outside the church gate and defend their faith in any situation they may find themselves.

6.5.5 *The Communal Lifestyle through Teaching*

The teaching ministry of the church is an essential part of spiritual commitment of the members. Macquarrie (1955:219) argues that wherever the Word is proclaimed and taught, there is the living church. Through the teaching ministry, members get biblical information that can lead them to be more effective within the church and society. Through the teaching ministry, the church feeds her members with the Word of God, the doctrines and the history of the development of the church. Members know the roles that the early church fathers played in sustaining church traditions, one of which is sanctification that demands that their lifestyles be united with the Lord Jesus. This implies that any behaviour that is not in accord with Jesus, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit is detrimental to the Christian faith. In other words, sanctification does not necessarily negate the importance and necessity of good works and morality. It is clear that no Christian can live a holy life outside Jesus. Jesus is the One that sanctifies us by means of our union with Him through His Word, the Lord's Supper

and prayers. The Christian's sanctification in Christ therefore produces a distinct spirituality and good behaviour (Fesko, 2010:214).

In teaching ministry, Christian discipleship is emphasized. According to James Dunn, in discipleship, members learn the character of Jesus and have a close intimacy with him. Jesus calls his followers disciples so that they can depend on him in all matters. Jesus calls his disciples little children and to be a child "is to be little, to need help, to be receptive to it. ...To become a disciple then is to become like a child that is to revert to a position of dependence" (Dunn, 2003:551). When disciples behave like Jesus in all their beings and doings, they will impact society positively for Christ.

Besides, the church is a learning community, a proto-rabbinic school. Within its walls, members learn more about Jesus, the Christian culture and doctrines. The major role of the church to her members is to equip them to have vertical and horizontal relationships with God and with one another. It is the duty of the church to develop members to be actively involved in mission and evangelism. The church also develops members to pray fervently for society, to read the Word of God and help the needy.

6.5.6 *The Communal Life through Love*

The love towards God, Christ and fellow human beings is a visible mark of the Christian faith. Jesus says, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for another" (John 13:34-35) NKJV. The church is the community of love that flows into, through and out of individuals to transform society. This love will make members to have passion for lost souls. The love of Christ binds members together, makes the church to pray for the nation, for people in authority and for the peace of the entire nation. The same love compels church members to visit the sick in hospitals. This love also makes members to serve and use their spiritual gifts to edify the entire congregation. Beek and Borghart argue that love, one of the gifts of the fruit of the Spirit, compels believers to serve the entire community. It is not the private possession of any individual member. The same love removes the wall of hostility among members and helps men to see their women-folk as made in the image of God. When men see the image of God in women, they

would treat women with dignity that would eventually remove gender discrimination (Van de Beek & Van der Borght, 2005:30). The same love will motivate the church to provide moral and material supports for widows. The church should also stand with a widow if her family's late husband's relations come to lay claim to his property. The church can also help widows and their children to find some means of earning a livelihood if they are uneducated or jobless (Kunhiyop, 2008:266).

In addition, the same love helps members to realize that there is joy in living together as a family of God. Christian love enables members to know that Jesus breaks the walls of hostility, fear and hatred that separate people and cultures. Although lepers were totally rejected in Jesus' day, He gave them attention because of love he had for them. The church becomes a unique body that has a message for society when the beauty of each member is recognized and appreciated, especially the beauty of the vulnerable through love. The church has to realize that the vulnerable are also part of society. The love of Christ Jesus will make members to treat the disabled not differently simply because of their vulnerability (Vanier, 2008:48-69).

6.5.7 *The Communal Lifestyle through Obedience*

Jesus' lifestyle demands moral obedience. Jesus obeyed His Father in all areas. The church has to obey the Word of God. She has to obey the constitution of the land, especially when it is in conformity with the content of the Bible. Obedience to constituted authority coupled with faithfulness and commitment to Christ will lead members of the church to ask this question: "how would Jesus behave or respond to a situational challenge such as this? If Jesus were to be in this situation, how would He handle it?" Responses to these questions in the light of the Scriptures would lead them to take the actions that would please Jesus. This would lead members to holiness. To live a holy life is to live in reverence before God, to fear and trust Him. To live Jesus' lifestyle demands a reorientation of any ambitions for social advance and wealth accumulation and presumes the willingness to endure suffering (Dunn, 2003:608). In order to live like Jesus, members have to pray for holiness and live accordingly. They have to pray to love God passionately with their whole heart, soul, mind and strength. If members are obedient and live a holy life in society, it might be

expected that the church will have a greater moral impact upon the Nigerian society (Dunn, 2003:546-547).

