



Retrieving *Ẹbọ* as Spirit: The Foundation of Authentic Christian Pneumatology Among the Igala, Nigeria

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Abstract

Ẹbọ is divine Spirit. It is the creative and sustaining principle with which the Supreme Being—*Ọjọ* creates and re-creates the Igala universe. It is through *ẹbọ* as spirit, that *Ọjọ* reveals God's self through the earth deity—*anẹ*, the ancestors—*ibegwu* and other nature spirits. Therefore, as spiritual beings *ẹbọ* have autonomous iconic existence apart from its physical representation in Idols, effigies and artifacts—*ode*. Through symbolic-ritual actions, *ẹbọ* makes *Ọjọ* accessible and *Beneficent* to the human through the ministry of healing and charisma. In the 1920s, while recognizing the positive influence of the *ẹbọ*—*ibegwu* cult among the Igala, the *Ajokodo* Bible translated the spirit as *ibegwu*. During the later missionary era, *ẹbọ* was diminished and demonized. As a result, *ẹbọ* lost its spirit connotation and dangerously become a synonym of idol—*ode*. On account of this pejorative association the 1970 translation of the Igala bible translated divine spirit as *afu*—wind, instead of *ẹbọ*—*ibegwu*.

The appreciation of *ẹbọ* as spirit has enormous implication for Igala Christian Pneumatology—science of the spirit and the Holy Spirit. The conception of any authentic Igala Pnuematology must first confront the reality *ẹbọ* as divine spirits in the Igala spirit—world. In essence, the appropriation of the word *afu* for spirit constitutes not only an escapism, but a monumental hindrance to theological inculturation.

In this essay, I argue that there is an aspect of *ẹbọ* as spirit of the divine obtainable only ritual action—worship, that is fundamentally lacking in the concept of *afu* as spirit. In that, among the Igala, *afu* has no *cultic*, or ritual significance. My take in this essay can be stated as follows: Unless we know what is spirit within the Igala

world we cannot claim to know what the Holy Spirit is doing in the lives of the Igala Christian.

Key words: *Ẹbọ*; *Ode*; *Afu*; Spirit; Igala Pnuematology; Igala worldview

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INTRODUCTION

To the West African Igala, *ẹbọ* means spirit; and *ode* means fetish effigy or idol. *Ẹbọ* is the divine supernatural vital force and the power of the Supreme Being *Ọjọ* operating in the Igala world through the particular and participatory activities of humans collaborating with principal divinities and deities. Ukwedeh meticulously outlines the rule of *ẹbọ* as nature spirits commissioned by the Supreme Being *Ọjọ* (Ukwedeh, 1987). As divine principle, *ẹbọ* connects the Supreme Being—*Ọjọ*, the ancestral spirit *ibegwu* through the reincarnated human spirit *ọjọ* and the earth deity—*anẹ* (Boston, 1971, p.200). Within the Igala worldview, the Supreme Being *Ọjọ* has no direct cult and as such *ẹbọ* serves both an ontological and phenomenological function. As ontological principle of creation, *ẹbọ* connects *Ọjọ* the creator to both the created world symbolized by earth—*anẹ* and the ancestral reincarnate human spirit—*ọjọ*. In the phenomenological sphere, *ẹbọ* manifests the divine outpouring of intuition and inspiration of the Supreme Being. It is the basic participatory character of the human in the divine, without which the glimpse into the hallowed and holy becomes an illusion. Plainly put, *ẹbọ* is the gateway to mystical experience and consciousness of the divine presence in the Igala world, creating the pathway for healing and wholeness through destiny—*okai* and charisma.

Generally, *ebo* is intrinsically linked to the anthropocentric conception of salvation—salvation from below—meaning that, it denotes the issues of human condition as it unfolds itself in the day-to-day realities and activities of the Igala from birth through death to the here-after. In the words of Sydney R. Seton, “‘Ebbo’ in the case is the household god... is supposed to contain a spirit, specially sent by Ojo to look after that particular man and his family. It corresponds roughly to the idea of a guardian angel and patron saint combined” (Seton, 1930, p.150). As spirit, therefore, *ebo* occupies a higher position above the humans and function as protector and guardian of society. The Igala names like *oma-ebo*—child of the spirits, *ad’ebo*—servant of the spirits, *achebo*—adherent of the spirits, *oko-ebo*—husband of the spirits, *oya-ebo*—wife of the spirits, and the proverb *ebo kiya gbẹ ẹki g’ule olemi nwu*—(do not alter false supplication to the spirit that saves you), affirms the importance of taking heed to the inspiration and the urgings of the spirits. *Ebo* as symbolic-ritual action generates group identity and functions as the sole authentic source document for the understanding of Igala traditional religion (Uzukwu, 1997, p.44). Through the *ebo* rituals the Igala draws life and wisdom from the ancestral pool. In this essay, for the reason that there exists an intrinsic connection between *ebo* and *ibegwu*, both terms are used as synonyms to convey the Igala sense of the spirit of the Supreme Being that is contextualized and experienced through symbolic-ritual actions and within specific cultic settings.

This essay is a response to Fidelis E. Egbunu’s article titled, *Personhood (one) in Igala Worldview: A Philosophical Appraisal* (Egbunu, 2013, pp.30-38). Relying heavily on western philosophical categories, Egbunu established a connection between the Igala understanding of person—*one* and the concept of unity—*Udama* as foundational to apprehending of personhood. This essay agrees with Egbunu on subject-matter, but deviates considerable on methods and substance. It addresses two major concerns in Igala theology of religions. (a) The retrieval and reinstatement of *ebo* as the veritable Igala translation of “spirit”. (b) laying the foundation of an authentic Igala Pneumatology—Holy Spirit of God—on the operational principles of *ebo* exacting influence on/through the individual and personal spirit; bearing gifts, healing and destiny. Through inductive reasoning and relying on earlier biblical translations and extra-biblical manuscripts where the word ‘spirit’ was translated both as *ibegwu* and *ebo* this essay surmise that *ebo* is the human and divine principle through which *Ojo* generate life and bestow healing through vocations and destiny—*okai*. With this in mind, I contend that the translation of *afu-wind* as spirit of the divine is incidental to the Igala tradition, in that, among the Igala people, *afu* as a natural phenomenon has no ritual or cultic significance.

1. TRANSLATING SPIRIT AS AFU— WIND, BREEZE OR AIR: RŪACH AND PNEUMA

The 1970 Igala Bible translates Spirit as *afu* (*Otakada Ola Ojo: The Bible in Igala*, 1970, p.5). This translation has become normative among recent Igala scholars. For instance, Fidelis E. Egbunu while attempting to foster an Igala Ontology of being applied the classical Western philosophical concepts to decode the Igala understanding of *afu* as “vital force”. He asserts further that the “typical Igala person holds the notion that God created the human person; he filled him with *afu* (air, spirit or breath) which is life in itself” (Egbunu, 2013, p.33). Though this research agrees with Egbunu’s philosophical analysis of the Igala worldview, it nonetheless distances itself from Egbunu’s appropriation of western methodologies. Such attempt to build concepts of African traditional religion, (ATR) on western categories has received serious criticism among African scholars. Okot p’Bitek for one accused some African scholars (like Bolaji Idowu and John Mbiti) as “Hellenizers of ATR,” in that, “they dress up African deities with Hellenistic robes and parade them before the Western world” (p’Bitek, 1970, p.120). For the sake of methodological accuracy and consistency this paper distances from commitment to western linguistic and syllogisms that are opposed to the African language of God-Spirit-talk rooted in signs and symbols.

