

## THE BLESSED TRINITY AND IGWEBUIKE PHILOSOPHY

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### **Abstract**

*An intent to understand and capture the reality and enigma surrounding the Divine Trinity presents the theologian with the adventure of having to pass through words like Nature, Hypostasis, Person etc. and it is not an easy adventure because there is the tension of maintaining balance in the “paradox” of Unity and plurality , One and Three, Nature and Personhood. But a perfect trinitarian theology should be able to highlight, emphasize and centralize that in the Divine life there exist a community of persons bounded in love. This work intends to express the presence of Igwe-bu-ike in the life of the Blessed Trinity, this way elevating Igwebuike to Divinity and drawing inspiration from it for Humanity.*

### **Introduction**

In this time of ours of advancing technologies and social innovation, there is this certitude in the minds of people of the surge of new things on one hand but on the other hand, there exist a certain doubt of having something new on coming aboard. But in spite of the doubt, our time has demonstrated that new grounds will continue to be broken, new realities explored, new ideas and books, new trends. The term igwebuike, is not a new word in the Igbo lexicon but yes, it is, in the circle of African philosophy and its birth is owed to the academic midwifery of Professor Kanu Ikechukwu Anthony<sup>96</sup>.

An article *Igwebuike as a trend in African philosophy*<sup>97</sup>, appeared in 2016 making case that the concept of Igwebuike should be part of what constitutes African

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<sup>96</sup> This article is dedicated to Professor Kanu Ikechukwu Anthony, OSA (Bsc. Rel., Uni. Jos; B. Phil., Urban. Rome; M.A. Rel., UNIZIK; M.A. Phil., UNN; Ph.D. Rel. UNIZIK) Priest of the Order of St. Augustine, President Association for the promotion of African Studies, on the occasion of his 10<sup>th</sup> priestly anniversary.

<sup>97</sup> KANU, I. A. “Igwebuike as a trend in African philosophy” *IGWEBUIKE: An African journal of arts and humanities*, Vol. 2, No 1, March 2016. pp. 108-113

philosophy as it tends to bridge the gap between various divergent trends in African Philosophy, especially the particularist and the universalist schools of African thought. Kanu states this, making reference to harmony as a fundamental principle that describes the core of the African spirit upon which a new school of thought would be built, in other to bring about the desired convergence and complementation among the trends of African philosophy. This new school of thought is enshrined in the term-Igwebuiké<sup>98</sup>. Igwebuiké, as posited by Professor Kanu, brings to the academic circle, the power of uniting various tributaries and schools of thought but most importantly, it is its capacity to relate with the human person in different scopes and perspectives, that cuts across the human person as a being in history: a being in history that is social, political and religious. Thus, igwebuiké by its relationship with the human person, can be said to be on one side immanent and transcendent on the other. Another important feature of Professor Kanu's igwebuiké is that it springs from a socio-historical context but its origin does not impede her wide-reaching effect. Igwebuiké is a word that affirms its igbo origin but its connotation, meaning and perspective is not restricted by either geographical or political boundaries; it is not withheld by racial colors or nationalistic creeds. Its *modus operandi* is based on the human person.

Owing to various theological inputs and reflections especially on the Blessed Trinity, there exists a trend of studying the Three persons- the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit- not so much in the terminologies of *ousia*, *physis*, *hypostasis* of the first councils of the church<sup>99</sup> rather from the doctrinal social dimension of the

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<sup>98</sup> KANU, A, *ibid.* 110-111

<sup>99</sup> MOLTSMANN, J. *Trinidad y reino de Dios: La doctrina sobre Dios*, Ediciones Sígueme, Salamanca, 1983 pp. 166-168 highlights the problem of the symbol of faith of the ancient Church in its dogmatic formulation of the Blessed Trinity, by trying to answer the two questions that arise at the time of interpreting their significance, concretely on the Council of Nicene's *Homousios* and the Athanasian thesis of *unus Deus*. The first question is formulated as thus: "The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are they one in possession of the same divine substance or identical in the same divine subject?" The second question is postulated, "The unity of the three distinct persons does it consist in the homogeneity of the divine substance that is common to them or does it consist in the sameness and identity of a unique divine subject?" The responses he gave to these questions made him arrive at *Drei-einigket* Tri-unity as presented in the biblical testimony of the three persons at work in the life of Jesus Christ. This unity, according to him, "is to be understood as a consequence of the union of the three person that is open, integrating... the union of the trinity that is given by the *community* of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The difference in their personality is the virtue of their unity, hence personhood and sociability constitute two aspects of the same reality. The unity of God is to be situated in the *perichoresis* of the divine persons and not in the trinitarian level of

Trinity. This trend intends to study the Trinity from the communitarian-relations that exist among the three persons of the Blessed Trinity.

The theology of the catholic church holds that the Blessed Trinity- God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit- is at the zenith of the hierarchy of revealed truths in the Catholic theology. It has been a subject of discussion over the ages since the inception of Christianity- both within and outside of her ecclesial circle. This is a mystery, but not an occultic reality on one hand- occult here in the sense of being hidden – because it has been revealed to us historically in that God is a true personal interlocutor of Man and this expressed in his capacity to speak by himself (Gen. 1:3), to reveal his name (Ex. 3:13ff)<sup>100</sup> and definitively, in the person of Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 1:1-2; Mt. 3:16-17; 28:19). It is not, on the other hand, a gnostic phenomenon reserved only for a selected few rather it is for all men, an invitation to participate in the divine life. This mystery is made manifest through its continual gradual revelation in through the body of Christ, the Church in journey to its definitive eschaton.

Hence in this work, there are two distinct concepts: Igwebuiké and The Blessed Trinity. The aim of which is to present a global vision of what Professor Kanu makes of this igbo concept and then use the fundamental elements of igwebuiké to talk about the existent communion in the Trinity as igwebuiké per excellence, the trinitarian perichoresis as the highest and best form of igwebuiké. The reflections will not just be centered on the Divine Persons because effort will be made to see the anthropological implication that this divine igwebuiké has for the human person.

## **Part I: Igwebuiké And Its Implications**

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individual homogeneity of the divine substance be it the sameness of the absolute subject (Tritheism) or in one of the person of the three (radical monotheism)”.

<sup>100</sup> RATZINGER, J *Introducción al cristianismo*, Ediciones Sígueme, Salamanca, 2016 pp. 111-113 in stating the idea of a name, draws a line between a name and a concept. The latter is tended to express the essence of a thing in itself, while the former is directed towards making it possible for something to be summoned or called upon. The idea of a name lies in its capacity to create a relationship, a nameless reality does not have that relational possibility. It is in naming a thing or somebody, that one can actually talk of co-existence. This is the significance of God revealing his name to Moses, to be made accessible to and coexist with his people.

