

CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN AFRICA VIS-A-VIS THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION: AN IGWEBUIKE PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This article studied reconciliation as practice in African Traditional religion and Christian religion (Catholic), from the spectrum of the Igwebuike Igbo-African philosophy of conflict resolution. Reason being that both religions still co-exist mutually in Igbo society today, promoting and sustaining their values can be of help in ameliorating conflict and create the conditions for peaceful coexistence. It aims at finding some essential elements of reconciliation common to both religions, drawing connection from the basic features of Igwebuike philosophy of peace and conflict resolution. To achieve this, the study will x-ray Igbo Traditional conflict resolution method and the sacrament of reconciliation in the Catholic Church, in order to facilitate and restore broken relationships in the religious pluralistic Igbo society.

Keywords: Igwebuike, Philosophy, Conflict Resolution, Sacrament of reconciliation

Introduction

Reconciliation and peace is the heart of all religions of the world. All religions strive to restore a broken relationship between human beings and God, between human beings and the natural world, or among human beings themselves (Meiring, 2005). This is true because disputes are an integral part of human nature which dates back to the origin of human beings. However, one of the tasks of religion and religious tenets is to re-establish the energy flow within individuals, families and communities so as to re-build social harmony. African Traditional religion and Christian religion are part of world religions that promotes peace, love and reconciliation. The ultimate goal of a traditional justice system in most African communities is reconciliation. African traditional culture and Christian value systems have much to offer to the world – a sense of direction in conflict resolution and in peace-building mechanisms. It is believed that Christian message is not entirely new for Africa, African culture and tradition has a certain resemblance to the worldview of the Bible. Mbiti in Meiring agrees with this assertion when he said, “The Bible is very much an African book, in which African Christians and theologians see themselves and their people reflected and in which they find a personal place of dignity and acceptance before God (2005, pp. 68-69).”

This article therefore seeks to study reconciliation as practice in African Traditional religion and Christian religion (Catholic), from the spectrum of the

Igwebuike Igbo-African philosophy of conflict resolution. Reason being that both religions still co-exist mutually in Igbo society today, promoting and sustaining their values can be of help in ameliorating conflict and create the conditions for peaceful coexistence. It aims at finding some essential elements of reconciliation common to both religions, drawing connection from the basic features of *Igwebuike* philosophy of peace and conflict resolution. To achieve this, the study will x-ray Igbo Traditional conflict resolution method and the sacrament of reconciliation in the Catholic Church, in order to facilitate and restore broken relationships in the religious pluralistic Igbo society.

Conceptualizing Reconciliation

The term “reconciliation” is derived from the Latin “reconciliare” or Latin expression “conciliatus” which means coming together or united. “*Conciliatus*” has the same connotation with “*conciliate*” which also means above all, to restore to friendship. It is the coming together for a friendly purpose. To this end, every definition of reconciliation must be geared toward building some sort of positive relationship. “Reconciliation refers to the processes by which parties that have experienced an oppressive relationship or a destructive conflict with each other move to attain or to restore a relationship that they believe to be minimally acceptable (Kriesberg, 2001, p. 48)”. According to Galtung (2001), reconciliation is the process of healing traumas of both victims and perpetrators after violence, providing a closure of the bad relation. Commenting on these definitions above, Molenaar opines that, although Galtung’s definition covers most of the elements Kriesberg provided, it leaves out any reference to the goal of the reconciliation process, i.e. the building of some sort of positive relationship which is supposed to be the end result of reconciliation (2005). Igboke argues that, “Reconciliation is a process and a goal and cannot be restricted to reflecting the final state of peace and therefore not an end on itself but a process to an end (2018, p.85-86).” Here, reconciliation is seen as a step by step process whose eventual end is in the restoration of peace and harmony to a situation that is hitherto conflictual.

