

EXEGETICAL STUDY OF MATTHEW 25: 31-46 IN CONTRADISTINCTION TO THE
IGBO COSMOLOGICAL NOTION OF REINCARNATION

BY

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CERTIFICATION

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APPROVAL PAGE

We ratify that this Dissertation carried out under our supervision, has been examined and found to have met the regulations of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. We therefore approve the work for the award of Ph.D Degree in Religion and Human Relations (New Testament).

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife, Rose Mbachii and my children: Princess, Juliet and Prince.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abs.	Absolute
Acc.	Accusative
Act.	Active (voice)
Adv.	Adverb
Advl.	Adverbial (ly)
Aor.	Aorist (tense)
Appos.	In apposition (to)
Art.	(definite) article
Cohort	Cohortative subjection (1 st pers. only)
Comp.	Comparative
Cond.	Conditional
Conj.	Conjunction
Dat.	Dative
Dep.	Deponent
Dir.	Direct
Fem.	Feminine
Freq.	Frequency
Fut.	Future (tense)
Gen.	Genetive
Gk.	Greek
Impf.	Imperfect
Impv.	Imperative (mood)
Indecl.	Indeclinable
Indef.	Indefinite
Indic.	Indicative
Inf.	Infinitive
Masc.	Masculine
Mid.	Middle (voice)
Neg.	Negative
Neut.	Neuter
Nom.	Nominative
NT	New Testament
Obj.	Objective
Obs.	Obsolete
Opt.	Optative
OT	Old Testament
Pass.	Passive (voice)
Pers.	Person
Pf.	Perfect (tense)
Pl.	Plural
Pred.	Predicative

Prep.	Preposition
Pres.	Present (tense)
Pro.	Pronoun
Ptc.	Participle
Ref.	Reference
Rel.	Relative
Sg.	Singular
Subj.	Subjunctive (mood)
Subord.	Subordinate
Superl.	Superlative
Trans.	Transitive
V.	Verse
Vb.	Verb
Voc.	Vocative
%	Percent

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ABSTRACT

The belief in reincarnation has affected some Christians at many levels ranging from belief, experience and ritual relation to their ancestors. The levels are intrinsically bound together and cause great harm to the Igbo Christian, especially when his conversion to Christianity fails to address what he experiences in his everyday life. Continual adherence to the beliefs and practices of traditional religion that reveals belief in reincarnation has not only weakened the Church but has also given rise to syncretism. This therefore betrays a gap in knowledge among some people who are being converted from traditional religion to Christianity. The Igbo Christian is so fundamentally bound to this indigenous belief that it presents stiff resistance to key Christian contentions such as eschatological judgment. The purpose of the study is to exegetically analyse the text: Matthew 25: 31-46, examine the inference deducible from it in relation to the Christian notion of eschatological judgment, and study how the textual position on eschatological judgment relates to or differs from the concept of reincarnation among the Igbo of the South East Nigeria. The research is both qualitative and quantitative. Data are collected from both primary and secondary sources using the survey method and documentary or historical method respectively. The questionnaire technique is used to collect primary data while secondary data are gathered from written sources such as books, journals, articles and so on. Primary data are analyzed and presented in Tables using the simple percentages while secondary data are analyzed using descriptive method. The historical-critical method and contextual/inculturation tools are used for the interpretation of the biblical text. The resurrection theory was used because this theory, more than any other delved into the mysteries beyond the grave and offer plausible solutions. The research revealed that the last judgment and reincarnation agreed to the point that the Supreme God and the Matthean God is not merely a power but a Person; and that the resurrected individuals and the living dead are not souls but spiritual persons. They differed in that the last judgment is a one-time-event that can never be repetitive unlike the Igbo concept of reincarnation. Also, contrary to the Igbo concept of reincarnation, the last judgment proffers lasting solution to the problem of evil. Again, unlike what we see in Igbo concept of reincarnation, the Christians will possess bodies that are not only new and glorious but will also not be subjugated to earthly limitations. The relationship between reincarnation and the last judgment is rather negative and non perfect. The index of relationship between the two can present some left to right downward trend if the graph of the relationship were to be plotted. The researcher, therefore, concluded that the Igbo Christian needed a genuine Igbo expression of the Christian faith and a corresponding theology for a possible inculturation. This includes seeing Christ as the Ancestor, making room for local names which do not contain any idea of reincarnation and possibly combining naming ceremony with baptism in some areas. The Church should be at pains through her teachings and practical life to introduce a fulfilment into the Christian conscience, that belief in the resurrection of the dead.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

It is rather an open secret that Christianity in Igboland has come of age. It is over one hundred and fifty years old. It has made a tremendous impact on all that the Igbo man believes and, in some cases, one can rightly say that the speed at which much of these impacts were made has left the Igbo man with a split between what he is as an Igbo and what he is as a Christian. Is this not suggestive of someone who is a victim of divided personality? This constitutes a serious worry to the researcher in that the Gospel which ought to serve as an agent of liberation from alienation and divided personality now appears to foster alienation and split personality.

As an Igbo Christian, the researcher is brought up to believe that death with Christ is not repeatable “Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face” (Heb. 9: 27 NIV). On the other hand, the researcher in the course of his pastoral visits to many homes, and resulting from his observations and experiences from everyday life, and from his counselings and interactions with hundreds of others, noted that some people promised, while still alive, that they would come back after their death and show signs or identifications. In this case, there is no doubt and people at birth of a child can identify him immediately.

More so, the researcher has also observed that there is a phrase, commonly used among some Igbo people he has come in contact with, which is “*N’uwam ọzọ*” (“in my next world”), which gives credence to reincarnation. For instance, “*N’uwam ọzọ m ga-abụ nke a ma-ọbụ nke ọzọ*” (“In my next world, I would be this or that”). This constitutes some worry to the researcher as to wonder how many worlds that exist. A man for instance, who suffers a lot of hardships and setbacks might even confess that in his next world, he would have tremendous

breakthroughs and unequalled success. A friend shared with the researcher the case he witnessed in his neighbourhood. According to him, there was one Mrs. Egodi who was short but with ‘an open teeth’. It was this ‘open teeth’ that gave her powerful dentition to the admiration of all. Her beauty lies in this dentition and that made her smile all the time so as to display her beauty as she had come to believe that her beauty lies in the arrangement of her teeth. Although the woman did not marry in time, yet she had five issues. Unfortunately, out of the five children, only two survived. Shortly before she died, she confessed to many people that in her next world, she would be tall and intelligent, study with scholarship, marry at a very young age and live with the husband in *ala bekee* (white man’s land). Shortly after Egodi’s death, a female child was born to her only surviving male child with features which typify those of his late mother. The girl grew up to become exceptionally tall, intelligent, beautiful, oval face with slit teeth. Right from the birth, the people who are acquainted with this story do call her Egodi, that is, her grandmother’s name, instead of Nneamaka, which is her own name. To the admiration of all, this girl studied with scholarship, married at a tender age, and at present living with her husband in Canada. In deed, the researcher does not know how to explain it all for the experience is undeniable.

Furthermore, the researcher has observed that in certain cases of child illness, when medical expertise appears not to proffer a solution, an elder would come in and ask the question: “Has the ancestor who came back in this child been determined? (*Agbaa na nwata nkea agu?*). In many of such cases, the parents, on being questioned would go in search of a *dibia afa* (fortune-teller) to find out who came back in the child and subsequently to welcome such an ancestor with appropriate honours. In few cases, the sickness appears to subside after the rituals. In those early days, some supposedly Christian families were also involved in this act. It became worrisome to discover that when a case became a matter of death and life, Christianity was often put aside and the traditional religion took over in the life of some

Christians as some would aptly assent that *Ije-Uka adighi kwa na nkea* (Going to Church will not limit ones action in this matter).

The researcher also learnt that in the early 20th Century, traditional religion was very strong in this part of the world. Birth was a common phenomenon as well as death. A newborn child was often thought to be the reincarnation of an ancestor who had returned to mortal life. Childlessness was regarded as a great trouble because it prevented the rebirth of the family elders. Days, weeks, months or even years after the birth of a child, the parents would seek the services of *dibia afa* (fortune-teller or diviner) to ascertain which of the ancestors had come back.

There was the case of one Oyeama who returned from the Nigeria-Biafra war with a bullet-inflicted wound on his left thigh. Five years after the war, he died. In 1987, one of his sons, Osita, got married. Osita's second child was a male child with something that appeared as a mark of an injury on the left thigh. On seeing the mark the child bore on his left thigh the elders concluded that the child was the reincarnation of his grandfather and they named him "*Nna-nna*" (grand father has returned).

Similar stories abound in various forms throughout the Igbo community. The Igbo give names such as *Nne-nna* (the mother of her father); *Nne-ji* (my brother/ sister); *Nna-ji* (my half-brother/ half- sister); *Nne-nne* (mother of her mother) and so on. None of these names is repeated in the same family because it is believed that it specifies the return of a specific ancestor. Invariably, people pay the child the same reverence they were accustomed to paying the deceased grandparent. So, it is a common practice that when a child is born, the elders do examine the child closely in order to identify the particular ancestor that has returned. Even in some Christian families, there are people that go with such names that betray their belief in reincarnation. This therefore constitutes a serious worry to the researcher.

Survival is a common goal around which all life revolves; but seeking eternity seems to be a purely human characteristic. The Igbo belief in survival of the human person after death, in ancestors as 'living dead' and in reincarnation, suggests that there is a strong belief in the afterlife. Reincarnation is the concept that when a person dies, he or she will return to this mortal life in another body for another period of life on earth. People are said to go through a series of such earthly lives.

The whole fuss about decent burial ceremonies and 'ancestor-veneration' betray people's invincible conviction that the dead exist as individuals in the spirit world. It is believed that from the spirit world, the ancestors who are now released from the restraints imposed by this earth, and who are believed to be possessors of limitless potentials can exploit these for the benefit or to the detriment of those who still live on earth. Sadly enough, it is observed that some Christians secretly conduct second burial in order to give their dead relatives "proper burial", an act that presupposes their belief in reincarnation.

The researcher observed that the Igbo, as well as every African man often conceived of life as a cyclic process of birth, death and rebirth. Beliefs about the fate of man in the afterlife involving a last judgment and reincarnation do exist, but they seem to be exceptions rather than the rule. In contrast to cyclical conception of history, the biblical writings understand history as a linear movement towards a goal. God is driving history towards the ultimate fulfillment of His purpose for His creation. In other words, biblical eschatology is not limited to the destiny of individuals. It concerns the consummation of the whole history of the world towards which all redemptive acts in history are directed. Thus, the Christian understands that there will be a great divide at God's Final Judgment. From the beginning, Jesus teaches that the world history has been structured with a split ending in view. History ends in either heaven or hell. It is therefore against this background that the researcher is poised to carry out

the exegetical study of Matthew 25: 31- 46 in contradistinction to the Igbo cosmological notion of reincarnation.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The Igbo of Nigeria believe in reincarnation, which, as a religious belief, affects their openness to certain Christian doctrines especially those concerning death and afterlife. This belief is mixed up with other beliefs like the cult of ancestors, belief in the spirits and the cult of *Chukwu* (God). The belief in reincarnation affects Christians at many levels ranging from belief, experience and ritual relation to their ancestors (Obilor, 1994). The levels are intrinsically bound together and cause great harm to the Igbo Christian, especially when his conversion to Christianity fails to address what he experiences in his everyday life. Continual adherence to the beliefs and practices of traditional religion that reveals belief in reincarnation has not only weakened the Church but has also given rise to syncretism. This therefore betrays a gap in knowledge among some people who are being converted from traditional religion to Christianity. The Igbo Christian is so fundamentally bound to these indigenous beliefs in such a way that presents stiff resistance to key Christian contentions such as eschatological judgment.

There are few points at which the teaching of the Bible is more sharply in conflict with the assumptions of Igbo traditional religious beliefs and of contemporary age than in its teaching concerning God's future judgment of all men. It is correspondingly one of the most serious contemporary expressions of Christian intellectual and spiritual submission that this particular truth should be so little reflected in current preaching and writing. Thus, a theological commentator can complain with full justice that today the notion of final judgment features so little in the theology and preaching of the Church. This theological neglect is the more inexcusable in that this century appears to have witnessed an

unprecedented recovery of the biblical eschatological perspective. This particular aspect of eschatology, future divine judgment, however, appears to have been given little emphasis. This may be part of the explanation why some Christians suffer from problems which arise from syncretism.

The researcher is concerned that the problem of reincarnation has become so topical and has assumed different forms in the present times that it can no longer be treated as an ancient belief of “pagan peoples”. Ezeaku (personal communication, August 8, 2015) saw it as a “challenge to Christianity”. Kasper, (cited by Obilor, 1994) spoke about the dangers to faith of the theories of reincarnation. According to him, it is necessary to respond to “this syncretistic vision of the world and of life” (p.111). This work therefore, poises to show that in the light of Matthew 25: 31-46, the belief in reincarnation stands in marked contrast to the last judgment.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study intends to:

- a. Exegetically analyze the text: Matthew 25: 31- 46,
- b. Examine the inference deducible therefrom in relation to the Christian notion of eschatological judgment,
- c. Investigate the nature, dimensions and character of this eschatological judgment,
- d. Explain the Igbo concept of reincarnation,
- e. Study how this textual position on eschatological judgment differs from the concept of reincarnation among the Igbo using Anambra State of Nigeria as a sample,
- f. Discuss the impact of these deviations of Igbo cosmological thought on the emerging moral framework of society, and

- g. Identify the role which a proper theological repositioning of the Igbo cosmological thought could play in achieving a dream society of justice, fairness, and eternal bliss in the hereafter.

1.4 Scope of the Study

Broadly speaking, this research work is on exegetical study of Matthew 25: 31- 46 in contradistinction to Igbo cosmological notion of reincarnation. The pericope Matthew 25: 31- 46 was selected because it presents the Matthean concept of the last judgment. There are many concepts of reincarnation throughout the world but the Igbo cosmological notion was considered because the researcher is an Igbo-man. The main focus of this study, however, is with the Igbo people occupying Anambra central covering Agulu, Alor, Mbaukwu, Mgbakwu, Nri, Ukpo and Ogidi. The researcher concentrated on this part of Igbo land because they fall within the same culture area. According to Achunike (1996), “Culture- area, geographically speaking, has, the same culture traits complexes and patterns; this is necessary for a deeper and rigorous research” (p.65).

1.5 Significance of the Study

Many works have been carried out on either reincarnation or last judgment. However, the significance of this study lies in the bold attempt to make a major Christian belief meaningful in African context by trying to identify the similarities and differences in the nature of the last judgment and Igbo traditional belief in reincarnation.

This work will help to reveal the fate of reincarnation after last judgment, reward and punishment thereby helping to place the confused Christians in the right perspective.

This study will also further enrich New Testament studies so much that scholars from every age and class will find in it a helpful source of information on this subject matter.

The practical aspect of it will also be in the use of African tools to investigate the Bible. It compares the concept of after-life between Igbo belief in reincarnation and the Christian claims of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Biblical scholars therefore need to be convinced that the African cultural heritage should no longer be dismissed as “pagan” but be harnessed to adequately relate the truth of the Christian faith. The dissertation undercuts biases against African culture and affirms the authority of African worldview in biblical interpretation.

Above all, this study will serve both as an added contribution to literary scholarship and as a reference material to subsequent researchers in the fields of religion, philosophy and enculturation theology.

1.6 Methodology

Data were collected for this work through the survey method. Oral interviews were also conducted by the researcher which paved the way for comparisons and analysis of facts collected with regard to the subject matter. As Maduakonam (2004) puts it, “Oral interview is face-to –face interpersonal roles, a situation in which one person being the interviewer, asks a person being interviewed, the respondent, questions designed to obtain answers pertinent to the research problem” (p. 143). The interviews were held between September 2014 and April 2016. The interview was based on structured questions. A total of one hundred and twenty-six subjects purposively selected among the elderly people and traditional worshippers who are custodians of the people’s culture were interviewed. Eight people who were randomly selected from each local government Area of Anambra Central were interviewed. The majority was directly interviewed in English, Igbo and a combination of both. The interviews were scheduled at the time most convenient to the interviewees. Nearly all the interviews were taped, except on the few occasions that the interviewees preferred to have their accounts

written instead. A comprehensive list of all the interviewees was included in the appendix, but for reasons of confidentiality some personal data were withheld.

The questionnaire technique was employed in the field survey and study of Igbo belief in reincarnation. The field survey was conducted to elicit information from the people of Agulu, Alor, Mbaukwu, Mgbakwu, Nri, Ukpo and Ogidi about their belief in reincarnation. One thousand and fifty copies of the questionnaire were administered in Agulu, Alor, Mbaukwu, Mgbakwu, Nri, Ukpo and Ogidi. Eight hundred and seven copies were retrieved; this makes 76.9% of the total copies of questionnaire distributed. Out of the eight hundred and seven copies of questionnaire retrieved, twenty-seven copies were discarded given that the responses of the respondents did not make any sense. The researcher had to work with seven hundred and eighty copies of the questionnaire distributed; this makes 74.3% of the total number of the questionnaire distributed. The researcher employed the convenient or random sampling technique in administering the questionnaire. In random sampling technique, everybody has an equal chance of participating. The respondents were drawn from different religious and educational backgrounds. Simple percentages were used for data analysis. Percentage means parts out of 100 and is used to compare information from different sources, quantify change over time and find the amount by which something has increased or decreased following a percentage change.

The secondary source refers to reports of a second-hand or third-hand authors such as diaries, letters, journals, magazines, Bible dictionaries and commentaries, textbooks of various kinds by some authors. All these were to help the researcher gain more insight into the subject matter.