## **A. Comprehending Igwebuiké**

The first part of the work looks to present what igwebuiké means both as a word and as a philosophical principle. It has been mentioned that the word “igwebuiké” has its origin in the igbo language. Therefore, on one hand, whatever interpretation that is sought and any attempt at defining it must have its bearing in the igbo lexicon. On the other hand, we must give attention too, to what Professor Kanu has defined igwebuiké to be in his papers that are related to this topic. By doing so, we can be sure of having a global view of what igwebuiké is.

### **i. Root Definition of igwebuiké**

Igwebuiké is made up of three words- *Igwe bu ike* and depending on the context of its use it could be a sentence (igwe bu ike) or a single word (igwebuiké). *Igwe* is a noun which means number or population. *Bu* is a verb which means is. *Ike* is also a noun that means strength and power. These words put together gives us the literal translation as number is strength or number is power. In unity, there is strength. Technically, it makes reference to the strength in solidarity and complementarity especially that which (should) exist(s) in human society and relations<sup>101</sup>. The anecdote of a Man who tried to unite his two warring sons on his deathbed, could also help in understanding what igwebuiké stands for.

The reference to solidarity and complementarity should not be interpreted as collectivism-communism, whereby the individual subject makes no impact and is only given the sense of belonging based on the collective whole-a phenomenon that exists in communist countries.

### **ii. Professor Kanu and Igwebuiké**

Through his academic prowess, Professor Kanu has been able to draw so many implications of what igwebuiké is and stands for and this can be found in the numerous articles and paper presentations he has been engaged in.

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<sup>101</sup> KANU, I. A “Igwebuiké and the question of superiority in the scientific community of knowledge” *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Vol. 3 No 1, January 2017. p. 108.

Professor Kanu posits that igwebuiké is at the heart and the underlying principle of African philosophy and that it is also a mode of being in African ontology. This he buttresses through presenting that, Igwebuiké as an African principle, is built upon various facets of the typical African socio-cultural background<sup>102</sup>. The sources of igwebuiké philosophy are: African proverbs, African folktales, African myths, African symbols, African songs, African names and Professional African philosophers. These facets, although not being philosophies in themselves, are not denied their inherent philosophical capacities through the help of hermeneutic interpretation that capacitates the passage to philosophy from culture<sup>103</sup>.

Another perspective from which Professor Kanu has elaborated on Igwebuiké is that of ontology from the African viewpoint. Igwebuiké for him is a mode of being, *uzo idi* this mode is characterized by being in relation to otherness (others). Igwebuiké, for Professor Kanu paves way for complementarity in human relations. This is because the human persons, being limited and finite entities, need to depend on each other for their temporal flourishing. This modality of being, igwebuiké has its virtual presentation in the African setting that points to the community as the center. Professor Kanu buttresses the creed “I am because others are” or “I am because we are” to imply that the community favors the identity of the individual and not its negation<sup>104</sup>. Also, we can add that, the interpretation of igwebuiké as a mode of being in the Igbo- African setting underlines the attitude and belief of belongingness<sup>105</sup>.

If in the scope of African ontology, Professor Kanu refers to igwebuiké as being in relation to otherness, it takes up a new line of hermeneutic interpretation at

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<sup>102</sup> KANU, I. A “Sources of Igwebuiké Philosophy: Towards A Socio-Cultural Foundation” Traditional African personality, Identity and Philosophy: Challenges and Ways Forward. 5<sup>th</sup> International Annual Conference of the Association of African Traditional Religion and Philosophy Scholars, 28<sup>th</sup> -30<sup>th</sup> June 2017, School of Postgraduate Studies Conference Hall, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka Anambra State, Nigeria. p.1

<sup>103</sup> KANU, I. A *ibid.* pp. 1-4

<sup>104</sup> KANU, I. A “Igwebuiké and Being in Igbo ontology” *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Vol. 4 No. 5 November 2018. pp. 18-19

<sup>105</sup> Cf. KANU, I. A *Towards an Igbo-African Christology: A cultural Christological construct in post missionary Africa*, LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, Mauritius, 2017. p. 93

the port of African sociopolitical trend. This is enshrined by the term, Inclusivity. In his article, "Igwebuiké Philosophy and the Issue of National Development" Professor Kanu made it known that out of the 100 appointments made by Muhammadu Buhari in 2015, 81% of those appointments went to the North while the South received an underwhelming 19%, this presents a vivid act of favoring some geo-political zones of the country over others<sup>106</sup>.

This is directly opposed by igwebuiké that stands for an all-round, comprehensive and balanced development of nation. Professor Kanu avers that for the success and progressive development of a nation that is diverse in groups and cultures (which is a good thing), its leadership must be inclusive and he does this by presenting the example of the success story of Singapore by Lee Kuan Yew<sup>107</sup>. An inclusive style of leadership and governance according to Professor Kanu must:

- Discover those circumstances that can help the people feel secured and preserved in their ethnicity.
- Imbibe a federal character that upholds coexistence, equality, individual freedom, autonomy of and respect for the culture of ethnic groups.
- Put in effort to engrave in the constitution various possibilities that assists in preserving human rights and promoting human development<sup>108</sup>.

### **B. Values Of Igwebuiké**

From what has been presented in the foregone, one can deduce that igwebuiké, as a philosophical principle, can have various positive implications in the human society and by the way of summarizing the definition and elucidations given above, few points shall be raised as to the values of igwebuiké.

**Unity:** This concept is one of the fundamental ideas that lies behind the message of Igwebuiké. The term, unity is defined as "The state of being in agreement and

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<sup>106</sup> KANU, I. A *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities* Vol. 3 No. 6 September 2017. pp. 36-42.

<sup>107</sup> Kanu, I. A cites Lee Kuan Yew in "Igwebuiké as an Igbo- African philosophy of Inclusive Leadership" *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities* Vol. 3 No. 7 December 2017. p. 166.

<sup>108</sup> KANU, I. A *ibid.* p.179

working together; the state of being joined together to form one unity”<sup>109</sup>. Igwebuiké buttresses the fact that it is a principle that deals with human relations, it seeks to make an impact among people, so as to set their sight on common goals that really matter. It is in this fundamental idea that human relations are made better and a strengthened. The Igbo people also have other concepts that make reference to this call to unity, for example, “A nyụkọ maamiri ọny, ọ gbọọ ufufu” (unity is strength), “egbe bere, ugo bere, nke si ibe ya ebela, nku kwaa ya” (live and let live)<sup>110</sup>.