For Lambourne, “Reconciliation between individuals or groups requires the involvement of two or more parties in an interaction of apology and forgiveness and the willingness to embark on a new relationship based on acceptance and trust” (2001, p. 314). Following from this, Molenaar (2005) sees reconciliation as the way to overcome a history of conflict and to rebuild better social relations in which people can cooperate, share meals and drink beer together. Huyse describes reconciliation in these words:

“Ideally reconciliation prevents, once and for all, the use of the past as the seed of renewed conflict. It consolidates

peace, breaks the cycle of violence and strengthens newly established or reintroduced democratic institutions. As a backward-looking operation, reconciliation brings about the personal healing of survivors, the reparation of past injustices, the building or rebuilding of non-violent relationships between individuals and communities, and the acceptance by the former parties to a conflict of a common vision and understanding of the past. In its forward-looking dimension, reconciliation means enabling victims and perpetrators to get on with life and, at the level of society, the establishment of a civilized political dialogue and an adequate sharing of power (2003, p. 19).

Reconciliation means different things to different people. What it means is, among others, dependent on culture or religion. Hence, Meiring, (2005) gave two dimensions of reconciliation; vertical and horizontal dimensions. The reconciliation between human beings and God is often referred to as the vertical dimension of reconciliation while the reconciliation between human beings as the horizontal dimension. Horizontal reconciliation can in turn take place between quarrelling individuals or conflicting groups. Igbokwe agrees totally with this, when he said, “Reconciliation with one another: the significant of this kind of reconciliation is that it is a horizontal one where the peace building process is done between humans (2018, p. 86).” They are both intertwined, one relating to the other. Thus, according to traditional Christian thought, all strife and brokenness stems from human disobedience to God. Similarly, the solution for conflict lies in first restoring human relationship with God. Reconciliation to fellow human beings is as important for Christians as their reconciliation with God, and is a central tenet in the teachings of Christ. Because, God is, for instance, thought to require sincere confession before He forgives human beings, this requirement also stands for reconciliation among human beings. Meiring concludes that, African religion being a practical religion falls squarely on the horizontal side of affairs, as it is thought to influence the vertical as well (2005, p. 90).

Igwebuike and Igbo-African Conflict Resolution

The theme of peace and reconciliation is not a foreign notion to the African people, and its intensity has accelerated, whether we look at it from secular or religious considerations. It is deeply integrated into the total life and worldview of the people, without delineating life into religious and secular components, because religion is part and parcel of traditional life. Thus, Mbiti (2010) opines that, While each people has particular ways of expressing its religious life, there are many similar features that make it meaningful to speak collectively of African Religion in the singular, albeit without uniformity or

centralized institutions. In African Religion there is more action on peace and less speculation about it. A lot of institutions and established processes are involved in conflict resolutions in Africa. This function all the time at many levels of life, which may take place in person-to-person relations, in the family, in the neighborhood, in the community, and among peoples (tribes) that, may have disputes or fights with one another. In Africa, peace and reconciliation is not taken for granted; the fact that people quarrel, have disputes and serious differences, fight and even injure or kill one another is a tragic reality of life, makes it a necessity for people to develop concepts and methods of bringing about reconciliation and peace where and when such fights ensue in the community.

Reconciliation here will be presented from the lens of *Igwebuike* Igbo-African peace and conflict resolution. According to Kanu, “*Igwebuike* is an Igbo word; one of the major dialects in Africa. It is a principle that is at the heart of African thought, and in fact, the modality of being in African ontology (2017, p. 6).” He went on to say that it can be employed as a word or used as a sentence: as a word, it is written as *Igwebuike*, and as a sentence, it is written as, *Igwe bu ike*, with the component words enjoying some independence in terms of space. The three words involved: ‘Igwe’ is a noun which means number or population, usually a huge number or population. ‘Bu’ is a verb, which means is. ‘Ike’ is another verb, which means strength or power (Kanu, 2016). Thus, put together, it means ‘number is strength’ or ‘number is power’, that is, when human beings come together in solidarity and complementarity, they are powerful or can constitute an insurmountable force. Its English equivalents are ‘complementarity’, ‘solidarity’ and ‘harmony’. The preferred concept, however, is ‘complementarity’ (Kanu, 2015a&b).

