"Returning to My Father" : A Decolonial Reading of Lk 15:11-32
Towards a Reconstruction of African Theological Anthropology for Authentic Sacramental Ethics via Indigenous Divinity Graduate Schools.

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By Etchi Besem Oben

INTRODUCTION

An African proverb says, “Home is not where we live; Home is where you belong” pointing to one’s default position as the place of identity rather than the geographical location. This paper is important to me because it reverts back to the purpose for which I began theological studies in 2008: “Why are things getting worse for Cameroonian and several sub-Saharan African countries in spite of over 500 years of having and reading the Bible, the word which is meant to set free?” The rampant occurrences of war and underdevelopment beg the acknowledgement of being in the presence of ethically unproductive rituals. This paper employs both a deductive and inductive method to examine and correct the faulty rituals of the Catholic Church in Africa. In Cameroon, baptized Catholics number at least 3.3 million, 26% of the population and largely enough to influence the country’s development and prosperity. The story of the prodigal son Lk 15:11-32 offers a pathway to return to flourishing enclosed in eating rituals. This paper explores the mechanics of ritual- the vehicle of identity creation- unearthing important revelations that reinterpret Lk 15:11-32 in a decolonizing manner. It makes the following three contributions: (1) by uncovering the Indigenous Norse zero-point subtext structuring today's Catholic liturgy, the paper constructs ancestral primacy as the delinking methodology for African theology to move into indigenizing Catholic liturgy; (2) by emphasizing ritual as transformative technology for identity and relationship, in its wielding of neurolinguistic programming for the individual's cognitive mind, somatic mind and field mind, the paper establishes indigenous epistemology as the proper spatial locus for any symbolic exchange that emerges authentic sacramental ethics; (3)
by discussing indigenized ritual as a path of realizing sociopolitical stability and harmony in African the need for via creating indigenous Divinity graduate schools in African countries is demonstrated.

The Immediate Instigating Circumstances for the Paper

What led to an intense focus on Lk 15:11-32 is the present civil war in Cameroon in which some members of its two Anglophone regions made a move for secession from the 8-region Francophone zone, merged together by colonizer politics. A revolt that started off as Anglophone teachers and lawyers decrying the Francophonization of the Anglophone zone and the absence of proper tools to foster Anglophone education and businesses, turned into a clamor for independence. The plan is to create an independent country called Ambazonia from the British settlement, Ambas bay where the Baptist Missionary Alfred Saker founded a settlement of freed slaves in 1988 in Limbe. Ambazonia would have an American geopolitical structure and governance systems aimed at enabling Anglophones to be free of being second class citizens of Cameroon. September 9, 2017 marked the day of the declaration of war on The Republic of Cameroon by the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGC) stating:

"The state of war that has been declared on the state of Ambazonia by the illegitimate and brutal colonial Government of La Republique du Cameroun. AGC is hereby engaged in self-defense and for the liberation of the Federation of Ambazonia from systematic human rights abuses and illegal annexation without a union treaty."1

And again:

“'The Ground Coordinator, the Deputy Chief, and all Commanders of the Ambazonia Defense Forces, are hereby authorized and directed to employ the entire self-defense force at the disposal of the Federation of Ambazonia and its resources

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to carry on self-defense against the despotism and occupation of the land of Ambazonia.”

Thus Cameroon became the home of armed conflict, with the rules of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* violated, on both sides, and with chants of victory. A year later, massacres of innocents were carried out on both sides and thousands of civilians fled, both to the francophone zone and neighboring Nigeria, from military raids and housing burning and Ambazonia-related kidnappings, torture and the burning of businesses. In this, the Christian church that actually controls the majority of secondary institutions of repute have been ambivalent towards the issue. How have we acquired an attitude of war among brethren in a dominant Catholic-led country, President Paul Biya being an ex-major seminarian himself? If our 500+ years of Catholic worship still accommodates a character of war, where lies the fault? When French phenomenologist and Catholic priest, Marie Louis Chauvet, describes how sacraments translate into ethics, he notes the fulcrum as the language act that originates the mythology of the sacrament and the ritual symbolism that effects a new identity from sacramental activity. Hence is the fault in the ritual mechanics of African worship or in the Christian mythology on which the ritual is based?