6.5.8 *The Communal Lifestyle through Sharing*

Africans, more in line with biblical teachings, attach much more importance to sharing than Europeans. Sharing was very important in the early church because it esteemed the interpersonal relationship of members. The Bible gives an analogy of the sharing life by means of the body organs. In organisms, when a part suffers, the whole body is affected. In communal sharing, when a member of the church is experiencing agony or celebrating a happy event, the whole congregation is affected psychologically and socially (Ruch & Anyanwu, 1984:143). If the community in which a church is located suffers, definitely members of a church will suffer and if it rejoices, it will also affect such a church positively. One of the areas where the African contributes to the Christian communal life is their corporate life. One of the areas where the early missionaries failed is their excessive individualistic approach to missionary work. The communal life enables the church relates to all groups and gives room for peaceful co-existence in the community, especially in a secular state like Nigeria (Mbiti, 1989:106-109).

Fellowship of believers is another major area of sharing. In fellowship, members experience life together; they demonstrate unselfish love and have a heart-to-heart sharing of pains and joy. They share their hurts, feelings, doubts, admit their fears, and confess their sins and weaknesses and asking for help or prayer to overcome their challenges. In a genuine fellowship, there is no secrecy; members do not live in pretence, rather in honesty with each other.

In sharing, the spirit of giving and receiving is essential. This builds a reciprocal relationship and the sharing of responsibilities that would also boost the community of faith. Sharing will also discourage dependency and laziness in the community (Ela, 1986:86).

In sharing, people empathize with other human beings. To empathize is more than counselling or rendering assistance to someone in need for it includes putting oneself alongside the pains or suffering of another. Sharing includes the Word of God,

service and suffering. The show of fellow feeling encourages the sufferer and motivates him to open up and share his feelings with the brethren (Mbiti, 1989:106).

The fellowship of sharing is good in small groups and it allows each member to know himself or herself better. It also prevents a domineering nature from manifesting. Furthermore, it allows each member to discuss issues passionately and honestly. Every Christian needs to participate in a small group within the church. The small groups of the church can be organized in home fellowships, the Sunday school class and Bible study groups. The real sharing life of the church is better in a small group rather than a large one. While a large congregation is good for worship, the small group is better for sharing and mutual relationships (Warren, 2002:138-143).

In summary, for a new and comprehensive lifestyle of Christians, the roles of church leaders, preachers and those of theologians have been discussed at length. Roles of the communities of faith within and without the church have been stated. For members to grow morally and spiritually, they need to know, believe and put into practice the doctrines of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. They should be obedient to the Scriptures and develop attitude of Christ in their actions, plans, characters and behaviours. If members practise their Christian faith sincerely and faithfully and always ready to take responsibility of their actions, they shall influence society thereby immorality, inequality and corruption can be reduced. If these vices are reduced, the church and society would experience transformation through the Gospel message.

My conviction is that if all Christians in Nigeria are obedient and honest in practicing their faith according to the mind of Christ, societal life would improve.

Having suggested the role of the church both within and outside the church, the last chapter offers observations, reflections, and concluding remarks.

CHAPTER 7

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The study observed that in an attempt to contextualize African Christianity, certain extreme traditions have been introduced into the AICs in an uncritical way. These traditions have led to the abuse of spirituality. Quite a number of Yoruba indigenous churches fail to distinguish between positive and negative cultural practices. Such practices include animal sacrifices, polygamy by leaders, unwholesome healing practices, infliction of pain in the process of exorcism, extortion, angel worship, gender discrimination, the use of extra-biblical sources in prayers and the inclination to trace the cause of all evil to the spirit world. As a Protestant pastor, I consider these practices as opposed to the Gospel of Christ. While the contextualization of the Gospel is significant for the growth of African Christianity, there are, however, limits to this process. African Christianity should always be prepared to distinguish between positive and negative traditions. It should uphold the positive traditions while the negative ones should be removed.