In biblical exegesis, translating *Rūach-spirit* constitutes one of the most difficult conundrums for biblical experts. The studies on *rūach* does not form a coherence. Scholars are not agreed on the semantic and syntactic applications of *rūach*. However, within the context of biblical cosmogony, there is constant referencing to the spirit of God -*rūach-YHW* and the spirit of Life-*ruach-Hayim* as the two primordial concept at creation. Outside this perspective, the interpretation of *rūach* as **wind** is always metaphoric and onomatopoeic; more of a descriptive adjective of *YHW* attributes. The distinction between *YHW*’s attribute and His essence is the topic for another debate beyond the confines of this essay. The point being that, though problematic as the concept of *rūach* seems to be, there is a certain consensus among scholars within the Jewish setting in their interpretation of *rūach* either as wind, the spirit of God or spirit of Life. However, to catapult this understanding to other cultures without qualification raises serious exegetical concerns, if not flaws.

The earlier *Ajokodo* translation of the Igala bible renders spirit as *ibegu*. There are other extra-biblical evidence of linguistic similarities obtained from the Igala in Delta and the neighboring ethnicity of the Idoma and Igbo people that supports the translation. The following are quotes from the *Ajokodo* translation of the Spirit.

Mtt 3:16: Ojale mu bi te own, I yu **ibegu** ei Ojo kbare. I gugu ogi wn daba okede...the heaven was opened, he

saw the Spirit of God descending, sitting on him like a dove.

Mtt 12:18: Na d'**Ibegu min**'Own... I will give my Spirit to him...

Luke 1:35: **Ibegu** Desholo...Holy Spirit (The Gospels and Acts in Igala, 1920).

The above rendition of *ibegu* as Spirit relates more to the Igala worldview as portrayed in the latest works by the Igala anthropologist Tom Miachi. Miachi's tripartite ordering of the Igala cosmology into God—ancestors—gods—(*Ojọ-ibegwu-ojọ*) supports the relevance of *ibegwu* in Igala religious worldview (Miachi, 2012, p. 115-117). Another opinion advocated by J. S Boston identifies God—earth—deity—spirits (*Ojọ-Ane-Ebo*) as the three topmost spirits—beings among Igala. (Boston, 1974, p.350). In the ritual setting *ebọ* intrinsically connects *Ojọ-ibegwu-Ane*, and as such there can be no authentic worship of the divine outside the paraphernalia of the spirit-beings—*ebọ*. The various nuances of *ebọ* demonstrate its importance in both the moral and cultic life of the Igala. In a symbolic sense, *ebọ* depicts the ritual face and phase of the Supreme Being. Strictly speaking, the ancestral cult—*ibegwu* qualifies as *ebọ per excellence* because of these inherent revelatory characteristics. In a lesser manner, *ebọ* refers to spirits with evocative influence when invoked through 'just/innocent appeals' and incantations—*ofor kpai ule*. Yet, this positive symbolism of *ebọ* was not appreciated and appropriated by the interpreters of the 1970 Igala Bible. Parenthetically, there are actually sound reasons to believe that the translation of spirit as *afu*—wind or breeze in the presence of anthropological and psychological suited words like *ibegwu-ebọ*, and *ọlaye*—life, *Iñmi*—breath by the translators was not unconnected with the missionaries negative attitude towards Igala traditional religion.

The *Ajokodo* translation of the Holy Spirit as *Ibegu desholo (ibegwu ohiolo)*—Holy ancestral spirit intends to connect the Igala positive reception of the supportive role of the ancestral spirits and the Christian perception of the Holy Spirit. From the perspective of the *Ajokodo* translators employing the Igala word *ibegwu* even in its controversial form to translate the Spirit, signals continuity with and mutual respect for the source culture. This attitude depicts humility and genuine openness to dialogue with elements of Igala traditional religion. It is attention-grabbing to note that still among the Igala in Delta State, the word *Ibegu* translates ancestral spirit and the spirit as well. In essence, *Ibegu* is the term for spirit and not *afu*. More astonishing is the fact that this group of Igala migrated to their current geographical location prior to the 1970 translation of the Igala Bible which renders spirit as *afu*.

A similar attempt in translation was carried out by the neighboring Idoma and Igbo ethnicities. Among the Idoma, the Holy Spirit was rendered *alekwu-ihọ*—Holy ancestral spirits. In the Idoma culture, there is

an interesting association between: *alekwu*—spirits, *alekwu*—ancestors and *ekwu*—incarnate beings/masquerades. Correspondingly, among the Igbo, *mmou*—spirits is analogous to *[m]munwu*—incarnate beings of the *ndi ichie*—ancestors. Both the Idoma and Igbo have a distinct expression for the *wind* as a natural phenomenon—*ikuku* for the Igbo and *owo* for the Idoma. The Igbo *ikuku* and Idoma *owo* are identical with the Igala *afu*. Yet, the Igbo and Idoma ethnicities retained the traditional concept *alekwu* and *mmou* in translating the divine spirit. Moreover, the Igala *ibegwu ohiolo*, Idoma *alekwu ihọ* and the Igbo *mmuo nsọ* belong to a similar semantic field, referring to the conceptual domain of the Supreme Being in relation to the human sphere. Whereas, among the Idoma and Igbo Christians the translation of the Holy Spirit as *alekwu ihọ* and *mmuo nsọ* is still in use within the cultic and liturgical settings, the Igala Christians dropped *ibegwu ohiolo* and adopted *afu ina-Holy wind*.

The question remains: what was the rationale behind the missionary's intent for *afu* as a substitute for *ibegwu-ebọ* in translating the Spirit among the Igala? The answer is not farfetched. It relates to the prevalent notion that *ebọ* in particular and the entire Igala traditional religion—*Ogwuchekpo*, has a subtle ontological continuity with animism. Evidence from ethnographic and anthropological studies reveals that the anthropological presuppositions and assertions of most pre-Vatican II missionaries were conditioned by the narrative enclosed in Edward Tylor's *Primitive Cultures*. Tylor's description of 'non-great' religions as animism is demeaning: "The theory of Animism...divides into two great dogmas; first concerning souls of individual creatures capable of continued existence after death or destruction of the body; second, concerning other spirits, upward to the rank of powerful deities" (Taylor, 1920, p.420). Kwame Bediako's comparative analysis of the missionaries' understanding of African Traditional Religion (ATR) as animism in the midst of other world religions is amazing.

"Animism" therefore, to all intents and purposes, constituted in the missionary understanding, a religious system like the other categories treated: Chinese religions, religions of Japan, Islam, and Hinduism. However, of all of them, Animism was probably the most difficult for the missionary to penetrate since it had neither literature nor scholar to expound its mysteries to the European mind. It is understandable therefore that many missionaries were hesitant to suggest that there exist any "preparation for Christianity" in this form of religion, whilst some even concluded that there was "practically no religious content in Animism. (Badiako, 1992, p.231)

As a result of this association with animism, *ebọ* was diminished and eventually demonized (Meyer, 1999), reducing it to the status of *ode*—the physical effigies and man-made idols associated with the ritual worship. Thus, used interchangeable with *ode*—idols, *ebọ* eventually lost its spirit connotation, and then acquired a pejorative

meaning, and subsequent appellation for the adherents of Igala traditional religion—*ama chi ichiēbọ*—those who act like /adhere to the ways of the spirits. The seemingly negative undertone given to *ēbọ* by the missionaries greatly influenced the later translations of Igala bible and prayer books.