An African proverb says: “if you want to clean a stream, you must start from the source”. What is the source of Cameroonian Catholic rituals and how do they influence the creation of our identity? The advent of Catholic missionaries in Cameroon began with the Papal Bulls of *Dum Diversas* and *Inter Caetera* of the 15th C which dispatched missionaries and colonizing expeditions

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4 When Marie Louis Chauvet describes how sacraments translate into ethics, he notes the fulcrum as the language act that grounds the sacrament and the ritual symbolism that effects a new identity from its activity.
from Portugal and Spain with the aim to confiscate all that is valuable for themselves and eliminate the indigenous people, their religion and their culture. Thus the introduction of Cameroonians into Roman Catholicism and European imperial rule established itself with a proliferation of trade in Africans to be enslaved, the humiliation of indigenous spiritual systems and a significant shift in the self-concept of Cameroonian believers steeped in inferiority complex. British Roman Catholic priest, historian and professor, Adrian Hastings detailed the participation of Catholic missionaries in the brutal slaughter, enslavement, forced conversions and dehumanization of sub-Saharan Africans in the 15th C. Walter Mignolo gives a succinct explanation of this plague, as a coloniality of the mind including a coloniality of space, time and identity. This identity distortion causes the victim to exist as a quasi-image and likeness of its colonizer in denigration of her/his divine image and likeness, rooted in their indigenous culture. Ghanaian statesman Nkame Nkrumah in his work on neocolonialism discusses how colonial religion continues to be a little noticed tool for self-colonization such that; “Neo-colonialism is also the worst form of imperialism. For those who practice it, it means power without responsibility and for those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress.” A hint at the complicity of European culture and epistemology can be gleaned, at the individual level, from the work of Nigerian sociologist Oyewumi Oyeronke detailing that there is not a one-to-one correlation of ‘European woman’ to ‘African anatomical females’ because of the differences in their social organizing principles that shape identity, behavior and roles. This normalizing of western gender constructs unto African identity,

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8 Oyeronke Oyewumi, The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997)
instigates a closer look into a possible relationship between the character of civil war in 19\textsuperscript{th} C Catholic-prone areas such as Biafran war; Rwandan genocide, DRC civil war and now Cameroon civil war and the character of war in European identity. As such African American Black feminist scholar Patricia Collins offers epistemological tools of resistance and delinking such as (1) concrete experience as a criterion for meaning, (2) self-definition, (3) alternative knowledge validation process (4) institutional transformation, aimed at improving knowledge, consciousness and empowerment.\textsuperscript{9} Let us turn to the scripture passage and make mention of Spiritan interpretive resources.

\textbf{Eating Rituals, Creating Identity and Education for Wealth Creation}

An African proverb says, when there is no enemy within, the enemies outside cannot hurt you. This calls for constant coming into oneself to assess whether one is making the best choices that are available to one’s possibilities. A story of a rich and ethical man with two sons is recorded in the 15\textsuperscript{th} chapter of the gospel according to Luke. The younger employs his intellect to take his share of inheritance and travel abroad where he runs out of resources and has to hire himself out to care for pigs (cf. Lk 15:11-15). His frustrated state is recorded in v.16: “He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.” Within this ritual of eating pods, the pigs grow full and fat while the human, in the divine image and likeness, lives somewhat depraved, poor, abandoned, humiliated, and trapped in an ideology of unworthiness. This mirrors the colonial situation of political powers benefitting from the services of their African

\textsuperscript{9} Patricia Hill Collins, \textit{Black Feminist thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment} (Routeledge Chapman and Inc) 1948
colonies while ensuring their citizens are denied the sustenance needed to flourish. In addition, the eating ritual is not serving the son, just as the sub-Saharan African performance of inculturated Catholic Eucharistic liturgies is wanting, in producing the public work of social transformation into life-to-the-full.