**Complementarity:** Professor Kanu states succinctly that the principle of complementarity is the underlying principle of the Igwebuiké philosophy<sup>111</sup>. It is important to restate the communitarian undertone to igwebuiké as earlier mentioned. Igwebuiké is community and communion, and this is lived without trying to suppress the individual at the expense of the whole. The intent of understanding igwebuiké from its communitarian feature, should give the sensation of not being extremist in discussing the community at the expense of the individual, neither is it to be permitted to be excessively dependent on the individual subject to the extent of the community becoming the individual or

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<sup>109</sup> WEHMEIER, S. (Ed) *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2005. p. 1614

<sup>110</sup> KANU, A. I *Towards an Igbo- African Christology: A Cultural Christological construct in post missionary Africa*, LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, Mauritius, 2017. p. 91-94. The egbe bere, ugo bere, nke si ibe ya ebela, nku kwaa ya ideology has been interpreted by Professor Kanu in the light of relations between persons in the community especially from the viewpoint of belonging or to being part of a community as it is found in the Igbo cultural setting. The concept of belonging “re-enacts the contents and significance of belongingness as the essence and hermeneutic core of reality”. This is in no way a contrast understanding to the idea of unity that is embedded in egbe bere, ugo bere... that of which Igwebuiké also transmits, rather what we have in these words and principles is the advantage of being able to generate pluriform and multifaceted interpretations that do not contradict themselves. Secondly, we must affirm that following the what has been said, Unity and Belonginess are both implied because to belong presupposes unity on one hand, while unity is the outward manifestation of belonging.

<sup>111</sup> KANU, A. I “Igwebuiké Philosophy and Human Rights Violation in Africa” *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities* Vol. 3 No.7, December 2017. Pp 116-117. He avers Complementation as bringing together or summing up distinct or similar things to make a new meaning, outlook or phenomenon. Igwebuiké perceives reality as an interrelation of its segment and that the whole is greater than its corresponding parts. He uses the analogy of the fingers to buttress that every being needs the other for its self-realization because the self is not realized in isolation. Each individual finger cannot do so much as when the five fingers unite in function. We can draw further inspiration by using the melody from the piano sound that is better when both hands (ten fingers) are in agreement. But again, much more do we appreciate the melody of the piano that is played with not just with both hands but also accompanied with the foot pedals operated by both feet. Therefore, in igwebuiké there is a strong sense of complementarity, complementarity that is a point of fulfillment for being.

vice versa. It is important to affirm that in the community, the “I” factor and the “We” factor complement each other.

It is worth mentioning that in the Igbo culture, the person has his dignity and exercises it within the community. Some names like *Azubuike*, *Ikemba*, among others give the sensation that a person cannot live in isolation but with the support of the community. This is not to say that the thinking of the Igbo does not value a person's autonomy (i.e. radical collectivism). There is need to make it clear that the community, in igbo culture, does not deny the individual the characteristic of being unique, the community does not prevent the development of the individual nor does it discourage personal initiatives and self-reliance. That the man is considered as unique, therefore matchless, special and inimitable, does not mean that man is totally free and existentially alone in this world<sup>112</sup>.

**Solidarity:** This is another feature that is implicit in Igwebuiké philosophy. If in the complementarity complex we buttressed the coming together of diverse or same entities to form a new phenomenon, in solidarity we find the fulcrum on which complementarity functions, that is the idea that Man is a social being, capable of complementation and simultaneously in need of it (complementation), that is realized in union with the “thou” of other men and of the community (Cf. *Gaudium et spes*, 25).

The principle of solidarity affirms the relation among human persons, social groups and the society, expressing the anthropological and ethical union among each and every person. It is also the call to everyone to be ethically responsible for other members of the society<sup>113</sup>. We can affirm therefore that solidarity is synonymous to and the effect of fraternity. This concept of solidarity is experienced in the igbo setting and igwebuiké embodies this phenomenon, this we see in various elements of socialization in the igbo cultural setting: *Ezi n’ulo*

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<sup>112</sup> AGULANNA, C (Citing, Chinua Achebe) *Community and Human Well-Being in an African Culture. “Trames. Journal of the Humanities and Social Science”*. 2010.3.05 p. 294

<sup>113</sup> GALINDO, G. *A Moral Socioeconomica*, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid 2016. p. 16.



(the Family), Umunna (the Clan), Ndi ọgbọ (The Age grade system)- all of these have solidarity written all over them.

To conclude this segment, we have drawn interpretations and implications of the igwebuiké philosophy from its root significance and Professor Kanu's insightful contributions. The multifaceted characteristic of this principle is made obvious by the different values that have been inferred from its strength-in-unity baseline. These values are not divergent nor contradictory, rather each value makes way for another to build on it, this goes on to demonstrate that the igwebuiké principle, which Professor Kanu moves for, is ingrained in the natural structure of human relationship and socio-political progress.

## **Part II: The Blessed Trinity: Personhood, Relations, Perichoresis And Trinity.**

The second part of this work will treat the question of the Blessed Trinity in the manner that it relates with the igwebuiké theme hence the exclusion of the presentation of the historical evolution progress of the dogma of the Blessed Trinity. In its stead, we shall make case as to what the concept of person is, for this is the foundation that enables us to understand the relations that exists in the life of the Blessed Trinity. In Perichoresis, we shall underline the communion and community of life of the three divine persons and the implications of this perichoretic characteristic of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

### **A. The Concept of the Person.**

We are meant to understand that the concept of the person as we have it today is indissolubly bound with theology and most especially as a product of the patristic thought<sup>114</sup> and from the Church's endeavor to give expression to its faith

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<sup>114</sup> ZIZIOULAS, J. D *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, New York 1985 pp. 27-35. He presents the problem of the Greek and Roman conception of the Person. The Greeks have been presented by many writers, according to Zizioulas, as possessing essentially a "non-personal" point of view and that this mode is enshrined both in the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies. The platonic philosophy failed to achieve the concept of the person because it was interested in demonstrating that everything concrete and individual is a reflection of the abstract idea that constitutes its ground and final justification, therefore the person is an ontological impossibility because what determines its permanence ( the soul, the abstract idea) is not in any way united permanently with the concrete individual man. The Aristotelian philosophy, on the other hand, laid its emphasis on the concrete, the individual and so could not provide any grounds for permanence nor continuity. The soul is intimately united with the individual man in that it ceases to exist when the individual man is

in the Triune God and this was done by identifying the hypostasis with the person. The term hypostasis did not have the same connotation as the term *persona*, for while the former was used to refer to the term substance, the latter was understood as a mask. Therefore, there was need for the *persona* to be modified in its perception, hence it came to be understood as an existence that is proper, untransferable and unconfused<sup>115</sup>. In the question of the defining what a person is we shall examine the postulation of various theologians who have made input towards this topic.