Thus, in order to justify the negative nuance given to *ēbọ* the missionaries made two important transitions in translation: (a) Denigrating *ēbọ* as mere *ode* (idol); and (b) Justifying the translating Spirit as *afu* in line with the biblical—*rūach*—Hebrew tradition. Perhaps in a way, the connection between *ēbọ* and animism was done to avoid associating the Holy Spirit with the nuances of evil spirits which in the belief of the missionaries the Igala word *ibegwu-ēbọ* represents. As if translating the spirit as *afu* will quell the menace of evil spirits *fiat accompli*. This belief ignores countable biblical references where the Hebrew word *rūach* and its Greek cognate *pneuma* encompass negative nuances that are complicated and controversial with reference to the Spirit of Yahweh. Strange as it may seem to the modern reader, the Hebrew word *rūach* like the Igala term *ēbọ* connotes ambiguity and sometimes could be dangerous; it “ranges widely in meaning from breath to breeze to wind to angel to demon to spirit” (Levison, 2013, p.17). In most cases, the ambivalence resulting from the use of *rūach/pneuma* does not convincingly address the issue of theodicy. In the Hebrew scripture for instance *rūach* translates both the Spirit of Yahweh, and also an evil spirit of or from “Yahweh.” The biblical passages of Judges 9:23; 1 Sam. 16:15ff; 18:10, depicts Yahweh as the ontological source of evil spirit. This view was advocated by Walther Eichrodt the 20th century German biblical scholar, in his *Theology of the Old Testament* (Eichrodt, 1961). Similarly, according to Kirsteen Kim, “*pneuma* occurs at least 250 times in the New Testament as a reference to the Spirit of God. On about forty other occasions, *pneuma* is applied to evil spirits of some kind. On about forty other occasions, “spirit” is identified as referring to “human spirit” or at least the dimension of the human being that interacts with the divine or “breathe of life” (Kim, 2007, 16). Consequently, an understanding of the words *rūach* and *pneuma* and their application to other culture must acknowledge these ambiguities and admitting that these terms themselves are the product of a particular culture’s long history of attempting to fathom and penetrate God’s activity in creation. As a result, the biblical understanding of *spirit* cannot be unilaterally implied, applied or imposed on other cultures without further qualifications or sound exegetical analysis—rigorously interpreting the *text* in *con-text* and *sub-text*.

Although *afu* like other natural phenomenon like rain—*omi*, thunder—*akpabana* and sun—*olu*, figuratively describes the activity and attribute of the Supreme Being, one must emphasize that the Igala

people mostly do not accord these phenomena the cultic and ritual considerations given to the domesticated spirits the *ēbọ*—*anē*, and the ancestral spirit *ēbọ*—*ibegwu*. The Igala have no cult for the worship of gods like the Igbo sun god—*anyanwu* or the Yoruba *orisha* or thunder god—*ogun*. This amounts to, as Boston pointed in 1971 that, “... the main emphases of Igala religion are slightly different from those of Yoruba religion... Ancestors and the earth cults play a more direct and central role in Igala than in Yoruba” (Boston, 1971, p. 200). In other words, there are cults and rituals for the earth spirits- *ēbọ anē*, for the ancestral spirits *ēbọ-ibegwu* and nature spirits, but scarcely do one find erections for non-cultic phenomena like *afu*, *omi*, *akpabana* relating to Yoruba *orisha* and Igbo *anyanwu*. Without overlaboring the point, I submit that, there is an aspect of *ēbọ* as spirit of the divine obtainable only through and within the ritual actions that makes *Ọjọ* accessible and beneficiary to the human through healing and charisma that are fundamentally lacking in the concept of *afu* as divine spirit.

In the metaphorical sense, *afu* describes the omnipresence attribute for *Ọjọ*—that cannot be confined or localized. But such an indeterminate characteristic risks placing the divine outside the realm of rituals. And without rites and rituals—*ucholo-ēbọ*, the Supreme Being—*Ọjọ* becomes a *dues otiosus*—a God that is idle, hidden and disinterested in the affairs of humans. Uzukwu opines that, ritual studies underline that beliefs, practices and values at their deepest level are revealed through ritual. Rituals are source documents of any society. Through them people express “what moves them most” (Uzukwu, 1997, p.41). The concept of *afu*—spirit—lacks the ritual dimension that defines and reveals the Supreme—*Ọjọ*’s presence as present in space, time, person or thing. Ritual actions through sacrifices—*ohidaka*, constitutes the fundamental means of communication between spirits and the Supreme Being. As such, faceless deities or spirits that have no ritual are considered unfriendly and violent. Subsequently, the non-cultic characteristic of *afu* as a natural phenomenon presupposes that it can neither be worshipped nor placated through sacrifices. In short, among the Igala, *afu* has no sacrificial rite—*ucholo*, no priest—*atama*, and no adherents. For the most part, such unidentified spirits are believed to be dangerous and malevolent. In what follows, I argue that because of its indeterminate trait, *afu* as natural phenomenon has no relevance in the cosmic re-ordering of the Igala universe. This position is defensible alongside a reconsideration of the role of *ēbọ* as divine spirit within cultic and ritual settings.

2. IGALA SPIRIT WORLD: ỌJỌ, ANĒ, IBEGWU AND ĒBỌ

After these preliminary exegetical observations, it is time to address the main crux of this essay, namely, the retrieval

and reinstatement of the term *ebò*. Essentially, this exercise serves an epistemological function. I admit, that the knowledge of spirits in general and the human spirit in particular is a prerequisite for understanding the Spirit of God. The Igala world is a universe that is saturated with Spirits—*ebò*. There are multiplicities of Spirits—*ebò* pervading and parading the Igala universe with the Supreme Being—*Ọjọ* as their source and fount. Among the Igala, there is the belief of the Supreme Being—*Ọjọ* who is the creator God and rules the universe—*anẹ*. According to the Igbo theologian Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, “the creative and life-giving dimension that defines God as Spirit is structured to ATR” (Uzukwu, 2012, p.137). Uzukwu’s depiction of the West African cosmology as “Spirit-oriented and spirit-embedded” (Uzukwu, 2012, p.138) nicely encapsulate the Igala Spirit-world. Earlier on reference was made to Miachi’s tripartite structuring of the Igala cosmology into Supreme Being—*Ọjọ*, Ancestors—*ibegwu* and reincarnated personal spirits—*ọjọ* and Boston’s identification Supreme Being—*Ọjọ*, the earth deity—*Ane* and spirits—*Ebo* as the three topmost spirit-beings among Igala.

Within the Igala world, *ebò* are spirits with a face; a face made manifest through rites, rituals and taboos. This distinctive characteristics differentiates *ebò* from unknown spirits that cannot be placated. As stated above, translating the Spirit as *ebò* has the *humana-pneuma* advantage of particularization and individuation which also includes the principle of participation. Because of its cultic relevance, *ebò* equally serves a relational function. It bridges the divine with particular adherents, groups and communities. For example, the *ebò Akpidi Iyanma* Ejule, the *ebò Okwuta* Ijoji, Egume and the *ebò Iyanma* Oyibo Ojuh and Ayiba of Agala-Ate in Anyigba, demonstrates how the ministrations of a particular *ebò* draws communities together with a sense of service and identity. The following was an ethnographic note recorded in 1929 from a descendant of *ebò Akpidi Iyanma*.