In addition, the researcher employed the apparatus of the historical-critical method and contextual/ inculturation methods in the interpretation of the selected texts, by making use of

Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible and also relating the interpretation of the biblical texts to Igbo context. In other words, the comparative and evaluative models were the method employed. The comparative model is interested in comparing the Bible and African life and culture while the evaluative model seeks to understand the biblical message against the background of African life, thought and practice. Both methodologies fall within the inculturation paradigm of African biblical interpretation.

1.7 Definition of Terms

For the purpose of clarity, some basic concepts used in this work will be defined. They include: exegetical, reincarnation, cosmological and contradistinction.

Exegetical

The word, 'exegetical' is an adjective form of the noun, 'exegesis'. The term ἐξήγησις from ἐξηγεῖσθαι ('to lead out') is a critical explanation or interpretation of a text, particularly a religious text. Traditionally the term was used primarily for work with the Bible; however, in modern usage "biblical exegesis" is used for greater specificity to distinguish it from any other broader critical text explanation. Exegesis includes a wide range of critical disciplines: textual criticism is the investigation into the history and origins of the text, but exegesis may include the study of the historical and cultural backgrounds of the author, the text, and the original audience. Other analysis includes classification of the type of literary genres present in the text, and an analysis of grammatical and syntactical features in the text itself. For Fee and Stuart (1993), the word 'hermeneutics' ordinarily covers the whole field of interpretation, including exegesis, it is also used in the narrower sense of seeking the contemporary relevance of ancient texts. Exegesis, therefore, can be distinguished from hermeneutics which Milne (1998) defined as "the science of interpreting Scripture" (p.59). Black and Dockery (2001) brought out the difference more clearly when they penned, "Exegesis is the

understanding of what the original author was trying to say while hermeneutics is the understanding of relevance of a text for today” (p. 8).

Rahner (1981) defined the word exegesis as the branch of theology which investigates and expresses the true sense of sacred Scripture. Fee and Stuart (1993) defined exegesis as “careful, systematic study of the Scripture to discover the original, intended meaning” (p. 19). Thus, in this work, the word, ‘exegetical’ is understood to mean the attempt to hear the Word as the original recipients were to have heard it, to find out what was the original intent of the words of the Bible relevant in this study.

Reincarnation

The word ‘reincarnation’ is derived from two Latin words: *re* which means again; and *incarnare* which means to enter into the body. What has no flesh before has now taken on flesh or now manifests in bodily form and is seen as flesh. Etymologically, the word ‘reincarnation’ therefore, literally means ‘entering the flesh again’ as in either human or animal to continue the normal existence. Hornby (2010) defined reincarnation as the belief that after somebody’s death his soul lives again in a new body. Random House Dictionary (2016) defined reincarnation as the belief that the soul, upon death of the body, comes back to earth in another body or form. For Onyewuenyi (1989), reincarnation is “the theory that when the soul separates from the body at death it informs another body for another span of earthly life” (p. 16). Echekwube (1987) saw reincarnation as “the soul of a deceased person taking a new body” (p. 10). Parrinder (1971) defined reincarnation as “the belief that soul or some power passes after death into another body” (p. 286.) However, in this work the definition given by John Iheanyichukwu Obilor is adopted. Obilor (1994) defined reincarnation (*ilọ-*uwa**) as the belief that “the qualified deceased or, living persons can return to the earth through birth in their grandchildren, great grandchildren or the children of their relatives

within the extended family circle as a sign of love and fellowship. In this work, it is important to distinguish this aspect of reincarnation from metempsychoses or transmigration. In transmigration or metempsychoses, the soul after leaving the human body inhabits an animal or some inanimate objects such as trees or stones. The unique nature of the working definition would later become clearer in the body of the work.

Cosmological

Cosmological is an adjective form of cosmology. Hornby (2010) defined the word 'cosmology' as the scientific study of the universe and its origin and development. According to Kirkpatrick (1983), cosmology is defined as the science of universe as a whole: a treatise on the structure and parts of the system of a creation. Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology defined cosmology in three ways:

- (a) Metaphysically, cosmology is defined as dealing with totality of things, or with such questions as whether a creative mind could be inferred from the ordered universe;
- (b) Scientifically, it may be considered as dealing with the discussion of contemporary scientific theories of the universe; and
- (c) Theologically, it refers to the worldview of a particular age.

It is in this third usage that cosmology is being used in this work. In other words, by Igbo cosmology the author means the set of presuppositions (or assumptions) which the Igbo hold (consciously or unconsciously) about the basic make-up of the world. It is the Igbo basic assumptions about reality.

Contradistinction

According to Hornby (2010), contradistinction is used to show contrast between something /somebody with something or somebody. Then, according to Macmillian Dictionary (2016),

contradistinction is used in showing differences between two things by comparing them.

Macmillian Dictionary's definition of contradistinction is adopted in this work.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

A study of the opinions and views of some scholars in the related study will be of immense help to a better understanding of this work. This is therefore done under the following headings:

- I. Conceptual Framework;
- II. Theoretical Framework; and
- III. Empirical Studies.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

It is vital in this work to have a look at the general concept of reincarnation. It therefore entails considering how scholars have defined the subject and then, throwing more light on it for better understanding.

2.1.1 The General Concept of Reincarnation

The word 'reincarnation' is derived from two Latin words: *re* which means again; and *incarnare* which means to enter into the body. What has no flesh before has now taken on flesh or now manifests in bodily form and is seen as flesh. Etymologically, the word 'reincarnation' therefore, literally means 'entering the flesh again' as in either human or animal to continue normal existence. Onyewuenyi (1989) defined reincarnation as "the theory that when the soul separates from the body at death, it informs another body for another span of earthly life" (p. 16). Arazu and Ibida (2005) defined reincarnation as the "doctrine that the human soul survives physical death and that the said human soul does return to this earth of sense experience by taking up another body after leaving the previous one through what is known as death" (p. 3). Echekwube (1987) defined reincarnation as "the soul of a deceased person taking a new body" (p. 10). Parrinder (1971) defined reincarnation as "the belief that the soul or some power passes after death into another body" (p. 286). Obilor (1994) defined

reincarnation (*ilq- uwa*) as the belief that “the qualified deceased or, living persons can return to the earth through birth in their grandchildren, great grandchildren or the children of their relatives within the extended family circle as a sign of love and fellowship.

2.1.2 Thoughts and Views of Reincarnation

Hinduism is the major religion of India but there are many different Hindu Schools of thought. The author will concern himself with the Vedantic view (that school of Indian thought which bases its philosophy on the writings of the *Upanishads* and the *Vedanta Sutra*) since this theory of reincarnation is in line with that of other orthodox schools of Indian thought (Gallup, 1982).

Indian philosophers Shankara (eight century) and Ramanuja (eleventh century), taught what are now the two main schools of thought in the Vedantic system. The author would like to label these two different views as the “Impersonal” view (Shankara’s *advaita* system) and the “Personal” view (Ramanuja’s system).

Shankara’s reincarnation belief is called *advaita*, which means “not-twoness” (everything is one). Shankara’s school holds a pantheistic worldview that says God (Brahman) is everything and everything is God. Thus, God is the world and the world is God (Geisler & Amano, 1986). Ramanuja, on the other hand, believes in a distinction between God and the world. His system, called *vishisht-advaita*, meaning “difference no- difference,” is not the total opposite of Shankara’s system, but is regarded as a modified form of it. In contrast to Shankara, Ramanuja believed that God is personal and that the world and individuals are God’s “body”. Thus, he can be regarded as having a *pan-en-theistic* (all-in-God) system where God is more than the world- in a real sense, distinguished from the world- while entailing the world as an aspect of himself as well (Geisler & Amano,1986). It is good at this point to note that

panentheism is the view that the universe is God, though God is more than the universe. It should be clearly distinguished from *pantheism* in which God and the universe are strictly identical. For the panentheist, God has an identity on his own, that is, he is something which the universe is not. On the other hand, the universe is part of the reality of God.

Many basic elements of these reincarnation beliefs dealing with personal and impersonal views are basically the same. The soul is called the *jiva* or *jivatman*. The soul (*jiva*) is attached to a physical body called the “gross body”. At death, this physical body dies and the soul survives as a mental entity called the “subtle body” (*lingua sharira*) (Hick, 1976). The subtle body is the continuous element throughout the reincarnation process until salvation occurs. The soul, as the subtle body bears the karma of its past lives.

The subtle body, then after making the appropriate karmic calculations, attaches itself to a developing embryo (Smart, 1972). If in one’s former life one had “good conduct” then one would enter a “pleasant womb” – be born into a higher socio-religious class. But if one’s conduct in a past life was not good, then one would enter a “foul and stinking womb”- be born into a lower class as an animal, vegetable, or mineral. Moreover, reincarnation is not limited to this earth. In fact, one can be reborn in a multiplicity of heavens, hells, and purgatories (Hick, 1983).

The Hindu holds that throughout the continual process of death and rebirth, one slowly progresses toward his salvation, from the bondage of being entrapped in this world to the goal of spiritual perfection in divine self-existence. However, it is on the nature of this “salvation” that Shankara and Ramanuja disagree. Both have as a goal to break the “wheel” of rebirth. This liberation from the burdensome recarnation-wheel is called *moksha* (Geisler & Amano, 1986).

Hick (1983) defined *moksha* in “Shankara’s Impersonal view as “unqualified identity” (p 428). That is, the self, when it has shed all of its karmic debt, is freed from having to be reincarnated again so that it literally becomes one with God. The *jivatman* (the individual soul) becomes the Brahman (God). Hence, self loses his/her individuality and merges into God. On the other hand, the Personal Hindu view of Ramanuju understands *moksha* as retaining the individuality of the soul and of God. “Liberation” is then interpreted as freedom from rebirth so that one may eternally live a constant devotional relationship with Bhagwan, the personal God.

On the other hand, Buddhism, the major religion of the Far East, is predominantly found in Tibet, China, and Japan. Gautama the Buddha lived in the sixth century B. C. After his death his beliefs spread throughout the world. The fundamental difference between the Buddhist and Hindu views of reincarnation is the Buddhist doctrine of “no-self” (*anatta*). In Hinduism, the self survives bodily death only to be reincarnated again. But according to Buddha, there is no self as we presently know it, in the “afterlife” (Lawlings, 1984). Radhakrishna (cited in Geisler & Amano, 1986) poignantly put it: “There is no such thing in Buddhism as the migration of the soul or the passage of an individual from life to life.... It is not the dead man who comes to rebirth but another. There is no soul to migrate” (p. 31).

This difficult doctrine is often illustrated by a wax that is impressed by a seal. The engravings of the seal leave an impression on the wax but no substance is transferred from the seal to the wax. Likewise in rebirth, even though there is a definite characteristic connection between the present life and future one, nothing substantial is transferred. Hick (1983) was of the opinion that the exact nature of this “survival” after death cannot be detailed because it transcends our understanding. For him the soul as we think of it in this life, does not exist; that in our present temporal world, the self is a mind-body unity. At death, all the components

of this mind-body unity are dissolved. All that is left is a “karmic deposit of former selves” (p.344). That which is reincarnated is called *vinnana*. *Vinnana* is not identical with one’s consciousness (which is just one component of one’s mind-body unity), but is the unconscious disposition which has “collected” its karmic deposit.

To put it another way, it is the prevailing tendencies of one’s character which survive death and re-enter embodiment. After death, the *vinnana* is filled with the cravings for material life. This craving “attracts” him back to the physical world and he is thus reborn (Geisler & Amano, 1986).

As with Hinduism, Buddhism believes that one’s karma determines a person’s next life. And yet, Budha’s view of karma was much more flexible than the Hindu version and was regarded as only one of the determining factors in successive rebirths. This is not to dilute the Buddhist belief in the law of karma. It was still regarded as a law and enforcer of equity, matching the right soul with the right body. Smart (1972) concisely put it: “Karma is often taken to function through the homing of a soul upon a morally and physically appropriate fetus” (p.123).

Primitive forms of Buddhism affirmed the possibility of being reborn as non-human forms, while more modern Buddhists considered it an impossibility (Evans-Wentz, 1960). More so, rebirths not only take place in different worlds and planes, but in fact, earthly rebirths are regarded as minority. The wheel of *samsara* (continual rebirth) is deemed something to be escaped. Through self-discipline, ethical conduct, wisdom, and meditation one can achieve *moksha* (liberation). This state of liberation is called *nirvana* (Geisler & Amano, 1986).

Then, Jainas, followers of an ancient (ninth century B. C.) religion of India, believed that there is a permanent soul or self (*jiva*) which persists throughout its afterlife. Throughout one’s reincarnations, one accumulates various kinds of karma-like “layers” or “incrustations”

which cover and weigh down the soul. These layers must be worn off through the process of reincarnation or by self-discipline, asceticism, and perfect knowledge (*kevala*) (Smart, 1972).

Under the Jain system, one can be reborn in non-human forms at various levels of existence. The accumulation of karmic matter is in direct proportion to one's desires; the worse the desires, the heavier the form of karmic matter which is embedded on the soul, sinking the soul to a lower scale of existence. If one is to reach a higher level of existence, one must shed one's heavy karmic matter and rise up to the higher existence of the "eternal home". There, the worthy soul is not reduced to nothingness but retains its own individual consciousness (Geisler & Amano, 1986).

Like Jainism, Sikhs believed that to succumb to material desires is to accumulate karma. But unlike Jainism, their reincarnation system held that the ultimate end of the dedicated Sikhs is absorption into God. Noss (1980) precisely represented it thus:

Let them think only of God, endlessly repeat his name, and be absorbed into Him; in such absorption alone lies the bliss known to Hindus as Nirvana. For salvation is not going to Paradise after a last judgment, but absorption- in God, the True Name (pp.123-124).

Besides, Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the founder of the International Society of Krishna Consciousness or Hare Krishnas (1982) said that the Hindu Scriptures called the Vedas teaches that there are 8, 400, 000 species of life, from amoebas to humans and "demigods". For him our whole existence in the material world is as a result of our karma from the past experiences. In his belief, the determination of one's future rebirth is a dual effort by oneself and Lord Krishna. For a person determines his own desires and Lord Krishna supplies the "material energy" needed to fulfill those desires. The more one gives in

to one's sensual and material desires, the lower the life-form in which one will be reincarnated. However, if one sheds these "lowly" desires, then one will progress to higher forms of existence until one is liberated from the process of reincarnation altogether.

In the understanding of Prabhupada, it is only through a human body that our souls can attain liberation. Unfortunately, a human reincarnation is a rarity and only occurs after evolving through millions of lower species. Thus, Prabhupada (1982) said, "One who misuses the human form and does not become self-realized is not better than a dog or an ass" (pp.122-123). For Prabhupada, the way to rid oneself of karma is through chanting a mantra. But in order to be effective, the Hare Krishna mantra must be received from a bona fide master in the spiritual line of disciples descending from Lord Krishna himself. It is only by the mercy of such qualified guru that one can become free from cycle of birth and death.

"Back to Godhead" is the theme of ISKCON liberation since liberation is seen as a literal "homecoming" from where one originally fell. Prabhupada (1982) pointed out that all living beings originally existed "in the spiritual world as transcendental loving servants of God" (pp.123-124). The unnatural cycle of repeated rebirth, disease, old age, and death can be stopped when one's consciousness is dovetailed with the supreme consciousness of God. The ultimate end of liberation is guaranteed. The soul is never banished to eternal damnation (Geisler & Amano, 1986).

Again, Cooper (1979) stated that the Theosophical Society teaches that since we are souls which emanated from God, we once "possessed all the powers of our divine Father" (p. 25). For him, the purpose of reincarnation is "to bring to us these experiences which will most rapidly awaken all our latent faculties and bring them into action" (p. 25).

Souls retain their sexless personhood throughout the reincarnation process, returning to earth as an embryo. The nature of this “return” is determined by karma, a manifestation of the universal law of cause and effect. In this way “the law of karma motivates rebirth. Reincarnation is made necessary by the accumulation of good and evil actions brought forward from previous existences. For Hall (1967) rebirth must continue as long as karma remains. However, theosophists rejected the notion that a human soul could be reincarnated into non-human forms.

After death, the soul enters an intermediate state called *kamaloka*, the “auric sphere”, or the “astral world” which is identical to that of the “subtle body” of Hinduism. Here in this purgatorial state, individuals suffer for past sins in order to “work off impurities” (Geilser & Amano, 1986). For the Theosophists, the state of purgatory or the reincarnation in this world of suffering may constitute “temporary hells” and “temporary heavens”, but there are no permanent, “static” ones. The escape from the “cycle of necessity” is the ultimate destiny of all. Instead of heaven, Purucker (1973) looked toward an: “Endless progress, endless advancement of all, excluding none, the tiniest atom, the mightiest god, two different stages of growing entities. The atom becomes a man, the man becomes a god, the god becomes a super-god, ad infinitum (p. 472) Purucker (1973) boldly proclaimed:

I want to grow out of a man to be a god, to lose my manhood, to merge into godhood ; and when I become a god, I shall still have, I hope, this yearning, this unsatisfied hunger for something grander and greater still than godhood, always marching upwards and onwards (p.356).

The nature of the final state, according to their perspective, is difficult to determine. Bailey (1978) called it a “stage of Christlike perfection” (p.119). Purucker (1973) said, this is when the soul: “Comes into direct and intimate relation, spiritual relation, communion, self-identification, with the Divine mind of which it is a child, the spark, the offspring. Then you

have Reality. That is Nirvana” (p. 301). Yet, this is not a total identification and absorption into “God”. Purucker rejected the assertion that we are all swallowed up into a state which dissolves our individual consciousness.

When we turn to ancient Greek and Roman views of reincarnation, we meet people like Pythagoras, Plato and Plotinus. While it appears that there is no direct record of Pythagora’s position on reincarnation, according to Geisler and Amano (1986), two other Greek philosophers- Empedocles and Pindar attested to Pythagora’s belief on this ancient doctrine of rebirth. Noss (1980) quoted Plato to have said:

Man is a soul in a body, and his soul needs to grow toward the highest good, that it may no longer have to suffer continued rebirth but to go into that state in which it may, like God, behold and enjoy forever the hierarchy of the ideal forms, in all their truth, beauty and goodness (p.52).

