

Understanding the Mystical Power: A Case Study of African and Christian Religious Beliefs for National Development

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Abstract: *The problem of grasping and fathoming the mystical power and its workings in human environment is such a startling force that has created a bemusing influence on human curiosity since the dawn of consciousness. While some people express it as a magical power when it strikes them as diabolical, others see it as a mystery in the sense of being aware of a phenomenon but very difficult to wrap one's mind round it. Because of its perplexing uncertainty, mystical power generates an incalculable fear on some people while some others enjoy its nature of existence since it offers them the opportunity to elicit their esoteric power to do either good or evil. This elusive phenomenon attracts study chiefly for its dual useful purposes of effecting good fortune and diabolical menace on human persons. The very way it works poses yet another serious challenge to many a scholar. This is why this paper tackles it head on with the intention to demystify the phenomenon so as to disabuse the minds of those who are imprisoned by the sheer fear arising from it. Since fear stunts people's growth and lures people into captivity, demystifying and unburdening the enslaved spirits will bring a lot of freed minds acting responsibly with delight. This paper believes that such a person will live a normal life that bears a fruit of development. It is not only that a human being is freed from crushing and debilitating fear, but that the redeemed person acts with unburdened heart that gives exponential development unfettered chance. Moreover, this paper believes that acquiring some degree of educated knowledge of the phenomenon will not only bring about development but hugely enhance national development exponentially.*

I. Preface

One of the greatest challenges of human life is the difficulty of understanding the mystical powers and their influences on human persons. It generates such menacing fears that drive some people berserk and some literally crazy while others are either schizophrenic or perpetually phobic of any situation to the extent of total home confinement. Mystical power is a mysterious or awe-inspiring power—an overwhelming experience that stuns the beholder beyond description. The influence of this power is such that often it is attributed to divine realm. Since people cannot fully understand this happening they express it as magical in a pejorative sense or mysterious in a sense of being aware of something and yet not being able to explain it. Studies have shown that things that challenge human understanding as such often subject the feelers to tremendous fears of unknown proportions. This is why some people in their desperation acquire protective charms to defend and protect themselves in the face of the prevailing danger. Indeed, it is not unconnected with the genesis of innumerable talismans of all sorts everywhere—an item that would protect and defend one from danger. In that way, talismans assume the responsibility of allaying people's fears. Thus, the subscribers are energized and emboldened to face their fears head-on. Perhaps that is why disciples of talismans are ever-increasing in African land and indeed the world over. Studies have shown that Christian religious converts transpose their new religious articles into new talismans to defend and protect them or to improve their sales and put them in better societal position. Accordingly, these neophytes view rosary-beads, statues of Virgin Mary, Crucifix, Holy Water, Holy Oil and many other religious articles as new talismans to protect them from sickness and or from attacks from their adversaries or to improve their sales or secure better positions in politics or places of work and so forth. It is against this backdrop that this work surveys this power with a view to discovering some inkling of its workings so as to harness it to counsel people on their crippling fears. In the process, the power will be properly investigated with the intention of discovering its source and intimidating influence on people and then try to see how we can harness the knowledge to extricate people from oppressive fears.

II. Clarification of Conceptual Terms

2.1. Power

Power which is an ability or capacity to do something, to influence people or to act upon something very often colors and dominates people's views, actions, and behaviors. Because of its mysterious influence on people, power is at times literally worshiped and adored as God, as it is often the case in politics, religion, commerce and industry. While some are born to rule some have power entrusted upon them and some acquire

power by hook or crook to be sure that they exert their influence on people. Be that as it may, Edem (1995) points out that various powers operate in the universe. He claims rightly that the first and major type of power is the omnipotence of God (p. 1). He explains that God is not only all powerful but also all controlling. This means in effect that God's all pervasive power controls everything in the universe. It appears then that from the very beginning, all powers both spiritual and temporal emerge from God. Hence Peale (1956) maintains that both natural and divine powers derive from God when he explains that "God is the source of all energy in the universe: atomic energy, electrical energy and spiritual energy" (p. 9).