The Ebbo is a spirit. Each has a name. My Ebbo is Okiti. It rests in an image made from an iron spear with cloth round it. It lives in the cloth. It came from my ancestors. Akudi, or Akodi Yama, a woman of Ejuli, heard about the Ebbo in Ifa and went there many years ago. She became an Atama and could foretell the future. My grandmother obtained my Ebbo from her. Before that there were no Atamas in the land. (Atama = Attah Ma, the father of many things). (Seton, 1925, p.45)

Also, in 1968 according to oral tradition, the *ebò iye-unyẹjima* was deployed from the Okolo Ichakolo center at Agbeji to combat smallpox disease in Agala-Ateh. (Ejiga, 1995)

More to the point, within the context of naming ceremony the Igala people bear the name *oma-ebò*—child of the spirits, *ad’ebò*—servant of the spirits, *achebò*—adherent of the spirits, *oko-ebò*—husband of the spirits, *oya-ebò*—wife of the spirits, and *Iñmi*—Life. Since Igala names evoke and extrapolate reality it is difficult to find adherents who bear names resulting from the dedication

to *afu* as spirit. No where among the Igala do people bear *oma-afu* or *ẹfulẹfu*—a child that is wayward like the wind; totally outside the rhythm of Life. Spirits are thought of in anthropomorphic terms. The existence of these names suggest a symbiotic relationship between the spirits-world and the human race. This affinity is constantly renewed through rituals and worship. For this reason, Igala names like other African names are extension of symbolic-ritual actions and not just “tags,” but an important tool to grapple and unravel the mystery of reality. As E. Ifesieh rightly puts it, “these names as religious symbols, evoke and provoke, extrapolate and eternalize, elevate and sustain, permeate and prepare, and finally in an unconstrained and contemporaneous manner, disposes the mind to embrace the meta-physical domain” (Ifesieh, 1969, p.126).

The existence of this transcendent *Ọjọ* is expressed in its dynamic immanence in the company of and through the assistance of other principal divinities, spirits and gods. In the generic sense *ebò* is the divine manifestations of *Ọjọ* in the world; the ontological and phenomenological vital force behind humans and the deities. In simpler terms, *ebò* is the greatest supernatural force among the Igala, the condition of the possibility of human deification, and the synergy of the human and divine life. Through reincarnation, the personal *ọjọ*, “the personal spirit that embodies individual destiny” (Uzukwu, 2012, p.193) participates in the divine life of the Supreme Being—*Ọjọ*. In this sense one can argue that *ebò* both translates supernatural vitality and also the personal spirit *ọjọ* in its individuation. In Igala anthropology, each individual before birth or fourteen days—*egwẹlẹ* after birth through the process of *ifa* divination is given a personal god called *ọjọ*. This personal deity is always a re-incarnated family member; an ancestor or ancestress (Miachi, 2012, pp.222-224). And these personal deities or spirits through the principle of re-incarnation are believed to be mode of God’s “creative and life-giving action in human beings” (Uzukwu, 2012, 193). In the strict sense, the *egwẹlẹ* ritual of identifying the personal *ọjọ* of the individual is the beginning of personhood among the Igala.

In the phenomenological and linguistic sense, *Ọjọ* also means “day”—today, yesterday and tomorrow.’ It is exciting to note how the Igala concept of *Ọjọ* as the returning face of the Supreme Being dawns on humanity through the participatory ritual actions of *ebò*. This view relates to Victor Manfredi analysis of the dawning *chi* among the Igbo of Ehugbo Afikpo (Manfredi, 1997, pp.174-178). That means, in the Igala concept of daybreak—*Ọjọ mu nwa*, God dawns; God unfolds. The Igala people conceive the day as the phenomenological opening of God’s face to humanity through the various activities of the spirits. *Ọjọ*’s presence at daybreak implies the giving of Life through the spirits. And for those who are alive to behold *Ọjọ* (the day), it is an answered prayer

to the request of the previous night. The normal response to a goodnight wish in Igala is the short ejaculatory prayer: “*ich’ene k’ojo buwane*”—if God permits one to rise; literally meaning to behold God’s dawning in the morning. Thus, the supreme God—*Ojo* dawns and bestows life—*olaye* in the *ebo*—spirit through the individual personal *ojo*.

The Igala land is saturated with spirits—*ebo* as a result of its strategic geographical location as a people surrounded by the great seven rivers—*Ofu, Okura, Omala/Bagaji, Yimua/Benue, Mabolo, Anambra, and Niger*. For this reason, among the Igala there exist a mutual relationship between the earth deity—*ane* and the great river spirits—*alijenu*. Customarily, water-*omi/ohimini* has become the greatest symbolic gesture of welcome among the Igala. On one hand, the imagery of the running-waters signal peace, generosity, reciprocity and continuity in the on-going flow of life, and on the other hand, the calm but insurmountable nature of *omi/ohimini* describes the defiance of the Igala to neighboring ethnicities and colonial authorities. The symbolic position of the city of Idah—the ancestral home of the Igala—bears testimony to this point. The proverb... *olagenyi jagenyi, una jo kere b’etutu, igba anyi, ijo kere b’ohimimi I mowo da* (the fire that burns the dry wool-grass with delight is curtailed by the waters of the sea), denotes the spiritual potency exuding from the Igala-spirit-world. According to oral traditions, neighboring ethnicities and kingdoms who sought both political and spiritual refuge found relieved at the shores of the Igala waters. Boston made allusion to the “Ibo who send men to Igala Country to be trained in the use of this power” (Boston, 1971, p.200). It is not an understatement to assert that the activities of *ebo* were among the factors that brought a glare of publicity on the Igala kingdom.

Before moving on, some clarification of the various nuances of the term *ebo* among the Igala is appropriate. Etymologically, ten different meanings are identified.

(i) *Ebo* as the principal pervading spirit of the Supreme Being *Ojo* in nature (Ukwedeh, 1987). In this sense *ebo* relates to the personal reincarnated spirit—*ojo* as derivative from *Ojo*.

(ii) *Ebo* as nature spirit of individual deities like the earth goddess—*ane* and the ancestral spirit—*ibegwu*. In this respect and to a greater degree, the Atta Igala qualifies as *ebo* with proper rites, rituals and taboos.

(iii) *Ebo* as the inner voice of conscience in human, explicitly responsible for discretion, discernment and decision-making. It serves as a gauge for morality.

(iv) *Ebo* as security surveillance device; protecting items, goods and services. Through the process of *ebo edu d’enwu*—setting the spirit as guard over items—such goods, be it a piece of land, economic trees and crops etc. The said items automatically become sacred and untouchable. Trespassers and culprits are generally apprehended by the *ebo* in question.

(v) *Ebo* as symbol of blood covenant of “brotherhood and sisterhood” among members and across clans and communities. Through the concept of *ene-ebo*—spiritual/mutual friendship, people not biologically related become natural family with all rights and privileges accruing from the bonds of consanguinity and affinity. Generally, marriages and acts of war are prohibited between such covenanted families.

(vi) *Ebo* as lie dictator and oath-taking. In the process of *ebo-em* members of society, especially traditional and religious leaders enter into a contractual relationship involving the responsibility of trust and duty of care. Also the events of dispute and allegations of falsehood and foul play among families and neighbors are generally settled through *ebo-em*—truth simulation and guilt knowledge test. The *ebo Enyi Ejuh* of Ofakaga and the *ebo Okolo Ichakolo* of Agbeji are typical centers for these rituals.

(vii) The concept of *ebo-ego*—invocation the spirits. It has both positive and negative consequences. Positively, *ebo-ego* within the context of ritual through incantations—*qfor kpai ule-ego* can be a form of prayer. Conversely, *ebo-ego* outside ritual setting carries a negative connotation of cursing or ill-wishing.