However, applied to African Traditional conflict resolution, Kanu writes that:

Igwebuike, an Igbo-African philosophy is, therefore, employed as a system of conflict resolution which would help Africans to incorporate African traditional categories in the resolution of conflicts, promotion of peace, justice, freedom, human dignity, sustainable development and better quality of life. *Igwebuike* as an indigenous wholistic Igbo philosophy is generated to emphasize that indigenous peoples have worldviews and means of relating to the world. This worldview is rooted within indigenous epistemologies, cultures and traditions with the understanding that we are all related- each aspect relates with the whole: the dynamics of reality are based on the relationships and experiences of interrelationships and interconnections (2017, p.2).

From the foregoing, *Igwebuike* as an Igbo-African concept has community living at the base of its philosophy, the nucleus of Traditional African society

as can be seen in Julius Nyerere's *Ujamaa*. *Ujamaa* is a Swahili word meaning 'extended family', 'brotherhood' or 'socialism'; as a political concept it asserts that a person becomes a person through the people or community. Mbiti (2010) explained that community life is very important in Africa, and that an injury to one is an injury to all. That is why people would say "we have been killed" if one member of their community was killed. If this corporate community is thus injured, the whole corporate community must be reconciled and is therefore involved in the reconciliation between (seemingly) only two members of the community. This is so because as Shedrack (2014) observed, African Traditional Dispute Resolution (ATDR) attaches more premium to community interests than individual needs and interests. The truth of this matter is Traditional African Dispute Resolution (TADR) is predominantly a community responsibility. The Chief presides over the resolution process alongside other elders and the people. The chief only facilitates the process, but the community owns the process.

In *Igwebuike* Igbo-African philosophy, the process of reconciliation is the reserve of elders, diviners, healers and other respected members of the society. Conflict resolution aimed at restoring social harmony, mending breached social ties, performance of rituals and offering apologies or compensation to ensure that the status quo before the dispute is restored. The process involved getting the parties and their families together, and getting to the root of the conflict to ensure underlying causes of conflict were resolved and the parties reconciled. Charles lists these as some of the institutions that manage conflict in Igbo land:

Ezi (Family), Okpala (eldest man holding ancestral spear), Umunna (Clan), Umuada or Umookpu (Females born in a clan), Amala (Council of elders), Nzuko Obodo (Village/town assembly), Oha-na-Eze (meeting of the king and the people), Ndi-isi Obodo (Village heads), Ndimmanwu (masquerade group), Out-Ogbo/Ebiri (ag grades), Out-ndi nta (hunters association), Ndi chili echichi (titled men like Ozo title-holders) and Agbara (oracles/deities) (2016, p. 27).

Whenever conflict ensues, the leader of any of these groups calls together those who are involved and the people-who serve dual purpose as audience and as witnesses. Reconciliation is never complete in tradition Igbo society without gestures, a public show of reconciliation.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

The Sacrament of Reconciliation also known as Penance or Confession is one of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church in which the faithful obtain absolution for the sins committed against God and neighbour and are reconciled with the community of the Church. When you use the word reconciliation, you are referring to the restoration of friendship destroyed by sin. Ossai avers that, "Both "penance" and "confession" describe the action of the penitent. "Reconciliation" describes the new state of life achieved by the penitent through this sacrament (2013, p. 64)." Thus, the sacrament of reconciliation refers to healing the rift (conflict) between a sinful human being, God and other human beings. It is called the sacrament of reconciliation, because it imparts to the sinner the life of God who reconciles: "Be reconciled to God" says the Scripture (2 Cor. 5:20). He who lives by God's merciful love are ready to respond to the Lord's call in Matthew 5:24: "Go; first be reconciled to your brother." "Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God's mercy for the offense committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, by example, and by prayer labors for their conversion (CCC1422)." During his public life Jesus not only forgave sins, but also made plain the effect of this forgiveness: he reintegrated forgiven sinners into the community of the People of God from which sin had alienated or even excluded them. A remarkable sign of this is the fact that Jesus receives sinners at his table, a gesture that expresses in an astonishing way both God's forgiveness and the return to the bosom of the People of God (CCC 1443).