This means that even all chemical powers, thermal power, magnetic power, atomic power, electrical power which are indeed various forms of source of energy emanate from God. Even the cosmic powers which could be described as natural energy that permeates this world also originate from God. Edem (1995) points out that these natural energies are tapped often by occultists and people of their kind, as ultimate powers (p. 1). Initially all these powers are good since they emanate from God. When people are in spiritual contact with God, Peale (1956) explains that "the divine energy flows through the personality, automatically renewing the original creative energy" (p. 9). Normally, people use these energies in their pure state as the Chinese use *chi* to navigate the spiritual world. (*Qi* or *chi*>breath, air) energy of life: in Chinese medicine and philosophy, the energy or life force of the universe, believed to flow round the body and to be present in all living things. The manipulation of *chi* is the basis of acupuncture and Chinese martial arts (Encarta 2002); however, at times some people like the sorcerers, because of their evil preoccupation, derogatively interpret the powers, and therefore use them diabolically to injure their perceived enemies. This agrees with what Otto (1978) suggested in the case of the origin of religion, saying that demons and gods have the same origin. According to him, "daemons and gods alike spring from 'the same' root" (Otto, 1978, p. 14). What people call god or devil develops from the same source. The positive (God) or negative (devil) interpretation depends then on the interpretation of human experience. Since this area of experience is shrouded in mystery, it appears that the primary human experience in this matter is pure since the impulse is not derived from any other experience except from the unique nature of eerie metaphysical experience which belongs to divine realm. Thus, if one taps this experience and interprets it wrongly because of the evil preoccupation of his/her mind, then the expression will be evil. Whereas, if the person's mind is preoccupied with good intent, he/she will positively interpret the power and then, good expressions will rule human experience. A case in point here is that while the occultists and sorcerers tap this energy for destroying people, medicine-men and women tap them for healing all sorts of ailments.

Other sorts of power enumerated by Edem (1995) are "juridical powers of governance connected with political and social power, parental power and authority over offspring." This is the power the Apostle Paul talks about in his thirteenth chapter of Romans, when he explains that since all authority comes from God, they should be obeyed (Rom. 13: 1-6). Other mentioned powers are: "personal power over self, psychological power which can be used for hypnotism, the social power of relationship, and the physical power which can produce energy for work" (Edem, 1995, p. 1). Some other powers like power to decide are so important that Edem (1995) devoted a whole book for it. Apart from all pervasive power of God, Edem (1995) explains that all these powers exist individually in their own class. He explains further that while all these powers exist on their own classes, they derive their potency from God. This implies that there is no power in existence that does not emanate from God. Thus, when people sing that beautiful song, "All power belongs to Jesus, all power belongs to him," or when people in their ejaculatory prayers insist in the words of David of old that all power belongs to God alone (Ps 62: 11, NRSV; Mt 28: 18), they are acknowledging the very fact that even the demonic powers derive from God.

2.2. The Power of Charms

Hence, it is correct to say that the power of lower things like charms derive from God. Charm is any formula, act, or object supposed to have magical power to ward off danger or to bring good luck. It is believed to preserve people from evil, diseases, bullets, or motor accidents, or to make one succeed in trade, in a love affair, in fishing, in catching thieves, in passing examinations, etc. (Arinze, 1970 p. 20). Although the term originally meant the chanting of a verse believed to exert supernatural or occult influence, it later came to mean an object worn or carried for protection or good fortune (Encarta 2002). Arinze (1970) explains the Igbo opinion saying that charms or *ogwu* derive their power from God. In his words, "judging from the way many people act, one is inclined to say that they [*ogwu*] are regarded as deriving their power from God at least in some cases" (p. 21). But Parrinder (1949) believes that medicine has no power in themselves, rather their power is imbued by the *dibia*'s incantation. The same is the opinion of Nnabuchi (1987) when he writes that the "spoken words of the *dibia* are the vibratory powers that energize *ogwu*" (p. 53). On the other hand, Parrinder (1949) believes that the medicines might have latent power which is aroused by the activities of the *dibia*. He explains further that "each medicine is believed to contain a power or breath of life, and may be the abode of a spiritual being, a minor god or an impersonal force" (p. 158). This is in total agreement with Arinze's earlier opinion but particularly with Nnabuchi (1987) when he explains that some herbs have unquestionable power to act on their