This parable’s solution begins with his state of fasting from the eating ritual and the ability of fasting to create a balance in the body that sharpens the mind to assess one’s state. He then proceeds to employ not his intellect, but his memories of past experiences that are able to locate the kind of living he wants for himself – to “have bread enough and to spare” (cf. Lk 15:17) The vision of his storied reality of abundance is so compelling that the response is “I will arise and go to my father” (cf. Lk15:18). This choice is one of self-definition from self-evaluation, arrived at through a heightened consciousness of concrete personal experience and an alternative knowledge validation process sourced from his ancestral way of life. The sons neuro-linguistic shifts makes his choice is thus a delinking from master-generated identities and realities to realign with ancestral storied reality to create the identity one longs for. This paper delves into the work of Dilts and Delozier’s third generation neuro-linguistic programming to highlight mechanisms contained in ritual and so heighten the understanding of Chauvet’s phenomenology of the sacraments and how sacraments may be adjusted to function for an African identity and ethics. The son was willing to forgo his privilege as son to take up the identity of a servant because it was much better that his life under citizens of an alien country.

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10 Nkrumah notes this about neo-colonialism
11 Hinduism offers scientific explanations to the benefits of fasting in detoxifying the body and balancing the chakras thus heightening one’s consciousness and ability to function towards one’s fulfillment.
12 This paper delves into the work of Dilts and Delozier’s third generation neurolinguistics programming to highlight mechanisms contained in ritual and so heighten the understanding of Chauvet’s phenomenology of the sacraments and how they function to create identity and ethics.
This paper focuses on how the peoples of sub-Saharan African may undertake this same return to ancestral primacy and so achieve an abundance of life. To "arise and return to the father" is the path of renewed identity and communal relationship where while the son is still on the way, the new ritual of eating the fattened calf is set in motion to restore sonship, authority and access, to the life-giving existence of the Father's knowledge, ancestry, wealth and spirituality (Lk 15:22-23). To live directed by a neo-colonial Catholic Eucharistic liturgy leaves Africans lost and dead, to reclaim ancestral primacy is mythology and ritual mechanism makes Africans found and alive setting up a path for everlasting joy. (Lk 15:24). What steps can African theology take to engender a new ritual living built on ancestral primacy, hybrid identities and committed to enhance value everywhere? For, liturgy is not complete until the anthropology and ethics that is ritualized gets actualized. To propose new directions this paper focuses on the contributions of the Spiritan theologians Elochukwu Uzukwu and James Okoye in the areas of ritual imagination and directives for education in African respectively.

An African proverb says s/he that beats the drum for the mad wo/man to dance is no better than the mad wo/man themself. This sounds the call for African theologians and priests to engage in an inculturation of mythology, space, time and mechanics for the Catholic Mass rather than fostering European neocolonial access to African minds through the pervasiveness of European indigenous Norse religion in the Catholic Liturgy. In Cameroon, “Yes I shall arise” is a popular Lenten hymn written by the French Spiritan (Holy Ghost Fathers) priest Lucien Deiss (1921-2007) and sung across the sub-Saharan parts of Africa. It is a favorite for the Stations of the Cross with its 8 short verses that provide a good duration of time for pray-ers to move from one station to the next. When Uzukwu discusses hospitality in Sub-Saharan African, he confirms hospitality
as integral to self-understanding as an identity not merely a situational ethic.\textsuperscript{13} War denotes the absence of hospitality which is thus an indicator of a lost indigenous identity. Ritual is the prime mechanism for creating identities hence the paper scrutinizes what kind of ritual the Catholic is for Africans. Uzukwu points out that ritual also lays down patterns that fashions the participant’s aesthetics.\textsuperscript{14} Thus the dressing patterns of Catholic Christians are an indicator of the archetypal identity their Catholic ritual is mirroring. A crucial contribution of Uzukwu’s work is the relationship of myth-symbol to ritual-symbol, describing how sacred narratives used in ritual impact the life of the community.\textsuperscript{15} This insight directs us to assess the impact of using days aligned with Norse gods, organizing worship around Christmas and Easter which are Norse feast dates, and using a liturgical structure and symbolism uplifted from Norse religion in African Catholic liturgies.