Plato taught that we ought to try to escape from the earth to the dwelling of the gods as quickly as we can and to escape is to become like God, so far as that is possible. Perhaps the most developed system of reincarnation in this age came from the Neo-Platonic philosopher Plotinus of the third century A.D. Geilser & Amano (1986) underscored that Plotinus claimed that there were basically three spheres of existence: vegetative sphere, the sensitive and intellectual. The vegetative sphere is, of course the realm of non-sensual, non-intelligent plant life. The sensitive sphere is basically the world of animals. Men and gods dwell in the place of the intellectual. Even though Plotinus did not speak of Karma, he did have concept of past actions determining future reincarnations. The souls which liberated themselves from sensual desires and therefore from the cycle of reincarnation will dwell where there is reality and true being and the divine, in God. Geilser & Amano (1986) quoting Plotinus stated that the goal for man is to become one with God.

When we turn to African views, while some scholars like Arazu and Ibida (2005), Ekwunife (1999) held that in tropical Africa, the belief in reincarnation is deeply rooted, others, like Innocent Onyewuenyi (1989), Obilor (1994) argued that what Africans mean by “return” or “reborn” cannot be translated by “reincarnation” because for them the child or children are not identical with the dead since the birth of the little one (s) in no wise puts an end to the existence of the deceased ancestor in the spirit world.

According to this African perspective, a person dies, enters the spirit world, and his vital force returns to earth in his descendants. There is neither concept of the progress of the soul as it returns to the material world nor is there a sense of punishment where evil men return in lower life-forms. However, there is a belief that some tribes are related to certain animals and therefore can return as animals.

Yet for them, this process of returning to earth should not be regarded as reincarnation. The deceased “self” is not re-embodied; for one retains one’s own identity in the spirit world even though one can influence or determine the physical and psychological characteristics of a newborn in one’s family. It is difficult to understand the logic of a belief in an ancestor who in some sense “returns” to this world and yet does not leave the other world. Yet this is inconsistent view hold by many tropical Africans.

When we turn to the so-called “Christian views”, we discover that MacGregor (1982) believed that reincarnation is “an enrichment of the Christian hope” (p. ix). Consequently he saw reincarnation as “a resurrection of some kind” (p. ix). For him, the attainment of a glorified body might be through a gradual process, which involves a long evolutionary, purgatorial process. He rejected “the standard Christian alternative” to reincarnation, namely, the “horrible” doctrine of hell, because it contradicts the “fundamental Christian assertion that God is love”. Instead, he interpreted hell as “final extinction” (p.171). He believed that

reincarnation enables one to receive a new capacity to be more intimate with God. And perhaps, at the end of every age, an evolutionary “leap” toward perfection will be in store for all humanity. The author saw this as a subtle attempt to blend the beliefs in reincarnation with the Christian doctrine of resurrection.

On the other hand, De Arteaga (1983) believed that reincarnation should only be seen as an option for some, but not as necessary for all. For him, at death, the Lord, not karma, directs the destiny of an individual soul “along the path best suited for its development” (pp.207-208). He saw afterlife as being multilevelled: those who are not reincarnated go to “quasi-heaven” (ie., the “bosom of Abraham”), one of the various levels of heaven, or to one of the sheol-hades states. The unbeliever goes to one of the sheol-hades states (which he does not identify with ultimate hell) and then is reincarnated into a state which provides him with the kingdom of God.

De Arteaga went on to say that believers can either enter one of the levels of heaven or reincarnate to a higher level of effective service to the body of Christ. He believed that the “Christian conception entails a final Last Judgment. For him there will come a time when one will have to make a final decision and thus enter either the kingdom of God or ultimate hell. Recalling the Scripture, De Arteaga noted that there is no forgiveness for those who reject Christ. In the understanding of the author, De Arteaga’s view constitutes one of the major differences between a so- called “Christian” conception of reincarnation and Eastern one.

Unlike the other “Christian” models of reincarnation, Hick (1976) did not advocate the doctrine of “past lives” reincarnation. For while he did not find such a belief to be theologically objectionable; he found the logical difficulties connected with the concept of perfect identity too serious to ignore. What Hick (1976) did propose is a doctrine of many successive lives in many worlds with the individual ultimately reaching a state of human

unity which is like the Trinitarian conception of God. He proposed a “replica theory” wherein the resurrection of the person can be thought of as a divine re-creation in another place of an exact replica of the deceased person. Hick (1976) argued that it is logically possible for any number of separate worlds to exist which are all observed by God’s universal consciousness. Thus, for Hick: “When an individual dies in our present world in space number one, he is either immediately or after a lapse of time re-created in a world in space number two” (p. 285).

It appears that Hick attempted to propose that the ultimate state is a harmonious relationship between all perfected and resurrected human beings as well as with God. In short, he seems to harmonize reincarnation with Christianity by demonstrating the “compatibility” between the resurrection and its Eastern counterpart. While Hick himself admits that he adheres essentially to the Hindu or Buddhist view of reincarnation, it is difficult to understand why he claimed that his postulation of reincarnation is taken place on many worlds, diverges significantly from the Eastern views, for many of these assert the same beliefs.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

There are many theories of reincarnation but no one theory explains it all. However, for the purpose of this study, the researcher decided to discuss some of these theories as follows:

2.2.1 Psychodynamic Theory

Psychodynamic theory remains important in academic and historical terms being the first psychological approach to gain acceptance. The aim of psychoanalysis is to produce therapeutic change by allowing the client to gain an insight into her or his emotional past.

These unresolved emotional conflicts from the past are thought to produce unconscious conflicts resulting in their symptoms. As a result of the process involved, psychoanalysis is sometimes described as an insight therapy.

Although its precursors can be traced back to Mesmer and the work of Breuer, psychodynamic approaches to abnormal behaviour truly began with Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). Freud formulated the psychodynamic theory of personality based on his clinical experiences. Holmes (1998) pointed out that he initially used hypnosis to access the early experiences of his neurotic patients.

A person under hypnosis is in a state of heightened susceptibility to the suggestions of others. Feldman (1994) described the method clearly:

You are feeling relaxed and drowsy. You are getting sleepier and sleepier. Your body is becoming limp. Now you are starting to become warm, at ease, more comfortable. Your eyelids are feeling heavier and heavier. Your eyes are closing; you can't keep them open anymore. You are totally relaxed. Now, as you listen to my voice, do exactly as I say. Place your hands above your head. You will find they are getting heavier and heavier- so heavy you can barely keep them up. In fact, although you are straining as hard as you will, yet you will be unable to hold them up again (p.144).

For Feldman, an observer watching the above scene would notice a curious phenomenon occurring: many of the people listening to the voice would, one by one, drop their arms to their sides, as if they were holding heavy lead weights. The reason for this strange behaviour is that the people have been hypnotized.

In some respects, it appears that a person in a hypnotic trance is asleep. Other aspects of behaviour contradict this appearance of sleep given that the person is attentive to the hypnotist's suggestions and carries out suggestions that may be bizarre or silly.

At the same time, Feldman (1994) noted that people do not lose all will of their own when hypnotized. For him, they will not perform antisocial behaviours and will not carry out self-

destructive acts. He went on to say that people will not reveal hidden truths about themselves and that they are capable of lying. Moreover, people cannot be hypnotized against their will.

Lynn, Weeks, Neufeld, Zivney, Brentar and Weiss (1991); Sabourine, Cutcomb, Crawford and Pribram (1990) discovered, there are wide variations in people's susceptibility to hypnosis. For them about 5 to 20 per cent of the population cannot be hypnotized at all while some 15 per cent of the population are very easily hypnotized. Most people fall in between. They went on to say that the ease with which a person is hypnotized is related to a number of other characteristics. Many scholars noted that people who are easily hypnotized are also easily absorbed while reading books or listening to music, becoming unaware of what is happening around them, and they often spend an unusual amount of time in happy daydreaming (Hilgard, (1974); Lynn & Rhue, 1985); Lynn & Snodgrass, (1987); Crawford, (1982). They concluded that such people showed a high ability to concentrate and to become completely absorbed in what they are doing.

It is very much likely that the investigators into the past life of those who claimed that they had once lived and reincarnated made use of this method to elicit information from their clients. Fraud must be regarded as a strong possibility, especially in hypnotic regressions and in cases where the data are presented by proponents of reincarnation. It is not necessary to allege conscious bad intent in every instance, for there may be a strong element of subconscious motivation when proponents of reincarnation are dealing with the possibility of rebirth. And, it should be remembered, most if not all reincarnation researchers and hypnotherapists make their living through their research and practice, a fact which can affect their findings whether consciously or not.

2.2.2 Cell Theory

The cell theory, one of the most general and basic concepts in biology, is formulated from the findings and ideas of several scientists. In 1839, the German zoologist, Theodor Schwann, and the botanist, Matthias Schleiden, who were both working on their own, stated clearly that the bodies of all animals and plants are composed of cells and the products of cells. Cells were then commonly described as “units of life” and “the building-blocks from which living organisms are made”. Biologists also realized that cells are not only the structural but also functional units of living organism. In 1885, another German biologist, Rodolf Virchow (cited by Ramalingam, 2005), stated that “all cells come from cells” (p. 214).

In the present century, studies connected with viruses and bacteria opened up the field of molecular biology. Scientists have now shown that information about the cells’ ‘make up’ is in the nucleic acids (deoxyribonucleic acid, DNA, and ribonucleic acid, RNA) of a cell. This information is passed on from one generation to the next when the cell or organism reproduces. Ramalingam (2005) summarized the cell theory thus:

- all living organisms are composed of one or more cells;
- the cell is the structural and functional unit of all living organism: the basic organizational unit of life;
- all existing cells come from the reproduction of pre-existing cells;
- a cell contains information for its structure and functional development is passed down from parent to offspring cells.

Some people hold that certain memories or characteristics of ancestry may be stored in our chromosomes and DNA structure; each person is a combination of all the ancestors who have preceded him. In some ways, such a theory seems reasonable and scientific, as the basic

mechanism (the genetic structure) is known. But science has yet to document such link in any way that would explain past-life recall.

2.2.3 Chromosome Theory of Heredity

Gregor Mendel (1822- 1884) carried out the first quantitative studies on inheritance. He published the results of his work in 1866. Michael (2001) underscored that he is often regarded as the father of genetics because his work formed the foundation for scientific study of heredity. These laid down the basic laws of genetics. From the result of his experiments, Mendel came to certain conclusions which are referred to as the Principles of “Mendelian Inheritance or Mendel’s laws of Heredity” (Ramalingam, 2005: 544). Mendel’s two laws are known as the law of segregation (of genes), and the law of independent assortment of genes.

Ramalingam (2005) summarized the Mendel’s law of heredity thus:

- the hereditary characters of an organism are determined by genes (called ‘factors’ by Mendel) which are discrete unchanging units (do not blend) of inheritance;
- a gene for a character may have alternative forms (alleles) which express the character in different ways;
- in a diploid organism, each character is controlled by two copies of each gene which may be identical alleles (homozygous) or different alleles (heterozygous);
- if a diploid organism has two different alleles (heterozygous) for a character, one allele may be dominant, dictating the expression of the character to the complete exclusion of the other (the recessive allele);

- in a diploid organism that is heterozygous for a character, the two alternative alleles separate (segregate) from each other during meiosis (called ‘factor’ reducing process by Mendel), each going randomly to a different gamete.

Mendel’s second law stated that during gamete formation, the way one pair of alleles for a given character distributes itself in the gametes does not affect the way other allelic pairs (for other characters) distribute themselves. This, however, only applies to allelic pairs on different homologous chromosomes. As a result, this law may now be restated in the following way; “During the formation of gametes, the alleles for one trait segregate independently of the alleles for other traits” (Kwan, Lam & Ofoefuna, 2011, 408).

Although Mendel published his data in 1866, its significance was only realised after 1990. By this time improved microscopes and staining techniques enabled scientists to observe the behaviour of chromosomes in gametes and zygotes. An American scientist, Walter Sutton, saw striking similarities in the way Mendel’s factors were transmitted, and chromosomes behaved during meiosis and fertilization. Sutton (cited by Ramlingam, 2005) “proposed that chromosomes are the carriers of Mendel’s factors (genes); this is called the chromosome theory of heredity” (p. 546). The chromosomes contain deoxyribonucleic acid or DNA, the molecule that contains hereditary information in a code form. This information includes all genetic instructions for controlling the production of chemicals for normal cell functioning; the production of a new cell or the whole organism itself; and the development of genetically acquired traits. Thus, this theory may account for all the apparent similarities and differences that are observed between the parents and their progenies.

2.2.6 Resurrection Theory

This theory borders on the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Ramsey (1956) postulated that the belief in the resurrection of the body has been a stumbling block, both in the ancient and

in the modern world. There are grounds, philosophical and psychological as well as religious, for believing that the soul survives death; though the life of a soul without the body is a phenomenon which is difficult to imagine. It is incomplete; because the self is far more important than the soul, and the self without bodily expression can hardly be complete self. While it was the glorified body to which the narratives testify, there was also the continuity between the old body and the one raised from death. The Son of God took upon Himself the whole of human nature in order that the whole person might be raised in glory. Ramsey (1956) concluded that the body is physical.

Ramsey was of the view that the body did not disintegrate, but was transformed, leaving behind an empty tomb. According to Ramsey, the resurrection of Christ is both spiritual and physical, in the sense that the body is a glorified body. If the spiritual, as noted by Ramsey, is left out, it only shows that only the body resurrected and it will not be a complete human nature. Ramsey's position is fundamental to the Christian faith.

What exactly was the mode of the transformation? Some of the Corinthian Christians rejected faith in the resurrection of the body. They desired to know the nature of the resurrection body. If the skeleton and corruption are raised with all the bodily weakness, what would be the value of the resurrection? For the Greeks, the idea of a bodily resurrection cannot be true, through death, the spirit escapes from its imprisonment in the mortal body. The Jewish understanding of resurrection evolved gradually. It became more realistic during the exile in Babylon. In the apocalyptic period, the concept of the resurrection became more pronounced among the Jew although, the Sadducees never accepted it. In Paul's time, some Pharisees taught that at the resurrection, people's bodies would be lifted up to heaven in the same condition in which they had been on earth. The learned Corinthians could not accept a system which by implication taught that the soul departed into Hades or Sheol, and that at the

resurrection, it would be reunited with the body. For the Corinthians who regarded the body as the perishable prison house of the soul, redemption was only for the soul and not for the body, which must disintegrate. When the Corinthians said: *ἀνάστασις νεκρὸν οὐκ ἔστιν* (there is no resurrection of the dead), it was to them the triumphant cry of the man who already possessed his freedom, resurrection and salvation. For Abogunrin (1991), during the ecstatic experience, the soul, they thought, was temporarily detached from the body and transformed into its heavenly home. Although a person is changed when he dies, he remains the same person.

A planted maize seed grows into a maize plant, not into a banana tree. So when someone dies, his or her personality will not be abolished.

Paul showed the differences between our present ‘body’ and our resurrection ‘body’. He did not think of the body and the soul as separate entities, but that our whole personality at the resurrection will be superior to our personality now. Paul wrote of the differences in the following ways:

- The present body is ‘perishable’, while the resurrection body is ‘imperishable’;
- This body is ‘dishonourable’, but the future body will be ‘glorious’;
- The body is sown in weakness, but will be raised in power by God;
- The future body is ‘spiritual’, transformed and filled with God’s Spirit.

Craig (1980) was of the view that Paul’s testimony serves to confirm the Gospels’ accounts of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. He argued that Jesus, in His resurrection, returned to the earthly and bodily existence through which He interacted with His disciples and those who came into contact with Him after His resurrection. He also had a meal, which He prepared with His disciples. It appears that Craig was not saying that all the cells in Jesus’ body spontaneously came back to life and that He rose naturally from the dead. Craig (1980) held

that the resurrection of Jesus is physical and the event is historical. Craig went on to argue that the resurrection event is not a myth, but a reality. Jesus in His physical nature interacted with the apostles; this is the evidence of the early Church. It is believed that the apostles were 'witnesses to the resurrection'.

For Richardson (1958), the Fourth Gospel taught or implied that Jesus rose bodily. He also laid emphasis on the fact that His risen body possesses certain capacities not shared by ordinary bodies. He posited that the empty tomb was the strongest evidence for the physical resurrection, basically because the Sanhedrin could not produce the putrefying corpse of Jesus to disprove the preaching of the resurrection, despite the fact that it had been buried in the garden of their members. Against all theories that the risen Christ was merely a kind of ghostly appearance; the Fourth Gospel taught that His resurrection was real, objective, palpable and bodily. His appearances to the Apostles after His resurrection were real, and not a piece of psychical experience. Richardson (1985) posited that the notion that the resurrection of Christ was purely a 'spiritual affair, while His corpse remained in the tomb, rests upon theories of the impossibility of miracles.

The Christian position is that Christ's resurrection body is not just physical in nature, but it also possesses capacities not shared by our mortal bodies. To any Jew of the time, a mere 'spiritual' resurrection would be unintelligible. Unlike the Greeks, the Jews did not think of man as being made up of a body and soul; a man was a living body. If Christ was raised from the dead, He must have been raised bodily. Thus, Paul could not conceive of those who are risen in Christ as existing in a disembodied state, though they have a 'spiritual body'. The body of the Risen Lord in John's account is a glorified body; it is clearly set free from the limitations of the flesh, it is the resurrection of humanity. Scientific explanations cannot be given for the events in the eschatological order. The advances in modern physical science

have indicated that we know so little about the properties of bodies that we must not dogmatize about what the body of Christ could or could not have done.

