

PROLEGOMENA TO TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS EVANGELISM IN IGBOLAND: RETURNING TO THE BASICS!

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ABSTRACT

This paper strongly argues that before the advocacy for the revival of Igbo Traditional Religion of the type taking place today in some Igbo societies become very fruitful, there are preliminary objections that must be addressed. That is the reasoning behind the choice of 'prolegomena' as our title. Those preliminary objections encompass intellectual, historical, theological and missiological concerns all having to do with the nature, the essence, the content, the message and the ultimate goal of Igbo Traditional Religion. It asks whether the religion has got the conceptual coherence and theological basis necessary to sustain a credible religious movement. Instead of the sporadic and uncoordinated methods trying to bamboozle people into adherence to the religion, by over and above all the instrumentalization of the entertainment value of the Mmonwu sacred institution, we are proposing that a systematic effort be put into place to address the evident lacunae in Igbo Traditional Religion. We think that these gaps have never been addressed before in African religious scholarship in a way that we are calling attention to. By adopting a historical, phenomenological and critical approach, our philosophical analysis of the issues at stake bring a much needed academic direction to the promotion of Igbo Traditional Religion.

Keywords: advocacy, Igbo, Chukwu, religion, prolegomena, Mmonwu, evangelism, ancestors.

Introduction

Those familiar with Emmanuel Kant would immediately identify the word “prolegomena” used in the title of this work. It is deliberately chosen to do the function which Kant's usage did, that is, to question the assumptions upon which metaphysical science is based. In fact, Kant's enterprise in itself, was to question the future of metaphysics as a science and whether it is even possible to have metaphysics as a science. It was Kant's encounter with Hume's critique of the metaphysics of causation, which woke him from his celebrated “dogmatic slumber” and led to his publication of his master work the - *Critique of Pure Reason*. Thanks to him, those who venture into metaphysics now have a sure footing on which to stand.

In our own case, we have in most recent times, noticed the call by many Igbo youths or

traditionalists, to return to the traditional religion of our ancestors, a religion which with the advent of colonialism and Christianity, had been abandoned for close to two centuries. Apart from the Mmonwu (masquerade) sacred institution which has become, in the hands of the protagonists, an instrument for this advocacy, there is a regular campaign through various channels of the social media championed by masters of the social media (Facebook) like Mathias Ezeaku of Eziokwu bu Ndu Foundation and Uchechukwu Obiajulu Sakar known as Maazi Dibia. They are not the sole voices to this call nor are they the first voices advocating this return to traditional religion. We recall that Maazi Nnamdi Kalu of IPOB and his followers, made this call the fulcrum of his radio broadcasts and messages hinged on the worship and blessings of a certain 'Chukwu okike abiam.' (Anyaeibu, 2023) The power of Kalu's charisma and the consistency of his messages fortunately or unfortunately rubbed off the minds of thousands of Igbo youths who willingly became the foot soldiers of the mission to return Igboland to her past sacred traditions and the worship of our forgone ancestors.

The major objective of this write-up is to question the intellectual, historical, cultural, theological and missiological assumptions animating this call to return to the traditional religion of our ancestors, and by so doing, abandon the Christian religion which has numerously been described by the social media specialists as “foreign religion,” “a scam,” and “a means of continued exploitation of our people.” Given that this quest is interdisciplinary, we shall draw from African Traditional Religion (ATR), missiology, religious studies, anthropology, sociology, and Igbo cultural history.

This study employs a qualitative philosophical methodology grounded in historical, phenomenological, and critical-analytical approaches. The historical approach examines the development of Igbo Traditional Religion before and after colonialism to identify discontinuities affecting contemporary revival movements. The phenomenological approach seeks to describe Igbo religious beliefs and practices as experienced and understood by their adherents without reducing them to external explanatory frameworks. Complementing these approaches, critical-philosophical analysis is employed to evaluate the conceptual, theological, historical, and missiological assumptions underlying contemporary advocacy for a return to Igbo Traditional Religion. The study relies primarily on documentary sources, including scholarly books, journals, historical records, and theological literature. Through this interdisciplinary framework, the study critically assesses whether contemporary traditional religious evangelism possesses the conceptual coherence and theological foundations necessary to sustain a credible religious movement.