own without any dibia's intervention. This power obviously emanates from God or nature as some people might like to hold. Herbs like *Akwukwo nju ofia*, or *njuofia*, *Anunuebe*, *Atubuonu* are well known Igbo trees and herbs that can act on their own. *Njuofia* for instance, can make someone miss in a jungle. This writer has experienced the mystical power of *Njuofia* when it caused him to get lost in the forest where he went to fetch firewood for hours before he could retrace his bearing. At times some people under *Njuofia's* effect miss for days before they retrace their bearing. There are some other herbs like *urara* that repel snakes and other dangerous animals. Nnabuchi (1987), enumerates the potency of some African plants as follows:

Certain plants prevent lightning and thunder while others draw it to the vicinity where they grow. Others would neutralize all forms of powers or nullify the effects of powers of entities and beings... Lower levels of witches are repelled by certain herbs while others are tools of membership into the cult. Thieves are prevented from stealing in one's compound by the use of certain herbs... Finally, certain herbs are used for creating states of madness in people while others are used to effect cure (Nnabuchi, 1987, p. 85).

Moreover, Arinze (1970) has some reservations for the power of charms which Igbo-people call *ajo ogwu* or bad charms. He thinks that even if people regard good charms as deriving their power from God, the bad charms derive their own power from the evil one. But since we discovered from the preceding that all powers emanate from God, it appears that even the power of *ajo ogwu* derives from God. It is the same mystical power coming from God but while the evil minded people tap the power and use them in a pejorative way, the good intentioned people tap them and use them positively as observed earlier.

III. The ingredients that go into the making of *Ogwu*/Medicine and the importance of Spells

Furthermore, Parrinder (1949) suggests that medicine/charm/*ogwu* necessarily needs an outward form or apparatus to work. Arinze (1970) enumerates the apparatuses as dirty pots containing water, earth, leaves, roots, sticks, rags, etc. He includes beautiful leather packet worn around the neck or waist, or put in the pocket (p. 21). Parrinder (1949) suggests rightly that these visible apparatuses differentiate the medicine/*ogwu* from God who can act without any material form (p. 158). In this way man-made objects clearly differentiates from God who exist *suigeneris* on his own. While God acts *ex-nihilo* from nothing in this case, human fabrication necessarily needs an outfit to work and indeed depends on greater power to be effective.

Here are various ingredients which go into the preparation of an efficacious medicine. The most essential ingredients in the preparation of medicine/*ogwu* are roots, barks, herbs or leaves. The dibia's or doctor's ingenuity is needed here to know the particular herb that cures particular ailment. For an effective and efficient medicine, other elements such as clay, water, fungus, unripe banana, hides, or fur, and even bizarre items such as an old woman's excreta, urine, toad, and many other things which the doctor/dibia must mix, depending on the type of medicine and the purpose of the medicine. If the medicine/*ogwu* is for eating, the immolated victim—chicken, goat, sheep, bull or just eggs, are used to prepare the medicine together with some tubers of yam, or unripe bananas and any ingredient that will make it palatable. If it is for drinking, it seems the sourer or bitterer the better. Rarely do they make potable herbs sweet except the ones diluted for children. If it is epidermal medicines for skin, muscular or inter-muscular diseases, alligator pepper and perhaps, certain nauseating ingredients like dung, an old-woman's excreta, as well as many other ingredients are mixed. Whether the medicine/*ogwu*/charm is for wearing, drinking, robbing, or inhaling, the doctor/dibia must of necessity pronounce some spells over the medicine before dispensing it. Spells or incantations are actually special property of charm/*ogwu*/medicine to ensure its efficacy.