James Okoye makes a pertinent contribution that what it meant for Israel to be the chosen people and a light to the nations did not invite other nations to cultural or religious conversion but to a striving for excellence in their own cultural and religious expression of being in the divine image and likeness.\textsuperscript{16} In the light of this understanding Okoye’s vision of what the Spiritan evangelizing mission should look like in Africa is to be a "mutual exchange of energies" (AG: 19) wherein African culture can teach the value of life, especially joy as celebrated communally and socially.\textsuperscript{17} The very opposite of a culture of war. Okoye’s theology of mission where African

\textsuperscript{15} Uzukwu, Worship as Body Language, 84-174.
theologies, praxis, and spiritualities enter the Catholic unity to relieve catholicity from being identified only with Western culture brings up an educational pedagogy that is holistic. When Okoye discusses the future of an inculturated African Eucharist in an African setting, some key elements he finds indispensable are that the liturgy should adopt a meal setting; a sacrificial meal that enlivens every facet of the community and as well, imparts mystical power to daily experience.\textsuperscript{18} Okoye’s focus on the future of Spiritan pedagogy in Africa reflects this emphasis of keeping Christian identity enlivened by holistic flourishing.\textsuperscript{19} This paper then proposes that the imperative for ancestral meanings and patterns in the Catholic liturgy in Africa for maintaining an identity of hospitality and communal wellbeing can best be fulfilled through indigenous Divinity schools.

\textbf{Towards An African Theology from Reflection on African Experiences of the Divine}

Recalling the memory of his father’s activity allowed the son to comprehend the great spirituality and wellbeing that it composed. His desire for life to the full met its fulfilment in his ancestral story. Schools of Divinity provide the ideal setting for masters programs towards investigating, recalling, documenting and propagating cultural ways, mythologies, religious activities, and existential realities. The combination of academics and ministry allows an intellectual and experiential immersion into African divine-human relationships. The scholarly route allows for interdisciplinary reflection on how to raise African children. Not confined by ecclesiastical obedience nor indigenous authorities, the researchers can come up with varied best practices that can be adopted by the diverse ethnic groups of sub Saharan. With indigenous divinity graduate schools, African theology will retrieve the epistemopathies required to reawaken and


reset the African mind to the path home via proper rituals of eating. Entertain a more in depth unfolding of this discourse.

THE RATIONAL INQUIRY OF THE PRODIGAL SON AS ELEMENTS FOR DELINKING RITUAL-TECHNOLOGY

The key excerpt of Lk 15:14-31 is held within the pigs eating, under their owner’s care, while the younger son is not given even the pigs’ leftovers (v.15-16); and the father’s banquet in his honor, where the fattened calf is eaten to celebrate the son (v.23-25). When the son comes into himself, the comparison between living as a hired servant under the citizens of the foreign land and the status of servants living under his father’s employment accomplishes two things. First, it creates an integration between his life experience and his ancestral story, therefore propelling him to modify his actions. Secondly, the questions and observations he makes creates a change in the meaning of leaving home. Leaving home does not mean being cut off from one’s ancestral story as the default for personal fulfilment.

The prodigal son would not have succeeded without the mentorship of the pigs. He chose a great job. Winston Churchill has a quote “Dogs look up to man. Cats look down to man. Pigs look us straight in the eye and see an equal.” By staying with the pigs, the younger son could observe the intense community life, the joy in social interaction, the frequency of communication and the identity of sharing, very different from the isolated life he chose for himself. Pigs are omnivores and live in matriarchal groups, with a great olfactory capability used to differentiate between familiar and unfamiliar people, litter mates and other pigs, playing a key role in crafting societal harmony.²⁰ The mother-child bond is the primal relationship with mothers building

houses for their litter who grow up to establish their own families around the mother. They possess exceptional communication skills and their strong snout is the perfect foraging tool for digging up the earth to permit new plant species to take up residence, thus being cherished environmental managers. As regards intelligence and emotion, pigs are noted to be inquisitive, with developed learning and problem solving abilities including evidence of learning from experience, compiling information and scheming to get free from their pens.

In Greco-Roman mythology pigs were considered filthy or unclean so could only be used in ritual sacrifice not domestic consumption, since ritual contained its condition. Pork was a key element in sacrificial meals, consumed by sanctuary ministers and members of the group offering the sacrifice promoting “group cohesion and identity.” The pig was also a key element in rituals to Demeter, the Goddess of fertility and agricultural resurrection (a seed sprouting). This is the mentorship the younger son was exposed to that shaped his choice to return to his own social grouping. The excerpt thus draws our attention to investigate the Catholic Eucharistic liturgy which is the place for eating Christ’s flesh and blood. Rather than use his intellect, the son uses his pig lessons, past experience and memories of his father. What follows is a recognition of imbibed unworthiness and a decision to return to his father and ask for pardon.
The shocking thing is that he had lost faith that he could be accepted as a son and is settling for being a servant.