The propagators of this religion have always assumed that Igbo Traditional Religion is our authentic indigenous religious heritage. This assumption has masked the major question: what do we understand by Igbo Traditional Religion? What is its essence? Do the practice of rituals, sacrifices and ancestor worship constitute the essence of the traditional African and Igbo religion? To what are they asking us to return? Is it to the dilapidated shrines in

various parts of Igbo land with termite-eaten idols found in them? Are the existence of these dilapidated shrines, enough historical evidence of the religion of our ancestors? Where are the rites of the religion?

In a Kantian-like manner, we are drawing the attention of the propagators to the basic things that need be determined about Igbo Traditional Religion before they can begin advocating for adhesion to it. We must first understand what our authentic traditional religious heritage is before we can decide what to do with it, whether to return to its practice, reject or reform it in its entirety. Our prolegomena will perform the task of leading the protagonists to the proper understanding of what they are propagating, before they can begin asking us all to accompany them in that return to the roots.

Understanding the Word “Prolegomena”

When Kant wrote his famous work - 'Prolegomena to any future metaphysics' in 1783, he did not perhaps imagine how popular it would become. Its popularity is certainly based on the fact that in it Kant proved that making preliminary investigations are absolutely necessary for understanding and adhering to any enterprise. He (Kant, 2001) publicly confessed to the influence of David Hume on him. “I openly confess that my remembering David Hume was the very thing which many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber and gave my investigations in the field of speculative philosophy a quite new direction” (p. 5). His encounter with the inquiries of David Hume on the metaphysics of causation gave him a new direction in his intellectual search. That encounter became a catalyst to the production of monumental works like the *Critique of Pure Reason*, *Critique of Practical Reason* and the *Critique of Judgment*. These works have become the indispensable tripod to the metaphysics of Kant.

Prolegomena is a Greek word composed of 'pro' referring to 'before' and 'legein' signifying 'to speak,' or 'to say.' The combination of the two words give us the parent word 'prolegein' meaning “things said before.” Ordinarily then, it refers to the things that must be said before the major discussions.' Though Kant did not give any etymological analysis of the Greek word, he made an assumption that his readers would understand his usage of the word as referring to his introductory remarks or preliminary investigations in metaphysics. It was a work he wrote to remind philosophers of the basic questions they must answer before they can begin making metaphysical claims. He also presented it as an introduction to his monumental work the 'Critique of Pure Reason.' Lucas Thorpe (2015) in Kant's dictionary describe *prolegomena* as “an introduction to or preparatory remarks on a particular subject.” (p. 165). Hence, it was a call to remind philosophers of the things they must first examine before making claims that can be epistemologically described as valid and legitimate.

Like Kant who was announcing a methodological revolution in the sense of re-framing the methods of doing metaphysics from provision of answers to positing of questions, our prolegomena similarly wants to call the preliminary issues that must be cleared by the proponents of Igbo Traditional Religion before an evangelism can effectively begin to take place. Although proponents exhibit strong ideological and emotional commitment, their advocacy often lacks a clearly articulated intellectual and theological foundation. We want to help them by calling the attention of the academia to this phenomenon that is raging in the local fields like a wild fire without direction. Our task is foundational in the sense that we are asking an essential epistemological question which the intellectuals must no longer neglect: What must the proponents of Igbo Traditional Religion establish beyond reasonable doubt before they can begin advocating a massive return to it? The assumptions we question are in the Kantian spirit of critiquing the pretentious habit of arriving at conclusions without examining the methods that lead to such conclusions. Those in a hurry to evangelize or should we say, re-evangelize the Igbo nation, must first examine whether the destination they are trying to lead us to actually exists. If it exists, the next question would be whether Ndi Igbo want to return or should return to their ancestral religion. They would have to make a more convincing case that the land of promise is far more superior to what is obtainable. They must have to show that they have intellectual, cultural, historical, theological and missiologically sound reasons that will make that call to return to traditional religion credible.