Through the sacrament of reconciliation, sinful persons express their sorrow and contrition for personal wrongdoing after baptism in order to be reconciled to; restored to full and healthy friendship or relationship with the loving and merciful God and the Christian Community. To receive forgiveness for sinful wrongdoing through this sacrament, Ekstrom (2010) opines that, one must have true sorrow, be willing to confess one's sin to a Catholic priest, make reparation for sin and receive absolution. For Ossai, "The Catholic Church teaches and believes that the Sacrament of Penance was instituted by Christ himself. Jesus gave the Apostles and their successors the spiritual power to forgive sins (cf. Matthew 16:19, John 20:21-23) (2013, p. 65)." He continued by saying that this power was not a personal gift, but transferred through them to the Church as a permanent institution.

The Elements of Reconciliation

Africans had an existing structure, institutions and process of reconciliation before the arrival of Christianity to African soil, which correspond to that brought by the missionaries. A critical look into the beliefs of Christianity and African Traditional practices reviews that there are some similarities in concepts which allows them to coexist harmoniously. For example, the

believe that God is the creator of everything including society. Society, according to their belief systems, is a moral entity since the Creator provided a moral code which directs individual behaviour patterns. However, this moral code can be violated, and any infraction of it is regarded as sin, which earns the displeasure of God. Such sinful acts according to Mbiti (2010) includes; immoral behaviour, breaking covenant, ritual mistakes, breaking of taboos, committing an abominable act, offence against God or man and pollution. Reconciliation is then the restoration of life force whenever or wherever it is diminished. Whenever there is a breach of order in the universe as established by God through the ancestors, humanity must see to it that the harmony is restored. It is important to note that, given this view of sin, reconciliation aims to remedy a broken relationship and restore harmony, rather than to punish the guilty. In addition to this, Kanu says:

This explains why the African approach always entails a spiritual dimension, for creating and restoring damaged relationship with God, the deities, the ancestors, family, neighbours, etc. This is done in a way, sometimes through rituals that link the people with their past, the present and their future- it is a holistic approach. Thus, it is not just about justifying the one and condemning the other, it works towards a compromise for the reconciliation of the both parties and the restoration of balance or the harmony of reality (2017, p. 9).

Reconciliation process is anchored by an authority figure in Igbo Tradition society, who mediates between conflicting parties but is empowered to make binding judgments. The purpose is not to render a judgment in law but to reconcile the conflicting parties and its norms. Therefore, reconciliation is not an isolated act, but a constant readiness to leave the tyranny of violence and fear behind. It is not an event but a process, and as such usually a difficult, long and unpredictable one, involving various steps and stages. These steps and stages Huyse (2003), identifies as Healing, truth-seeking, justice and reparation, which correspond to the four elements of the sacrament of reconciliation-contrition, confession, satisfaction and absolution-in the Catholic Church.

a. Truth-Telling

Conflict resolution in *Igwebuiké* philosophy is a community affair. The first basic features of *Igwebuiké* philosophy of peace and conflict resolution, says that, "Conflict is not viewed as a problem between the disputants but as a problem of the entire community (Kanu 2017, p. 9)", this is captured beautifully in the Igbo adage, *Anya beewe imi e beewe*, "when the eyes begin

to cry, the nose cry also.” *Igwebuike* sees conflict as a thorn on the flesh that must be carefully removed. In traditional Igbo society, the two parties in conflict never closed their eyes or fold their hands against the restoration of order, relationship and reasonability. At least, one of the quarreling parties was reasonable enough to associate with the wisdom of reconciliation. Kanu had this mind when saying, “In relation to conflict, *Igwebuike* philosophy does not understand conflict merely as a fracas between two persons, or two groups, it rather understands conflict as a fracas touching on the harmony of reality (2017, p. 9)”.