7.2 POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS

Utilitarian Prayer

The study affirmed that the utilitarian prayer ministry without emphasis on a moral life and total obedience to the Scriptures is negative because it cannot transform members and society. Whenever a church grows at speed and the converts are not properly disciplined, there is a tendency to fall back on African religion in moments of crisis. An African convert who is not well versed in the Bible will easily combine traditional belief with his Christian faith. I am convinced of the fact that any religious activity that does not emphasize the events of the cross, discipleship, holiness, gender equality and obedience to the Scriptures, cannot positively influence the lives of the believers and transform a society. The churches studied during this research

have to balance their prayer life with discipleship and ethical teachings of Jesus Christ.

Mythical Behaviour

The critical examination of selected Yoruba myths revealed that myths and other elements of spiritual heritage affect the Yoruba economic, political, social and religious life. Myths are retrogressive rather than progressive in nature. They can oppress people and tie them to a primitive worldview. Most Africans turn back to the traditions of their fathers because they believe that the past is the focus. Therefore, they are reluctant to change or to embark on anything new. Often through myths, they maintain the oppression of women and violate their dignity. They oppress women and deny them equality. Certain things are prohibited for women to do. If myths that prevent women from performing some roles are interpreted in the light of Christ, they would no longer relegate women to the status of second-class citizens. Women have to be treated with equal dignity as men in society because Christ died for all. He died to raise higher the dignity of the entire human race, irrespective of gender or race. According to the Scriptures, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28) NIV. If Jesus' death on the cross covers salvation of both men and women, it then follows that in the Gospel message, men and women are equal before the Almighty God.

The Yoruba thought system that is backward-directed, should be redefined. The Yoruba regard the good old days as in the past, and the future as holding nothing good; things are thought of as having been better in the golden age of ancestors than they are today. As noted by Horton, "the before is usually valued positively, sometimes neutrally, and never negatively" (Horton, 1995:247). Being naturally retrospective, it leaves room for people to escape responsibility and to fall back into heathenism. Unlike the Holy Spirit who gives progressive revelation and discloses new possibilities, traditional spiritual heritage sticks to the ancient beliefs and practices that may not be relevant and meaningful to modern man.

Unlike Christianity that focuses on God and how man should glorify God and enjoy Him eternally, African spiritual heritage centres on man and his needs and how to

make the spirit beings instruments of man's personal needs. Adeyemo, an African Evangelical theologian, argues that Africans do not seek God for His sake; they seek Him in worship for what they can get out of Him for their wellbeing (Adeyemo, 1979:47). The central goal of Christianity is different from that African traditional religion. While the Christian goal is to glorify God, the African spirituality aims to use spiritual beings for their physical needs.

7.3 OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Absence of an Emphasis on the Humanity of Jesus

As a result of the emphasis on the power of Jesus to perform miracles and to undo the activities of enemies, these churches do not place much emphasis his humanity. The moral aspect of Jesus who lived an exemplary life on earth is emphasized less in these churches. Jesus is made to fit into the Yoruba concept of divinities who live above the realm of human beings. Strong emphasis on the divine nature of Jesus Christ is not a complete Christology. Both the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ should be upheld simultaneously. A balanced teaching of a complete Christology will engender a quest for moral life that will affect both the Church and society.

For Christians to be committed in Africa, the human and divine personality of Jesus has to be stressed in AICs. It is unheard of to hear the name of Jesus in worship in an AIC in a manner that reflects the traditional Christian doctrines or humanity of Jesus. There is no particular reference to the serious discussion on humanity of Jesus. Jesus Christ is in the AICs pictured as a conqueror over natural and evil forces that torment mankind. He is just a victor who delivers and subdues enemies, but never a fellow-sufferer and a moral example (Aigbadumah, 2011:179).

Absence of Jesus' Ethics

The absence of Jesus' ethics in African AICs leads to superficial commitment. The ethical demands and discipleship must not be jettisoned in African Christianity. A comprehensive and holistic discipleship emphasis will reduce superficial commitment. It will also provide room for a sound biblical and balanced prosperity theology. It will reveal that suffering is part of Christology (Aigbadumah, 2011:178). It is important to note that in church history, Christian evangelization is closely

associated with theology. Tienou argues “Theology and a real zeal for evangelism must go hand-in-hand because defective theology will lead to defective evangelism” (Tienou, 1982:14-15).