The Intellectual Foundations that must be Established

The issue at stake here is multi-dimensional. In the first place is the issue of concept and definition. What concept are we dealing with here? Is it about 'African Traditional Religion' as it is presented by the Universities in Africa? Or its equivalent 'African Traditional Religions' as some have argued given the multiplicity of traditional religions in Africa? (Ofuasia, 2026, p.vii). It is not even better when we localize the religion and address it as 'Igbo Traditional Religion.' The problem that arises would be the homogeneity of practice as if that is even necessary for a foundational religion. The practice is as diverse as the various dialects and villages of *Ndi Igbo*. Even the gods that serve as objects of worship and in some cases, the means of arriving at the Supreme Being 'Chukwu,' are quite different. While 'Chukwu' is regarded as the Supreme Being, the existence of multifarious beings regarded as gods throw a spanner in the wheel of faith, understanding and worship. A religion that is both monotheistic and polytheistic at the same time looks very much a contradiction. (Orjikwe, 2016, p. 7) Recently, Ofuasia (2026) is calling for a reinterpretation of the proper concept of God befitting for the Igbo traditional religious worldview. What concept of God and what religion are the protagonists of traditional evangelism professing?

The manifestations of traditional evangelism by the adherents of Igbo traditional religion

need to be object driven. We are yet to understand the object of their evangelical activities. Are they directing their mission to the Christian religion that is the predominant religion in Igbo land or to the spirituality of the Igbo people which is also predominantly Christian? If their evangelism is aimed at the propagation of Igbo culture, one would expect that they make an official distinction between what they call Igbo Traditional Religion and Igbo culture.

Traditional Igbo religion was never overtly and systematically evangelistic in nature as the protagonists of today seem to be doing. It was a way of life into which people were born. Going back to history, there are no proven records that our ancestors engaged in active evangelism to pass across the importance of Igbo Traditional Religion. Talking of records make it even more difficult to pinpoint at exactly what the structure of the Igbo Traditional Religion was. Of all the known religions in the world, African and Igbo Traditional Religions are described as oral religions. It was rather a cultural thing which passed through layers of family structure, community life, locality, ritual practices and traditional events. The community knew the essence of Igbo traditional religion and the rites of its practices. However, when colonialism arrived, those structures and institutions that communicated and transmitted the religion of our ancestors, were destroyed and its authentic memory was evacuated. What would in reality remain would be the distorted idea of what it looked like. Hence, those propagating for a return to that religion, should first take proper hold of it, reconstruct it, begin practicing it and allow it to appeal to the Igbo spirit which would gladly reunite with it. That is the major way traditional Igbo religion would recover its identity.

Historical Grounds

So far, the major authority that our protagonists of the return to Igbo Traditional Religion quote is that it is the religion of our ancestors. Whether it is or not has never been in doubt because we know that in the precolonial Igbo society, our Igbo people were deeply given to the practice of their religious beliefs through the local means available to them. Those local means would include the family structure based on traditional authority where the head of the family directed the affairs of those under his charge. This would include directing the religious practices of the family according to tradition. In this case, the dictates of the tradition would mostly be oral and not written or documented. The transmission of traditional practices by oral means were both valid and defective. It was valid because that was the only means available to them at the time, (Idowu, 1973, p. 83) and defective because of the attendant dangers in transmitting the practices. The transmitter and the transmitted could be affected by time, and circumstances leading to the dilution or even the outright altering of the message. This generational method of transmission could eventually and in most cases that is the reality, totally change or disfigure the essence of what would become the Igbo Traditional Religion. Vansina (1985) identifies selection and interpretation as some of the major limitations of oral tradition. The interplay of the two events makes oral tradition which is a valid source, a dangerous form of history.