**St. Augustine (354-430):** He made reference to the difficulties that existed in his time of the application and the usage of *hypostases*, *ousia*, *prosopon*. To this end he aligned himself with the Latin postulation of One Essence or Substance, Three Persons. The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit (The Gift of God) are referred to as Persons and this is for the reason of not being silent and not so much about defining the Blessed Trinity because human language is impoverished to come up with a better term<sup>116</sup>. St. Augustine did not define directly what a person is, rather it is inferred from his explanation, that a person is an individual and singular entity<sup>117</sup>.

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destroyed by death. The reason for the Greek thought's inability to find permanence for the human individuality according to Zizioulas (p.29) is rooted in the ontological monism that characterized the Greek philosophy from inception. This ontological monism has the *cosmos* as its center, that portrays the harmonious relationship of existent things among themselves hence everything is determined and it is impossible for freedom to operate as an absolute and unrestricted claim to existence. It is in this ambience that the person, *prosopon* is defined, in that it is the mask that man wears, something which is without ontological content.

The Person, in the ancient Roman thought, is conceived solely from the sociological perspective, that is, man's ability to relate with others in the society and the different roles he carries out in the society for the good of the State. The individual person owes his or her freedom and identity to the organized whole, the State. Hence "*persona* is the role which one plays in one's social or legal relationships, the moral or "legal" person which either collectively or individually has nothing to do with the ontology of the Person" (p. 34).

In other to arrive at an identification of the person with the being of man, Zizioulas averred that there was a need for "a radical change in cosmology that would free the world and man from ontological necessity and secondly a need for an ontological view of man which would unite the person with the *being* of man, with his permanent and enduring existence, with his genuine and absolute identity". The first task was resolved by the biblical outlook of the creation and the Christians perception to it while the second will be done by the use of the Greek thought's interest in ontology (p.35).

<sup>115</sup> MOLTSMANN, J. *op. cit* p. 187. ZIZIOULAS, J. D *op. cit* pp. 36-39

<sup>116</sup> Cf. *De Trinitate* V, IX, 10.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. *De Trinitate* VII, VI, 11

**Boethius:** The definition that was given by him is still referred to as a classical one *persona est naturae rationalis individua substantia*, a person is an individual substance of a rational nature<sup>118</sup>. Luis Ladaria posits that this definition came about from a Christological context and so it is not directly trinitarian and from the definition he underlines two elements. First is the role of substance in the definition that tends to not only point to the underlying fundament of being but also its characteristic of being individualized and not interchangeable. The second is the role of the rational nature, that helps to specify the individuality of man, in that it is by the virtue of the rational nature that man experiences the incommunicability of each individual<sup>119</sup>.

**Richard of St. Victor:** Against the difficulty of tritheism that arose at the time of applying Boethius' definition to the persons of the Blessed Trinity, Richard postulated the definition of the person as an incommunicable existence of a rational nature<sup>120</sup> by this way, he substituted the term *substance* for existence. To be a person is to exist, existence is to be understood as subsistence in relation to the other, therefore, each person of the Blessed Trinity, by the virtue of the love that is found among them, receives the fullness of the eternal life from others<sup>121</sup>.

**St. Thomas Aquinas:** In his *Summa*, we find a reformulation of the boethian concept of the Person. For St. Thomas, a person signifies what is most perfect in all nature that is, a subsistent individual of a rational nature and that this name is applied to God in the most excellent meaning of the word<sup>122</sup>. Two features, therefore, constitute personhood for Aquinas: subsistence and intelligence. The sense of substance in the definition of Boethius, is seen to signify Self-subsistence, while the possession of rational nature is meant to signify an intelligent nature and not as a discursive thought<sup>123</sup>. The implication of the

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<sup>118</sup> Cf. *Liber de persona et duabus naturis*, 3 (PL 64, 1343).

<sup>119</sup> *El Dios vivo y verdadero: El misterio de la Trinidad*, Secretariado Trinitario, Salamanca. 2010<sup>4</sup>. p. 358.

<sup>120</sup> *De Trinitate*, IV 23

<sup>121</sup> Moltmann, J. *op.cit* p. 189.

<sup>122</sup> *STh*. I 29, 3

<sup>123</sup> *STh*. I 29, 3 ad 4

definition of person by St. Thomas takes a new turn under the lenses of relations. He recognizes the difficulty that has come with the connotation of the Person in the discussion of the Blessed Trinity as to whether it implies essence directly or indirectly on one hand and relation directly or indirectly. Since distinction in God is only by relation of origin and this relation is not as an accident in a subject rather by its divine essence (by the virtue of its substance), a divine person signifies relation as subsisting<sup>124</sup>. In the Divine life, the concept of the person signifies self-donation and aperture, it is in relation that the three persons are distinguished. This distinction is not by anyway to mean separation rather it is relation and self-giving to the other. The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit are by the virtue of their relation, a perfect communion<sup>125</sup>.

**Jürgen Moltmann:** The content of the definition of a Person revolves around his intent to present a Social Doctrine of the Trinity from biblical testimonies that demonstrates the history of the communitarian relations of the Trinity<sup>126</sup>. According to Moltmann, we must determine the union of the Three person from biblical history and this will lead us to understand the union of The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit as openness, integrative. To be in union, for Moltmann, means to be a person, the concept of a Person implies relationship and union, therefore Personhood and relation with the other are two aspects of the same reality<sup>127</sup>.

**Joseph Ratzinger:** To confess God as a Person, is necessarily to confess him as relation, communicability, fecundity. With this enunciation, he goes on to explain the second thesis of the implication of the Blessed Trinity from a positive sense. He goes on to give us the literal meaning of the Greek's *prosopon* and the Latin's *persona* both which have the undertone of communicability that is directed towards something, that its indication of relation. To refer the concept of person to God in the absolute sense of the word for Ratzinger, does not mean absolute

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<sup>124</sup> *STh.* I 29, 4

<sup>125</sup> Ladaria, L. F *op.cit* p. 363

<sup>126</sup> *Op. cit* p. 33

<sup>127</sup> *Op.cit* pp. 167-168. 189-190. Cf. LADARIA, L. F *La Trinidad, Misterio de Communion* p. 108

singularity, rather in the triple personality of God, it demonstrates that he supersedes the human personhood of Man<sup>128</sup>.