Concept of Sin

African spiritual heritage does not teach that sin is rebellion against God or disobedience of God’s Word. Rather, it reduces sin to behaviours against society, ancestors and spirits. Salvation is solely based on deliverance from enemies and enjoying material blessing. Consequently, there is no need for spiritual rebirth or any hope of a future salvation, because the ancestral way of life is the best life given to man. It also teaches that one can obtain salvation through prayers, offerings, sacrifices and paying homages to the ancestral spirits. This is contrary to the Christian teachings that emphasize that everlasting life is in heaven through faith in Christ, repentance and obedience to the Scriptures (Gehman, 2013:246-247).

Less Emphasis on Righteousness and Holiness

Chapter 1 established that the impact of the Church is not felt in the societal behaviour of Nigerians. One of the causes of this lack of impact may be that some churches have become social clubs where people talk more of prosperity, socialization, and means of knowing important personalities in society than the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel and the message of the Scriptures. The church has to be a place of righteousness, holiness, impartation of moral values and the winning of lost souls to the kingdom of the Lord. Bringing lost souls to church and teaching them to become mature in the Lord will sooner or later have its effect in society. In effect, Jesus commissioned the Church to depopulate the kingdom of darkness and to populate His kingdom.

Besides, the primary assignment of the Church is to teach members to seek first God’s kingdom and His righteousness. The reverse is the case in many Nigerian churches where “other things” come first before God’s kingdom. The church has a major role to play in correcting the misuse of spiritual heritage in Nigeria. She has to transform her members to become agents of transformation by emphasizing holiness, hard work, sound doctrines and balanced biblical teachings. These

teachings will help the church really contribute to the improvement of the moral standards in our society. The church in Nigeria should see her faith as a way of life and not as mere religion where outward physical activity is done with selfishness and personal gain (Ogunkunle, 2009:5-6). If churches and ministries in Nigeria would stress more explicitly holiness within and without the church, the church could become a major factor in the building of a righteous Nigerian nation.

Strong Emphasis on Discipline

For AICs to stress holiness, discipline has to be enforced. The early church took the issue of discipline very seriously, but the twenty-first century church takes discipline lightly, probably because of extreme individualism, relativism or mere indifference, permissiveness and a false notion of love and tolerance. Discipline is both preventive and purifying. It develops members and builds their character in consonance with the teachings of the Bible; regulates and inculcates a moral standard of behaviour. The purifying effect of discipline is evident as correction of wrong behaviour serves as a deterrent to others. Paul told Timothy, “But those elders who are sinning you are to reprove before everyone, so that the others may take warning” (1 Timothy 5:20) NIV. This passage shows that the purpose of discipline is not to project a sinless church, but to discipline and build a community of faith for those who enjoy and live under God’s forgiveness (Duncan, 2010:57-58). Churches should discipline members who live contrary to biblical doctrines of love. When they do not handle discipline and doctrinal problems lovingly, fights and schisms occur (Makinde, 2012).

Furthermore, many Africans attend the Yoruba indigenous churches as a result of poverty. The poor economic situation of Nigeria leads to the problem of unemployment, political instability, injustice, favouritism, nepotism and social disorientation. The above challenges encourage people to seek solutions to their immediate problems in the African Indigenous Churches. For the church in Africa to minimize these challenges, she has to develop a mission strategy for addressing the needs of members through social and relief ministries.

African Christianity has to recognize that Christianity is more than providing a solution to the physical and psychological needs of people that are in AICs. African Christianity needs a Christianity that is deeply rooted in a sound Christology. It has to

recognize the suffering of the Lord Jesus and share in this suffering. When members are taught understandable doctrines that are well-grounded in the Scriptures, they would not only remain in the faith during challenging situations, but would also discard sentiment-laden worship exercises that only offer a temporary solution to their predicaments.

7.4 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER FINDINGS

The central question this study sought to answer is: *How can the Church most effectively correct the negative aspects of the societal impact of the Yoruba traditional spiritual heritage?* In answering this question, the study divided into seven chapters.