Abogunrin (1991) noted that in the Old Testament, man is not considered as an immortal soul, temporarily inhabiting a mortal body, but rather, as a body-soul unity. The Hebrews could only conceive of man in the totality of his being, as the vital union of body and soul. Looking at the ancient Jewish belief, Abogunrin postulated that man is a product of two factors, namely *nephesh* (soul, which is the principle of life) and *basher* (body or flesh, which is the complex organ that *nephesh* animates). Man may therefore be described as an animated body, but this falls short of a true description of man, since in this regard, he is not different from the animal creation. *Then the Lord God formed man out of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being.* Man's distinctiveness is based on the fact that, to him alone is imparted the breath of life by direct activity of God. Although the use of *nephesh* in creation denotes a complete being according to the general understanding of the Old Testament, neither *basher* nor *nephesh* can make a complete man. The separation of both of them means that it ceases to be, in any real sense, a complete personality. Abogunrin (1991) concisely put it, "Man is a unity of personality, and the dissolution of either soul or the body means the true end of life" (pp. 16- 17).

Abogunrin's work discussed the fundamental nature of man in the Jewish perspective as a unity of the body and the soul. This helps to unravel the nature of resurrection body of Jesus Christ. If Christ indeed resurrected from the dead, it could only mean that His soul as well as His body are made alive, to show the unity of His personality.

According to Ladd (1983), certain elements in first-century Judaism believed in the resurrection of the physical body, that is, in the return of life of the same body that died. That is illustrated by the story of the Jewish elder called Rasis in the days of the Selucid

persecution. Rather than fall into the hands of the hated Greeks, Razis took a sword and disembowelled himself. Then Ladd (1983) noted: *standing on a steep rock...he tore out his bowels, putting his hands to them, and flung them at the crowds. So he died, calling on Him who is Lord of life and spirit to restore them to him again.*

According to Ladd, Jesus' resurrection was clearly a bodily resurrection: yet it was a body that possessed a new and higher power than had His physical body before His death. He concluded that such a story about Razis does not describe the nature of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus' resurrection is not the restoration of the body to physical life, rather, it is the emergence of a new order of life. The resurrected body of Christ is not restoration to old life and earthly limitations, but a transformed and glorious body.

In the view of Holden and Barrett, the Gospels go to a great length in attesting that the resurrection of Jesus was indeed a bodily resurrection. In many ways, His body made an impression on the physical sense of feeling, of vision, of audition (Jn. 20: 16). It is probable that Mary recognized Jesus by the tone of His voice when He pronounced her name. There are other elements that suggest that Jesus' body was physical body. He said, *A spirit has not flesh and blood as you see me have.* However, from the context, it seems evident that this is not meant to be a "scientific analysis of the composition of His body, but is intended only to prove that He had a real body and was not a disembodied spirit. Holden (1996) remarked that the resurrected Jesus was capable of eating. He ate a piece of fish in the presence of His disciples, but again, the words, "before them" made it clear that this was done as a sign that He rose bodily. However, Jesus' resurrected body possessed a new power that set it apart from the natural and physical body. It had the amazing power to appear and disappear at will. On two occasions, John recorded that Jesus suddenly appeared to His disciples, *the doors being shut.* This can only mean that Jesus did not enter through an open door. Although the

doors were shut, *Jesus came and stood among them*. This is akin to the event at Emmaus. At Emmaus, after breaking bread with two disciples, Jesus suddenly vanished out of sight. When they returned to Jerusalem and related their experience, Jesus stood among them. He came with such suddenness that they were startled and frightened and supposed that it was a spirit. The resurrected body of Jesus seemed to belong to a different order of reality. Houlden (1996) concluded that the resurrection of Jesus was a bodily resurrection; but His resurrected body transcended physical limitations.

The works of Houlden and Barrett approached the investigation of the resurrection event by pointing to the various aspects of the senses of feeling, of vision, of audition, of touching, of tasting (eating), etc., these empirical observations gave credence to bodily nature of Christ's body. Furthermore, Houlden pointed to the ability of the risen Jesus to enter into locked rooms and disappear at will as due to the fact it is a glorified body, which is no longer subject to earthly limitations. Christ's resurrected body could interact with the natural order, but it at the same time transcends this order. This is referred to by Barrett (1955) as: "The mysterious power of the risen Jesus, who was at once sufficiently corporeal to show His wounds and sufficiently immaterial to pass through closed doors". (p.472).

2.3 Empirical Studies

Some of the most important researchers in the area of past-life recall were reviewed here. Other works not solely on past-life recall were also treated.

Psychiatrist Ian Stevenson, from the University of Virginia, investigated many reports of young children who claimed to remember a past life. He conducted more than 2,500 case studies over a period of 40 years and published twelve books, including *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* and *Where Reincarnation and Biology Intersect*. Stevenson

travelled extensively, sometimes as much as 55,000 miles a year, collecting around three thousand case studies based on interviews with children from Africa to Alaska. Stevenson methodically documented each child's statements and then identified the deceased person the child identified with, and verified the facts of the deceased person's life that matched the child's memory. He also matched birthmarks and birth defects to wounds and scars on the deceased, verified by medical records such as autopsy photographs, in reincarnation and biology (Cadoret, 2005). Stevenson searched for disconfirming evidence and alternative explanations for the reports, and believed that his strict methods ruled out all possible "normal" explanations for the child's memories (Shroder, 2007). However, a significant majority of Stevenson's reported cases of reincarnation originated in Eastern societies, where dominant religions often permit the concept of reincarnation. Following this type of criticism, Stevenson published a book on European Cases of the Reincarnation Type. Other people who have undertaken reincarnation research include Jim B. Tucker, Antonia Mills, Satwant Pasricha, Godwin Samararatne, and Erlendur Haraldsson (Shroder, 2007).

Edwards (2001) analyzed many of these accounts, and called them anecdotal, while also suggesting that claims of evidence for reincarnation originate from selective thinking and from the false memories that often result from one's own belief system and basic fears, and thus cannot be counted as empirical evidence. Sagan (1996) referred to examples apparently from Stevenson's investigations in his book "The Demon-Hunted World" as an example of carefully collected empirical data, though he rejected reincarnation as a parsimonious explanation for stories. Harris (2005) cited Stevenson's works in his book, "The End of Faith" as "part of a body of data that seems to attest to the reality of psychic phenomena (p. 41).

Shroder (2007) noted that Stevenson claimed there were a handful of cases that suggested evidence of xenoglossy. These included two where a subject under hypnosis could allegedly converse with people speaking the foreign language, instead of merely being able to recite foreign words. Sarah (1996) reanalyzed these cases, concluding that the linguistic evidence is too weak to provide support for the claims of xenoglossy. Xenoglossia is an ability claimed by some spirit mediums, clairvoyants, and other psychics to speak in languages that they have never learnt. This term is quite different from glossolalia. While glossolalia is the Holy Spirit-given ability to speak in other languages, xenoglossia is the ability to speak in other languages that result from a source other than the Holy Spirit.

Wilson (1981) argued that a large number of Stevenson's cases consisted of poor children remembering wealthy lives or belonging to a higher caste. He speculated that such cases may represent a scheme to obtain money from the family of the alleged former incarnation. Keith (2004) posited that the vast majority of Stevenson's cases come from countries where a religious belief in reincarnation is strong, and rarely elsewhere, seems to indicate that cultural conditioning (rather than reincarnation) generates claims of spontaneous past-life memories. According to the research of Baker (1996), many of the alleged past-life experiences investigated by Stevenson and other parapsychologists can be explained in terms of known psychological factors. Baker wrote that the recalling of past lives is a mixture of cryptomnesia and confabulation. Edwards (1996) noted that reincarnation invokes assumptions and is inconsistent with modern science. Objections to claims of reincarnation include the facts that the vast majority of people do not remember previous lives and there is no mechanism known to modern science that would enable a personality to survive death and travel to another body, barring the idea of biocentrism. Although modern science does not know everything, yet researchers such as Stevenson have acknowledged these limitations (Shroder, 2007).

Stevenson (1992) described as the *leit motif* of his career his interest in why one person would develop one disease, and another something different. He came to believe that neither environment nor heredity could account for certain fears, illnesses and special abilities, and that some form of personality or memory transfer might provide a third type of explanation. Shroder (2007) pointed out that Stevenson was never able to suggest how personality traits might survive death, much less be carried from one body to another. Shroder commented that Stevenson was careful not to commit himself fully to the position that reincarnation occurs. Tucker (2005) underscored that Stevenson argued only that his case studies could not, in his view, be explained by environment or heredity, and that “reincarnation is the best – even though not the only – explanation for the stronger cases we have investigated” (p. 211). He noted that Stevenson’s position was not a religious one, but represented what Robert Almeder, professor emeritus of philosophy at Georgia State University, calls the minimalistic reincarnation hypothesis:

There is something essential to some human personalities ... which we cannot plausibly construe solely in terms of either brain states, or properties of brain states ... and, further, after biological death this non-reducible essential trait sometimes persists for some time, in some way, in some place, and for some reason or other, existing independently of the person's former brain and body. Moreover, after some time, some of these irreducible essential traits of human personality, for some reason or other, and by some mechanism or other, come to reside in other human bodies either some time during the gestation period, at birth, or shortly after birth (p. 211).

The researcher concurred with Baker (1996) that recalling of past life resulting from the research work of Stevenson is a mixture of cryptomnesia (an apparently creative or original idea that is in fact derived from a latent or subconscious memory) and confabulation (a

memory disorder related to “amnesia” but involving the generation of fabricated accounts of events, experiences or facts, either deliberately or without conscious intent). In fact, Stevenson’s work is a fanciful attempt to explain away what could otherwise be explained by environment or heredity. The researcher considered it as an organized or “honest lying” as it falls short of the Igbo concept of reincarnation.

Helen Wambach, a licensed hypnotherapist, is one of the active researchers in past-life recall. She often does her therapy in groups. After soliciting volunteers (usually people with more than a passing interest in reincarnation), she puts them into hypnotic trance. Once the subjects are ‘under’, she asks them to “go back to 1750”- or 1900 or some other arbitrary date – and “describe your impression”. Sometimes she gets no response, in which case she tries another date. The great majority of her subjects come up with remarkably detailed description of life in some previous place and time.

In other instances, she uses the word “tour technique”. Albrecht (1982) vividly described the tour technique thus:

We’re going to float back all round the world, back into past time. When I call out the name of a place, let the images come into your mind. An image for the Far East... an image for Central Asia... and image for North, Central or South America....Now choose your character (p. 54).

She sometimes prodded them into verbal questions to elicit more detail which usually has positive results. In a lecture in Palo Alto, Calif (cited in Albrecht 1982) quoted Wambach as admitting that “eighty per cent of her subjects telepathically anticipated her questions even when she purposefully asked some questions mentally” (p. 54). It appears that Wambach is scientific and cautious, claiming that her research does not prove reincarnation. Wambach

(cited in Abrecht 1982) admitted that “People are actually reproducing the past. I don’t know how they are doing it” (p. 54). On another occasion she speculated on the dynamics of hypnotic state: “I think the brain is just like a receiver and just tunes in on what ‘is’” (p. 54).

The researcher notes that there is a considerable suggestive give-and-take between Wambach and her patients. Such techniques as used by Wambach, do yield a volume of detail but some of the details may be mundane, some semiarcanic and some interesting. In altered states of consciousness such as hypnosis people seem to be susceptible to paranormal or telepathic communications from a variety of sources, including the spirit world or psychic realm, but the exact nature of the hypnotic state, including the sources of information which the subject recalls, is still very much an unsolved riddle. Given that people under hypnosis cannot reveal hidden truths about themselves, and that they are not only capable of lying but also cannot be hypnotized against their will reveals the emptiness and futility of this venture. The researcher therefore accentuates that a state of heightened susceptibility to the suggestions of others cannot be used to explain Igbo concept of reincarnation.

Walter and Waterhouse (1999) reviewed the previous data on the level of reincarnation belief and performed a set of thirty in-depth interviews in Britain among people who did not belong to a religion advocating reincarnation. The authors reported that surveys found, about one fifth to one quarter of Europeans had some level of belief in reincarnation, with similar results found in the USA. In the interviewed group, the belief in the existence of this phenomenon appeared independent of their age, or the type of religion that these people belonged, with most being Christians. The beliefs of this group also did not appear to contain any more than usual of "new age" ideas (broadly defined) and the authors interpreted their

ideas on reincarnation as "one way of tackling issues of suffering" (p. 13), but noted that this seemed to have little effect on their private lives.

Waterhouse (1999) also published a detailed discussion of beliefs expressed in the interviews. She noted that although most people hold their belief in reincarnation quite lightly and were unclear on the details of their ideas, personal experiences such as past-life memories and near-death experiences had influenced most believers, although only a few had direct experience of these phenomena. Waterhouse analyzed the influences of second-hand accounts of reincarnation, writing that most of the people in the survey had heard other people's accounts of past-lives from regression hypnosis and dreams and found these fascinating, feeling that there "must be something in it" if other people were having such experiences.

The researcher however considers the work of Waterhouse as a resultant effect of happy daydreaming and cannot be used to explain the Igbo concept of reincarnation. Waterhouse concept of reincarnation appears to feed on wishful thinking and vague and fanciful feelings. Unfortunately, wishful thoughts and whimsical feelings are not among the embers that fan the Igbo ideas of reincarnation.

Being part of the African world, the Igbo share many things in common with other African societies including that of their belief in reincarnation. Ekwunife (1999) observed that where the Igbo differ from other societies is in the interpretation of the phenomenon of reincarnation. He argued that the English word 'reincarnation' with its meaning in English environment does not and cannot fit into the Igbo experience of the phenomenon. Rather their experience is better translated in their native language as "*Ino uwa or inyọ uwa*" (p. 20). Ekwunife (1999) attempted a descriptive definition of *ilo uwa* or reincarnation when he said, "It is the process by which certain categories of the deceased in African spiritual world of the

dead are believed to be mysteriously, but in a real way, capable of incarnating their personality traits on a newborn physical body of a child, without either destroying the new unique personality of the child or substituting for it” (p. 22). He saw Igbo belief in reincarnation as a process in which an identifiable personality in Igbo spiritual world is said to, in a mysterious but real way, incorporate his personality traits on a unique born personality without destroying that personality or substituting himself / herself for that new personality. For him, by so doing, the said reincarnated person, ‘*onye n̄r̄ō uwa*’ still retains his complete personal identity in Igbo spiritual world of the dead. However, by virtue of an enhanced power of spirits, he / she was able to impress his former traits on the newborn child in a human way. Ekwunife (1999) suggested that the spiritual influence of the identified deceased is better described in English as “mystical influence” (p. 21). He explained that it should be considered as such given that it neither diminishes the status of the dead in the Igbo spiritual world nor destroys the status of a newborn child who should possess complete freedom and possibilities of achieved fulfilment. Hence the ritual for identifying the reincarnated dead person is referred to in Igbo subculture areas as “*igba aḡu nwa*” (divining for child’s companion). He argued that only the traditional ritual specialists - the traditional Igbo diviners (*dibia afa*) can authoritatively pronounce the name of the reincarnated person.

The researcher rather doubts whether the concept of reincarnation as presented by Ekwunife above is the true representation of Igbo concept of reincarnation. In the spiritual anatomy of man in Igbo cosmology, *mmadu* (man) is neither a dichotomy of body and soul nor a trichotomy of body, soul and spirit. *Mmadu* (man) is a unity of personality. The Igboman, for instance, believes that Okeke *n̄r̄ō uwa* (Okeke reincarnated) and not an aspect or part of Okeke or his “mystical influence”. The researcher therefore disagrees with Ekwunife in that he cannot reconcile Ekwunife’s “mystical influence” with the Igbo concept of human personality. Besides, the Igbo often speak of “*ndi mmadu*” (humans) and “*ndi mmūō*”

(spirits). Hence “spirits” and “humans” are both persons, where “*ndi*” also stands for persons. Ekwunife’s “mystical influence” is therefore considered by the researcher as nothing other than a distortion of Igbo idea of man and personal identity.

Onyewuenyi (1989) defined reincarnation as “Perpetuation of ancestors through reproduction” (p. 39). He further described reincarnation as ‘life-giving will’ or ‘vital influence’ or ‘secretion of vital force’ (p. 39). He saw the ancestors as dynamic force who can influence and effect many births in his clan without emptying his personality. He compared the vital force of an ancestor to the sun, which is not diminished by the number and extent of its rays. Onyewuenyi (1989) noted that “Just as the sun is the causal agent of heat, so is an ancestor a causal agent of his descendants who are below him in the ontological hierarchy” (p. 40). Onyewuenyi admitted that the biological conception of the child results from the concurrent act of God and parents. Then the influence of the ancestor which is referred to as reincarnation comes later. For him, it is the human being, who already possesses life in the womb of his mother (by divine influence), who finds himself under the vital, the ontological influence of a predestined ancestor or of a spirit.

The researcher equally doubts whether Onyewuenyi’s view is the true representation of Igbo concept of reincarnation. Onyewuenyi’s ‘vital force’, or ‘life-giving will’ or ‘secretion of vital power’ falls short of Igbo concept of human personality and personal identity. The researcher notes that Onyewuenyi confused ‘being’ (a living creature) with ‘force’ (a physical action) which belongs to different planes of life. The researcher agrees with Onyewuenyi that the sun is present in its rays and heats and brightens through its ray; yet he disagrees with Onyewuenyi in that the rays of the sun singly or together are not the sun. The author insists on the fact that an aspect of man cannot be a holistic view of man. To do so is nothing other

than an alteration of reality. The author therefore notes that Onyewuenyi's ideas cannot be a better representation of Igbo understanding of reincarnation.

Ezenweke (2012) defined reincarnation as "The theory that when the soul separates from the body at death, it informs another body for another span of life" (p. 195). For Ezenweke, the soul (*mkpuru obi*) leaves the body at death and waits for judgment. It is received into the blessed company of his forbearers only if it scales through the test of life. It is his activities on earth that will score him to merit or demerit the blissful existence. She also noted that one may come back in non human form like various types of animal or any other living thing.