(viii) *Ebo-edu*—individual participation in particular cultic services...*iyamma, igbogachi, ichekpa, etu, iye-unyeyima, owalika, akpoli, okwuta-ijoji, egbunu, ikpakachi.etc.*

(ix) *Ebo eta*—spirit self-deployment from place of abode to the destination of ministry—*ule ogoli hobaho*. The resounding alarm of *Okaheje (Okaheje kiya togba ebo onwu aj’ebo n’egahi)* among the Igala announces the ritual time and space of the particular *ebo*. During this exercise, non-initiates are warned to keep their distance.

(x) *Ebo emutula*...as the gauge of the lantern that controls the density of light. The *ebo* of the lantern is considered the life—*olaye* of the lamp.

To put the issue of *ebo* in a more critical perspective, it is informative to highlight the comments of Boston on this subject.

A western observer would tend to rank the various spirits in terms of their order of magnitude or degrees of power. At the top of the hierarchy would come *Ojo*, the Supreme Being and creator. Another spirit with wide powers in Igala belief is *An*, the spirit of the earth. Then there are various oracle spirits known generically as *ebo*, with the function of giving protection against witchcraft. Their congregation may be large or small according to the success of the spirits in unmasking witches by striking them with illness and making them confess to their wrongdoing. Operating within a more restricted range are the Ancestor spirits who are guardians of wellbeing in particular clans, lineages, or lineage segments. Within the complex of ancestor worship falls the dyadic relationship between an individual and his personal *ojo* or guardian spirit. The guardian has responsibility for the destiny of its ward. Finally there are fetishes, *ode*, which are made and worshipped by individuals, and which are believed to ensure success in daily life by affording protection against the misfortunes that witchcraft and sorcery can bring. (Boston, 1974, p.350)

This connection of *eb̄o* to the Supreme Being *Oj̄o* and the reincarnated spirit *oj̄o* within the ritual and cultic settings makes *eb̄o* relevant as a Spirit—deity that is contextualized, identifiable and worshipped by families and communities. However, Boston’s functional categorization of *eb̄o* together with *ode* as a kind of antidote to witchcraft is confusing and misleading. This simplistic association of *eb̄o* with fetish—*ode* later contributed to the misconception harbored by missionaries and other Igala Christians, that depicts *eb̄o* as idol—*ode*—man made idols—the work of human hands...with mouths but cannot speak, and eyes that cannot see (Ps. 135:16). But *eb̄o* is Spirit. And as Spirit *eb̄o* it has a wider *modus operandi* within the Igala worldview than the mere policing of witches and wizards. *Eb̄o* is the creative and sustaining principle with which *Oj̄o* creates and re-creates the universe. It is through *eb̄o* as spirit, that *Oj̄o* reveals God’s self through the earth deity *an̄e*, and the ancestors—*ibegwu* and other oracle spirits. Therefore, as spiritual beings *eb̄o* have autonomous iconic existence apart from the physical representation in *ode*—Idols, effigies and artifacts.

From the colonial time to date, *eb̄o* has been dangerously associated with *ode* and in some cases used interchangeably. This has done grave harm to the practice of inculturation. Similarly, Sydney R. Seton’s symbolic description of Ebbo [*eb̄o*] is fascinating. Seton asserts that *eb̄o* is a spirit sent by *Oj̄o*.

The “Ebbo” in the case is the household god and is generally represented by a piece of wood with a cloth round it. It may be roughly carved in the semblance of a man or woman. Aches from the white iroko are put in a hole in the chest of the figure. Everything given to the “Ebbo” must touch this iron, and when any prayer is made to it the iron is struck to drive the prayer home. There are cowries tied round the figure and the red feathers of a parrot are tied to the head to represent red eyes. Thread is wound round the figure, and the spirit animating it is asked to bring all sickness and prevent its coming to the house, even as itself is bound. The figure is put in an open hole near the compound, and a small hut is built over it. It is supposed to contain a spirit, specially sent by *Oj̄o* to look after that particular man and his family. It corresponds roughly to the idea of a guardian angel and patron saint combined. (Seton, 1930, p.150)

This statement bears close resemblance to what most people today would identify as coherent with the Igala worldview; namely that *eb̄o* is the divine spirit, the presence of *Oj̄o* radiating forth from the effigy—*ode*. Although, Seton’s analysis of ebbo closely associates it with fetish—*ode* object; it nonetheless distances itself from such notion. His graphic description of *eb̄o* shows that it is spirit...a spirit with an image—*ode*. In a loose but figurative sense, the image of the *eb̄o* can loosely identified with the *eb̄o* itself. The Igala celebrity *agale* musician Paul Mohammed Onalo (a.k.a Odih Imalima) provides a more anthropomorphic representation of *eb̄o* in the following instances: *oje eb̄o t’eb̄ole, ya d’eb̄o dachi*

n’ane—the oracle will tumble and fall if outweighed by the food that is placed on it and *eb̄o unyi f’ene ki n’unyi kpa, ekwu fu je*—the oracle that kills the owner will be eaten by the termites (Onalo, 1979).

In general, there are two major categories of spirits in Igala cosmology: *eb̄o unyi*—house spirits and *eb̄o oko*—forest spirits. Principal among the domesticated Spirits—*eb̄o unyi* are the earth goddess—*an̄e*, the ancestral spirits—*ibegwu* and the reincarnated personal spirit—*oj̄o*. The bush Spirits—*eb̄o oko*, have their domicile far away from home. They include the spirit of the divinities and deities taking abode in natural phenomena like the rivers, caves, rocks, forest, and shrines that are further remote from human settlement. Examples of the most elusive beings in Igala folklore are *ichekpa (ogebe)* and *egwubi (okagoli)*. The *ichekpa* spirits are the most prominent and affable. According to the description from oral tradition, *ichekpa* is a hairy anthropoid about two-three feet in height with crooked legs and feet turned backwards on the ankle (Boston, 1971, p.200). As the hero (*oga*) of the both the dead and the living—*oga-egwu kpai oga-ile*, the *eb̄o ichekpa* is endowed with phenomenal knowledge of herbs and plants... and mastery of arts and crafts. It is believed that *ichekpa (ogebe)* is the starting point of all human wisdom, talents and charisma. In the words of Boston, “from time to time they abduct human children and bring them up as their own offspring. They pass on to the children their own knowledge of medicines which far exceeds any skill that a man could acquire by normal means. The abducted children are eventually set free to return home” (Boston, 1971, p.200). Generally, dreadlock hair style worn by adherents of the *ichekpa* cult connotes a symbolic covenantal agreement and mutual relationship.

Although, the Supreme Being *Oj̄o* is one, it is always in communion with other deities, especially the earth goddess *an̄e* and the ancestral spirits—*ibegwu*. The earth goddess—*an̄e* and other deities are Spirits—*eb̄o* and they are approached and worshipped as such. In the cosmology of the Igala Traditional Religion humans are integral part of the created universe, co-existing and sharing the same sacred space with other vital forces and spirits—*eb̄o*. Most of the *eb̄o* especially the ancestral spirits function as a pillar and foundation members of societies. Because of this fundamental linkage between ancestral spirits as founding fathers/mothers of societies, *eb̄o* cannot be expelled by its adherents for supposedly lack of performance. Comparatively, the incident recorded in Chinua Achebe’s *Arrow of God* (Achebe, 1964, pp.207-216) in which the people of *Umuaro* deserted and subsequently declared the deity—*Ulu a persona non grata* for failing to meet the general wellbeing of the people will be considered outrageous among the Igala. Unlike the Igbo, the Igala people do not practice the strict *do ut des* contractual relationship with the spirits. Human beings occupy the lower status with respect to the spirits and deities. And since nature itself is saturated with the

spiritual presence of the divine, all natural phenomena like the rivers, forest, and land are all pervaded by the Spirits: no land or water is a no man's territory among the Igala.