IV. Turning *Ogwu*/Medicine into an Idol

Parrinder (1949) suggests that preparing important medicines for protecting or guarding villages or chief's houses, needs a mixture of herbal, animal, and alcoholic elements. This mixture is then buried together with some animal parts. Often some medicines/*ogwu* necessarily needs the victim to be buried alive. In olden days a human being was buried alive to ensure a potent medicine. Presently, big animals such as bulls are buried alive in place of human beings to ensure the same purpose. Thus all these mounds of clays, stones, or cement seen in many African compounds or at their gates are signs of potent medicines guarding and protecting the people living there (Parrinder, 1949, p. 159; Arinze 1970, p.12, 19, 21, 49; Mgbobukwa, 1996, pp 11-12.). These types of medicine/*ogwu* are known as *alusi* or spirits or gods that serve as real God in the mind of many owners. Some owners, however, own them out of superstition, fear and ignorance. To acquire this type of *ogwu* or *Arusi* is to worship idol and therefore a distraction from the worship of one true God. Medicines/*ogwu* usually acts for anyone at all, that is why some of them could be sold in the market at any price. The owner is however, obliged to meticulously observe the taboos, and the proper ceremonies to ensure their efficacy. Since the natives regard *ogwu* "medicines," as useful things charged with powers which people can exploit, it follows that extra precaution should be taken to handle them (Arinze, 1970, p. 21; Parrinder, 1949, p. 158).

V. Deeper Understanding of Ogwu/Medicine and its Workings

For clearer concept of medicine/*ogwu* and its workings, Arinze(1970) outlines three aspects of magical, religious and natural sciences as follows:

i. Magical Aspects: Although he delineated six magical elements, only four could be considered magical or miraculous, extraordinary or wonderful happenings usually attributed to God in my opinion. These are: (a) Certain words/incantations/spells pronounced over the prepared stuff; (b) Emphasis laid on the repetition of formulae; (c) The charms act on the names mentioned during the preparation, for example if a girl's or a boy's name is mentioned while preparing love potion, the medicine mysteriously affects the person; (d) Many charms are believed to be capable of acting from a distance without any apparent contact (Arinze, 1970, p. 21).

ii. Religious Aspects: The elements considered religious in charms/*ogwu* are: (a) Officials: Medicines/*Ogwu* are mainly prepared by *dibia*/diviners who may also be, and in many cases are, priests. (b) Power Genesis: The medicines/*ogwu* are believed to have their power from the spirits. (c) Prayer: Sometimes there are some appearances of 'prayer' to these '*ogwu*'; and (d) Sacrifice: In their preparation some animals or birds are often immolated and some people might consider this as a sacrifice (Arinze, 1970, p. 21-22).

iii. Natural Science Aspect: we notice signs of natural sciences—that is, sciences that deal with natural phenomena, like biology, chemistry, and physics. It appears that these medicines/*ogwu* are considered to be secreting some powerful forces which are tapped and used by wise people.

Proper Distinction between Idol and Herbal Medicine

It appears that some people in their religious bigot refuse to use herbal medicine thinking that it is a sin to do so. Many weak Christians crash here confusing /medicines/*ogwu* used for healing purposes and the talisman considered as God per se as pointed out earlier. In this area distinction must again be made between herbs made for healing purposes and talisman made for protection. While the former could be used by anybody for healing purposes, the latter should be rejected by Christians since it takes the place of God. This is idol worshiping which is against the Judeo-Christian commandment. "Thou shall not have any other God before me" (Ex 20: 3-6). Besides, since the charms are human fabrication, when they lose their power they often face humiliation by throwing them away as used-up batteries by the owner, or the owner may resolve to take them to the diviner to have them renewed much as weak batteries are re-charged. In this case then it becomes abundantly clear that human fabrications can never be worshiped, adored or regarded as God in any way, shape or form. The highest we can do is to understand that their power derives from God whether remotely or close by. But because of its healing effect, protective charms are hardly differentiated from oral or massaging medicines meant for healing ailments. That is why all of them have the same name in Igbo>*ogwu*. Hence the word *ogwu* could pass for healing or protection. That is why one who survives accident is said to have been keeping amedicine/*ogwu* that saved him and still it is the same nomenclature 'medicine/*ogwu*' is used to express the healing people receive when for instance they recover from fever attack treated with herbal medicine. However, in all these, the healing power is always from God and always understood as coming from God. It is the same power as we have noted earlier that sorcerers or evil people tap to do evil things. Hence if people die in an accident, it is often said that his/her enemies killed him/her with medicine/*ogwu*. in the same vein when people fail to make sales in their business, they often attribute their bad sales to bad-medicine from their enemies. Hence, we can assert the age-old saying that human beings can harness the power of created things like herbs for healing various ailments and nutritional values and at the same time fabricate the same and position them for worship. This is condemned in strongest terms by christian belief.