Selectivity implies discarding certain information one has about the past and from that pool of information keeping only what is still significant in the present. However, the information that is retained, still comes from the past. Interpretation means to alter information from the past to give it new meaning and as interpretation is more creative than selection, it is also more dangerous, but not to the point that all is to be rejected.(p. 191).

Now after two centuries of Christianity in Igbo land, and the presence and effects of modernity, it could be very pertinent to ask which version of Igbo Traditional Religion is in discussion? Culture changes and it changes everything with it. The precolonial version of Igbo Traditional Religion had no historically documented evidence of its practices and beliefs. The disjointed and sporadic versions that are being promoted today have yet to be formalized among the divergent Igbo communities. Religious practice obtainable in areas like Aro, is quite different from the one in Nri deemed to be the cradle of Igbo civilization and highly credited with evolving the priest-kingship rites responsible for the initial upshoots of the Igbo Traditional Religion. Historian like Isichei (1976) mentioned that Nri ritual specialists 'travelled through much of the east and west Igboland purifying communities from abominations.' (p.10). Even among the communities around the Nri region, their religious practices lack homogeneity that is very important in claiming uniformity of origin. Leaving aside the question of homogeneity, the central place of historical and textual evidence cannot be overemphasized. In the words of Orjiekwe (2016):

This lack made it very difficult, if not impossible for scholars of Igbo studies to find original information or material in any aspect of Igbo traditional religion. The effect is observed more, when one tries to discuss what should have been the core concepts of this religion. In this regard, we are not surprised that there are many views on aspects of Igbo traditional religion. (p. 10).

In as much as oral traditions are valid, they are treated in the same breath as symbolic narratives that express communal identity and practice. They are never to replace historically, and documented verifiable events. Afigbo (2006) calls us to exercise some caution in the acceptance of oral tradition as the major evidence for the authenticity of a people's religion. The caveat is that oral tradition must be critically examined, contextually interpreted and corroborated with other facts. This is simply because, like other sources as written documents, oral tradition does not authenticate itself. It needs the authentication of interpreters and analysts to have evidential and historical validity worthy of confidence. Jan Vansina (1985) averred that “lack of chronology and interdependence of sources are limitations that are truly characteristics of tradition.” (p. 186f). To overcome them would require the addition of outside evidence which must be congruent with the contents of oral tradition, a condition which looks more like an exception than the rule. (p. 190) Hence the question of history would certainly establish that there is no single, uniform Igbo Traditional Religion to return to. This makes the task even more herculean to convince the

bystanders that the contemporary Igbo Traditional Religion faithfully mirrors the religion of the Igbo of the precolonial times. This discovery makes it imperative for the proponents of this advocacy to first go back to the drawing board and begin sifting and preserving the oral traditions that have not gone into extinction. Idowu (1973) insists that “these oral traditions constitute the scriptures as well as the breviaries of African traditional religion.” (p.85). After the collection, theologians and interpreters would enter the major task of documenting the fundamental belief system and practice worthy of religion in the contemporary times.

Theological Concerns to be Demonstrated

Igbo Traditional Religion is part of the cultural heritage of the Igbo people, though the lack of documented texts of the beliefs and practices of the religion hamper the religion from gaining the recognition that it truly deserves among the world religions. Its cultural heritage bequeathed to it the concept of God which guarded and drew together its belief and popular faith. The demands that our prolegomena are making are those of refining the theological basis of that belief which until the present, have remained ill defined or ill systematized, and thus lack the power of conviction that would draw believers from other faith systems to abandon their religions and rush back to the traditional religion of our ancestors. People who gather or troop out to enjoy the entertainment value of the Mmonwu sacred institution, do not by that adhere to Igbo Traditional Religion. We must go beyond the ephemeral pleasure to the solid foundational issues upon which the faith, conviction and practice of the religion must be based.