The first step to conflict resolution is truth-telling. The conflicting party is required to make a statement or narrate the issue at stake to the authority handling the reconciliation process. They are to tell the whole truth in their statement without hiding anything. This is the major and most significant aspect of conflict resolution, because without knowing the real cause of the conflict, the mediator will not be able to resolve the conflict. This is why in some cases; the parties in conflict are made to swear an oath before an oracle before proceeding to truth-telling. The mediator, judge and arbitrator must be well prepared because truth is not static. Truth is also a covenant logo disputant or parties in conflict must not miss. For one of the conflicting parties to have come to the reconciliation table means that person is ready to settle or resolve the dispute, although, this is not always the case. We find truth-telling also in the sacrament of reconciliation. Ossai assert that, Confession means “telling of our sins to an authorized priest for the purpose of obtaining forgiveness (2013, p. 66).” It entails the acknowledgement and acceptance or admitting and naming one's sin. It is in this act that the penitent names his or her sins, acknowledging the judgment of God over his or her actions.

Generally, there is an expectation that confession of sin be integral and thorough, and the priest can be of assistance in guiding the penitent through such a process. The function of a priest in sacramental confession is the same with an elder in *Igwebuike* Igbo conflict resolution process. The usual minister of the sacrament of reconciliation is a presbyter (priest). The word “presbyter” is a Latin word which means an elder. So a priest is an elder in the Catholic Church, who represents God during the sacrament of reconciliation just as an elder does in Igbo Traditional society. An elder bolster/persuade the parties in conflict into telling the truth, and by guiding them through the process, helps them bring about peace. Truth-telling is one of the most important steps used by elders in the *Igwebuike* Igbo-African traditional society in the reconciliation process. A fruitful reconciliation begins with truth telling. The process of reconciliation can be established only when there is openness and transparency.

b. Forgiveness

After listening to the parties in conflict, elders acting as judge give verdict and apportion blames to whoever is at fault. When this is done, the defaulter renders apology to the community through the victim, who is expected to accept the apology and forgive. This is based on the Igbo adage, *Ma mmehie adighi, mgbaghara agaghi a di*, “if there is no sin, there will be no forgiveness.” According to Igbokwe, “Forgiveness among disputants is generally understood as the giving up of the feelings of resentment that the victims have against the offenders, which results in the restoration of a social bond between them (2018, p. 88).” It does not mean forgetting but giving up the conflict or feelings of pain for peace. *Igwebuike* understands peace within the context of good health, well-being, order and freshness (Kanu 2017, p.8). A community can be said to be healthy, when there is no conflict, when people are living harmoniously and when there is no feeling of suspicion.

In the sacrament of reconciliation, forgiveness can be compared to contrition. **Contrition** is one's expression of sorrow for sin. Contrition occupies first place in the work of the sacrament, but the expression of the "Act of Contrition" usually follows after the confession of sin. The way of contrition may defer in people. For instance, in some people, it is contrite of heart that moves them to go for confession, while in others, it is after they must have confess their sins during the admonition of the priest. But in *Igwebuike* Igbo traditional conflict resolution, contrition comes after truth-telling, when the elder who is mediating the reconciliation process has pronounced the guilty party.