The first chapter offered a general introduction that shaped the outlook of the study. The motivation, purpose and the relevance of the study were stated. The motivation for this study was the phenomenon of the growth of the churches in Nigeria with a decline in the morality in Nigerian society. The goal of this work is to contribute to the ethical discourse in the Nigerian society with specific attention to the role of religious ideas in relation to the practical socio-economic life of the Yoruba community.

Many African theologians seem to be comfortable with the impact of African traditional beliefs in African Christianity. The argument of this school of thought is understandable and acceptable to a certain degree. There is however, no guarantee that the role of traditional beliefs always is a positive one. There might also be negative effects.

Chapter 2 established that Africans, especially the Yoruba, are highly religious and the chapter subsequently surveyed the Yoruba beliefs. The Yoruba interpret every event of their lives from a religious viewpoint. The Yoruba heritage has shaped and is continuing to shape Nigerian Christianity. The concept of *ori* (*alter ego*) and *ayanmo* (destiny) provides the Yoruba with a means of resolving some important puzzles of the human condition and behaviour. *Ori* and *ayanmo* provide the Yoruba an explanation that their lives are predestined by the type of the *Ori* chosen before their entry into the world. Yoruba's failure or success in life largely depends on this type of choice they had made in heaven prior to their journey into the world.

The concept of *Ori* and *ayanmo* emanate from *Olodumare*, who is the Great Ori. No one chooses an *Ori* without kneeling down before *Olodumare* with his or her *alter ego* that is also referred to as *Iponri* or *enikeji* (the second counterpart) who (the Yoruba believe) stays in the spiritual realm and monitors the life of its earthly counterpart. The Yoruba hold that *Ori* influences the fate, behaviour, character and life of an individual on earth. The choice of *Ori* before *Olodumare* determines the fulfilment of destiny of individuals in the universe. *Ori* and *ayanmo* are crucial insights upon which the arguments of this work are built.

Among the Yoruba, the reality of life is expressed through references to the influence of the spirit world as a result of the fusion of the sacred and the secular. The Yoruba believe in a spirit (*Esu*) that causes evil and instigates people to commit moral evil. *Esu*, unlike the biblical concept of the devil, has a positive influence on his devotees. *Esu* blesses, favours and supports his devotees, while tormenting the enemies of his worshippers.

The ontology of the Yoruba traditional religion affects individual and societal behaviours as a result of the belief in God, divinities, spirits, ancestors, magic, myth and evil powers. It revolves around the belief in the existence of *Olodumare* who creates and controls the affairs of people in the universe. *Olodumare* however, has intermediaries, divinities who are between him and other human beings. The Yoruba have different divinities with distinct offices. These divinities can affect positively and negatively the behaviour and fortune of people.

The Yoruba derive their political structure from *Olodumare*, the King of heaven. *Olodumare* has surrogates among his people known as *obas* (kings); these are considered divine and representatives of their ancestors. As *Olodumare* can only be approached indirectly through divinities, *obas* are also very powerful and cannot be approached directly.

The belief in ancestors is widespread in Africa. The Yoruba see their ancestors as grandfathers and grandmothers who lived an exemplary life on the earth. Though dead, they nevertheless participate in the affairs of their families and societies. They are regarded as a type of guardian “angels” because they enforce societal laws. They not worship ancestors; rather they venerate them as elder members of families.

Although there are similarities (analogies) in the roles of ancestors and Jesus, they are not sufficient to call Jesus an ancestor.

Chapter 3 looked at the emergence of indigenous churches and its current debates. The chapter presented a brief history of the Cherubim and Seraphim and the Celestial Church of Christ, two popular indigenous churches among the Yoruba. Their characteristics, and the continuities and discontinuities of the Yoruba spiritual heritage with Indigenous Churches were investigated. The continuities of Yoruba spiritual heritage reflect in their consciousness of spiritual powers as influencing human destiny, their concepts of evil that are expressed in worship, healing practices, communal life, polygamy and the fear of the future. Their church worship has been Africanized with the use of emotions in corporate worship.