The concept of God is the central theological issue that must be addressed by the protagonists of the Igbo Traditional Religion. It is futile to presume that the Igbo have no theological idea of a supreme being. What adds value to the discussion is the understanding of that concept of God and the place or function of other divinities that co-exist with the supreme being God known as '*Chukwu*.' The other divinities are usually referred to as "*Alusi*." It is this co-existence of the Supreme God and the other gods that have given rise to the accusation of polytheism or worse still idolatry where the divinities are represented by art works. In the Yoruba part of Nigeria where the same type of God and gods co-exist, Idowu (1973) gives it a different terminology of “implicit” or “diffused monotheism,” “because here we have a monotheism in which there exist other powers which derive from Deity such being and authority that they can be treated, for practical purposes, almost as ends in themselves.” (p. 135). It was John Awolawu (1976) who described the concepts of God in African Traditional Religions as interpreted by the foremost scholars like Bolaji Idowu and John Mbiti as 'modified monotheism' though Mbiti (2009) himself confirms that African religion is a “deeply monotheistic religion.” (p.147). Is the Igbo Traditional Religion monotheistic in any form or shade? That is the question that must be answered for the appeal to return to our heritage to make much sense.

A new interpretation and understanding of the concept of God has emerged in the latest work of Emmanuel Ofuasia (2026). Employing philosophical rigour and analysis, he examined through the history of the various conceptions of God in African literature, and

found them full of European or colonial bias and thus inadequate to capture the real concept of God as expressed by the cosmology of most Africans and particularly the Igbo. One caveat from the onset is his wrong appellation of “African God”(p.xii) to mean the understanding of 'God' in Africa and by Africans. God as God is not compartmentalized into 'African God,' 'European God,' 'Abrahamic God,' or any other thing like that. Ofuasia (2026) proposes panenthesim as the most appropriate term for talking about the concept of God in African traditional religions. (p.xiii). He briefly describes it as “belief in one God who can be reached among multiple divinities.” (p.xiv). The foundation of his identification of the concept of God in African Traditional Religions is process theology. For Ofuasia (2026), what panentheism means is that:

There is an independent entity called God. This God, being an individual possesses unique aims. This God resides in the world. Events in the world affect God just like God also influences the world albeit persuasively. This means that God is immanent and not transcendent. Permit me to add that in panentheism, there are no gods but one. Divinities are recognized but all of these, within the context of ATRs are the link or mediator between humans and the one God. So, unlike polytheism, which hints at the belief in, and worship of numerous gods, panentheism sticks to the ideas of one God who also has aims and is part of this world. (p.100).

The next is to determine the structure of such religion. Every religion of the world has got a structure that is well established since its inception and that has undergone some evolution that have made it even better and more comprehensible. Scholars of African Traditional Religion have come up with certain theological structures. For P. A. Talbot (1926): “The religion of the inhabitants of Southern Provinces of Nigeria would appear to be compounded of four main elements, viz polytheism, anthropomorphism, animism, and ancestor worship” (p.14). His observations describe the co-existence of the supreme God and other gods as polytheism. Some other scholars agree with him on this identification but whether all agree as to its name is yet to be seen. Anthropomorphism is the human way of thinking, appreciating or interpreting of the divine. Animism recognizes the presence of spirits manifest in the cult that worships and appreciates them. Ancestor worship is a characteristic veneration reserved to the ancestors. Another major voice in this inquiry is Parrinder (1961). He also identifies fourfold structure of the African Traditional Religion.

It has been discovered that there exist, in many West African languages, convenient categories for the consideration of the types of religious belief. Briefly, we may distinguish: (a) a supreme God or creator, sometimes above other gods, sometimes first among equals - Onyame in Twi-Ashanti, Mawu in Ewe-Fon, Olorun in Yoruba, Chuku in Ibo; (b) the chief divinities, generally non-human spirits, often associated with natural forces...; (c) the cult of the human but divinized ancestors of the clan...; (d) the charms and amulets, which some have called 'fetishes' or 'juju.'