**John D Zizioulas:** He drew inspiration from the Cappadocian Fathers (St. Basil especially) to postulate that the Divine life of God as The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit is owed not to the substance rather to one Person- the Father. The being of God is identified with a Person (The Father) and that it this personal existence that constitutes his substance<sup>129</sup>. To further buttress his existential point that God exists on the account of a person and not on the account of being substance, he avers that God exists as a person because: (a). He possesses an absolute ontological freedom that is uncreated and unbound by “necessity<sup>130</sup>” (b). He affirms and exercises this ontological freedom by transcending and abolishing the ontological necessity and replaces this necessity with the free self-affirmation of divine existence. (c). He is unique and unrepeatable as Father that is eternally distinguished from that of the Son and of the Spirit. The Son is immortal because of his being the “only-begotten”. The Spirit is Life-giving because he is communion. The life of God is eternal because it is personal and realized as an expression of free communion, as love. Life and Love are identified in the personhood of God<sup>131</sup>. All these could be summarized in this manner: “that the Father is a person that generates Otherness from his being that is identified with Freedom and Love. The central theme of Zizioulas’ trinitarian thought is the Person and not the substance. The Father is the Personal and Ontological Origen of the Blessed Trinity”<sup>132</sup>.

From St. Augustine to St. Thomas Aquinas, it is believed that there is a thread that moves from underlining characterization of a person from the standpoint of substance to the gradual unravelling of the person as a relation this was as a

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<sup>128</sup> *Op. cit* p. 151

<sup>129</sup> *Op. cit* p. 41

<sup>130</sup> By “necessity” Zizioulas is making reference to other created realities that exist side by side with the Human Person at the time of expressing his/her freedom.

<sup>131</sup> *Op. cit* pp. 42-49

<sup>132</sup> Tapia, M. S *El Misterio de Dios: La Trinidad*. La Unidad divina y la comunión trinitaria. (unpublished lecture note). Estudio Teológico Agustiniiano, Valladolid, 2018. p.6

result of the effort to salvage both the Trinitarian- Christological part of the faith of the Church from the heretics. We are not to be oblivious of the direction of thought in the modern era that sought to redefine various concepts and concretely, the concept of person. It sought to give it a new appraisal stemming from the anthropological point of view, which has affected the reflection and comprehension of the person both in Philosophy and Theology.

### **B. The Relations in the Blessed Trinity.**

The question of the relations that exists in the internal life of the Blessed Trinity is said to have its origin in the processions of The Son and The Holy Spirit with respect to the Father. The vision of the Fathers of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century commencing with St. Athanasius, developed in the East by Gregory of Nazianzen and by Augustine in the West, consists in stating that the differences that we find in the Blessed Trinity is not owed to the substance rather by the virtue of their intra-divine relations<sup>133</sup>.

Let us examine St. Augustine's thought on this theme. In the fifth book of *De Trinitate*, we read Augustine, who proves his resourcefulness against the heretics of his time, to whom with all intent tried to reduce the divinity of the Son in respect to that of the Father.

A fundamental metaphysical truth is that in God there is no accidental feature, He is pure Substance, Ousia. The Arian heretics in accepting that in God no accident can be found predicated the concept of Unbegotten and Begotten as two different substances, therefore the Father and the Son are not of the same substance<sup>134</sup>.

Augustine in quoting Jn 10:30, established that the Son had already affirmed the unity between himself and the Father, which means that they both are One and consubstantial. It is not the same when these two concepts of Unbegotten and Begotten are predicated because they are not to be understood in the substantial

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<sup>133</sup> Kasper, W. *El Dios de Jesucristo*, Ediciones Sígueme, Salamanca, 1986. p. 318

<sup>134</sup> *De Trini*. V, II, 4

sense rather in the sense of Relation and this relation is predicated in the Being of God that is absolute perfection<sup>135</sup>.

Given this possibility of relation, whatever is said or predicated of the Trinity is said of each person of the Blessed Trinity but he adverts against referring to the Trinity as just The Father or The Son or The Holy Spirit. Although following the Logic that God is Spirit and at same time Holy, it is possible to call the Trinity, Holy Spirit but there is a line to this because the Holy Spirit is also in the Trinity and so it is not the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is the ineffable communication of the Father and the Son<sup>136</sup>.

St. Thomas Aquinas is another theologian that has made case for the relations in the life of the Blessed Trinity. He defines relation as only what refers to another, it is the regard of one to another, according as one is relatively opposed to the other<sup>137</sup>. Since it is from the processions that we have the relations in the life of the Trinity, St. Thomas<sup>138</sup> helps us state that there are only two processions: The Procession of the Word (Generation) and The Procession of Love (Spiration) and from these two we have four relations, viz:

- The relation of the Father with the Son: Active generation (*generare*), Paternity.
- The relation of the Son with the Father: Passive generation (*generari*), Filiation.
- The relation of the Father and the Son with the Holy Spirit: Active spiration (*spirare*).
- The relation of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son: Passive spiration.
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Walter Kasper gives a concise explanation that helps to understand better what has been presented in the foregone. He avers that

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<sup>135</sup> *De Trin.* V, V, 6

<sup>136</sup> *De Trin.* V, XI, 12.

<sup>137</sup> *STh.* I, 28, a 1.3

<sup>138</sup> *STh* I, 27, a 4

*only three of the four relations actually help to create a distinction among the three Persons and that is Paternity, Filiation and Passive spiration. The active spiration is not to be seen as distinct because the Father and the Son are not two source from which the Holy Spirit proceeds, rather that both, The Father and the Son, are a common origin of the Holy Spirit, meanwhile the passive spiration refers to the Father and Son as distinct from the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in God, by the virtue of the two processions, there are three oppositions and an original foundation of a dialogic and relational reference of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the history of salvation<sup>139</sup>.*

After all of what has been put down, it is pertinent and not out of place to ask the consequence(s) the assertions on the relations in God have for us.

Firstly, I would like to stand with the affirmation of Ratzinger who averred that in God there exists a dialogical dynamism, thanks to the distinction and the relation of the Three. The ability to dialogue and to relate, together with the concept of substance is a primordial form of being. The virtue of relation does not create a multiplicity of divine substances in God, rather, in the God one and undivided, there is the phenomenon of dialogue, of relation between the Word and Love, it is their relationship that constitutes the unity of the divine essence. The person is a pure relation of reference towards the other and nothing more. To be a person implies the capacity of being referable<sup>140</sup>.

Luis Ladaria<sup>141</sup> summarizes this as the theology of relation in God. An enumeration of the points he raised with regards to this theology.

- The relations in God implies the fullness of life and communion.
- The relations in God have their origins and their end in the Divine life of the Blessed Trinity. That is the relationship of The Father (Paternity), The Son (Filiation) and the Holy Spirit (Spiration) only has its starting and terminal points within the life of the Trinity and not outside of it.

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<sup>139</sup> *Op. cit* p. 318.

<sup>140</sup> *Op. cit* p. 154ss

<sup>141</sup> *El Dios vivo...* pp. 353-354.



- The relations are eternal as the being of God, this implies that there is no chronological difference between the Being of God and the relations of God.