The researcher notes that Ezenweke's view cannot be a better representation of Igbo belief in reincarnation since she ranked her view with the Asiatic cyclic notion of reincarnation. Besides, Igboman does not refer to *mmadu* (man) as *mkpuru obi* (soul). Instead, *mkpuru obi* (soul) is what man has. It is a component of man; not the sum total make-up of man. For the Igbo, Okeke *noro uwa* (okeke reincarnated) and not *mkpuru obi* Okeke *noro uwa* (the soul of Okeke reincarnated). Moreso, the Igboman does not believe that his ancestor would be reborn as an animal or be reincarnated into an inanimate object. Such thinking is foreign to the Igboman concept of afterlife. Consequently, the view of reincarnation as presented by Ezenweke leaves much to be considered as the true representation of Igbo concept of reincarnation.

Like Ekwunife, Obilor believed that Igbo concept of reincarnation can better be translated in Igbo as *ilo-uwaa*. Obilor (1994) defined reincarnation as "The belief that the qualified deceased or living persons can return to the earth through birth in their grandchildren, great grandchildren or the children of their relatives within the extended family circle as a sign of love and fellowship"(pp. 137- 138). Obilor (1994) attempted a comparison of *ilo-uwaa* and reincarnation in order to bring out their differences thus:

Reincarnation proposes a dualism of body and soul and matter. Igbo anthropology on the other hand abhors any form of dualism. The Igbo do not talk about soul but person. Man is a spiritual person and the living dead are also spiritual persons and are superior to humans. Ikenga Metuh puts it clearly this way, 'Hence it is the full individual person not a part of him or his soul which survives after death. Similarly, at conception, a new individual person is created by God. This is so in spite of belief about reincarnation. What reincarnates... is not the personhood of the ancestor but an aspect of his self'. Reincarnation proposes that all the dead can be reincarnated, but in *ilọ- ụwa* only the qualified person can be 'reincarnated'. It is perhaps necessary at this junction to answer a crucial question: who can 'return' in Igbo traditional belief? One can answer that all have the possibility to return but not all actually do return. For the Igbo *ilọ ụwa* is an exception and not the rule. Life lived well to the full dies into fullness. The dying aged person tries to realise the infinite within himself or herself, adores it, clasps it with affection, and ultimately becomes one with it. He or she at times leaves instructions to his or her children and urges them to revere the traditional codes of their fathers. He or she often blesses them and wishes them well. He or she tells them: 'I am returning to our ancestor', closes his eyes and gives up the ghost. In this frame of thought, one is wrong to imagine that for Igbo the soul has to pass through many lives before the goal is reached. There is no traditional announcement of deaths in Igboland which uses 'soul movement' to express the occurrence of the death. What you hear is *Okonkwo a gawala* (Okonkwo is gone), *onwu biara ebe Okafor* (death visited Okafor), etc. Reincarnation proposes that there is an original body and a new body while in the Igbo *ilọ ụwa*, both the original

body and the new body are considered side by side. Actually, the most distinctive proofs of *ilọ uwa* are based on visible or sensible resemblance: the reappearance of marks on the body. The ‘relacking’ of a lacking part of the body, the facial and physical resemblance, the vocal and oratorical resemblance, behavioural resemblance, intellectual and humorous resemblance (pp.140-141).

If the above descriptive definition of Igbo *ilọ uwa* succeeds in the possibility of excluding the African experiences of born to die group, classical Western or Asiatic definitions and the transmigration of the soul of the deceased into non-human animate objects, it is still fraught with problems.

The Igbo do say for instance, Okeke *bịara uwa or lolọ-uwa* (Okeke reincarnated) not aspect of Okeke. If it were so, it then becomes illogical to refer to an aspect of one’s person to one’s entire personhood. An aspect of Okeke cannot be Okeke himself.

For Obilor as noted above, the most distinctive proofs of *ilọ-uwa* (reincarnation) are based on visible or sensible resemblance: the reappearance of marks on the body. The ‘relacking’ of a lacking part of the body, the facial and physical resemblance, the vocal and oratorical resemblance, behavioural resemblance, intellectual and humorous resemblance. If this view is the true representation of Igbo notion of reincarnation, the question now is, how is this “uniqueness” to be proven? And why are only some features carried on to the next incarnation to the exclusion of others? Certainly, demonic must be considered as a possible source. If a person with a birth mark dies or if a person who sustains an injury in any part of his body dies, he is believed to have left the old body. When an infant bears marks which are similar to those of the dead, it is claimed to be a case of reincarnation. How could the corpse bear the “karmic energy” or “vital force” to be transmitted to its next incarnation? Besides,

science teaches that individual life begins at conception. In 1981, the US Senate held extensive hearings on the “Human Life Bill”. National and international scientific authorities testified on the origin of human life. The official Senate report read as follows (as cited in Geisler & Amano, 1986):

Physicians, biologists, and other scientists agree that conception (they defined fertilization and conception to be the same) marks the beginning of the life of a human being- a being that is alive and is a member of the human species. There is overwhelming agreement on this point in countless medical, biological, and scientific writings (p. 160).

In brief, the available scientific evidence pointed to individual human life beginning at conception. There is no scientific evidence for the reincarnationist belief that life begins before conception. Of course, some Igbo traditionalists believe that life begins at conception but that the reincarnating ancestor emits its “self” to the baby during conception. However, this theory lacks scientific support. Scientific evidence indicated that an individual’s life, soul and body begin at conception.

Moreover, two elements identified as defining the identity of man in Igbo worldview are *Chi* and *Eke*. Whereas *Chi* not only determines one’s destiny, it brings it to the proper end; *Eke* on the other hand refers to the person’s shape, character, or some qualities. Obilor (1994) emphatically stated: “When these qualities are derived from an identified ancestor, or any good dead person as a case may be, the Igbo say that the child is the reincarnation of that ancestor or the person” (p. 121).

He went on to say that these qualities are often “personified; when this happens, it refers to an ancestor or a spirit” (p. 122). If the view represented by Obilor is right, it then means that what the Igbo people believe as *ilọ-ụwa*, and by extension reincarnation, is nothing other than

hereditary traits personified. Besides, in Igbo cosmology, not everybody can reincarnate even if he met the standard for reincarnation. As noted earlier, Sutton (cited by Ramlingam, 2005) “Proposed that chromosomes are the carriers of Mendel’s factors (genes); this is called the chromosome theory of heredity” (p. 546). The chromosomes contain deoxyribonucleic acid or DNA, the molecule that contains hereditary information in a code form. This information includes all genetic instructions for controlling the production of chemicals for normal cell functioning; the production of a new cell or the whole organism itself; and the development of genetically acquired traits. Thus, this theory may account for all the apparent similarities and differences that are observed between the parents and their progenies. Mbiti (1969) clearly admitted that the pros and con about reincarnation is “Partly an attempt to explain what is, otherwise, a purely biological phenomenon, which applies not only to human beings but also to animals (p. 164).

It is revealing that various authors examined above point to the resurgence of character traits in the descendants of an ancestor in their attempts to explain the phenomenon of *ilo-uwā*. For Arinze, it seems only a part of the ancestor spirit is believed born again in the new child. Obilor sees the concept of *ilo-uwā* as nothing but an interpretation of, an attempt to grasp, hereditary traits transferred by genes while Onyewuenyi enjoins that what one sees in the new born is only a portion of the "vital force" or "vital power" or "vital influence" of the living-dead. An ancestor who is now 'pure dynamic force' can influence and effect many births without emptying his personality. His 'vital force' is such that it can be emitted into the "returned" baby without losing or diminishing his cherished place in the spirit world, just as the number and extent of the rays of the sun do not diminish it. Thus, instead of seeing a new born as a complete 'return' of a departed personality, it is differently seen as a 'vital influence', a 'personal ray' or a 'living-perpetuation of the living-dead. *Ilo-uwā* as thus delineated

presupposes something tangible or noticeable of a person, which can stand for that person and re-enact his previous life in the new existent person. Here, an identifiable personality in the Igbo spiritual world is said to, in a mysterious but real manner, incorporate his personality traits on a new unique personality without destroying or substituting for that new personality and without diminishing his complete personal identity in the spirit world. The special impact of the identified deceased on the new born which Onyewuenyi calls 'vital influence' is identified by Ekwunife as a 'mystical influence' since it neither diminishes the status of the dead nor destroys the freedom and possibilities of the new born to achieve fulfilment in life.

Having critically weighed the thoughts of the above writers, it is therefore the contention of the author that the term *ilo-uwaa* in the Igbo philosophy and cosmology can have a scientific explanation based on human nature itself given that the proofs of fact itself are themselves proofs of genetic inheritance. Considered scientifically, a much more appropriate term should be given to it. The researcher therefore proposes *oyiyi* (resemblance or in the likeness of) instead of the term *ilo-uwaa*. In the scientific analysis, it then means that what is obtainable in Igboland as the phenomena of reincarnation is *oyiyi*.

Oyiyi (resemblance or in the likeness of) if so approved, will take care of apparent differences and similarities observable in *ilo-uwaa* such as a single ancestor returning in many individuals; somebody reincarnating in a newborn baby while still alive and so on. However, it is reasonable and logical for an individual to "resemble" or be "in the likeness of" many persons including the young, old and even the dead. On the issue of reappearance of the marks on the body, the author opines that familiar spirit is involved. Reappearance of the marks on the body is only witnessed among the people that believe in reincarnation. If it were not so, why is it that that phenomenon does not occur among the people that do not believe in reincarnation? So, in a mysterious way, familiar spirit plays upon its victim during

conception to produce the said mark. The author sees the reappearance of marks on the body as a manipulative action of the familiar spirit upon its victim during conception rather than as a proof of reincarnation. The author categorically states that this manipulative action of the familiar spirits can only be witnessed among the people that believe in it. In other words, it is a manipulative action of familiar spirits facilitated by the belief system of the people.

The researcher contends that the proofs of the fact of reincarnation are themselves the proofs of the fact of genetic inheritance. The findings of genetics (scientific study of heredity and variation in living organism) showed that certain traits are persistent along family lines. *Ilo-uwu* or reincarnation as noted above occurs mostly within family circles and the proofs themselves are qualities and characteristics which are inheritable from parents and ancestors. Igbo ancestors knew this and gave the Igbo traditions some norms governing marriage contracts and other relations. For instance, the Igbo say, *agburu ndi ara* (the family of mad people) or *agburu ndi onwu ike* (the family of bad deaths) and other examples referring to serious hereditary traits. The author contends that given that these genetic problems are known and accepted by the Igbo as negative implication of heredity even before the dawning of medical science, what prevents the Igbo people from accepting *ilo-uwu* as the positive implication of the same heredity? Nothing prevents a child from inheriting the qualities or physical marks and signs of his or her ancestors and great grandfathers and mothers.

Frequent deaths in Igboland are another serious problem. In Igbo traditional society, *dibia afa* is often consulted to ascertain the cause of infant death and often *ogbanje* is alleged. *Ogbanje* can also be explained in terms of genetics. The researcher concedes the fact that genetics cannot explain everything. The whole cultural complex and environmental factors must be taken into account. Psychologists and geneticists recognize the ecological factor in the shaping of man and his belief system. In Igboland, it appears that the less developed

environments are fertile soil for all kinds of strange beliefs. When such beliefs are woven into a strong culture, the result is the persistence of such beliefs, even when the society has greatly improved. This can be applied to the case of belief in *ilo-uwa* and *ogbanje*.

Again, considered differently, if it is argued that it is not the aspect of an ancestor but his personhood that is reincarnated in a child, it will not only present the problem of dualism which the Igbo stand against but it will also cast a question mark on their ancestor worship or veneration for it does not make sense to adore and worship an ancestor who is believed to have reincarnated and at the same time dwells among the ancestral cult.

It is noted that the Igbo say, *Uwam-uwa-asaa*. While some scholars with cyclic theory of rebirths take it for seven-rebirths, that is, that reincarnation exists and that one has a chance of seven reincarnations, after which it ceases, some other scholars like Ekwunife (1999) see it as a symbolic oppression, pointing to the reality of the fullness of life in the ancestral world with their corresponding effects on the living in human world. The author is of the opinion that *Uwam-uwa-asaa* in the understanding of Igbo people is rather an expression of a desire which is far from being a statement of fact. A desire, it should be noted is a craving or a longing for something which may or may not be granted. In other words, what the Igboman means when he says, *uwam-uwa-asaa* is that he wishes that his similitude will not be obliterated. Hence, the Igbo do say, *Afu nwa echeta nna* (if you see a child, you remember the father) or *Afamefula* (let not my name be obliterated). This is because of the belief that the parents are living in their descendants. The researcher rather affirms that this cannot be any other way except through transmission of genes. Of course nobody would want his ancestral lineage to come to an abrupt end. For Ekwunife (1999), the number seven is symbolic for the Igbo and it means “fullness of human life; greatly desired and welcomed” (p. 40). If Ekwunife is right in his assertion, it then means that when the Igboman is saying *Uwam-uwa-*

asaa, he is merely expressing a desire that his ancestral lineage will not be cut off from the planet earth. This is why childlessness is totally despised throughout the Igboland.

Furthermore, *ogbanje* (born to die group of people) cannot be regarded as the Igbo belief in the destiny of man. As a result, it is out of consideration here. The author rather asserts that the Igbo have no clearly articulated concept of belief in reincarnation. Their speculation about *Ilo-uwu* or reincarnation is rather a distortion of reality. At best, it is hereditary traits personified. This is the logical conclusion of empirical analysis of this phenomenon.

Igbo scholars like Ilogu (1974), Onwuejeogwu (1981), Ifesieh (1989) and Onunwa (1990) appeared to explain reincarnation in terms of cyclic rebirth process in which the dead is returned or reincarnated in a new bornchild or as a 'born to die child'. They perceived reincarnation as a purifying exercise in human progression of consciousness. The author sees this as a corruption of Asiatic perception of reincarnation and cannot fit into the Igbo view of reincarnation.

On the other hand, scholars like Arinze (1970) observed that reincarnation in Igbo belief system is quite different from Asiatic cyclic notions. For him, it tilts towards a partial reincarnation since the privileged reincarnated livingdead continue to enjoy their existence in the Igbo ancestral world. In an unmistakable term, Arinze (1970) stated, "It seems that only a part of the ancestor's spirit is believed to be born again" (p. 81). The researcher agrees with Arinze that Igbo concept of reincarnation is quite different from the Asiatic cyclical notion of reincarnation but vehemently disagrees with him in that partial reincarnation is a negation of unity of human personality which the Igbo people tenaciously hold onto.

Chegwe's works (1973), and Opata's works (cited in Ekwunife, 1999) seemed to perceive reincarnation as a phenomenon in which the elements of qualitative psychic real influences of

an identifiable dead ancestor or ancestress on a newborn infant are noticed and acknowledged. Signs of these influences become part and parcel of the characteristic traits of new infants. The researcher doubts if this is a better representation of Igbo beliefs in *ilo-uwa* and at the same time wants to challenge the signs of those influences as phenomenon subject to modern law of heredity. The author wants to show that no matter how this phenomenon is explained away as Ekwunife (1999) tried to do as a “vital influence or the life-share or living perpetuation of the ancestor” (p. 56), it cannot fit into the Igbo perception of reincarnation. This is because the Igboman believes that Maduka *biara uwa* (Maduka returned or reincarnated) and not an aspect of Maduka or a “vital force of Maduka.

However, it takes religion to critique religion. This phenomenon of *ilo-uwa* or reincarnation should be considered in the light of belief system rather than be seen as a trackless scientific jungle, full of contradictions; a tangled undergrowth of unrelated ideas. Belief according to Oxford Dictionary of Psychology (2003) is any proposition that is accepted as true on the basis of inconclusive evidence. It is conviction, faith or confidence in something or someone. Considered as such, the author contends that Igbo concept of reincarnation can only be possible within the ambience of belief system. Hence, the researcher considers the views of scholars like Ekwunife and Obilor as approximating to the Igbo concepts of reincarnation.

In a more articulate form, therefore, for the Igbo reincarnation is a phenomenon in which an identifiable personality in the Igbo spiritual world is believed in a mysterious but real way to transmit his personality traits on a newborn personality without destroying that personality or substituting himself or herself for that new personality. In doing so, the said reincarnate person still retains his complete personal identity in Igbo spiritual world of the dead. By virtue of the power he commands as a spirit he is able to impress his former traits on the new born child in a human way. The ritual for identifying the reincarnated dead person is called in

many areas in Igboland as “*igba agu*” (divining for the reincarnate person). Only the traditional Igbo diviners (*dibia afa*) can authoritatively pronounce the name of the reincarnated person through *igba afa*. Ekwealor (2013) described *igba afa* as a means of finding out the hidden things which are elusive to an ordinary man. It is the means of finding out the thoughts of the deities and the ancestors. For Ogbuagu, Udemmadu and Anedo (2012) *igba afa* means gaining access to secret things that man on his own cannot find out. According to Ubesie (2003), *igba afa* is a means of finding any secret that exists between the living and the dead or between two or more living persons. However, Umeodinka (2015) understood *igba afa* to be the means through which the Igbo people bring out the hidden things from the realm of darkness into the limelight of knowledge.

Igbo people anchor on experience on their insistence on reincarnation. Of course, experience they say is the best teacher. They base reincarnation on what is visible or sensible or perceptible or the like. No one can tell a man that what he sees with his own eyes does not exist. Throughout the Igboland, people abound who are said to be the reincarnation of one deceased person or another. There are signs, marks and often existing ‘lectures’ why the living person should be the one who had died. Of course, these would be backed up with the confirmatory affirmation of the *dibia afa* (diviner).