Members of these churches link malicious behaviour to *Esu* and his agents. According to these churches, *Esu* is the spirit that is responsible for nearly all evil. It is strongly believed that *Esu* often possesses human beings to make them behave maliciously against friends and neighbours. Among the Yoruba, human agents of evil are identified as *awon iya osorong*a or *awon aje* (witches), *awon oso* (wizards) and *emere* and *elegbe* (spirits of mischievous children). Other human agents include *awon elegbe okunkun* (occultists or sorcerers) *oloogun ika* (ruthless magicians and spiteful persons who wield dark or evil influences on mortals), *lebo loogun* (demon possessed fetish priests), *ara ile eni* (close relations), *odale ore* (conspirators) and *aseni ba ni d'aro* (mischievous companions).

These human agents are believed to interfere with people's destinies and wreak havoc on the lives of unsuspecting victims, either due to personal hatred of their victims, to suppress progress, to avenge an evil earlier done to them, to test their power or just for their pleasure. This means that believers can always escape their responsibility.

The Yoruba believe that *Esu* has some good aspects. This understanding of *Esu* is completely rejected in AICs. They see *Esu* as a perpetual enemy of God and His children. *Aladura* churches are also reluctant to ascribe the title of an ancestor (*Iserun* in Yoruba) to Jesus. They propose that such a title belittles His divine nature

as the Son of God as they understand him to be. Although some of the *Aladura* churches are involved in veneration of ancestors, most reject this practice.

The essence of the Yoruba religion centres on the prevention of misfortunes and the maximization of good fortune. Many people join these churches in search of protection and amelioration of their lot. This quest is one of the major links between the Yoruba religion and Indigenous Churches. Consequently, AICs draw largely from African spiritual heritage where there is strong emphasis on good health, well-being, the influence of the spirit world and peace with oneself and the community.

One of the reasons for the rapid growth of these churches in Nigeria is that people turn to the church to find solutions to their immediate problems. It is evident, however, that increasing upsurge of Nigerian churches is in an inverse relationship to the prevalent moral, ethical and spiritual standards. There is a great disparity in the profession of faith of individuals and their corresponding lifestyle. This poses an ecclesiological and academic challenge to the Christian faith. One would have expected Christianity to influence the moral standards of individuals and society but that was and is clearly the case.

Chapter 4 highlights the ways in which AICs abuse the Yoruba spiritual heritage. The spiritual heritage serves as a means of escaping responsibility, of oppression and inflicting pain. There is abuse of children, extortion of the innocent, gender discrimination, corruption and magic money. The abuses discussed in this chapter illustrate the negative influence of the traditional religious worldview that has not been affected and conquered by the Christian faith in Nigeria. These traditional religious worldviews form the basis of the Nigerian society and are an integral part of their social structure.

Chapter 5 analysed inculturation theology. A survey of the literature shows that many African scholars are positive about the African culture. They affirm that the African spiritual heritage is a stepping-stone towards a relevant and meaningful Christian theology in Africa. The review also shows the different views of scholars on the developmental stages of the African spiritual heritage. Despite these differences, all the scholars reviewed suggest the significance of the African traditional religion in understanding the Christian faith, societal behaviour and their relationship to the spirit

world. Only a few scholars considered the spiritual heritage as an incompatible element with Christian faith. Most of the inculturation theologians did not investigate to what extent the misuse of the spiritual heritage served as a means of escaping responsibilities.

Some of the positions of inculturation theologians, who over-stress the importance of the African culture to undertake meaningful and relevant theology in Africa, are challenged. First stating their theses and antitheses, the chapter moved to a synthetization of their positions and proposed a more critical inculturation theology. The chapter pleads for sound theological education and the development of a church model with an outspoken Christian lifestyle that would not only transform society, but also purify the Yoruba spiritual heritage to reduce gender inequality, injustice, corruption, inflicting pains and extortion. I dealt here with the theologies of John Mbiti, Kwame Bediako, Osadolor Imasogie, Bolaji Idowu and Byang Kato.

A more critical inculturation should affirm the uniqueness of the Bible. The spiritual heritage that is compatible to Christianity can be “baptized” into Christian enrichment. A more critical inculturation opines that anywhere where traditions clash with the Gospel, such traditions have to be disposed of.

In agreement with Mbiti, I hold that some aspects of African spiritual heritage are not compatible with the Christian faith. Therefore, such incompatible aspects are considered negative. Critical inculturation provides a promising and fruitful area of comparative studies between the African cultural background and that of the Old and New Testaments.