The Spirits are the rightful owners of nature and as such through the *Ifa* (*ifa m'abo ma li enwu, m'abo enwu omune ali ifan*), divination process permission is sought from specific spirit to share portions of such sacred space—land or water—as a guest with the host spirit. The ecological import of such a worldview is immense; namely that humans are the steward or custodian of nature. Thus, through ritual actions, individuals and society respect the sacredness of the abode “places,” of these spirits while at the same time observing their “times,” and maintaining ceremonies and festivals. For instance, during ritual of *ebò eta*—spirit self-deployment from place of abode to the destination of ministry—children and young adults who are non-initiates are generally warned to stay off the path of the spirit. Various taboos and prohibitions are laid down by society to respect the sacredness and dignity of the *atama*—priests and priestess; the [*ayibò*] sacrificial items and shrine objects. All these restrictions and prohibitions around the sacred places, time, persons and objects/items are prescribed according to custom and traditions for the sole purpose of maintaining cosmic balance—but not dominion—over nature and to avert the wrath of the *ebò*.

Closely related to *ebò* in meaning are the words breath—*inmi*, life—*olaye* and shadow—*ojiji*. According to Uzukwu, “shadow is the being or person as invisible, as spiritual being...the principle of empowerment for self-deployment beyond the body, enabling the person to act beyond corporeal spatial constriction...” (Uzukwu, 2012, p.155). As a philosophical concept, the human shadow—*ojiji onẹ* forms the basis for the Igala belief in ‘appearance and disappearance’—the possibility of conceptualizing reality outside or beyond the physical (meta-physics). Consequently, the phenomenon of witchcraft and sorcery—*ochu* and *inacha* are made possible through this process of capturing and manipulating the human shadow—*emu ojiji onẹ*. According to Miachi, the perception of *ojiji* reinforces in a positive way the Igala belief in re-incarnation (Miachi, 2012, p.116).

On the supra-mundane level, *ebò* as spirit, *imñi* as breath, *olaye* as life and *ojiji* as psyche/soul translates the meta-physical dimension of person—*onẹ*; whereas on the mundane sphere, blood—*ebiẹ* and body—*angola* or flesh—*orọela* represents the physical reality. What constitutes the human person—*onẹ* among the Igala is the above combination of the physical and meta-physical dimension. The Igala sense of duality between the physical and the metaphysical realities is relational and so distances itself from the western concept of dualism with emphasis on absolute principles that are opposites and at times impositional.

In the moral sphere, *ebò* also functions as the source and seat of wisdom. Together with the human head/

brain—*oji/okoto*—and the heart—*edo, ebò* is stressed as the physical seat of rationality and decision making. The Igala name *edogbo* which literally translate the virtue of courage or spiritedness shows the psychological connection that exists between the human heart and *ebò* as the driving force behind human activities. In an integral sense, *oji, edo* and *ebò* function together in dictating the inner voice of conscience that prompts decision making. For instance, an Igala can suddenly decide to cancel an already planned journey, a project or discontinue negotiations for the simple reason that the heart—*edo*, the head—*oji* or the spirit—*ebò* no longer consent to such an endeavor, (*edo migban, oji mi dun, ebò mi dun*) (Egbunu, 2013).

In the event of death, the breath is let go, the soul wanders away/around, the blood unites with the body, and only *ebò* as spirit persists after death, thus forming the ontological basis for continuity between the human and the divine realm. In this sense, *ebò* becomes the surviving and the persisting principle of the dead *okwu onẹ* incarnating into *egwu*-incarnate being (Miachi, 2012, p.116). In brief, *ebò* constitutes the invisible manifestation of *Ojọ*—alive and active—in the living and the living-dead. In general, all incarnate beings—*egwu* viewed from this perspective as the visible representation of the living-dead are *ebò* in the fullest sense. Each incarnate being have their respective rites and rituals depending on the degree of ritual items—*ucholo kpai ayibo*. Miachi succinctly equivocated the incarnate being *Amuda-Idedeba* as both *egwu* and *ebò* (Miachi, 2012, p.197). Identically, Boston referred to the incarnate being *Obajeada* as nature spirits—*ebò* (Boston, 1960, p.223). Both positions are consistent with the Igala conceptual framework; however, one still question Miachi's rationale for the singling out of *Amuda-Idedeba* and not the totality of the incarnate beings. Since what incarnates in the human form is the spirit—*ebò* and this spirit is referred to as *egwu* among the Igala, any distinction between the latter and the formal nonetheless seems superfluous if not unnecessary.

The phenomenon of evil spirits exists in two different ways among the Igala: (a) in the events of manipulating the spirits and (b) in cases of indeterminate spirits (Uzukwu, 2012, p.62). The concepts of *ebò-bibi*—perverted Spirit or *afu-bibi*—bad wind translates either a manipulated Spirit or the Spirit behind some natural disaster that is beyond any human placating through sacrifice. For instance, the goddess, *ebò iye-unyẹjima* a protective deity of a particular community can on some other occasion be termed a dangerous spirit if the *atama* manipulates the *ebò* to cause harm to individuals or the community. Sometimes, the *ebò* can equally inflict a just but merciless punishment upon culprits of a particular crime or taboo performed against the mores and ethos of the land.

Joseph Abu the most celebrated Igala folklorist dedicates a tract of his *Alọ* music to the phenomenon of manipulative *ẹbọ* who stole and ate what was kept in its custody by the Tortoise:

<i>Oji j'ẹne....tije</i>	If somebody is a victim of theft
<i>Ene mem'ag' ẹbọ...tije</i>	normally one invokes or consults the <i>spirit</i> ...
<i>Igbele igbele, tije</i>	Right from the olden days...
<i>Oji j'ẹne...tije</i>	If somebody is a victim of theft...
<i>Ene mem'ag' ẹbọ...tije</i>	normally one invokes or consults the <i>spirit</i> ...
<i>Ama ẹbọ la j'oji</i>	But the <i>Spirit</i> itself has stolen
<i>Enwu ma ọke?</i>	What else can be consulted? (Abuh, 1979)

In this particular incident, the *ẹbọ* ended up entering a deal with the Tortoise to avoid public scandal. This folklore is a good example of a perverted and manipulative *ẹbọ*. In most cases since *ẹbọ* is spirit, the blame is normally put on the *Atamas*—priests and priestess—for some kind of foul play. There is a lesson to be learnt from this folklore; namely, that accountability is demanded from those who uphold the law and secondly, that the Spirits in anthropomorphic sense are negotiable beings. In a sense, *ẹbọ* can be manipulated and in the process become perverted. Yet, these spirits are open to reconciliation through sacrifices. But the case is not always the same with the second category of evil spirits—the indeterminate spirits. They are dangerous and violent because they do not allow themselves to be known. Therefore, the possibility of either placating or appeasing them are very limited. This category of spirit beings does not have a cult, a ritual, time or priest or priestess. A milder example of such indeterminate spirit is the occult practice of witchcraft. In this perspective, *ẹbọ* has no metaphysical connection with moral evil. By the same token, one cannot ignore the existence of perverted spirits. More important, however, is the distinction between the Igala conception of perverted spirit and the western understanding of evil spirit—properly personified devil. Evidently, there is no Igala word that translates a metaphysical being—such as the devil or Satan—responsible for evil prior to the advent of Islam and Christianity. The Igala word *ebili*—devil is a borrowed entity from the Arabic Islamic word *Iblis*. This brings us to the very important question of the existence of witchcraft and the function of *ẹbọ* in the Igala society. The Igala proverb: *Ochu ali'kpadala ẹbọn* (witches do not travel the path of the Spirit) shows that *ẹbọ* does not tolerate the activities witches among the Igala people. Generally, the Igala *Ocho* festival takes care of the purgation and prevention of the land from the menaces and attacks of witches. The main function of the *Obajeadaka* nature spirits (*ẹbọ*) is to identify witches and make them confess and repent (Boston, 1960, pp.223-232).