### **C. Perichoresis and Tri-unity**

The term *perichoresis* can be summarily understood as the interpenetration, co-inherence or co-indwelling of the Divine Persons (Cf. Jn 10:30; 14:9; 17:21). It is believed that Gregory of Nazianzen in Letter 101, 6, was the first to use this terminology when he was making reference to the union of the divine and human natures in Jesus Christ. It was later adopted by John Damascene for the Divine Persons. The term was translated in the Latin circle as *circumisessio*-referring to a dynamic interpenetration of the Divine Persons, another terminology is *circuminsessio*- referring to a static mutual presence<sup>142</sup>.

Perichoresis is understood to mean that the Three Divine Person do not only subsist in the common divine essence but also that they exist in their mutual relationship with others, living in and through the other. The Father exists in the Son, The Son exists in the Father and both of them in the Holy Spirit just as the Holy Spirit exists in the Father and the Son. This reality is made possible by the eternal love that each offers to the other two<sup>143</sup>.

Gisbert Greshake alludes to the importance of interpreting the Trinity as communion. For him "That God is One and Triune signifies that God is a communion by which the Three Divine Persons, in an interchanging trilogy of love, express the one divine life as a reciprocal communication of themselves". *Communio* for Gisbert is a process of mediation between unity and plurality. In this communion there is conjunction, auto-unification, auto-differentiation<sup>144</sup>.

Perichoresis emphasizes a presence that points to inhabitation, unity and distinction. The inhabitation of these three persons reciprocates, expresses and

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<sup>142</sup> Kasper, W *op.cit* p.323

<sup>143</sup> Moltmann, J. *op. cit* p. 191

<sup>144</sup> *El Dios Uno y Trino: Una Teologia de la Trinidad*, Biblioteca Herder, Barcelona. pp. 223-248

realizes in the best manner, the unity of the persons in their distinction<sup>145</sup>. Therefore, to affirm the perichoretic relation of the divine Persons means to give credence to the unity of persons and unicity of the divine essence. It is important to state also that the unicity and union of the three divine persons do not eliminate the distinction that exists by their virtue of their relation, for each of them maintains his individual distinctive identity.

### **Part Iii: The Blessed Trinity, Igwebuike's Best Representation**

From all that has been presented in Parts I and II, it will not be difficult to affirm that the underlining thesis of this work is that The Blessed Trinity, The Community of the Divine Persons of the Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit, is both the Divine form of Igwebuike and its origin par excellence. By this affirmation, we are not making an assertion that drives off the igbo-african identity from Igwebuike, rather we are opening up another vista that affirms the originality and validity of the content of the trend that Professor Kanu has thrown into the academic fray. Hence, we can also look at understanding a certain Theology of Igwebuike that has its starting point in The Blessed Trinity.

To be able to carry out the task before us, we shall talk about the salvific actions of the Blessed Trinity to Man. The end to this, is to state that The Trinity, with scriptural support, is characterized as a communion and a community that is open to sharing its Divine Life with Man and later, we shall reflect on the lessons of the Theology of Igwebuike for human relations.

#### **A. The Blessed Trinity and The History of Salvation.**

##### **i. God the Father, Creator and Origin of all Things.**

The invocation of God with the name "Father" constitutes one of the original phenomena of the History of Religions. The general conception in the ancient Babylonian and Assyrian religions is that the Divine is the Father, origin and ultimate destiny of all. To be denominated as Father, meant Origin and principle of all things by a physical generation of things. The concept of Father is adopted in the Old Testament but in reference to God, there is no attribution of any

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<sup>145</sup> Tapia, M. *op. cit* p. 11

physical/material generation of things from Him as perceived in the ancient religions<sup>146</sup>. But in Christ, we experience the grace of the adoptive filiation, through him who introduced us to call God- Father (cf. Eph. 1:5; Gal. 4:4-5; Jn. 1:12-13; Mt. 6:9-13).

Moltmann asks, who is the Father? His response takes off from the strong emphasis that the paternity of the First Person of the Blessed Trinity be understood exclusively in the ambience of the Trinity and in relation to the Son, this is the Christian idea of the paternity of the first person of the Trinity. The application of “Father” with respect to the created reality springs from the Christian’s understanding that the Father created through his Son, therefore, it is right to say that it is only in reference to the Son that the First person of the Trinity becomes our Father. The Father, in the trinitarian circle, is the origin without beginning, *principium sine principio* of the Son and the Holy Spirit<sup>147</sup>.

The Old Testament makes reference to God as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob<sup>148</sup> and also refers to Israel as his people, his firstborn son (Ex. 4:22; Hos. 11:1; Jer. 31:9). The paternity of God and the filiation is not based on some mythological fables or of a natural genealogy rather it is a relation made possible by the virtue of Election and Vocation, which the people experienced through the salvific action wrought for them by YHWH in history<sup>149</sup>.

In the New testament, we have references that points to the Father, most of which were made in relation to Jesus Christ. In the synoptic gospels, Jesus refers to God as “My Father- Mt 11, 25-27” and to his disciples he uses “Your Father- Mt 6, 8.14”. this qualification by Jesus is said to be related with the central theme

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<sup>146</sup> Kasper, W *op.cit* p.166.

<sup>147</sup> *Op. cit* 179-182

<sup>148</sup> Ratzinger, J. *op. cit* 103-104 interprets this as the manifestation of the Personhood which makes it take a different dimension from the pagan’s conception of divinity. For while the pagans’ divinity is inclined to a being restricted to a geographical vicinity. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is a God who shows and manifests his operational presence wherever men are found, A God who is comprehended on the level of I-thou relation and not of a geographical location. In this we see the clear manifestation of the personhood of God.

<sup>149</sup> Kasper, W. *op.cit* p. 167.

of his kerygma- the Kingdom of God, one that is characterized by the love and graciousness of the Father<sup>150</sup>.

St. Paul is fond of using the term God and Father in his salutations and epilogues (Cf. 1 Thes. 1:1; Gal. 1:3). These expressions are said to have originated from the liturgy of the Christian community. Paul makes it clear to us that we are children of the Father by the virtue of the sonship of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8,15; Gal. 4,6). The paternity of God signifies liberty and freedom for those who have been called to be children, hence, they cease to be slaves (Gal. 4,1; Rom 8,15) and this liberty is expressed and demonstrated in love and service to others (Gal 5, 13).

The Johannine tradition also gives us the perspective of the paternity of God to signify the origin and content of the Revelation made manifest by Son. This is Jesus' task, to reveal who reveal who the Father is to men so that they in turn are made children by believing in the revelation of God (Jn 1, 12-13). The Father is the one who commends the mission to the Son (Jn. 5, 43) and this mission is to make known the name of the Father (Jn. 17, 6.26).