I also argued in line with Kato, who stresses the theological pitfalls in Africa. In examining Kato’s theology in the light of critical inculturation vis-à-vis cultural heritage in relation to the Christian faith, I submit that the critical inculturation postulate agrees with Kato’s theology that rejects man-made religions such as the African traditional religion as a basis for African Christianity and gives preference to the Bible.

Chapter 6 examined the ethical role of the Church in society. It described the Church, Christian ethics and African ethics. The chapter suggests some ways in which

churches could improve the moral life of members through the lifestyles of preachers, theologians and the communal life of the church in society.

The practise of uncritical inculturation leaves room for the violation of children's and women's rights, corruption, exploitation, escaping responsibility and gender discrimination. These immoralities affect Christian behaviours negatively and they are destructive practices. For Christians and African churches to correct the negative impacts of Yoruba spiritual heritage, a more critical inculturation theology is required.

7.5 CONCLUSION

The spiritual heritage practised in many contemporary Yoruba churches do not represent the worldview of the twenty-first century, but follows the archaic practices of by-gone centuries. Spiritual heritage not only serves as a source of African theological reflection, a means of anchoring education and entertainment, a model for enforcing societal laws and maintaining order, or of revealing the deeper religious insights of a particular community, but also as a means of suppression and restriction of women's rights. The spiritual heritage of the Yoruba also encourages injustice, corruption and the infliction of pain in AICs.

Christianity is not about theoretical knowledge of Christ that does not involve the transformation of lives. It is a way of life to be lived every day before Jesus Christ, the Lord and Saviour of mankind. The Christian faith will become good news to societies only if there is a genuine and constructive theology. One of the tests of a living church is the transformation of lives and society through the Gospel.

The Yoruba should blame themselves and not Satan or spirits for wrong behaviours. Unless they first accept responsibility for their wrong behaviours, the moral standard of the Yoruba community and Nigeria in general will not improve.

The phenomenon of Indigenous Churches creates the illusion of an Africa that appears very much receptive to Christ. However, with the extent of the abuse of spiritual heritage manifested in them, African Indigenous Churches are unable to reveal the genuine Christian life. For African Christianity to become authentic and relevant, a more critical inculturation is proposed as a way forward. Mbiti and Kato can serve as a framework for a more critical inculturation.

A more critical inculturation theology differs from uncritical inculturation in the sense that it does not accept the status quo of the African cultural heritage. The main thrust of a more critical inculturation hypothesis is in its final analysis. With the help of the methodological tool of the two-sided transformation, the positive aspects of the Yoruba spiritual heritage will be retained while the negative aspects that make people want to escape their responsibility will be strongly discouraged. This aim can only be reached when not just the cultural heritage enriches the Gospel, but when also the Gospel of Christ is enabled to criticize thoroughly certain destructive cultural and religious phenomena.

A critical theology holds that attributing most of the societal or individual moral behaviours to the spirit world is a spiritual danger which must be guarded against. It also provides a link to the dialogue between the Christian faith and the African traditional religion that aims to purify the Yoruba spiritual heritage and safeguard it from misuse. Consequently, a more critical inculturation is very important to both academics and the church in Nigeria.

A more critical inculturation theology also fosters high expectations of the potential ethical role of a church endowed with an outspoken Christian lifestyle. In the current situation in Nigeria, the church might be one of the institutions that has a significant role to transform both society and individuals. A more critical inculturation theology stresses the importance of the role model position of church leaders, preachers, theologians and the communities of faith.

A more critical inculturation theology suggests an ethical paradigm to engage the problems of the misuse of spiritual heritage in Nigeria. Consequently, when the Gospel makes contact with a culture and when cultural abuses are reduced and a positive cultural heritage is maintained, we can say that critical inculturation has taken place.

A more critical inculturation theology in the restoration discourse holds that spirits are not responsible for all sinful behaviours in human beings. Often, it is a choice of individuals. The choice to return to the path of righteousness rests with individuals through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit (Van Gemeren, 1988:97).

In conclusion, the link between the Christian faith and the African traditional religion should be redefined. The Yoruba spiritual heritage has to be re-interpreted by means of a rigorous Christian analysis and critical mind that should ascribe dignity to both men and women, both perceived as the image of God. When the Yoruba practise their spiritual heritage with the mind-set of Christ, the prevailing oppression and discrimination could be more explicitly addressed. A new Christian self-understanding could become manifest, and the ethical and moral standards of church members could improve in a manner that could lead to a greater commitment to Jesus Christ and the community of faith.