When a child is born, during *igu aha* (naming ceremony) the *okpala* (the family head) or the father of the child or both will consult the diviner to discover the ancestor who has been reincarnated, and especially to discover his name and his *nsọ* (prohibitions). The child must take the name of the reincarnated ancestor, but when no reincarnation has been confirmed, the patriarchal grandfather or the eldest man present has the prerogative of giving the child a name. The divination rite which precedes the naming ceremony is to establish his identity. The naming ceremony is to effect his incorporation into the society.

2.4 Summary of the Literature Review

From the foregoing, it was discovered that the Eastern views on reincarnation have had a long history in the West. Western views, however, have their own characteristic features. Western forms of reincarnation are generally less strictly pantheistic (the belief that all is God), opting for some kind of eventual individual survival, or at least opposed to ultimate absorption into God. Second, as a result of Christian influence, many Western forms of reincarnation offer some kind of forgiveness foreign to native Eastern views, thus breaking the rigid law of karma. Third, many Western views on reincarnation see it as only one of several possible futures for individuals rather than as the destiny for all.

Despite these differences, it was discovered that Eastern and Western types of reincarnation share many common features. They affirmed the following:

- (i) A goal of ultimate perfection for the human race;
- (ii) An evolutionary progress towards perfection which one achieves through reincarnations;
- (iii) In some sense, the conduct of one's past life will influence the kind of life one will supposedly have in future reincarnations;
- (iv) The doctrine of "second chance" after this life;
- (v) Survival of the self in successive afterlives;
- (vi) The perishability of the bodies into which the reincarnations occur; and
- (vii) The existence of multiple worlds or realms in which reincarnations take place.

It was discovered that the Igbo concept of reincarnation is quite different from the Eastern and Western types of reincarnation. The Western and Eastern types desire reincarnation as a value, but while in Igbo it is a help to live a good life, since only the morally upright can be rewarded by it. In the Western and Eastern types it can destroy the zeal to live a better life, since it is neither a reward of a good life nor it is determined by it. The Igbo idea is unique

and original from the point of view of its theology and also from the point of view of its anthropology.

It was also discovered that the Igbo concept of reincarnation is a complex one and viewed in various ways. While some people were of the opinion that we should be talking about *ilo-uwa* instead of reincarnation, some others are talking about “partial reincarnation”. Still some others are talking about cyclical reincarnation with the maximum number of seven chances of reincarnation. Others hold unto cyclical form of reincarnation in an unending process. The researcher contends that Igbo concept of reincarnation can only be possible within the ambience of belief system. Hence, the researcher considers the views of scholars like Ekwunife and Obilor as approximating to the Igbo concepts of reincarnation. If this is true, it still stands in contradistinction to the Biblical view of history. Besides, some of the results of research in genetics (the science of biological inheritance and variation) can offer a scientific explanation based on human nature itself. It is on this premise that the author proffers *oyiyi* as the better term to be used in the place of *ilo-uwa* or reincarnation.

It was discovered that there were many theories that attempt to explain life beyond this present life. The author sees the resurrection theory as more convincing one. It was discovered that there were alternative explanations for cases of past-life recall and assertions of previous lives. There have been past-life recalls that were thought to be legitimate but which later turned out to be fraudulent. Others can be attributed to cryptoamnesia or cultural conditioning. Of course, we cannot deny the possibility of the demonic as a source for the supernatural events in these past-life recall cases. Further, if reincarnation were true, it would imply some disturbing consequences, including the justification of homosexuality, divorce, and even murder.

Putting everything into consideration, therefore, the researcher would use the resurrection theory to show that the concept of Matthean last judgment stands in sharp contrast to the Igbo cosmological notion of reincarnation. This is the theory more than any other, that appeared to delve into the mysteries of life beyond the grave and offer plausible solutions.

CHAPTER THREE

REINCARNATION IN IGBO COSMOLOGY

3. 1 Historical Survey of the Igbo People

Anthropological and historical studies on the Igbo, Efik, Ibibio, Ekoi, and Ijaw, reveal groups of people that inhabited Eastern Nigeria since pre-colonial times. The West Coast of Africa was unveiled to the world in the late fifteenth century by Portuguese sailors, but it was not until 1784, three centuries later, that that part of the continent in which Calabar is situated, was explored along its coastline. Commerce was soon attracted to the coast and, as this increased, a line of settlements or forts was planted along the seaboard. This part of the West African coastline, which jutted into the Bight of Biafra, was famous from the sixteen to the early nineteenth century on account of the slave trade, at the end of which, in 1885, an Oil Rivers Protectorate, later Niger Coast Protectorate, was established incorporating Calabar, areas close to the Atlantic, and the Southern fringes of Igboland.

In 1900, the territory now known as Nigeria was administered as two independent British protectorates: Northern Nigeria Protectorate and Southern Nigeria Protectorate. Eastern Nigeria was part of Southern Nigeria Protectorate and encompassed the Old Oil Rivers Protectorate, its hinterland, and more. Southern Protectorate had three sections: the Western, Central and Eastern Provinces with Eastern Nigeria encompassing all of the Eastern Province and also part of the Central Province. Uchendu (2011) noted that it was with the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Nigeria Protectorates in 1914 that Eastern Nigeria came into use as the official designation for the area lying south of the River Benue and east of the River Niger, stretching southwards into the Bight of Biafra and the Atlantic Ocean. It became the official name for the area inhabited by the Igbo, Ibibio, Efik, Ekoi, Ijaw and few other smaller groups.

The Igbo retain a long held status as the major dominant group in this part of Nigeria. In addition to its vary territory, it has extensive groups in the old Centrals (or Warri) province, west of the Niger and therefore in Southwest Nigeria. These Igbo communities were once known as the West Niger Igbo but presently as Anioma. In brief, the Igbo homeland in Nigeria sits astride the River Niger. Ohadike (cited in Uchendu 2011) pointed out that on the eastern side, as mentioned, is the original homeland, from where the forebears of Anioma migrated westwards many centuries ago to occupy territories west of the Niger River. In 1998, the Igbo homeland east of the Niger would become South-East geopolitical zone, while the remaining four ethnic groups of Eastern Nigeria, along with Delta State, where Anioma is currently located, would become South-South geopolitical zone. However, the Igbo territory of Eastern Nigeria split into the following five states: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo.

The Igbo homeland in Eastern Nigeria is enclosed within an imaginary line running ` outside of the western boundary of the river Niger: Enugu Ezike in northern Igboland; Abakaliki, Afikpo, and Arochukwu on the eastern end; and Port Harcourt in the south. Towns located within this periphery are united in their acceptance of Igbo as their ethnic identity and their use of the Igbo language albeit with certain dialectical variations. Uchendu (2011) underscored that the one exception is the Ikwere of Rivers State who, prior to the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War in 1967, spoke the Igbo dialect common in southern Igboland, identified themselves as Igbo, and were identified by others as Igbo, but had since the end of the civil war assumed a new identity as “the Ikwere”.

Outside Eastern Nigeria to the north of Igboland, the Igala, Idoma, and Tiv of North Central Nigeria (previously the Middle Belt) are found, and westwards are the Anioma. Meek (cited in Uchendu, 2011) described the Igbo ethnic group as “one of the largest in Africa, with an

exceptionally difficult language” (p. 23). He went on to report that: “With their population of four million in 1929 they would outnumber all other Nigerian (ethnic groups), not excluding the Hausa who are generally regarded as the most numerous and most important (ethnic group) in West Africa, if not in the whole of Africa” (p. 23).

Ekanem (1972) put the figure of Igbo population as “twelve million” (p. 67). The last official census in Nigeria was conducted in 1963 and it put the population at 8.3 million. If the growth is 3% annually, our estimated number should be fourteen million without prejudices to the Nigeria-Biafra civil war. Obilor (1994) remarked that the census of 1992 was not conducted on ethnic or tribal lines. That could have given a better estimation of the population of the Igbo.

How the people came to be known as Igbo has never been discovered. Afikpo (1981) noted that the culture with which they are associated “dates to about 600 BC” (p. 57). Parrinder (1987) pointed out that oral tradition, missionary records and archaeological reports show that “The Igbo are traditionally deeply religious, who knew Chukwu (God) before they knew Christianity” (p. 139).

The most characteristic feature of the Igbo appears to be the almost complete absence of any higher political or social unit above the commune or small group of contiguous villages, whose customs and cults are identical, who prior to colonial domination took common action against an external enemy, whose sense of solidarity is so strong that they regard themselves as descendants of a common ancestor. The lack of higher political units appears to be a feature of nearly all the ethnic groups in the Eastern Nigeria.

Centuries-long interaction of the Efiks and the Europeans made the former the earliest of the Eastern Nigeria ethnic communities to be Christianized and better educated by the turn of the twentieth century. While the Igbo and Ibibio were mainly agricultural groups, with the Igbo also famous for trading, the Efik and Ijaw depended primarily on fishing, and the Ekoi on hunting, leaving much of the agricultural work to women. According to the reports of Patridge (1905) and Talbot (1915), the soil in most part of Eastern Nigeria was fertile up till the turn of twentieth century. The closeness of the Atlantic Ocean and its many tributaries allowed extensive fishing. The Igbo interacted primarily with the Ekoi, Efik, Ibibio and Ijaw long before the establishment of colonial domination. Trade provided the chief reason for these interactions in the process of which intermarriages and political alliances were formed among them. The major trade trajectory was southwards through Calabar to the Atlantic Ocean, and the trade items were slaves and imported European goods until a new economic era, under the legitimate trade, replaced the obsession with slaves and diversified the goods put forward for sale by the indigenous population. Igbo external dealings revolved within Eastern Nigeria marginalizing ethnic groups found northwards beyond the Benue River until colonialism opened up that corridor early in the twentieth century.

Afigbo (cited by Uchendu, 2011) advanced reason for the relatively narrow range of Igbo external contacts before the colonial era thus: “The Igbo were first and foremost an agricultural people bound to their land by strong traditions and taboos” (p. 25). He added that the needs of the Igbo as an agricultural people were limited and easily satisfied from within their locality or those of their immediate neighbours within Eastern Nigeria. He went on to say that “The small fraction of the Igbo predisposed to long-distance travel were Arochukwu (Aro) traders and the Nkwere and Awka smiths who were described as “those who had detached themselves partially or completely from the land in order to supply a more generally felt need or the more exotic needs of a narrow elite class, who had developed

appetites that could no longer be fully or satisfactorily met from the productive resources of their local communities” (p. 25).

Fishing was not widely indulged in Igboland. Few exceptions were in Onitsha, Ossomari, Oguta, Afikpo, Azumini, and Umuna, communities along the Niger, the Imo, and the Oguta Rivers to which fishing was confined. Oral traditions from Igboland showed that it was a taboo to fish in many Igbo villages because of the belief that the fish embodied the souls of the people’s ancestors. The author however, doubts whether this tradition is true in that no Igbo village is readily cited.

Following the arrival of missionaries in Onitsha in 27th of July 1857, Christian missions arose from there and extended their activities to Igboland and began to gain converts among the local people. Christianity became the first foreign religion to gain a foothold in Igboland. A century afterwards, Igboland had gained the reputation of being one of Africa’s homogenous Christian regions (Uchendu, 2011). Ozigbo (1999) also posited, “Igboland was to become a heartland of Christianity in Nigeria with a cacophony of churches, dioceses, districts, and high ranking ministries” (p. 5). The process of planting Christianity in Igboland was not without challenges and problems both for the Igbo, whom the missionaries desperately wanted to reform, and for the missionaries, whose goodwill met with determined rebuff in the early stages of their work.

Before 1970, Islam encountered a strong rebuff in Igboland in attempts to introduce it. Islam continues to experience this rebuff in Igboland despite its gains. Denials of its existence or of the presence of indigenous Muslims were common in many parts of Igboland. Associating Islam with the Hausa ethnic group was no help to its cause in Igboland. D. O. Okeke (personal communication, January, 2016) claimed that the Igbo are either Christians or traditionalists and should remain what they are. Be it as it may, the presence of indigenous

Muslims can no longer be denied. Islam had been introduced in the following towns: Nsukka, Mbaise, Ohafia, Awka, Nnewi, Onitsha and Afikpo. Islam has established a very strong presence in Afikpo since 1946, having today, third generation indigenous muslims, with a free education programme that leads to tertiary education in Saudi Arabia and Dubai.

Anambra State is located in the south eastern geopolitical zone of Nigeria, and with Imo State, it forms the heartland of Igboland. It has an estimated population of 7.8 million people which stretches over about 60 km between surrounding communities. It is reputed to have the highest population density in Africa with an estimated density of 1500-2000 persons per square kilometer. The state is bordered by Delta State to the west, Imo State to the south, Enugu State to the east and Kogi State to the north. Anambra State is rich in natural gas, crude oil, bauxite, ceramics and arable soil, although its mineral resources are yet untapped. The State was created in 1976 from Old East Central State with its capital at Enugu. A further reorganization of the Nigerian federation in 1991 saw the State divided into two states with its new capital at Awka.

Anambra State has a total of twenty-one local government areas grouped into three zones that are otherwise known as senatorial districts. The three senatorial districts of Anambra State are: Anambra North, Anambra Central and Anambra South. Anambra North senatorial district has seven local government areas which include: Onitsha North, Onitsha South, Oyi, Ogbaru, Anambra East, Anambra West and Ayamelum. Anambra Central has also seven local government areas which include Awka North, Awka South, Njikoka, Anaocha, Idemili North, Idemili South and Dunukofia. The local government areas of Anambra South senatorial district are equally seven which include: Ihiala, Nnewi North, Nnewi South, Orumba South, Orumba North, Aguata and Ekwusigo.

The state is predominantly occupied by Igbo ethnic group who by nature are farmers, fishermen, craftsmen and traders. The crops grown by the farmers in the state include yam, palm produce, rice, cassava, cocoyam and vegetables which are particularly cultivated by those living in the riverine areas of the state while their craftsmanship are nationally and internationally recognized as evident in the iron smithing works of Awka people, the bronze sculptures of Igbo Ukwu et cetera.

3.2 Igbo Cosmology

Like every other people, the Igbo appear to have their own unique worldview. According to Metuh (1985) the Igbo know only one world inhabited by both visible and invisible beings. For Anozia (1968), “The Igbo world whether visible or invisible was a ‘real’ world in every sense of the word” (p. 2). It is in this understanding that Uzuoku (cited in Obilor, 1994) regarded the Igbo world as a world: “Where time and space, objects and persons are made sacred... where from cradle to grave life is moving towards fullness through dynamic interaction between the human community and its spiritual originators” (p. 117).

This sacralized worldview also extends to commerce. Each Igbo day is a market day and is dedicated to a spirit: *Eke, Ori, Afọ and Nkwọ*. This is repeated in the same order. The Igbo believe in three-step structured hierarchical order of the hereafter: the land of *Chukwu* (God), the land of the non-human spirits like *Ana or Ala* and that of the human spirits with special reference to the ancestors.

Obilor (1994) pointed out that there are three relations which maintain equilibrium in Igbo thought: cosmic, social, and religious. The three relations are viewed both from the spirit world and the world of humans. Both *Chukwu* and the gods expect a harmonious co-existence among the three. Man is said to be responsible for any disharmony or disequilibrium. Any

disorder arising from any of the three relations is attributed to human negligence or transgressions. Thus, natural disaster, epidemics, famine, certain deaths, and all that are considered unnatural are attributed to human 'sin' and 'wrong doings'. These are ultimately traced to the violation of taboos, *nsọ* (abomination), *arụ* (evil) like the sin of sorcery, homicide, suicide, incest, false oath, theft, etc. In this worldview, any evil in the world is caused by man.

The Igbo thoughts and ideas are usually experimental, concrete, practical and inductive rather than abstract and deductive. For instance, the Igbo relate to God through His self-manifestations, and approach the destiny of man through the value and reward of good life. This approach extends to their idea of reincarnation and retribution. Reincarnation is therefore not only the effort to unite the visible and invisible spheres of existence but also to give value and reward to good life. For the Igbo, justice in its most perfect form exists in God. For them, justice takes its bearing from God and not from man. Nzomiwu (1999) noted that in the Igbo thought, "All other beings are just according to the degree of their propinquity to God" (p.77). God is understood as the source of all justice.

God has some names which indicate what the Igbo believe about Him. For example, He is *Chukwu* (Chi-ukwu, the great God), *Chineke* (Chi-n'eke, the God that creates), *Oseburuwa* (Lord who upholds the world). *Amamikpe nke ndị ikpe* (the Judge of the judges) and *Nwoke oghorogho anya* (One with very wide eyes), thereby implying that He can see all things.

The justice of *Chukwu* is mediated through other minor deities and beings in lesser degree as one goes down the pyramid of beings in Igbo beliefs and cosmology. Among men the ability to produce righteous judgment and execute justice varies according to one's nearness to the deities. This belief among the Igbo is responsible for the prominent role which *mmanwu* (the masquerades), *ndị nze na ọzọ* (the elders and title holders) play in Igbo juridical process. The

justice of these groups of people is more reliable since they are closer to the ancestors, the deities and ultimately to supreme God (*Chukwu*). The Igbo people not only recognise the divine justice as the ideal justice but they also aspire and strive after it.

The next after *Chukwu* in order of justice in Igbo man's cosmogony is *Ala* (the Earth goddess). She is believed to have compiled and handed down *omenala* (the Igbo moral code) to the ancestors from time immemorial. This unwritten code of moral conduct contains a great number of *nsọ-ala* (desecration of the land). It includes moral as well as religious demands and contains social, political, economic principles or norms or prohibitions. New laws are made in her name and heinous social offences are regarded as crimes against the land. These offences are usually called *alụ ma-ọbụ nsọ* (abomination or desecration of the land). The priests of *Ala* are guardians of public morality.

From *Ala*, one descends to another grade of beings in Igbo cosmology. They are *ndị-ichie* (the ancestors). The moral rectitude of their lives and their proximity to *Chukwu* guarantee that they will effect the type of justice which approximates the justice of *Chukwu*. Justice for the Igbo has a divine character, and the closer one is to *Chukwu* the more He is influenced by His justice. *Ndị-ichie* (ancestors) are believed to have an advantage over the human authority because they have an added quality of omnipresence and so no single act of injustice or infringement on custom can escape their attention. It is in respect and fear of the ancestors that injustice is avoided among the Igbo.