The question of theodicy is normally addressed by positing a worldview that is in support of the existence of a hierarchy of Spirit and spirit-beings. The phenomenon of evil spirits has to do also with the level of familiarity with a particular *ẹbọ*. The cultic Spirits more often than not are placated through rituals and sacrifice to reduce their potency and propensity to do evil. Thus, the concept of evil in this sense connotes occult practices, magic and ill-gotten wealth. For this reason, repentant witches and sorcerers will lose their possessions to the *ẹbọ* that hunts them down. In some cases, the entire family of culprits become dedicated cultic servants to the *ẹbọ*. These restored items are displayed for public view to show the vanity that accompanied ill-gotten wealth through sorcery and magic.

The process of the discernment of Spirits in the Igala culture begins first and foremost with the identification of the particular kind of spirit that is behind an utterance, possession, obsession, dance or other gestures. This is normally done by the *Ifa*—diviner priest/priestess. The process of discernment yields dual results. In the first place, the outcome of spirit possession for instance, can result in the discernment of good and positive spirit which bears gifts and charismas to the society through the possessed. Though the discernment questionnaires varies according to different *ifa* priest, the generally include questions about (a) place and location of the patient prior to attack, (in the forest, by the stream); (b) the time the attack occurred (ritual time like during the *Anẹ* festival, or ordinary time—mid-day or mid-night); (c) and person, being or objects that the patient was in contact with prior to attack (contact with some masquerade, touching or staring at forbidding objects in the shrine). Answers to these questions will aid the *ifa* priest decipher whether the patient was possessed by either the domestic—*ẹbọ unyi*—or forest spirits—*ẹbọ oko*. The second step after identification of the particular spirit is the attempt to enter into a dialogic covenant with the *ẹbọ* in question to depart in peace through the offering of sacrifice. Some *ẹbọ* compromise and depart, but in other cases, they remain. This leads to the third stage of discernment; exorcism. Note that exorcism is always the end product of the discernment process not the beginning. The discernment process begins among the Igala with the identification of the spirit. Thus, any spirit that cannot be identified is normally considered dangerous, wild and evil, and *afu*—as spirit—in its indeterminate and un-cultic nature runs the risk of being identified with evil.

3. ẸBỌ—SPIRIT, ỌLAYE—LIFE AND INMI—BREATH: THE FOUNDATION OF AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN PNEUMATOLOGY

I will now return to the central question of this essay; namely how does human *ẹbọ*—spirit, serve as the basis for understanding the supernatural *ẹbọ*—spirit of the

Supreme Being *Ojọ*? In a purely theological term, how does the human spirit relate or participate in the creative and redemptive act of God in creation? In answering this question, references will be made to the pneumatological presuppositions of Elochukwu Uzukwu (Africa), Paul Tillich (Western) and Gregory Palamas (Eastern). In the final analysis, I will relate the Igala principle of *ojo*—reincarnated ancestor—as the condition of possibility of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the human. Thus cementing the argument, that, in the cultic and ritual sense there can be no essential difference between *Ebo—Spirit and İñmi—Life*.

Kirsteen Kim questions, if “the theology of the Holy Spirit is a study of God’s involvement with the world?” (Kim, 2007). Correspondingly, how can the Igala Christian see the activities of *ebọ*/Spirits as the handiwork of *Ojọ* in creation? In the realm of Christian theology, can a theology be termed orthodox and authentic when its pneumatology acknowledges the existence of evil spirits and understanding them as that part of the Spirit’s activity and energy in the world that is still unknown? The appreciation of *ebọ* as spirit has enormous implication for Igala Christian Pneumatology—science of the spirit and the Holy Spirit. My take in this essay can be stated as follows: unless we know what spirit is, we cannot claim to know what the Holy Spirit is doing in the lives of the Igala Christian (Tillich, 1963). The conception of any authentic Igala pneumatology must first confront the reality of the Igala *ebọ*/Spirits-world. In essence, the appropriation of the word *afu* for spirit constitutes not only an escapism, but a monumental hindrance to such in-depth endeavor. Thus, providing an answer to the question of the role of *ebọ* in the personal life of the Igala Christian is a prerequisite for understanding what the Holy Spirit is doing in the Igala cosmos. For this purpose, I submit that the characteristics of *ebọ* as divine-human agent opens an interpretative framework for understanding, discerning and appreciating the gifts of the Holy Spirit—healing and wholeness—in creation (Uzukwu, 2012, p.88). Thus, one can argue that because of the inherent spirit—*ebọ* which constitute the ontological condition of *one*, the human *ebọ* is open to the transcendent realm of the Spirit. This approach differs substantially from Egbunu’s subscription of western philosophical category to interpret personhood—*one* in Igala worldview (Egbunu, 2013).

Elochukwu Uzukwu’s pneumatological position solidly affirms God as mystery and Spirit (Uzukwu, 2012). As a mystery, Uzukwu surmise that no one human culture, language and logical category can lay claim and authority to full mastery of God. In the same way, as Spirit, God’s Activity in the universe is carried out in a participatory fashion through the medium of and in collaboration with other spirits, deities and divinity. In his appropriation of

Gnuse’s (Gnuse, 1997) thesis of the mutual coexistence of gods and the heavenly beings in pre-exilic Israel and the becoming of monotheistic Elohim, Uzukwu distanced himself from “the militancy of Deuteronomistic history” (Uzukwu, 2012, p.131). He further asserts that the conception of an absolute mono-Yahweh that is based on the “rhetoric of exclusion” and intolerance is both Life-threatening and “Life-denying.” (Uzukwu, 2012, p.131). Heavily influenced by Origen’s pneumatological principle of individuation Uzukwu develops a principle of Relationality in which the human spirit participates in the Divine Spirit. The concreteness of this relationality is brought to bear on the principle of individuation of spirits as the giver of gifts and charisma; all for the purpose and in the service of human Life. Uzukwu endorses Origen’s pneumatology as the methodological reference point for his discourse on the Trinity and the economy of spirits. He argues further that the concept of deities in the West African universe is hinged on the dual principles of relationality and individuation. Uzukwu agrees with Teresa Okure’s interpretation of the Johannine definition of God’s Spirit meaning not His nature “as such, but the mode of his creativity, life-giving actions in human beings” (Okure, 1988). This mode of thinking resonates and aligns with the West African conception of the transformative and dynamic power of the Spirit in the world. Uzukwu notes that Origen’s doctrine of the Spirit as the condition of possibility of ascent to divinization is both similar and different in some ways from the “West African mysticism of descent.” He then relates Origen’s pneumatological principle of individuation to West African *humana-pneuma* manifested in personal spirits as bearer of destiny (Uzukwu, 2012, p.140).