The traditional Catholic interpretation of this text is of a sinner who returns to God to find fulfilment, bringing our attention to the question, “who is the God in the Catholic liturgy of eating? What does interaction with this divine entity create?” The de-colonial interpretation, takes seriously the presence of two worlds: living under foreign rule and living under ancestral provision. Returning to the father is thus symbolic of a set of mentorship step for returning to one’s ancestral roots, as the episteme for the experience of fulfilment. According to Chammah Kaunda on European coloniality in Africa: “Colonial conquest was a ferocious attack on the essence of African humanity.”

Again he says:

“Decolonial theology is a struggle to conceptualize how precolonial social order functioned and find critical ways of rethinking modern African Christian experience without failing into the trap of cultural revivalism. Decolonial theology is not about reclaiming cultural past but redesigning the present by re-conceptualizing.”

What is it that needs re-conceptualizing when the ritual of eating does not produce an identity and ethics of fulfilment? Is it the ritual mechanism, the myth-symbol or the ritual symbolism?

**Can European Mythology Create an Ethical African Person Via the Catholic Eucharist?**

Kaunda quotes Kwame Nantambu to clarify that the African notion of the divine brought by European missionaries is not Jewish but wrapped in European culture and serving their intentions. He says:

“God was presented to Africans through European cultural symbols but African. Missionary Christianity is, as Kwame Nantambu points out, “a derived way of life

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and belief system promulgated and manipulated by Europeans for Europeans so as to facilitate and advance their religious supremacy.”  

Investigating this further in Gundarsson Kvelduf’s *Teutonic Religion* one would learn that the days of the week around which the lectionary is organized are actually Norse deities (1) Sunday: For Sol, goddess of the sun, Sun's day (2) Monday: for Mani, goddess of the moon, Mani’s day (3) Tuesday: For Tyr, god of war, Tyr's day (4) Wednesday: For Odin, the Raven God, sometimes known as Woden's day (5) Thursday: For Thor, god of strength and storms, Thor's day (6) Friday: For Frigg, goddess of marriage, Frigg’s day. Such that the mere appellation of week days is already an invocation of the concerned deity. Ritual time is colonized. War is a cultural identity in the Norse society successfully introduced with a coloniality technology of a racial/caste pyramid. There are striking similarities and almost exactly copy of proto-European Aryan myths introduced into what is called Hinduism. Thus the Aryan Lord Vishnu, the second person of the Hindu Triumtri shares overwhelming similarity with Jesus Christ the carpenter son, in addition to other details of Thor and Odin, we see the glaring European Inculturation of whatever original Jewish story of Miriam and her son Yeshua that could have existed.

Several elements of the Catholic Mass come from Teutonic religion: blessing bowls and twigs for blessing with water, bishop’s signet ring, praying over food and cutting the air, ringing bells to call to prayer, and using the Nordic basic ritual structure for the Latin Rite Mass. Thus religious texts, concepts and symbols of the Catholic Mass all originate from European ancestral religion meanwhile African ancestral religion was demonized and Africans taught to discard it in

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favor of foreign religious domination. This African condition of continued mental and ritual dependence is succinctly captured by Kaunda who writes:

“This model has continued as coloniality, a manifestation of colonial character in modern African systems, demonstrated through hierarchies of power, gender, ethnicity, ecological domination, theological/knowledge production and a mis/mistaken representation of Western knowledge as universal system of thought.”

Let us examine the impact via ritual technology on the African mind.

Louis-Marie Chauvet outlines that ritual begins with the word inhabiting the body, then the body acts in ritual symbolism and finally a new ethical word-mind is produced. As such what Uzukwu calls the myth-symbol: the narrative on which the ritual is built, is the defining factor for the identity and ethics the ritual will realize. Chauvet lamented that “the use of western language and thought gives rise to metaphysics, to onto-theology shaped by western culture and reality.”