In Traditional Igbo society, one is not guilty until pronounced by the elders who are responsible for conflict resolution. Contrition is that remorse, that comes about through understanding the nature of one's relationship with God as an invitation and a call to discipleship, and an awareness of the ways in which one has not lived up to that call. Remorse is expressed in the form of apologies and articulations of regret and guilt, conveyed privately or publicly. Mercy and forgiveness are also variously expressed (Kriesberg, 2007). “The council of Florence noted that to be sacramentally forgiven one must express contrition for personal sinfulness, confess to a priest, and make amends, also known as “reparation, by doing penance” (Ekstrom 2010, p.227).” Forgiveness in both cultures is not an option but a necessity for reconciliation.

c. Reparation

Reparation is a key element of any true reconciliation process. Reconciliation and justice are almost twin notions. Many people argue that the search for peaceful coexistence, trust, and empathy demands that “justice be done” - that in one way or another, the crimes of the past are acknowledged and punished. Reparation is sought because of a breakdown in relationships often require

restitution before the reconciliation can be established. The sixth basic features of *Igwebuike* philosophy of peace and conflict resolution says that, there is an emphasis on restorative penalty. This penalty has human face, not “a winner takes it all” affair but that of no winner no vanquished. “*Igwebuike* works towards a situation that acknowledges a mutually beneficial condition rather just condemning one and exalting the other. This is because the emphasis is on co-operation with one another for the common good as opposed to competition that could lead to grave instability within the community (Kanu 2017, p. 9).”

However, reparation can either be restorative, compensatory or expiatory in nature; this is so because every crime committed offends the human and the divine worlds. Restorative and compensatory reparation to the human world is necessary because in the first place, one has offended the community and one's neighbour. One must do what is possible in order to repair the harm to the human world. Restorative and compensatory can take the form of returning a stolen goods, restore the reputation of someone slandered, and pay compensation for injuries. For instance, in the case of stealing in Igbo society, the culprit will be sternly warned and rebuked if the stolen property is of low value, but if the property involved is of high value, the culprit is tied up for days without food and if he was caught red-handed, he is carried about the village especially round the market square with the stolen property conspicuously tied around his neck while passers-by jeer, curse and spit on him. Later, the culprit would be expected to make restitution. The penalty will be more severe if the stolen property is symbolic such as yams, hen and so on or if the culprits is of high ranking such as titled men, elders, etc. Stealing from an outsider is even much more serious, for the culprit is detained until a substantial ransom is paid by his relatives apart from which in the former times, the culprit would be sold into slavery.

But some crimes also injure and weaken the culprit's relationships with the gods. To this effect, expiation is needed. Expiation is often done through sacrifice to the gods of the land, to appease the gods. The items for this sacrifice are provided mostly by the culprit as reparation. In the sacrament of reconciliation, there is also that aspect of reparation, which may come in form of prayer, restoration or compensation depend on the kind of sin one have committed, as judged right by the priest. Thus, the Catechism of Catholic Church states that, “Raised up from sin, the sinner must still recover his full spiritual health by doing something more to make amends for the sin: he must "make satisfaction for" or "expiate" his sins. This satisfaction is also called "penance" (CCC 1459)." By satisfaction, Ossai says, the priest has to impose some penance on the penitent after confession and that satisfaction can also be called atonement because it can require some act of restitution (2013). **Satisfaction** for sin is the way in which the sinner shows his or her "firm

purpose of amendment," which means that the sinner demonstrates by action the intention to heal the harm done by sin. When someone harms another, the process of reconciliation in that relationship entails making restitution, and that gesture in itself is a healing remedy.

d. Celebration

Reconciliation in Igbo traditional society is incomplete without celebration. First, you don't invite the elders for conflict resolution without some piece of kola-nuts and a gourd of palm-wine. After the kola-nuts are broken and shared, the convener presents the issue at stake. When conflict had been resolved, the parties to conflict were expected to show publicly the sign of reconciliation. **The fifth basic features of Igwebuiké philosophy of peace and conflict resolution** says that, "There is a high degree of public participation. There are no secret trails in African traditional legal system. Since the problem between the disputants is seen as a community problem, in restoring harmony, there must be a general satisfaction among the public regarding the procedure and outcome of the case (Kanu 2017, p. 9)."