VI. Rightful uses of Medicine/Ogwu

Whereas worshiping created things will amount to the violation of the fundamental Christian beliefs as previously analyzed, using them for healing and nutritural purposes is considered blissful. For example in Gen. 1: 29, God gives humanity powers over all creatures and commands that humanity should not only rule them but use them as food for bodily nourishment. In his words, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food." In the same vein, Ezekiel 47: 12, recommends the herbs as medicinal. In his words, "On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water from them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing." Thus if God has provided these leaves for human nourishment and betterment, why should human beings fear to use them? Is human fear not using them not irrational? In my judgment it is irrational fear that impedes humans from using what God in his wisdom has created and ordered humans to use. Hence from now on we must resolve to use God's creation with educated rational minds full of love and appreciation (Chidili, 2005, pp. 246-257). This is the essence of this essay—to extricate humans from irrational fears surrounding medicine/*ogwu*

Presently, however, there are so many Christian herbalists that practice herbalism with gusto. These new generation of herbalists have helped to disabuse the idea of herbalism being diabolic. In their daily

activities they use herbs to provide protective, preventive and curative medicines cheaply without any recourse to questionable *dibia*'s incantations. This is necessary as they help us to allay fears surrounding the use of herbs in the healing process. We must understand with Adibe (2006) herbs are no more than the ordinary vegetables used in our daily meals for nutritional purposes (Adibe, 2006, p. 38). Moreover, this essay has offered us the authentic knowledge that all powers including that of *Ogwu*/medicine come from God (Ps 64)

VII. The Mystery of Healing

From the foregoing we can establish that the power of *ogwu*/medicine and its menacing mystical influences on human persons are real to the people of Africa. What is also real to African people is that all powers come from God including the power of medicine. What continues to present itself as a mystery is the workings of the power per se. We understand the mixtures of various herbs and the incantations of the *dibia/boka/babalawo* but how the mixture effects healing remains a mystery. While it remains a mystery to uninitiated, an African believes that that mystery is the finger of God. Hence a Kipsigis' herbalist of Kenya believes that they can procure medicine but the healing is totally dependent on God Almighty (Chepkwony, 2006, p. 38).

7.i. Interpreting God's Experience

Again, since all powers come from one source, God, it appears that understanding the power itself does not pose any puzzle to any person; rather it is the interpretation and the use of the experience that imposes crippling fears on many an interpreter. This is as a result of an interpreter experiencing the phenomenon as oppressive and so he/she interprets as oppressive and so it becomes oppressive to him/her. But if the individual feels the experience joyously, the interpretation will be delightful. Take for instance the experience of the death of a beloved one in the family or a birth of a physically challenged person in a family. Generally people understand such an occurrence as a very bad omen. Hence some people may view the incidences as an overbearing punishment from God and as a result view God as an oppressor; whereas some individuals might understand the same occurrences as God's grace and so it becomes a salutary lesson from God—a lesson that might deeply connect them as friends of God all the days of their lives. In this case then such an understanding is accepted as a part of "all things" where "God works for good of those who love him" (Rm. 8:29).

Thus, venturing to understand the revelation of God through our cultural symbols and interpreting them correctly is the first step of proper conversion to Christian believers. Those who follow Christ therefore must understand him as the father and friend who works for their good all the time. Thus, their faith must lead them to seeking for solutions of their problems including all kinds of fears particularly fears of *ajo-ogwu*/poison/medicine in Christ. To those who believe Jesus says: "courage, I have overcome the world" (Jon 16:33) or in another place he says, "Take courage, do not fear, it is I" (Mt 14: 27; Mk 6:50; Jon 6: 20) These empowering and encouraging statements are to convince the believers that God in Jesus Christ is in charge always and therefore have nothing to do with talisman or false gods as a protector, defender or assistant to their wellbeing. Such reassuring words are the underlining factors that God revealed in Jesus Christ is enough for the believer. Hence Jesus insists, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt 28:18), so as to let the believer know that he/she has no need searching for other authorities to rely on. The believer has no other authority to serve or bow to; Christ is the only answer and indeed enough for the believers. This understanding disabuses any idea of fear in the life of the believers. When all dangers of fear are dispensed in the mind of any believer, he/she is transformed into a better human person and a true citizen of Nigeria.