In effect, the African participation in the Eucharistic liturgy rather remakes us into the Western image and likeness, it “whitens” us and places us in the stead of the younger son – dehumanized, frustrated, deprived and desolate. Thus to arise and return to our father as Africans is not a return to the European God but a summons to an indigenization of language, rites, thought and symbol for our rituals. An idea of how the sample ritual affects colonizer and colonized can be grasped via the prayer that offers the divine glory “as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be.” To the European colonizer, leader, conqueror, chosen for manifest destiny it speaks more victories and breeds confidence for good things. Meanwhile to the African, colonized, vanquished, inferiorized and demonized it speaks deeper self-hatred and breeds low self-esteem with an expectation of

more bad things. Consider this explanation of Chauvet on how story gets imprinted on the body during ritual:

“The sacraments render our bodies the site of God’s writing, as through baptism we are ‘plunged into the body of signifiers – material, institutional, cultural, and traditional – of the Church.’ ‘One becomes a Christian only by entering an institution and in letting this institution stamp its “trademark,” its “character,” on one’s body.’ It is thus impossible to think of the faith outside of the body, as our Christian existence is ‘always-already inscribed in the order of the sacramental’.”

The myth that the ritual is built on, is the determiner of the identity and ethics of the person who fully and actively participates in it. Thus a return to ancestral primacy becomes the goal for any delinking methodologies in constructing African theologies. What central principle grounds such a methodology as can assist with delinking the African from their qusai-European pen?

The Contribution of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) to Ritual as a Delinking Technology

Ritual has a basic three part structure of separation, transformation and re-integration. In the parable of Lk 15:11-32, the transformative session in the company of the pigs, demonstrates some key shifts that Neuro-linguistic programming also uses to modify the experiences and beliefs of its clients. First, NLP explains that the mind does not entirely reside in the brain (intellect only) but more so on the body and in a dynamic field around the body (relationships). Whereas the younger son uses his intellect, his cognitive mind, to demand his share of inheritance and travel to a foreign land, he rather shifts his focus to his somatic mind: empty stomach, effects of fasting, memory, and his field mind: mentor relationship with the pigs, and job conditions to get him out

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36 Marie Chauvet, Symbol and Sacrament, 155-156
38
of his misery. Second, NLP points one that one imposition of western society on other conquered peoples is a linear understanding of time in which the past is gone forever. The younger son poses a return to cyclic time that puts him in touch with his memories and he realizes his part is the key of his future. “How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!” (cf. Lk 15:17) This shift modifies his perspective by creating distance between himself and the event, thus he is able to see the fulfilment he seeks, in his ancestry. Third, NLP reminds that the brain functions by making associations. Thus to create a change in identity and functioning one has to change the associations. The younger son’s restoration is done by the use of symbolic language to create new associations of identity with flourishing: Robe, sandals, ring, fattened calf (cf. Lk 15:22-24). How do we then constitute mentorship, memories and metaphors that can effect the journey home to ancestral primacy?

INDIGENOUS EPISTEMOLOGY AS THE PROPER SPATIAL LOCUS FOR ANY DELINKING SYMBOLIC EXCHANGE THAT EFFECTS A SACRAMENTAL IDENTITY AND ETHICS AlIGNED WITH AFRICAN CONSCIOUSNESS.

The tripod on which Chauvet constructs ritual, using the sacrament of reconciliation as a case study is (1) the ritual context – the language: what is speaking? (2) The word – the formulas: How is speaking happening? (3) Ethics and mission – the change: why is speaking happening?39

Given the normalization of Catholic sacraments across cultures, Oyeronke’s discourse on a varied organization principle of societies such that anatomical humans are not socially constructed to be “men” and “women” across cultures warrants a starting point of asking who is entering the ritual? Subsequently, making this question the basis for judging how suitable the text, symbols and

39 Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 430-438
movements are. This is where Uzukwu’s note is necessary that worship is such that “the total human person (embodied spirit) makes this gesture…” arguing that “our motions or gestures and the way we generally interpret human rhythmic movement, are bound to an ethnic experience” and ritual derives meaning therein.\textsuperscript{40}