In the Igala world, *Ojọ* created all—the spirits, the deities and the humans—to be in communion for the propagation and protection of Life. Life is generated through the reincarnated *ebọ*/spirits of the ancestors and it is the same Spirit that brings forth life that equally saves it. Uzukwu’s description of the primacy of the human Spirit and its desires for divine participation through the principle of relationality serves a dual function for the retrieval of the Igala understanding of *ebọ*. First, it grounds and solidifies *ebọ* as the divine desire of the Supreme Being—*Ojọ* to give Life and secondly, through the principle of reincarnation, it also captures the ontological reality of *ebọ* as the human principle for Life. Uzukwu maintains that:

The spirit dimension of the person linking the individual from pre-existence into life in this world is strategic to the notion of person. This spirit carries or reflects individual destiny providentially assigned by God, the origin of origins, and/or democratically chosen by each pre-existent. It constitutes the acknowledged and unacknowledged link with God in the evolving destiny of the individual or in questions asked about the fortunes and misfortunes by the individual and community. One should not underestimate the cosmological and anthropological

positions of this structural determinant of destiny, the embedded spirit, the original gift and guardian from God that humanizes the person. The description of the human pneuma by Origen as life coming from God puts the West African principle on the same pedestal as the Greek *pneuma*—both are humanizing principles that come and return to God: God is Spirit, “breath of Life”. (Uzukwu, 2012, p.190)

In the Igala worldview, although, *olaye* translates Life in its biological form, the word *iñmi*—breathe—gives an anthropological and ontological reason for which humans are alive or living. For the most part, the crimes of suicide or homicide rank the topmost among the prohibitions against life or shed blood on the earth. This is so because among the Igala, the issue of Life as Breathe is the prerogative of the supreme deity—*iñmi d’owo Ojo* translates this reality.

It is an incontestable fact that Paul Tillich’s “correlative method” in theological investigation forms one of the pillars of theological methodologies in modern and post-modern times. At its core, the correlative method draws insights from theology to address philosophical and cultural issues facing man/woman. In his critique of Cartesian dichotomy between body and spirit, Tillich posited a fundamental question that guided his entire work: can the word “spirit” designating the particular human dimension of life, be reinstated? (Tillich, 1961). The necessity for the reinstatement “spirit” in the day-to-day affairs of the society for Tillich serve a practical epistemological purpose, that is; “without knowing what spirit is one cannot know what Spirit is” (Tillich, 1961, p.23). The concept of “Spiritual Presence” in this sense is the correlative of Life as spirit. The understanding of one leads to a better understanding of the other. So, for Tillich, the philosophical, existential and ontological questions posed by the various ambiguities surrounding man/woman and their quest for meaning of life and death are best addressed in the understanding of “Life” that is the spirit which is not detached from its source i.e. Spiritual Presence. Life as such becomes the grounding and vital force for living in the Spirit. Furthermore, Tillich’s explanation of the relationship of **Spirit** to **spirit** draws out the ontological connection that exists between them. The Divine Spirit “breaks into the human spirit; this does not mean that it rest there, but that it drives the human spirit out of itself” (Tillich, 1961, p.113).

Furthermore, Kirsteen Kim distinguishes between Western and Eastern epistemological presupposition to the subject of the Trinity: “Western Trinitarian doctrine, as developed by Augustine and the scholastics, aimed to solve metaphysical questions about the nature of God in God’s self, *ad intra*. Eastern concern, on the other hand, had been mainly with explaining the way in which the members of the Trinity work together *ad extra* to bring about the salvation of the world” (Kim, 2007, p.42). This paper cannot fully address the various contributions of the Orthodox theologians to the pneumatological debate. By and large, a claim that the Eastern Orthodox

Pneumatology begins and revolves around the concept of the “Economy Trinity” is defensible. For the time being, I will only focus on one of the outstanding Orthodox thinker: Gregory Palamas, stating briefly the central thesis of his *Triad*. According to Aristotle Papanikolaou, “Palamas’s thought is characterized as the culmination of Eastern patristic thought” (Papanikolaou, 2002, p.239). This assessment is plausible in that, “the councils held in Constantinople in 1341, 1351 and 1368 all affirmed the Palamite distinction between the invisible essence and the self-revealing energies” (Reid, 1997, p.51).

My interest in the Palamite synthesis is simply to argue for the humanizing principle of *εβο* as divine energies of *Οιο* who bestows gifts and charisma for the service of the community. Palamas’ greatest achievement in Orthodox theology was his synthesis of the problem concerning the knowable and unknowable God. His elaborate citation of the preceding Greek Patristic fully demonstrates that the theology of the unknown God and the issue of the divine attributes of such God was altogether not a new phenomenon in the Orthodox tradition. Palamas’ elaborate citation of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa proves this point better.

As Basil the great says, the guarantee of the existence of every essence is its natural energy which leads the mind to the nature. According to St. Gregory Nyssa and all the other fathers, the natural energy is the power which manifests every essence and only nonbeing is deprived of this power; for the being which participates in an essence will also surely participate in the power which manifests that essence. But since God is entirely present in each of the divine energies we name Him from each of them, although it is clear that He transcends all of them. (Meyendorff, 1983, pp.95-96)

Palamas agrees with the fathers that God’s essence—the somethingness of God—in its inner structure is unknown to human, but humans can know God through the manifestation of God’s energies, “since energy can be participated in...we have a proof that the eternal glory of God *is* participable for that which in God is visible in some way, is also participable (Meyendorff, 1983, pp.97-99). It is this principle of participation of energies in essences that makes enhypostatic—deification a possibility. Since “according to the fathers, deification is an essential energy of God,” Palamas argues that “the deified received energy identical to that of the deifying essence” (Meyendorff, 1983, pp.86-89).

CONCLUSION

All along, this essay subscribes to and intends to contribute to the research of Elochukwu Uzukwu—The Pierre Schouver endowed Chair on Mission, at Duquesne University. This essay fundamentally agrees with Uzukwu stance, that we can know God through rituals and participate in God’s spirit through worship. And

that God is “alive and active” in the African universe through the actions of benevolent spirits...bearing gifts, healing and charisma. This essay argues, that a translation of spirit as *ebò* instead of *afu* resonates well with the ritual and cultic setting of the reincarnated Igala ancestors—*ibegwu*. The *Ajokodo* Biblical translation of the Holy Spirit as *ibegu desholo* properly demonstrates this connection. Accordingly, the Igala principle of reincarnation serves a dual pneumatological function. (a) It ushers the Divine Spirit into the realm of the human *pneuma*. Borrowing from Tillich’s phrase, the divine Spirit of *Ojò* “... breaks forth into the human spirit.” (b) The human spirit once leavened by the divine energy is thus opened to transcendence.

In order to clear the ground for the above argument, I proposed that an understanding of *ebò* as the divine principle connecting the Supreme Being—*Ojò* and the reincarnated humanspirit—*ojò* as can be the starting point of Pneumatology. In this connection, the relationship between *ebò* as personal spirits participating in the divine spirits can be compared to the Palamitan principle of spirits as energies proceeding from the divine essence of God. Therefore, *ebò* becomes the principle of particularization and individuation with which the Supreme Being—*Ojò* creates and constantly re-creates the Igala universe. Thus, in light of all the above, the present pejorative reference to *ebò* as man-made and devilish and the scornful appellation given to adherents of Igala traditionalist—*ogwuchekpo* as *ama chi ich’ebò* needs further re-evaluation.

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