## **ii. God the Son, Mediator and Redeemer.**

The Son is the first receptor of the Father's love and this has been confirmed through the New Testament texts of Mk. 1,11; Mt. 3, 17; Lk. 3, 24 during the baptism of Jesus Christ and also in the recount of the episode of the Transfiguration- Mk. 9,7; Mt 17,5; Lk 9,35.

St. Paul refers to the Son of God as the one who liberated us from sin (Col. 1,13). The Gospel of St. John also makes reference to the Love that exists between the Father and The Son (Jn. 3, 35; 5, 20; 10,17; 15, 9; 17, 23-24.26).

In general, Tapia Sanchez<sup>151</sup> helps us understand in what manner the Son of God is presented to us in the New Testament. According to him, the significance of

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<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.* p. 169

<sup>151</sup> *Tema III: La doctrina sobre Dios en el Nuevo Testamento.* Estudio Teologico Agustiniano, Valladolid. 2018 (unpublished lecture note) pp 8-13

term “the Son” in the synoptic tradition indicates that Jesus Christ is the one sent by the Father. It is in him the definitive filiation of Israel is realized. In the Johannine tradition, the prologue of the gospel gives us the insight of the pre-existence of the Logos, The Son, that indicates that the Son exists in an intimate union with the Father and the Holy Spirit. It is through the testimony of the Son that Men have come to know the Father and by that, come into union with the Father (Jn 2, 22-24).

The Pauline tradition affirms the pre-existence and the incarnation of the Son by whom we are made adopted sons of the Father and this was made possible by the virtue of his Kenosis (Phil 2,6; 2 Cor 8, 9; Gal. 4, 5).

There are four aspects to which the second person of the Blessed Trinity is perceived in the New Testament:

- Ontological Perspective-This refers to the essential characteristics of Christ with respect to the Father. This is an independent reality from creation. It is the affirmation of the homousios-ness in Divine Substance.
- Functional Perspective- this is the Christocentric dimension of his existence in relation to his soteriological task (Jn. 1,1-14; Col 1,16; 1 Cor 8, 6)
- Historical Perspective- The perspective of the Son of God in history and his relation with the World in the historic dimension (Hb. 9,14; 1 Cor. 15, 3; 2 Pe 1,8-9).
- Personal Perspective- This aspect refers to the Jesus as Glorified by God in resurrection (Mt. 22,24; Mc. 16, 19; Acts. 2, 34; Eph. 1, 20; Jn 20-21).

### **iii. God the Holy Spirit, Gift of love and Sanctifier<sup>152</sup>.**

The Third person has been linked to be the *ruah*, a divine dynamic entity through which God’s actions are carried out. The Holy Spirit is referred to as the Gift of God (Acts. 8, 20), as the Subject of the gift (Acts. 2,38; 10,45; 11,17), He is also referred to as the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8,9; 1 Pet. 1,11; Gal. 4,6).

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<sup>152</sup> Ladaria, L. *op. cit* p. 443ss. Tapia, S *op.cit* p. 14ss

In the Synoptic tradition, the Holy Spirit is affirmed to be given to Jesus at the time of his baptism (Mt. 3, 13-17; Mk 1,9-11; Lk 3, 21-22). He is usually linked with the person and works of Christ. In the Acts of the Apostles, we see a more active dimension of the work of the Holy Spirit: The Pentecost, The liturgical gathering of the Community and in the mission of the community- all of these point to the presence of the Holy Spirit at the inception of the Church.

The Pneumatology of St. Paul is said to be more elaborate. Jesus is said to be declared the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of Holiness (Rom. 1,3). It is through the Holy Spirit that we attain the new life promised us in the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8, 6-13). One is said to be a Christian by the virtue of the Holy Spirit working in the life of the believer (Rom. 8, 9,14) a life that is characterized by liberty (Gal. 5, 13).

In the Johannine tradition, The Holy Spirit is said to be the Paraclete, Jn 14, 26 whose task is to teach and remind the disciples of Christ all that has been taught them, to the end of uniting all who believe in the loving union of the Father and the Son.

From what has been affirmed in the foregone, we can be clear that the Community of the Divine Persons is not a community that is exclusively closed in itself. It is a community that is open to communion with Humanity, a desire that springs from the initiative of the Triune God and it is realized fully in the Divine Life. God the Father extends his paternity to us by the grace of his Son, Jesus Christ, in the pattern of love that Holy Spirit generates. This is seen from biblical testimonies, that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit is a community that extends an invitation to the Human community by various historical personalities to participate in the Divine Life.

### **B. The Blessed Trinity: A Model For The Human Community**

Taking inspiration and insight from what Professor Kanu has postulated to be the significance of Igwebuiké- a modality of being that is manifested by being in relation to the other (otherness)- and having affirmed that the Blessed Trinity is

the *forma excelsis* of igwebuike, we want to make inferences from this affirmation and draw out the consequences it has for the human society.

Firstly, we want to infer that the Blessed Trinity is a community and communion of The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit.

Second affirmation is that the individual distinctions by the virtue of the relations (as stated earlier in p. 9ss) does not put the unity of the Three persons in jeopardy.

Third affirmation is that while maintaining their distinctive characters, The Father is equal to the Son and the Holy Spirit, The Son is equal to the Father and the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is equal to the Father and the Son.

**Community:** The Cambridge Dictionary defines Community as “all the people who live in a particular area, or a group of people who are considered as a unit because of their shared interests or background”<sup>153</sup>. It is interesting to note that in this definition, the qualification of the group of people who form a community, as a group with a common background or interest. Therefore, the use of the term community (in this work) cuts across race or religion; color or language. What qualifies the human community for this paper is the Christian perspective of each human person as the image of God (Gen. 1, 26-27).

While we cannot copy the Community of the Trinity in all respect as it is impossible, but we can do so in some respects and one of it is by finding out that which constitutes our homogeneity and makes us compatible, in other words, our common ground. The Text of Gen. 1, 26-27 gives us a common base, that every human person is created as *imago Dei*. This Christian perspective serves as a starting point towards accepting everyone into our communities.

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<sup>153</sup> Cambridge Dictionary <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/community> accessed 30th July, 2019.

Experiences has shown, nonetheless, that this could be some utopian structure that cannot realized. We owe this to the extreme conception and exercise of autonomy and freedom, which in turn paves way for individualism and the 'I' at the expense of the 'thou', what matters is no longer the wellbeing of the other, it is now all about the satisfaction of the ego.