Next to *ndị-ichie* in the Igbo pyramid of beings as well as justice is *mmanwụ* (the masquerade). It is believed among the Igbo that the masquerades are possessed by the spirit of the dead ancestors and it is in view of this that they execute justice. For Nzomiwu (1999), as far as human justice is concerned, the Igbo believe that those people who are very close to

the deities share in the perfect justice of the gods and thus the Igbo entrust juridical decision in their hands.

The creator God, who appears in salutations and stories among the Igbo, is usually not represented by images, and He usually has neither temple nor special worship. That is why the Igbo call Him *Eze bi n'elu ogodo ya na-akpu n'ala* (the King who lives above but his wrap fills the world). He is God who does not need anything. He created all things and He owns all things and distributes gifts to his people and hence the name *Ezechitaokee*. He does not even need sacrifices. He is invoked as a recognition of His ever absence-presence. His presence is felt in the gods through which the Igbo believe He is made manifest.

In the thoughts of an Igboman, God is not wicked. Most sacrifices in Igbo religion are to placate and pacify the minor deities. There is no such sacrifice to Chukwu. One can rightly say that the Igbo conceive God as a loving father who saves His people in times of danger. In short, God is for the Igbo a savior both in life and in death. The Igbo have names such as *Chinazo* (God saves) and *Chizom* (Save me God) which express this fact of God's dominion over life and death. The old people speak of returning to Him and to the ancestors with calm and desire. It is believed that the intermediary gods are responsible for the fear and terror with which Igbo religious sacrifice is often associated.

In Igbo cosmology, God stands outside all human calculations and classifications. For the Igbo, God is not one of the beings who they can classify. He is completely other. God in Igbo is only known through His emanations. That is why the Igbo call Him *Amaama-amasi amasi* (known yet not known). In Igbo thought, reincarnation functions as one of the visible proofs of God's emanation. There is no concept of God in three persons in Igboland. The idea of a god who dies and rises or a god who gives information about himself is foreign to Igbo

thought. They rather experience God through His self-emanation in the critical universe. They relate to Him normally through intermediaries. The Igbo will say: “*Nna nna anyị ha sị*” *ma ọbu “ndị ichie sị*” (our forefathers say or our ancestors say) but never *Chukwu kwuru sị* (God says, or said or had spoken). The idea of a god who is self-revealing and who can communicate with his people is rather strange to the traditional Igboman. Unlike in Christianity, the Igbo never conceived God as a Father and never relate to Him in that wise.

The Igbo relate to God as a mystery, beyond the realm of humans, time and space. He is worshipped in Igbo through the worship of lesser deities. The Igbo believe that every power ultimately derives from Him including that of reincarnation and retribution. The Igbo traditional religion is centred more on man than on God.

In Igbo anthropology, man (*mmadu*) is neither a dichotomy of body and soul nor a trichotomy of body, soul and spirit. *Mmadu* is a unity of personality. The spiritual anatomy of man for the Igbo is *ahụ*, (body), *mkpuruobi* (seed of the heart) and *muo* (spirit). According to Obilor (1994), the spirits on the other hand are made up of the spirit ancestors and the spirit deities which are invisible; the malignant spirits or attacking spirits which are visible only to the *dibia* (diviner) and in the form of *mba muo* (the attack by the evil spirit); and the spirit messenger (*mmuo*). Although the Igboman is very much at home with pneumatology, yet the concept of Holy Spirit is strange to him. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit falls outside their belief system because they have nothing to do with Three in One God.

From the point of view of origin and final destiny, *mmadu* (man) for Igbo belongs to *Chukwu*. God at the moment of conception creates the spirit of the would-be person. Metuh (1985) concisely put it this way: “The spirit that will be born goes before Chukwu to receive his ‘*Chi*’ (spirit destiny) and his ‘*Eke*’ (reincarnating ancestor), and then the Okike (creative emanation of Chukwu) lets him out into the world” (p. 40).

The two elements which come together to make up what can be called the identity of man must here immediately be underlined. The ‘*chi*’ not only determines one’s destiny, it brings it to the proper end, and thus the Igbo would say, *ebe onye dara ka chi ya kwaturu ya* (where a person falls, there his Chi pushed him down). The ‘Eke’ on the other hand refers to the person’s shape, character or some qualities. According to Obilor (1994), when these qualities are derived from an identical ancestor, or any good dead person as the case may be, the Igbo say that the child is the ‘reincarnation of that ancestor or the person’ (p. 121). Some people promise while still alive that they would come back after their death and show signs of identification. In this case, there is no doubt and people at the birth of a child can identify him immediately. When there is doubt, then it is the work of the *dibia afa* (diviner) to identify the reincarnated person.

The Igbo believe that humans survive after death. Death is a passage into the community of the ‘living dead’, a separation and not an annihilation, a bridge to another existence, a reality which is awaited with ‘anxiety’, *ina unọ* (returning home), *ila ala mmuọ* (returning to the land of the spirits) especially *ala nna nna anyi ha* (the land of our ancestors). The Igbo believe that the dead are living side-by-side with them. One can say that for the Igbo, the dead are regarded as people who have completed their work. The wicked and the just do not share the same realm after death in Igboman’s thought. While the just join the ancestors or “community of the saints” the wicked are believed to pass on to oblivion or stay at the region referred to by Isidienu (2015) “*As agbata uwa na-agbata mmuọ*” (p.111) (the boundary between the living and the dead). There is no general consensus about the abode of the wicked in Igboland.

Mourning for the dead is religiously observed in Igboland. The period of mourning depends on certain factors. If the deceased is a titled person, the period is usually longer. What used to be a common practice in Igboland is one year mourning period. Death affects whatever the deceased owned and renders it unclean. Therefore, purificatory sacrifices are performed. The Igbo have the practices of shaving the head or wearing mourning dress for a period of one year as a sign of respect for the dead.

The notion of the hereafter appears to be very vast and complicated but the belief in reincarnation depends on that of the hereafter and not the other way round. For Obilor (1994), all decisions about who will return, the shape, the form and qualities are taken in the hereafter by the community of the ancestors in strict accord with *Chukwu* who finally sends the person to the earth through birth.

The most important sphere of the hereafter appears to be the 'ancestral community'- the community of the dead. The ancestors who are in their permanent rest are conceived to be with *Chukwu* (God) and can help the living because they are closer to the source of salvation. This does not refer to a condition of being with God as parents do with their children. It rather refers to the community of the ancestors which is God's community. God in relation to creature is considered as completely other. The dead are believed to return to *Chukwu* only to take their rightful place among the ancestors commensurate with the way they conducted their life here on earth. The help which comes from *Chukwu* is often believed to reach man through the intermediaries. The ancestors are believed to be the major intermediaries. For the Igboman, reincarnation is seen as a witness to the power of *Chukwu* who not only saves life and provides for life but also can bless a family by sending back to them a good and noble life lived before.

They admit new members and give them their rightful place. This admittance is believed to base on spotless life, ripe old age, founding lineages, proper burial as the case may be. These conditions are not within the reach of the poor, the invalid and those who die young. The living do their best to win the favour of the ancestors and to be in line with the moral discipline of the clan. The living are expected to live a good and holy life to enable them get a reward of good rest among the ancestors. There is a general distrust for human justice and unconscious longing for the ideal justice of the deities. The Igbo are aware of the limitations of human justice and long insatiably for that type of justice which is unlimited, most profound and most original. It is the justice of *Chukwu* that their spirits unconsciously long for. Limitations and imperfections are the main features of human justice. In the land of the spirits and ultimately in God is the ideal justice and man must do his best to emulate this ideal justice. Not man but God is the source of justice. It is for this reason that the Igbo make sure that those who had anything to do with execution of justice on earth are people who are in a special way associated with the gods and ancestors and thus participate in this ideal justice.

Where the ideal justice is made manifest by the ancestors through the *omenala* (the tradition), man has no option but to obey. The reasonableness of such action is no longer questioned. It is sufficient for them to know that such action is in line with the ideal justice of God. Where the ideal justice is not so evident, man has a grave moral obligation to find out. So, one notices that among the Igbo no stone is left unturned to determine the will of the deity and the ancestors. It is to this ideal justice they appeal, when every attempt to secure equitable justice in the human court has failed. Thus the Igbo seek to find out the unalloyed will of the deities by constant consultation of the diviners and in extreme cases by the consultation of the oracles. They have recourse to swearing in the bid to let God decide the issues for them since they as human beings do not know all the circumstances surrounding an action.

Given that Igbo man becomes just by close association and communion with divinities, to be credited with judicial authority, one has to be just by a constant effort to come closer to the deities and ancestors. There is a constant effort to share in the spirit of the deities. This is the idea behind *ozọ*-title taking and the making of masquerade. Justice becomes thus a life-long struggle since one cannot be completely divinized in this world. The efforts for justice and to become just will be realized fully in the final reunion with the ancestral spirits which the Igbo believe is the end of every good man. At death, the living perform a lot of sacrifices for the dead to assist his acceptance and permanence among the community or a possible reincarnation as the case may be.

3. 3 A Survey of Igbo Concept of Reincarnation

Belief in reincarnation is reported in many African societies. Not only are the ancestors revered as past heroes, felt to be present, watching over household, directly concerned in all the affairs of the family and property, giving abundant harvests and fertility, guardians of the tribal traditions and history, but also it is commonly believed that it is among the ancestral cults that the deceased are reborn into their immediate families. There is an almost consensus among Africans and the majority of scholars that only the deceased who died in adulthood and who attained the status of ancestorhood can reincarnate.

Reincarnation, therefore, appears to be an essential tenet of many traditional African religious systems and philosophies. Belief in rebirth has been reported amongst peoples scattered the length and breadth of the mighty continent: Akamba (Kenya), Akan (Ghana), Lango (Uganda), Luo (Zambia), Ndebele (Zimbabwe), Sebei (Uganda), Yoruba (Nigeria), Shona (Zimbabwe), Nupe (Nigeria), Illa (Zambia), and many others. There is, of course, a wide variation in understanding of the processes of rebirth: beliefs range from that in a "partial" reincarnation of an ancestor in one or several individuals strictly within the same family, to

that in an endless cycle of rebirths linked to a notion of cleansing and refinement of the inner nature.

Rooke (1980) noted that the Illa people of southern Zambia believe that a certain number of spirits were created and given bodies at the dawn of manifestation. When the bodies wear out during the course of a lifetime, the spirits live on in their own sphere of consciousness and then have other bodies prepared for them at the appropriate time. Linked with this is a belief in the inevitability of rebirth for the majority of humanity with only two exceptions cited by the Illa elders -- the *mizhimo* or "tribal gods," and those unfortunate individuals whose spiritual evolution has in some way been interrupted by sorcerers. Rooke (1980) equally stressed that the Illa people also believe that the reincarnating spirit is sexless and may seek manifestation in either the body of a man or woman regardless of the individual's sex in a previous life. They say, in common with the esoteric teachings of many other religious traditions, that the incarnating spirit, the true Self of each individual, provides to the newly-born child no memory of previous lives in the worlds of either spirit or matter. During life, the spirit animates the body but remains untainted by the vicissitudes of daily living.

On its face, the theory of selective reincarnation may appear to be nothing more than a curious feature of Akan cosmology. As presented by Wiredu (1983), however, it is part of a general process of making moral agents. Appreciating the role of selective reincarnation among the Akan thus requires acknowledging the whole process by which morally responsible agents come to be, as well as how individuals become motivated to be moral. For Wiredu (1983), critical to this appreciation is the understanding that the entity underlying this process exists beyond the life of a physical human being. The *okra* that forms the 'core' of the human being (and the returns through the process of selective reincarnation) precedes one's life as a human and constitutes one end of this process. At the other end is the Akan

ancestor, the culmination of the process of becoming a person whose memory serves as a moral exemplar to the living that guides the moral journey of the Akan. Those who become ancestors are those who, through their imagination, intelligence, and empathetic identification with their fellow human beings excel, despite all the challenges that are put before them. After having lived a full life, they obtain their 'ticket' (to use Wiredu's imagery) to the ancestral world and are reincarnated into service-ancestors.

Gyekye (1984) rejects this explanation, along with Wiredu's analysis of Akan personhood. He argues instead that any such explanation of Akan social and linguistic conventions must presume the personhood of even the youngest human:

A human person is a person whatever his age or social status. Personhood may reach its full realization in community, but it is not acquired or yet to be achieved as one goes along in society. What a person acquires are status, habits, and personality or character traits: he, *qua* person, thus becomes the *subject* of acquisition, and being thus prior to the acquisition, he cannot be defined by what he acquires. One is a person because of what he is not because of what he has acquired (P.108).

For Gyekye, then, differences with respect to personhood cannot account for the difference in how the Akan deal with the death of infants and adults. He prefers instead to account for these differences in terms of the utilitarian value of cultural practices such as the different treatment of the deaths of infants and adults. The most obvious reason for the difference, according to Gyekye (1984), is that the size and magnitude of death celebration depends on the social status of the deceased individual. The death of a wealthy and well-connected person will naturally call for a more elaborate ceremony than the death of a newborn, quite independently of their status as persons.

This is not to say that Gyekye denies the role that the *idea* of reincarnation plays for the Akan in the formation of persons. For him, however, the idea of reincarnation (and of the graduated concept of personhood) is less a factual account of personhood than a moral narrative, such as the ones postulated by Aquinas, Kant, Bentham, and John Stuart Mill to explain and justify moral precepts.

The Yorùbá people of Southern Nigeria believe in reincarnation (*atunwaye*). They actually believe that the souls of some individuals do return after death to live again in a different body. There are different types of reincarnation beliefs among the Yorùbá. One is the belief that someone who dies in good old age may return, out of affection for his children, grand children or relatives, to be reborn into the family to live with them again. This type of reincarnation is called *ipadawaye* (ancestors' rebirth). This is the most common and enduring belief in reincarnation among the Yorùbá. There is another belief in *abiku* (born to die). The third form of reincarnation belief among the Yorùbá is *akudaaya* (died and reappeared).

The Yorùbá people believe that reincarnation may not always be completely physical, and for a long time. The person can appear suddenly to intervene or rescue his family member from a particular problem, only to disappear after. It can be a sudden and short reappearance that comes like a flash that leaves the person with an undeniable impression. These reappearances are identified with cases of *akudaaya*. There is another level of reappearance that occurs regularly in dreams or follows a particular pattern. For instance, the dream appearance experienced at the anniversary of the person's death or a regular reappearance of a husband to his widow on their wedding anniversary. It is believed that the dead actually came back to give guidance to the living or to prove that they still exist in some forms elsewhere. It is arguable however, whether this is not simply a mental experience instead of reincarnation

since the dead did not take up a new physical body. The usual emphasis is that his soul re-manifests to show its continued existence.

Before the belief in ancestors' rebirth is connected with the belief in judgment and ancestral cult among the Yorùbá people, the Yorùbá believe that the life after death is in heaven (*orun*). *Orun* however has two compartments; *orunrere* (good heaven) and *orunapaadi* (bad heaven). It is believed that those who died good death are rewarded with *orunrere*. There is also the belief that God judges the character of individuals after death and rewards those with good character with *orunrere* and the bad people are kept in *orunapaadi* for the punishment of their sins. The *orunrere* is where the ancestors live after death. There, they continue their lives in eternal bliss and in the company of other ancestors. They can also interfere in the affairs of their family members still living. They may decide to reincarnate as a child to the benefit of their family members. Thus, it is only the good ancestors who can reincarnate and those who so wish to do that do reincarnate.

For Awolalu & Dopamu (2005), the Yorùbá strongly believe that the souls of the departed good ancestors were reincarnated and reborn as grandchildren in the family for them to continue their existence in the family. The ancestors do this as a result of the love they have for their family members or for the world. Children born into the family shortly after the death of an aged person are believed to be reincarnated, especially if they share the same gender with the departed. Children believed to be reincarnated by ancestors are given such names as *Yetunde* (mother has returned), *Iyabo* (mother has come), *Babatide* (father has come) and *Babatunde* (father has come again). Others are *Ayedun* (life is sweet), *Dehinbo* (come back), and *Sehinde* (come again). Awolalu & Dopamu (2005) noted that when a child is born, the divine oracle *ifa* is consulted to know which ancestor or ancestress has

reincarnated in the child. Some are obvious if certain marks that appeared on the dead also appear on the child.

The Yorùbá expresses the desire for reincarnation at life, but more at death. An aged dying man or woman can express the desire to be reincarnated in the family of his or children's family as a grandchild. More reincarnation expressions are made at death. Fatokun & Hofmyer (2008) remarked that whenever somebody died after a life of much suffering either from a protracted illness or some similar varied ills like barrenness, ill luck, and other related life misfortunes, the corpse was usually addressed as follows: "In the next life, make sure you change your destiny. Others simply say at the death of a beloved after a life of misfortunes: *Otilo tunyan-* a Yorùbá expression meaning he/she has gone back to change his or her destiny" (pp. 457-474).

Oládótun & Kehinde (2016) asserted that *Abiku* is a phenomenon whereby there is a repeated mortality and birth by the same mother. It is believed that it is the same soul reoccurring to be born as child many times over. Awolalu & Dopamu (2005) collaborated this assertion when they pointed out that it is based upon the belief that there is a circle of wicked spirits who, of their own volition, enter the wombs of pregnant women and are born only to die shortly after. Many times, marks are made on the dead child before it is buried to disfigure it and discourage it from appearing again. However, the fact that these marks reappear on the child that comes after, is a strong evidence to show that it is the same child that is reborn and a strong support for the belief in this phenomenon.