While ‘ethnic’ should remind us of ancestral primacy, ‘experience’ in a circular time frame, rather than a linear one, will shift the focus from logos to pathos as that which is relived through ritual. Collins in discussing concrete experience as a criterion of meaning towards an Afrocentric epistemology, portrays experience as the “cutting edge” dividing knowledge and wisdom in favor of the latter.\textsuperscript{41} After all it is the pneumatological principle (wisdom) that gives life. In her words “knowledge without wisdom is adequate for the powerful, but wisdom is essential to the survival of the subordinate” because living through the experience is more authentic than reading or thinking it through.\textsuperscript{42}

Collins explains that using concrete experience as a criterion of meaning results in multiple levels of meaning from a knowing “located in the body and the space it occupies and the other passing beyond it” generating a subjectivity that allows connectedness to become a key manner of knowing.\textsuperscript{43}

Hence in searching for African body motions to express the same Christian faith as European body motions, Uzukwu introduces attention to the myth-symbol: the founding stories of the community in assembly, as the locus of ritualizing all facts of life.\textsuperscript{44} The intimate relationship of myth to ritual as referent is what is speaking. Uzukwu demonstrates that for the early Christians reliving the Christian founding myth, their life became a display of the way the Christ lived and died (worship) and the Eucharist became the power of being both vehicle and interpreter of the paschal mystery made

\textsuperscript{40} Elochukwu Uzukwu, \textit{Worship as Body language}. ix.
\textsuperscript{41} Patricia Hill Collins, \textit{Black Feminist Thought}, 208-212
\textsuperscript{42} Patricia Hill Collins, \textit{Black Feminist Thought}, 208
\textsuperscript{43} Patricia Hill Collins, Black Feminist Thought, 211-212
\textsuperscript{44} Elochukwu Uzukwu, \textit{Worship as Body language}.84-219
totally manifest.\textsuperscript{45} The impact of this is that an Afrocentric ritual built on ethnic experience an ancestral myth-symbol ceases to be a Sunday event for two hours or a weekly mass for one hour but becomes integrate into the cycle of life such that the concept of living itself is the ritual.

When Collins quotes Audre Lorde: “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” it is to wed a changed consciousness with the power of self-definition through self-knowledge and crafting action.\textsuperscript{46} Okoye does this by articulating that an African Eucharist cannot dispense of enlivening the community holistically with the impartation of sacred power for daily experience. Thus rather than specify what tools and methods should become the new norm there is rather a setting of the bar from where to judge whether the Catholic Eucharist is being authentically Africa. Does it resurrect the people in power, daily? Hence indigenizing the Catholic liturgy is not foremost a matter of replacing items or replacing rites, but an ongoing search for how to achieve this holistic empowered living that necessitates an organ of research and application. This journey back home is a decision for integrated living rather that separation of religion and politics within oneself.

Chinese Philosopher Xunzi, strived to sway the Chinese from a growing fascination with individual corporal techniques to ritual technology that organizes and harmonizes an “organic communal body”\textsuperscript{47} His first principle is the adoption of an external mentor to access accumulated effort – self cultivation. The next is the adherence to ritual as a set of corporal techniques that create humaneness and are therapeutic. The third, bears on the performative aspect of ritual where through music and dance the people are charged with new socio-political implications.\textsuperscript{48} For

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{45} Elochukwu Uzukwu, *Worship as Body language*, 200
\item \textsuperscript{46} Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 110 -114
\item \textsuperscript{47} Ori Tavor. “Xunzi’s Theory of Ritual Revisited: Reading Ritual as Corporal Technology” in *Dao*. September 2013, Volume 12, Issue 3, 313–330
\item \textsuperscript{48} Ori Tavor, *Xunzi’s Theory of Ritual Revisited*, 321-323
\end{itemize}
Xunzi, ritual is the most efficient tool for social cohesiveness and political harmony, which he bases on the aesthetic dimension of ritual audio-visual performance. In Xunzi’s “Discourse on Music” he starts with the lines “Music is joy, an intrinsic part of human dispositions” drawing our attention to the necessary energetic and vibrational component of ritual. In understanding why rhythm and beat, story and movement must be rooted in indigenous ancestry this quote of Xunzi offers insight:

“Humans, he argues, cannot live without some sort of satisfaction and any regimen that calls for the abolition of desire is thus ultimately destined to fail. Uncurbed satisfaction, however, will also ultimately fail since it will lead to social and political chaos. Ritual is thus a product of this need for a tool that allows humans to enjoy themselves in a structured and long-term manner.”