From Parrinder, we notice a similar structure to the one Talbot mentioned above. It is very

striking that they all hint at the African religion's appreciation of a supreme God who has other gods, that are either subordinates for certain interpreters or are equals according to Parrinder. Then the place of other divinities, the spirits, the ancestors and the lower forces are recognized and loosely determined. In Igbo Traditional Religion, these different gods and the other forces are acknowledged. Those adhering to the religious practice have yet to systematize and define the place of these beings or forces in the Igbo cosmology and their distinctive functions.

According to Idowu (1973), there are five component elements that go into the making of African Traditional Religion. These are: "belief in God, belief in the divinities, belief in spirits, belief in the ancestors, and the practice of magic and medicine, each with its own consequent, attendant cult." (p.139). These cardinal beliefs cut across the many religious cultures of Africa, and they do not stand in isolation from each other. God alone is referred to as Deity while the spirits are referred to as divinities. The divinities owe their being and divine authority to Deity. (Idowu, 1973, p.159). These distinct parts of the theological structure of African Traditional Religion are quite acknowledged. They are also the same major lines in Igbo Traditional Religion. What we are demanding however, is a coherent, consistent and defensible explanation that would make adherence to this religion appealing and convincing to the ordinary Igbo man/woman.

The Missiological Foundation

Given that we are dealing with an advocacy to return to the Igbo Traditional Religion of our ancestors, we have to seek clarifications on the missiological aspect of the problem that the advocates have perhaps never thought about. Our prolegomena asks important missionary question that has never before attracted scholarly interest: what does this call to return to the roots mean? Though the advocates of this call have never clarified what they mean, let us assume that their call would eventually encompass religious, cultural and political dimensions.

Supposing it were to be a religious call to return to the Igbo traditional religion, the call would not be out of place only if the fundamental tenets of that religion have been clarified and systematized in such a way, that potential adherents would not have much problem understanding what they are intending to adhere to. Do we intend the return to be to the Igbo morality and ethics which nobody has ever promoted except in casual settings where people encounter each other and meet existential problems involving Igbo people. What happens to the christian ethics that have permeated the cultural and religious matrix of the Igbo people? Religion is part of a people's culture and when that culture has been penetrated by Christianity for more than two centuries, it becomes difficult trying to excavate an indigenous or traditional religion that had lost its primary place in the scheme of things. However, as the treatment of the theological basis has shown, the proponents still have a long way to go. Most of them in the local fields do not even possess answers to the questions we have posed above and neither have they even thought of it.

A religious call to return to the traditional religion of Igbo heritage would involve a

deconversion movement which Harrold (2006) defines as “the experience of tuning away from a particular religious identity or way of life.” (p.79). If that is what the call to return to the roots mean, then it is a demand for something that is radical and fundamental because it involves uprooting one from his/her ideological, cultural and moral certainties into a new way of life and living. (Anyaeibu, 2026, p.128ff). To arrive at this level of radicality, the potential convert must have undergone some form of intellectual doubt about his/her current faith status and questioned his belongingness or adherence to a certain faith system. Some of the factors that may bring about this may include dissatisfaction with established religions, lack of positive effects to prayers emitted to God through some particular channels, disappointment as a result of failed prophetic claims made with financial commitments, general boredom and quest for something different. Have we got youths in this category? Can we actually say that those of them we have seen changing over to Igbo Traditional Religion or a different faith system have experienced one or some of the factors enumerated above? Do we not think that some are experimental adventurers looking for a type of wait-and-take-the-answer type of faith system? What are the signs that they will not deconvert again from Igbo traditional system back to their former destinations? Now if eventually a deconversion is involved in the call, what signs would accompany this religious deconversion? The Abrahamic religions-Judaism, Christianity and Islam, all have ways of celebrating conversion from one state of faith and belief into another. What and what are the constituting features of conversion or deconversion in Igbo Traditional Religion? Is it ritual initiation, sacrifice, verbal renunciation of the old faith system, or a ceremonial acceptance by the community? Potential converts would want to know the process of conversion to Igbo Traditional Religion, and that is what our prolegomena would wish that it be established.