At the end of reconciliation process, the reconciled party show any of these gestures as a sign of true reconciliation; clasp/shaking of hands, washing the real or symbolic wounds of his or her victim with water from a nearby river, dancing together as an expression of rejecting anger and embracing communion, enemies could be told to speak to one another of potential good days (parties or meetings) that were lost due to the animosity and sacrifices and offerings can be made to reconstruct a relationship between human beings, God, and creation. Closely related to the sacrifices and offerings of reconciliation, are the rituals intended as communion. Sacrifices may consist of libations of water, palm wine or beer, small quantities of food or the flesh of a sacrificed animal. Meiring opines that, "When meat is burned, for example, it symbolizes communion with the ancestors (2005, p. 111)." Mbiti commented on the importance of rituals for reconciliation saying, cleansing ritual would for example be used to cleanse a broken relationship so that a fresh relationship could be built. These rituals remove both psychological and spiritual injuries (2010). The whole idea is that a communion is established between two parties (one of which may be the ancestors) through eating and drinking together.

In fact, the whole of person-to-person, and divinity-to-person, relations have their basis largely in celebration. Their intention is to cultivate peace, good relations, ties, mutuality, friendship, respect, and love between people, between people and nature, and between people and spiritual realities (God, divinities and spirits, as the case may be). Conflict affects the entire community and is witnessed and endorsed by the community, the living-dead,

and often by God as well. The celebration attempts to affirm and recreate the person's original ontological unity with God and humanity. It is a quest for and a sign of the primal harmony of life and community. Reconciliation is celebrated by feasting together. The eating is a communion, a celebration of life in a community.

The sacrament of reconciliation is a celebration of its own. Nevertheless, at the end of the sacrament, the prayer of absolution is offered. **Absolution** from sin is offered by the priest acting *in persona Christi*, "in the person of Christ." The real power of the sacrament is this incarnational moment, as the healing power of Christ in his forgiveness is given a real face and a real voice in the person of the priest. One can pray to God to ask for forgiveness anytime, and all are encouraged to do so as a means of seeking and finding forgiveness for minor everyday faults (i.e., venial sins), but only in the sacramental celebration is that gift of forgiveness offered in such concrete form. With the words of absolution, the penitent finds peace once more with God. Thus, reconciliation aims at restoring peace and communal living with the Igbo principle of *egbe bere ugo bere*; 'let the kit perch, let the eagle perch.'

Conclusion

Igwebuiké proposes complementarity, which the sacrament of reconciliation set out to do. With regards to reconciliation, the Catholic Church's sacrament of reconciliation seeks to complement *Igwebuiké* Igbo conflict resolution especially at a time when modernity is trying to super-impose itself on the traditional method of conflict resolution. In an effort to overshadow completely the traditional method, modern method has gradually flushed out the use of chief priest and shrine in resolving conflicts in Igbo traditional society. So, where the *Igwebuiké* method stops in conflict resolution, the sacrament of reconciliation continues. It takes care of the spiritual or vertical dimension of reconciliation which is being swept away by modernity.

However, this work has revealed that these two religions can contribute something towards peace and reconciliation, to ameliorate conflict and foster peace. We have seen that potentially *Igwebuiké* Igbo-African philosophy of peace and conflict resolution is clearly committed to peace, and in various ways it undertakes methods that teach, encourage, and promote peace. Neither *Igwebuiké* Igbo-African philosophy of peace and conflict resolution nor the sacrament of reconciliation in the Catholic Church is innocent of engaging, aggravating, or promoting conflicts and wars. But their teachings can challenge people to make and practice peace at all levels: peace among people, peace between people and nature, and peace between people and God. Their synergy will in a great way help to reduce conflict in Igbo traditional society, thereby bringing about reconciliation.

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