Since all powers emanate from one God; it appears that the believers must interpret the powers rightly and access them properly as coming from the benevolent God who created them and would never think of hurting them in any event. Thus, they must understand that the only one who can protect, guide, and direct them in all their dealings with the world is no other than the Almighty God. He is the only one who defends and protects us from all dangers. God is the mystery which we meet in our everyday lives. The fact that he is involved in our daily sufferings is the mystery of God-incarnate with his people. Because Jesus suffered in his lifetime, we have an advocate who fully understands our sufferings and sympathizes with us all the time. The fact that we do not fully grasp him in our sufferings and difficulties is actually what challenges some people whose view of God is only in successes, happy moments, progresses and all that that makes one joyous. But the mystery of God with us is the God who is with his people in moments of suffering and difficulties, in moments of pleasures and joys of life. Hence, he says, "I am with you always," whether good or bad. This is why we must try to discover in our daily experiences with God as big lessons we must try to learn. His mysterious stay with us is what makes him Emmanuel > God with us. Although, the experience is enshrined in mystery, yet at the same time God exposes himself to us in those occasions as mentioned earlier so that we may seize the opportunity to access his help and comfort. Thus instead of resorting to human fabrications or reposing on humanity, we have to do about face and discover God in our daily lives, learn the lessons he wants to teach us in our experiences and then rely on that to praise and adore him all the time, beseech his assistance in all situations, trust his

faithfulness in everything and rely completely on his judgment and guidance in all situations of human endeavor. This is the ultimate stratagem for understanding the mystery that is God. This understanding makes God our shield and our strong pillar for defense in all demonic onslaughts,

7.ii Interpreting God's Experience as Oppressive

Moreover, those who express their unpleasant sentiments as oppression from God must reconsider their position by carefully reading chapter twelve of the book of Hebrews with the author. In this chapter the author advises that we should fix our eyes on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith (v. 2) in all situations, but particularly at the moment of trials. He goes on to say that we should recall all the sufferings and death Christ underwent in the hands of sinful people, yet he endured them for the sake of joy that would abound afterwards. He advises that thinking about Christ's sufferings would enable us not to be weary and give up in our struggle against evil. After all, he argues, "you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin." Or put it this way; your struggle against sin has not risen to the point of shedding blood, even at that, your best survival mechanism lies on Christ our peace. He pleads that our sufferings should not lead us to forget the words of exhortation addressed to us by Godself where God addresses us as his children: "my children! do not disdain the discipline of the Lord or lose heart when reproved by him; for whom the Lord loves, he disciplines; he scourges every child he acknowledges" (vv. 4-6).

7.iii. Centering on Christian Faith

Furthermore, you must understand that your conversion to Christianity is not because you have no religion or that your religion is inferior to other religions. It is not even that your religion is no more fashionable or useful or valuable to you. Rather, you are converted to a new religion called Christianity because God's revelation in Christianity is more concrete and clearer than other former religions you were used to. You converted because Christianity basically handles the question of life and death so conclusively that any other religions seem somewhat inadequate. Let us not forget that the essence of religion is life—to live fully, abundantly and everlastingly. Christianity tackles these points so convincingly that one decides to stay in it for its values and benefits. The one and only reason Christianity outshines other religions is that Christ, the founder, lived this earth as we are living now; suffered as we are suffering now on earth; died like other mortals do die but then crowned the whole episode with resurrection from the dead. And what is more? He promises all the followers the same feat (Jn. 6:39; 11:25-6; 17:24). By this then, life is not just living on this earth, but living well on this earth (i.e. being fully aware of graceful human condition on this earth as a result of incarnate Jesus) and living forever in heaven. If not anything, these promises from the master Jesus himself should dispel any atom of fear oppressing us. This should transform us into believing Christians who have nothing to do with fears arising from any type of malicious poison/bad medicine