Retaking Professor Kanu's postulation, using the igbo proverb *ngwere ghara ukwu osisi, aka akpara ya* (if a lizard stays away from the foot of the tree, it would be caught by man), that the community is what grants the individual the sense of belonging, it affirms that the community life is not a one man task, rather the task of all<sup>154</sup>. It is in the community that an individual is realized and not only that, it provides the ambience for this realization of potentials of the individual. To this effect, Professor Kanu cites Ekwulu, in buttressing this point:

"I realize myself in the other because it is in the 'Thou-ness' of the Thou that my 'Is-ness' is realized. I am 'I' because you are 'You'. Without Thou there is no I. We are 'We' because they are 'They', and without 'They', there is no 'We'"<sup>155</sup>.

The Blessed Trinity teaches us not just the value of community and communion-ness but also it initiates both realities for us. From the scripture we can find events that puts the concept of community in the spotlight: The Creation story already gives the origin of being as *imago Dei* (Gen. 1, 26- 27), The vocation and Covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12. 15. 17. 22, 15-18), The Exodus experience and the covenant on Mount Sinai (Ex. 13. 14; 19-24), The liberation of the people from exile, the kerygma of the Kingdom of God as an invitation to participate in the Divine Life (Mk. 1, 14-15; Lk 14, 15-24), The congregation of different nations at Pentecost (Acts. 2, 1-47). These are instances to prove that the Blessed Trinity initiates, promotes and perfects the human community because the Triune God is a communion and a community.

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<sup>154</sup> "Igwebuike and Being in Igbo ontology" ... p. 19

<sup>155</sup> Kanu, I. A (citing Ekwulu, B.I) *Igwebuike Philosophy and Human Rights Violation in Africa* ... p. 126



**Diversity:** The emphasis on the need to be a community and opened to unity does not mean that we are to suppress the distinction that exists in our society, as a matter of fact, diversity builds a stronger community. The life of the Blessed Trinity has shown that the Father not being neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit; The Son not being neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit; The Holy Spirit not being neither the Father nor the Son does not in anyway jeopardize the fundamental truth of their unity because “the perfect communion in the one essence of God includes the differences in the mode of possession of the essence”<sup>156</sup>.

The same should be applied in human societies. Unity is not to mean uniformity as neither can be implied necessarily in the other. The human community should give room for diversity, the acceptance of diversity and distinction helps to build a community and that what others bring to the table positively, helps to open up vistas and perceptions to various realities that we did not know existed<sup>157</sup>.

Professor Kanu proposes a panacea for this dilemma, averring that the diversities of people, culture, language from the perspective of igwebuiké philosophy enriches the nation and could coexist in a federation<sup>158</sup>. Just as igwebuiké philosophy proposes, the Blessed Trinity lives out the perfect union while each of the three maintain their distinct characters and identities.

**Equality:** This is to be considered important especially from the Christian perspective, that we are all made equal by the virtue of being created in the image and likeness of God. This concept of equality is closely knitted to the dignity of each individual. No one has to be made to feel less human. The Church has this to say regarding Equality:

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<sup>156</sup> Kasper, W. *op. cit* p. 350

<sup>157</sup> It is a sad reality that xenophobia is now redefining various places that were once a beautiful home to all. Racial undertones are now being read in almost every statement or action taken in a multi-cultural society. The general perception of being ‘on guard’ and ‘cautious’ is now trending in various socio-political boundaries, there is fear and mistrust of the ‘other’ who is not part of the ‘homogeneity’ that exists in a place. True there are legitimate reasons to all of these but is unfortunate that we are drawing evermore closer to demonizing ‘the different’ be it race, colour and tribe.

<sup>158</sup> “*Igwebuiké Philosophy and the Issue of National Development*” ... p. 44

“Since all men possess a rational soul and are created in God's likeness, since they have the same nature and origin, have been redeemed by Christ and enjoy the same divine calling and destiny, the basic equality of all must receive increasingly greater recognition”<sup>159</sup>

We can understand what has been stated here by underlining the points of interest in it that all Men are equal because:

- All have a rational soul
- All have the same nature.
- All have the same origin.
- All are redeemed by Christ (that is, his sacrifice is intended for all, though only some may choose to benefit from it)
- All are called to the destiny of union with God in heaven (though only some will realize it, and even those who are saved may realize this to different degrees of perfection). Only in these basic matters are men equal. They may vary greatly in other respects<sup>160</sup>.

Professor Kanu Igwebuike recognizes equality as an attribute of being human. In African ontology, hierarchy does not conflict with the idea of equality given that equality is not placing everyone on the same level rather it is about giving everyone what is due to the person<sup>161</sup>. In this we clearly see that making reference to Equality brings us to the port of justice. According to Mijancos Gurruchaga:

Justice and equality are two related and united concepts that cannot be valued without each other. Recognizing that some values such as the legitimacy of power, freedom, social justice, the common good, etc., are aspects of justice, the only principle that cannot enunciate justice without any valuation is the principle of equality. When it is stated that something

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<sup>159</sup> Second Vatican Council *Gaudium et spes* no 29.

<sup>160</sup> CASTELLANO, D. J *Commentary on Gaudium et spes* Repository of Arcane knowledge. <https://www.arcaneknowledge.org/catholic/councils/comment21-16.htm#ch2> accessed 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2019.

<sup>161</sup> “Igwebuike and African Ethics” *Igwebuikipedia: Internet Encyclopedia of African Philosophy* <http://igwebuikipedia.info/Shared.asp> accessed 31st July 2019.

is fair, it is because there is an equal exercise with respect to the other. The scope of this principle is given by three elements: the alterity or orientation towards the other, the presence of a deontic duty or requirement and the equality or proportionality of the debit of justice. For the common good, the good of individuals is essential<sup>162</sup>.

Within the Blessed Trinity, we find that equality forms part of the life of the Trinity as each one of them has its specific roles, yet in no way is one's role to be considered as the better of the other two rather through perichoretic dynamism of the Father's love, the grace of the Son and the communion of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Cor. 13,13), they work together to realize these functions in the History of salvation. I think it is important to pay attention this concept and most especially imbibe igwebuike in our discourse as it possesses this value to make our human community better.

## **Conclusion**

Igwebuike is a well-thought principle that can be interpreted in many different academic, political and social circles. Ascribing this principle to the foundation of the Christian faith, The Blessed Trinity, does not seek to avoid the question and identity of mystery which is attached to it. Rather what I have done in the foregone is to see if the igwebuike principle championed by Professor Kanu can be used to make a discourse on the Trinity from its social dimension, that is based on the relations that exists in the Life of the Blessed Trinity.

There are many possibilities in the Igwebuike principle of Professor Kanu especially in the ambience of life of the Church and her missions. I believe Igwebuike can extend a helping hand to explaining the Christian principles in an indigenous manner that is more appealing and original to those who evangelize and to the evangelized.

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