In this manner ritual technology through Xunzi’s basic mechanism of qi (energy) is all of celebration, education for social living and conforming one’s life to the rhythms of heaven and earth. This connects back to Okoye’s specification that African liturgies must impart sacred power for daily living. Hence we may deduce that Afrocentric rituals must incorporate energetic technology and not merely mechanistic or materialistic symbols. Thus we may arrive at the social cohesion and political stability needed in African countries like Cameroon. The challenging task now lies in the large number of ethnic groups and cultures in Cameroon and other countries that need an adequate tool to have access to their indigenous knowledge. This paper proposes the use of divinity graduate schools as an adequate community for indigenizing Catholic ritual.

CREATING DIVINITY GRADUATE SCHOOLS IN AFRICA

Cameroon, for example, has over 250 ethnicities, each with their own myths, religious practices, gestures and values. The first task of addressing our hybrid identities that many have

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49 Ori Tavor, Xunzi’s Theory of Ritual Revisited, 321-325
50 Ori Tavor, Xunzi’s Theory of Ritual Revisited, 323
of belonging to both ancestry and Catholic faith culture, through indigenized rituals would be to collect, document and experience our religious realities. Graduate divinity schools have the quality of merging information with ministerial experience, thus working with different human intelligences. In Orobator’s recently edited book *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III*, Laurenti Magesa points out that African theology has neglected this important task but can no longer ignore it, or provide a pre-fabricated answer, rather deconstruction and reconstruction is needed. Uzukwu notes, in the same work, that the mandate for African Christianity is to reestablish peace, harmony, hospitality and relationality. When Okoye writes about education and the Spiritan tradition, he demonstrates that Spiritans have used education primarily as an instrument of evangelization in African countries but following Vatican II education needs to adopt a trend of liberation and human promotion which is not unanimously agreed on. As a result of confessional priorities and political ideologies, the task of re-indigenizing rituals in Africa should neither be confided to seminaries or universities. Divinity graduate schools have the quality of involving different religious views without making them conform to the Christian soteriological ideal. It also allows both clergy and lay people to participate in their own spiritual development while carrying out the work ensuring a proper representation of age, gender and status. To begin with, combining the Ignatian and Spiritan pedagogical models in teaching allow for both critical inquiry, the former being Socratic, and an expansive consciousness beyond Christo-centric answers as is common to the latter. However, as

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traditional pedagogic forms are discovered and mastered these should take priority of place. A great deal can be learned from exploring other religions of the world and their institutional development to what best practices can be adopted. Adding a print press, internships, and community partnerships will allow the endeavor to become self-sustaining for ongoing reflection. I believe it is an endeavor that should receive support both from Episcopates and the Ministry of culture in every country.

CONCLUSION

The story of the prodigal son Lk 15:11-32 is often employed in teaching reconciliation in the Catholic church as a return of the sinner to a life in God. On closer examination, the parable houses shifts in neuro-linguistic programming that point the text out as a powerful decolonial method to delink from an identity adopted from foreign domination to recuperating one’s original ancestral identity which is full of authority, access, abundance and celebration. The pattern of separation, transformation and return in the parable, puts us in the domain of ritual as a corporal technology that can be applied to African decolonial aspirations.

As more and more atrocities happen all over Africa in areas inhabited by Catholics the issue of indigenized rituals, away from western-based rituals continues to be relevant to African theology. The quasi-western image and likeness that many Catholics become, owing to the western mythology and religious system that undergirds the sacraments, is also accompanied by a propensity to war as this is integrated into primal western identity. How then do we return to ancestral primacy in Catholic rituals? Key Catholic theologians who place ritual as the vehicle of identity formation have been referenced to point to the necessity for changing myth, symbol, movements and gestures in Catholic Rituals, if we want to create an alternative identities. In addition, an interreligious contribution from Xunzi’s Confucian beliefs confirms the power of the
aesthetic dimension of ritual to create social cohesion and political harmony through the manipulation of internal energies. This responsibility is best placed in the hands of Divinity Graduate Schools that can cater to a broader involvement of people, interreligious exploration, documenting ethnic revelations and practices and doing an indigenization together with the community.
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