Furthermore, while many other religions like Hindu would stress the transmigration of soul in this world so as to attain highest purification level, Christianity does not espouse such a doctrine. According to the modern Hinduism, the state in which the soul is reborn is predetermined by the good or bad deeds (karma) done in former incarnations of the soul; the souls of those who do evil, for example, are reborn in lower states (such as animals, insects, and the spirits of trees). Eventually, the soul would be released from samsara> (the endless cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth in Hinduism) and karma after atonement for bad deeds and recognition that the individual soul (atman) and the universal soul (Brahman) are identical (. The African religion would emphasize quality of moral life that would launch one to ancestral home, so as to reemerge as a child in the world to continue living the earth (Chidili, 2012, vol.1, p). Both religions basically emphasize cyclic moral life on this earth. In effect the two religions have somewhat a survival moral mechanism built in them that induces one to be good so as to achieve the maximum concept of the state of being. They dwell and concentrate on this world, but Christianity while not neglecting the world, has successfully transcended it and convincingly established continuous life with God forever in the great beyond. This is why we cannot be in Christianity and be looking askance at other religions not even African religion and all that we might consider necessary and valuable in it. The hope of resurrection embedded in Christianity is what spurs us on; it is what makes Christianity exceptional and irresistible. No religion has rivaled that. I say this not because I am a Christian but because the proof is objective and there for everyone to see. St Paul explains among other things that allowing our hope to be only on this earth is an unfortunate venture, making our faith in life very delusional (1Cor. 15: 19). But a faith that transcends this world in line with the resurrected Christ is rewarding and indeed transforming.

That is why it is important to believe in God revealed in Jesus and stop terrifying ourselves with human fears or fears of medicine/*ogwu* or poison, and their potential deadly attacks. Rather, it is better to be certain to sanctify the Lord in your hearts. This means allowing the fear of the Lord to be your preoccupation in this land of the living. "Let the Lord be your dread," Isaiah 8:12-13, would advise. The Lord Jesus advises the followers as follows: "Do not be afraid of those who want to kill you. They can only kill the body; and do nothing more to

you. Fear only God who has power to kill people and then throw them into hell” (Luke 12:4-5). This means that we must always rely on the Lord’s power, we must trust his faithfulness, we must always submit to the Lord’s wisdom to handle every situation, always imitate his holiness, and always give the Lord the glory due to his most illustrious perfections. Furthermore, instead of wallowing in wild goose chase, let the promise of the Lord in Isaiah 41:10 assuage us. In this chapter and verse, the Lord unequivocally assures us in these words: “so do not fear I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” There is nothing better and certain than the Lord’s supportive promise. I am confident that those who confidently believe in God revealed in Jesus Christ will be totally transformed into a fearless joyous human being who will live an authentic life in this world and attain everlasting life with ease. This suggests transformational hope that builds a believer into a new person that builds the nation with vigor and unalloyed certainty.

VIII. Conclusion

Thus while the understanding of the mystical power remains elusive to the unbelievers, the believers are certain that all powers subsist in God Almighty. If we are real believers therefore, we must rely on God’s promises and then continually sanctify him before others so as to enable our good behaviors encourage and attract others to honor and glorify him (Lev 10:3). When this principle deeply becomes a part of us, then we are transformed, the next thing is to always be ready and willing to give answer to or make apology or defense of the faith we profess to any person who asks us a reason of our hope, with unrelenting good behaviors. Then, we will always poise to face such questions as what sort of hope we have, or why do we endure all these sufferings or why do we suffer all these hardships in the world? (1Pt 3:14-15). Let us not forget that an unparalleled sense of the divine perfections is the best antidote against the fear of sufferings. This means that in times of danger the fear of the Lord is the best policy. The rule is that if we fear God more we should definitely fear human beings and their machinations less. If we respect and trust in the power of God more we should fear poison, *ogwu*/medicine less. So we must humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God and always cast all our worries upon him because he really cares for us (1Pt 5: 6-7); then we are fully transformed into a better Nigerian.

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