If the call to return to the roots is not religious, is it cultural? The advocates must be able to delineate the meaning and implication of their repeated calls. It could be that they are calling for cultural reclamation given the devastations of colonization, christianization, modernity and globalization to the fledgling cultural matrix of Igbo people. A return to the cultural reclamation and appreciation of our heritage would not necessarily involve abandoning one's faith for a new or different faith all together. It would mean a return to the customs and tradition of Igbo people which would specifically refer to the ethics, customary law, and cultural practices of the people. That being the case, the multitudes of young people we witness in traditional festivals across Igbo land, may not necessarily be a sign of conversion or return to Igbo Traditional Religion. It may not even be a sign of their piety or devotion to particular gods/goddesses venerated by the festivities, rather, it may be their way of appreciating their cultural heritage by socializing with their peers.

In cases of religious advocacy, there is always a target audience. When this religious advocacy goes into the markets of the various Igbo communities on their respective market days, when it takes place along the streets of the villages, when it takes place in town squares through the entertainment value of Masquerades, when it takes place on specific market days that fall on Sundays, who is the target audience? The audience must have to be identified if the missionary question is to be answered. Does even the fact that it is

identified as Igbo Traditional Religion not hamper the missionary efforts of the protagonists in the sense that non-Igbos would automatically be excluded from adherence to this religion? A missionary religious project would ordinarily be open to all men and women who can freely accept the faith and practice of a certain system otherwise it would lose its 'missionary' character and become a mere ethnic religion. Every missionary project has a content and an outcome, that which it brings to the possible converts. Christianity calls her own content the 'Good News' of Jesus Christ and its outcome as eternal salvation. Is Igbo Traditional Religion ready to present a consistent body of doctrinal beliefs that would serve as foundation of adherence for every possible convert? What outcome does adherence to the religion produce? The questions of after life and how it is experienced are very valid for a clearer understanding of Igbo Traditional Religion. What is the ultimate goal of life according to the religion? For other religions, there is the doctrine of happiness in heaven with God; believers in these other major religious systems know this and it gives them hope of a better life to come. Will the promise of having a better welcome in the company of the ancestors, (Ndiukwu, 2014, p.329) and *ipso facto* merit the status of veneration by the living, strong enough to convince one to take the radical step of abandoning one's faith system and convert to Igbo Traditional Religion? Until these valid concerns are adequately addressed, any advocacy would be seen as a mere manifestation of empty zeal.

Conclusion

Any religion that has stood the test of time has been able to establish some form of epistemic and intellectual coherence, historical accuracy, theological forthrightness, and missiological focus. In the world of today, the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have been the dominant religions overshadowing and influencing any veritable discussion on religion. For Igbo Traditional Religion to take its rightful place in the company of religions, we have tried to call attention to the foundational concerns that must be addressed before it can begin inspiring people to freely deconvert from their faith systems and convert into its own belief and practices. For as Idowu (1973) poignantly observed, "it is laid upon every religion sooner or later to formulate its articles of faith in order to teach and maintain its tenets." (p.14) That is why we have tried to make this paper really 'prolegomenous' by outlining what we have identified as lacunae to be filled for its advocacy to become valid and effective. Igbo people standing along the various paths of life, need to know what the Igbo Traditional Religion will offer them. Once this knowledge and certainty have been acquired, the religion exerts some form of attraction that would make people freely come to it requesting for adhesion and initiation. Unless this initial work is done, the sporadic advocacy by the contemporary proponents of Igbo Traditional Religion, will be exercise in futility or at best, an invitation to the regular display of the entertainment value of the Mmonwu sacred institution in Igbo tradition.

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