In conclusion, the study was aimed at answering the question: has inculturation theology, especially in its emphasis on the value of the spiritual heritage as a model of African theology, led to a sincere commitment to Christianity in Africa? My conclusion is that in its justified emphasis on the accessibility of the Gospel for African people with the help of the traditional African worldviews, the inculturation theology has overlooked negative aspects of this worldview. The emphasis on the rich African heritage might become a setback if this theology does not reflect on the dynamic Christian message in order to attack cultural attitudes and traditions of immorality and corruption.

Therefore, I propose a more critical inculturation theology that provides answers to the weaknesses of the inculturation theology of “old” inculturation theologians who praise the African religions and traditions in African Christianity. It might be that such an appraisal was needed as a first step. Presently a second step is urgently needed to address the weaknesses we are confronted with in African traditional religion in relation to Christianity. Such weaknesses include: a limited concept of salvation, the absence of the notion that suffering is a part of human and Christian life, exorcism, the presence of false prophets, the dangerous practices of magic money, the silence or lack of interest on question of corruption in society, the practice of animal sacrifice, angel worship and attributing most of the moral evil to the spirit world.

The overall conclusion of this work is that the way inculturation theology has been expounded in recent times has left too much room for spiritual abuse. A more critical inculturation theology as proposed in this study can be one of the ways out of this

trend. It can contribute to a new understanding of African religious studies in relation to the Christian faith. A more critical inculturation theology in this study, far from endorsing the excesses of African traditional religious practices in the Indigenous Churches, suggests rather that African theologians should be open to seeing the abuses inherent in spiritual heritage. It addresses the importance of a critical evaluation of spiritual heritage in African theology. Therefore, the answer to the main research question: *How can the Church most effectively correct the negative aspects of the societal impact of the Yoruba traditional spiritual heritage?* is that a more critical inculturation theory provides a promising and fruitful area of comparative study between the African cultural background and the Old and the New Testaments. The building blocks for such a critical inculturation theory or theology are already there, as mentioned above.

Lastly, the study did not attempt to cover all features of the Yoruba spiritual heritage. It only addressed spiritual heritage in relation to societal behaviours. The hope is that the study ignites discussion to enrich the religious life of the Yoruba and Africa in its entirety. My sincere hope is that this thesis will inspire Christians and churches to develop Christian virtues of love, nurturing, sharing, holiness, commitment, morality and obedience in our society and in doing so, exert this much needed influence.

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APPENDIX A: UNSTRUCTURED QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS

Introduction: Greetings to you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. May the blessing and favour of the Lord be with you. My name is Adetunmibi Manasseh Adegboyega, a PhD student at North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa. My research topic is: Spiritual heritage and its implications for Yoruba indigenous churches in Nigeria.

1. Sir/Mam, can you give me some information about you?
2. Could you please share with me some causes of immoral behaviour and corruption in Nigeria?
3. Is there any link or relationship between human behaviour and the spirit world?
4. Can spiritual beings influence human behaviour?
5. What role do ancestors play in the welfare of families and individuals?
6. Can you tell me your view about the influence of ancestors on the reality of life among the Yoruba?
7. Can you share your view about generational curses?
8. Is there any relationship between spiritual heritage and gender discrimination in Yoruba society?

ESU

1. To what extent can *Esu* affect human behaviour?
2. What role does *Esu* play in societal behaviour?
3. Can you tell me your view about spirit as causality of evil?

ORI

1. Can you provide your view about the Yoruba concept of *Ori*?
2. To what extent can *Ori* affect human behaviour?
3. Is there any relationship between *Ori* and wealth acquisition and its distribution?
4. Is there any relationship between *Ori* and the Yoruba concept of success and failure?

CHURCH ROLES

1. Do the churches in Nigeria have an impact on Nigerian society?
2. Does the Church have any role to play in correcting the wrong in society?
3. Is there any relationship between Yoruba spiritual heritage and indigenous churches?
4. What role can the Church play in correcting the negative impact of spiritual heritage in society?
5. Can you suggest some ways the Church can promote the dignity of women and children in society?