Such children are usually named *Maku* (Do not die), *Kokumo* (It will not die again), *Kasimaawo* (Let us watch this one), *Arinka* (Unstable walker), *Igbokoyi/Igbekoyi* (The burial ground rejects this), *Malomo* (Do not go again), *Ayedun* (Life or the earth is sweet), *Durojaiye* (Wait and enjoy life), *Durosinmi* (Wait and bury me), *Kokumo* (Not dying again),

Apara (One who comes and goes), *Ikujore* (Death leaves him), *Biobaku* (If he does not die), *Petirin* (He has been walking for a long time). These names are given to serve as an appeal to the children to stay and not die again. Some are given in hope that the child will not die again. Others express doubt on whether the child will stay for long or they simply reserve judgement on it. Some others however are believed to taunt the child, make him/her realise that he/she have been identified as *abiku* children, which will make them stay or worse still, die and never reincarnate again.

Ekwunife (1999) attempted to summarize the African concept of reincarnation using three models: physic-cyclic rebirth model, dualistic dialectical model and mystic-psyche model. The physic-cyclic rebirth model views African reincarnation as a cyclic rebirth model in which a cyclic rebirth and return of the dead either as reincarnated ancestors or reincarnated born to die children- '*ogbanje*'. Scholars with this cyclic interpretive model include Leonard (1968), Meek (1973), Green (1964), Talbot (1967), Uchendu (1965), Ilogu (1974), Onwuejeogwu (1981), Ifesieh (1989), Onunwa (1990), Onwubiko (1991), Onuoha (1987), Onyioha (1995). Ekwunife (1999) asserted that interpretations offered by some of these scholars were influenced by Asiatic cyclic model and were attempts to explain the practical applications of reincarnation in the human evolution of consciousness and purifications.

On the other hand, scholars in the list of dualistic dialectical model include Arinze (1970), Taylor (1963), Mbiti (1964), Idowu (1962-1970), and Awolalu (1978). These scholars observed that reincarnation in African perspective is not to be understood in its classical cyclic sense. Parrinder (1974) insisted that this phenomenon is not identical with the Asiatic cyclic notions. Mbiti (1964), Idowu (1962-1970) and Awolalu (1978) rested on partial reincarnation since the privilege reincarnated living-dead continue to enjoy their existence in the African ancestral world. Mbiti (1964) made it clear that African traditional perception of

the destiny of man finds its end in the ontological permanent stay in the spirit world. Hence he asserted:

As far as traditional African concepts are concerned, death is death and the beginning of the permanent ontological departure of the individual to spirithood. Beyond that point, African religions and philosophy are absolutely silent, or at most extremely vague. Nothing can reverse or halt that process, and death is the end of real and complete man (p. 165).

Idowu (1962-1870) and Awolalu and Dopamu (1979) admitted the impossibility of solving totally the paradox of dual existence of the dead. However, Idowu reassured his readers that on that paradox rest the solid grounds on which the Yoruba base their belief in the concrete reality. Arinze (1970) asserted that with particular reference to Igbo culture: “The belief in the reincarnation of good ancestors seems at first sight to cancel all ancestor worship. But it does not for Ibos, or for Africans for that matter. It seems that only a part of the ancestor’s spirit is believed to be born again” (p. 17).

On the other hand, Oguejiofor (1996) absolved the traditional Igbo for their inarticulate downright contradictory thought on this issue. He observed that the “Traditional Igboman did not bother himself about how logical or consistent these beliefs are” (p. 81).

Next is the mystic-psychic model. Chegwe’s works (1973) and Opata’s works (cited in Ekwunife, 1999), seemed to toe this line. In this model the elements of qualitative psychic real influences of an identifiable dead ancestor or ancestress on a newborn infant are noticed and acknowledged. Signs of these influences become part and parcel of the characteristic traits of new infants which according to Ekwunife (1999) are not necessarily subject to modern law of heredity but are rather the “vital influence or the life-share or living perturbation of the ancestor” (p. 56). While Chegwe was insistent on correct methodological approach for

unfolding the truth about African realities on this issue, Opata elaborated on the meanings of, and principles for understanding this phenomenon, as well as its relevance in the socio-religious and economic lives of the Igbo.

If the above models are the true representation of African interpretation of their belief in reincarnation, it stands in contradiction to the Christians' cherished beliefs in the last judgment, in fixed eternal life and damnation, resurrection of the dead, uniqueness of the individual soul by God to be renewed after the image of Christ. More so, no matter how some Africans may try to explain away the hereditary traits that are transferred from the parents to the offspring as "vital influence or life-share or living perpetuation of the ancestor", it is purely a biological phenomenon being propelled by the law of heredity. Mbiti (1969) sincerely admitted:

I suspect that this belief is partly the result of externalizing people's awareness of the nearness of their living-dead, and partly an attempt to explain what is otherwise a purely biological phenomenon which applies not only to human beings but also to animals (p. 164).

Furthermore, African concept of reincarnation appears to be fraught with inconsistency. It is difficult to understand the logic of a belief in an ancestor who in some sense is reincarnated in this world and yet does not leave the other world. If this is the case, it challenges their ground for ancestor-worship and their belief in unity of human personality.

3.4 Reincarnation in Igbo Worldview- Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Field survey in this thesis took two forms: personal interview and the administration of questionnaire, each complementing the other. One thousand and fifty copies of questionnaire were administered among literate members of the society. A total of one hundred and fifty copies of questionnaire were distributed in Agulu, one hundred and fifty were distributed in

Alor, one hundred and fifty were distributed in Mbaukwu, one hundred and fifty were distributed in Mgbakwu, one hundred and fifty were distributed in Nri, one hundred and fifty were distributed in Ogidi and one hundred and fifty were distributed in Ukpo. Eight hundred and seven copies of questionnaire were retrieved; this makes 76.9% of the total copies of questionnaire distributed. Out of the eight hundred and seven copies of questionnaire retrieved, twenty-seven copies were discarded given that the responses of the respondents did not make any sense as they were cursorily filled. The researcher had to work with seven hundred and eighty copies of the questionnaire distributed; this makes 74.3% of the total number of the questionnaire distributed.

The interview was employed mostly among the non-literate people in Agulu, Alor, Mbaukwu, Mgbakwu, Nri, Ogidi and Ukpo. The researcher interviewed 126 subjects in the towns under surveillance. While the literate respondents are to a large extent influenced by Western education, and proselytizing religions, the non-literate are less influenced by these factors. They are true custodians of the peoples' tradition and beliefs. The choice of the two methods was therefore intended to provide a balance to the study.

Preset questions were used during the interview sessions. The interview was carried out with the help of research assistants in the towns under consideration. The interviewees were also conveniently selected. Data from the interview sessions were used to complement those of the questionnaire. Both surveys were carried out between September 2014 and April 2016.

Demographic data on respondents is represented in the following tables:

Table 1 Showing Respondents' Sex, Age, and Educational qualification.

Sex of the respondents			Age of the respondents			Educational qualification		
	Freq	%		Freq	%		Freq	%
Male	468	60	Below 20	54	6.9	Primary School	90	11.5
Female	312	40	20-35	114	14.6	'O' Level/Grade 11 Teachers' Cert.	150	19.2
Total	780	100	36-50	132	16.9	'A' level/NCE/OND/ND	210	26.9
			51-70	444	56.9	Graduate/HND	312	40
			Above 70	36	4.6	Postgraduate	18	2.3
			Total	780	100	Others	00	00
						Total	780	100

Source: Field Survey September 2014-April 2016

Table 1: That is, demographic data (A) supplies information on the sex, age and educational qualification of those responded to the questionnaire. From the data, 60% of the respondents are males, while the females constitute 40%. The obvious reason for the difference in number is basically due to the fact that there were more male respondents and not due to gender difference or academic qualification, because a significant percentage of Agulu, Alor, Mbaukwu, Mgbakwu, Nri, Ogidi and Ukpo are well read.

With regard to the age of the respondents, those who are below the age of 20, constitute 6.9%, those between 20 and 35 constitute 14.6%, those between 36 and 50 constitute 16.9%, while those between the age of 51 and 70 constitute 56.9 %, and those who are above 70 years constitute 4.6%.

The researcher took keen interest in choosing more subjects from among the senior members of the selected communities because the elders are the custodians of the rich traditions of the

Igbo people, unlike younger ones whose worldview and religious affiliations have affected their mode of thinking and religious beliefs.

The third variant on the table reveals that those who responded to the questionnaire are those with a high level of education. Those who have primary school leaving certificate constitute 11.5%, those with Ordinary Level Certificate or Grade II Teachers' Certificate constitute 19.2%, those with NCE, OND, *et cetera*, constitute 26.9%, those who have first degree or HND constitute 40.0% while those with higher degrees constitute 2.3%. Apparently, those with various diplomas, first degree and above constitute 69.2% of the number of subjects who responded to the questionnaire. This implies that the result of the survey is more representative of the literate members of Agulu, Alor, Mbaukwu, Mgbakwu, Nri, Ogidi and Ukpo communities. This deficiency has been dealt with through the additional use of the interview method.

Table 2 Showing Respondents' Occupation, Marital Status and Denominations/ Sects

Occupation			Marital Status			Religion of the Respondents			Denomination or Sects		
	Freq	%		Freq	%		Freq	%		Freq	%
Students	120	15.4	Single	174	22.3	A.T.R	249	31.9	Orthodox	216	27.7
Traders/ artisans	90	11.5	Married	546	90.0	Christianity	516	66.2	Roman Catholic	240	30.8
Farmers	72	9.2	Widow/ widower	60	7.7	Others	15	1.9	New Generational Churches	60	7.7
Civil Servants	306	39.2	Total	780	100	Total	780	100	Others	264	33.8
Retirees	156	20.0							Total	780	100
Herb- alists	06	0.8									
Clergy/ Prophets	30	3.8									
Total	780	100									

Source: Field Survey September 2014-April 2016

The table above is a continuation of the demographic data of the respondents to the questionnaire. It contains four variables, three of which require attention. The first is an analysis of the occupations of the respondents: 90 of the respondents, constituting 11.5% are traders and artisans; and 72 of the respondents constituting 9.2%, are farmers. The majority of the respondents are civil servants, who made up a total of 306 subjects, constituting 39.2%; the retirees, numbering 156 constitute 20%; six herbalists are among the respondents and they constitute 0.8%; the number also includes thirty clergymen or prophets constituting 3.8%.

The civil servants, retirees and students, making a total number of 582 respondents, constitute 74.6%.

With regard to the variable on the marital status of the respondents, the analysis in Table 2 reveals that 70.0% are married, 22.3% are single, while 7.7% are either widows or widowers. It is important to note here that the marital status of the respondents has no influence on the views of the respondents.

Another variable that requires attention in Table 2 is the religion of the respondents. Those who belong to African Traditional Religion number two hundred and forty-nine, constituting 31.9%, while the Christians are in the majority, with a total number of five hundred and sixteen respondents, constituting 66.2%. Others like Islam and those who do not belong to any religious group constitute a negligible percentage of 1.9% with a total number of fifteen people. The implication of this on the data is that those who belong to Traditional Religion have proved to be the most suitable subjects in this regard. The Muslims and Christians have been influenced by their new faith, and most of their responses to the questions are either supported by the teachings from the Holy Bible, or the Q'uran. Nevertheless, their understanding and belief in the afterlife is, to a very extent, untainted, although they quoted profusely from the Holy Bible and Q'uran. This makes the interview exercise necessary and significance to this research.

3.4.1 Belief in Afterlife

Table 3 and those that follow represent the opinions of the respondents to variables raised in the questionnaire. There are three options given to each question. The first option which is “Yes” is an affirmation of the issue raised, the second which is “No” is a rebuttal of the same, while the third option which is “Don’t know” is an indication of non-committal on the issues, which the respondent is not particularly convinced about.

Table 3 Showing Respondents' Perception about Afterlife

Opinions	Death is not the end of man's existence		There is another life after death		The Spirit of man cannot die (immortality of the soul)	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Yes	714	91.5	606	77.7	711	91.2
No	45	5.8	144	18.5	69	8.8
Don't Know	21	2.7	30	3.8	0	0
Total	780	100	780	100	780	100

Source: Field Survey September 2014-April 2016

Table 3 above presents an analysis of data about respondents' perceptions regarding the belief in afterlife under the variables. The proposition of the first variable on the table is that death cannot write '*finis*' to man's life. Those who affirm this proposition are seven hundred and fourteen, which represent 91.5%; those who say "No" to this are forty-five, constituting 5.8% and those who are not sure are only twenty-one people constituting 2.7%. A sweeping majority of 91.5% agree with this proposition.

The second variable on the table holds that there is another life after death and that death is only a passage to the hereafter. Those who affirm this by saying "Yes" make a total of six hundred and six people, constituting 77.7% of the respondents. Those who say "No" to this constitute 18.5%, numbering one hundred and forty-four and those who are not very sure are only thirty, which make only 3.8% of the respondents.

The third variable on the table claims that the spirit of man cannot die (immortality of the soul). Those who agree to this are the majority, constituting 91.2%, numbering seven hundred and eleven people. Those who disagree with the proposition by choosing "No" are sixty-nine, which constitute 8.8% of the respondents. No one is non-committal.

An assessment of the aforestated statistics shows that the belief in the continuation of life after death is profound. This implies the belief that death cannot put an end to the existence of man's life. This belief has also led to respondents' opinion that man's soul cannot die. Rather, it is believed that it takes up a new form and continues its existence in another world, while sometimes, coming back to the present world through reincarnation or in the spirit, which may not be made known to everybody except those for whom it is meant or those who have magical power to see things that could not be seen with ordinary eyes like traditional Igbo diviners (*dibia afa*).

The position of the respondents to the questionnaire on the concept of life after death can be corroborated by the interviews that were conducted in Agulu, Alor, Mbaukwu, Mgbakwu, Nri, Ogidi and Ukpo towns. Almost every interviewee affirmed that Igbo people believe strongly in life after death and that the dead people are not dead at all, but only change their place of living. As such, everybody looks forward to dying someday, after attaining a "good" old age. According to Okpala (personal communication, December 21 2014), everyone prays fervently to die a good death so that he will return home, join the ancestors and be reincarnated. For Okpala, *onwu bu ina unọ* (death is returning home) or *ina ala nna nna anyi ha* (returning to the land of our ancestors).

Okonkwo (personal communication, March 28 2015) said *mmadu nile ji onwu ugwo; mmadu nile ga-anwu* (we are all debtors to death, and we shall all die). Abana (personal communication, February 20 2015) claimed that the land of the ancestors, *ala nna nna anyi*, is the most important place; we must lead a good life and die at a good old age. Further to this, Okoye (personal communication, March 30 2015) said *mkpuru obi mmadu adi anwu-anwu* that is, (the soul of man cannot die), but continues to live either in *ala-mmuo* (abode of the dead) or returns to the world shortly after through reincarnation. According to

Osinomumu (personal communication, May 5 2015) the idea of reincarnation does not mean that the Igbo people believe that everybody who dies returns to the world as a new child. But it is thought that the deceased can have certain influence on the personality and destiny of the child. For Osinomumu, all the deceased are still fully intact in the ancestral world, and this is why the living can pray to them always. He also added that it proves that though the relative is dead, some link is still maintained through birth of the child.

Azoka (personal communication, February 14 2016) said that *ihe ana-eme n' uwa yiri ihe ana-eme n'ala mmuo* (what is done here on earth is similar to what is done in the spirit world). For Azoka, many learn their trade and skill in the ancestral world before coming into this physical world. For him, this explains why some people are so good. Ezudu (personal communication, October 27 2015) said that *anyị bu obia n' uwa*, that is, we are visitors in this world; at birth, the newborn child is welcomed with the greeting: *nwa biara ije, nnoo n' uwa* (welcome into the world, newly born child and visitor to the world). Man has no enduring place here on earth, because *uwa bu ahia, onye zuchaa, onaa* (the world is like a marketplace where one goes to purchase things and goes home at the end). That is why Okoye (personal communication, March 30 2015) said that at death, a person is said to have returned home (*o nara unọ*).

Some of the interviewees (Okeke, Enue, Ofodile, personal communications, February 20 2015), however, objected to the opinion that there is a continuation of life after death. To them, at death, man's life and activities will cease, and his soul only awaits judgment by God in heaven. It was observed by the researcher that those who object to the position were basically younger people with western influence.

The following inference can be deduced from the data above. Igbo people of Agulu, Alor, Mbaukwu, Mgbakwu, Ogidi, Nri and Ukpo believe in life after death. They also believe in

the immortality of man's soul, and for this death is viewed only as a passage to another life. It is a separation of the body from the soul and spirit. Although the body will decay and return to dust, yet a bodiless soul is foreign to Igbo thought. That is why in the understanding of Igbo both the living and the dead are referred to as persons.

The Igbo people believe that there is a state of existence, attainable by human beings, beyond the limits of our present mortal lifespan. That there is existence after death is attested to by the actions and practices of the people, such as veneration of the ancestors, ancestral festivals, concept of the "living dead", belief in spiritual superintendents of family affairs and punishment of moral offenders by the cult of ancestors.

It is of note that it is yet to be empirically established that there is ultimate survival after death; many old people believe that there should not be any anxiety over death. Death is simply a means of returning home, the final destination of every human. When the aged dies therefore, there are funeral rites performed to prepare him or her for the new journey home. In other words, to the people, death opens another door, the door to new life. The aged, therefore, do not face death as cowards, but with courage. There is absolutely no evidence that the soul is a complete human being in the ancestral world before coming into the world. On the contrary, the concepts which the people have of the soul are not possible without some bodily form.

3.4.2 The Concept of Judgment

As reported above, the majority of those interviewed believe that the dead are not really dead for the Igbo but rather living within but in another sphere. Behind all the reverences and respect for the dead lies the fact of the belief in the ancestral community and the possibility of reincarnation. Everybody strives to lead a good life and and die a good death so that he will

be accepted by the ancestors. The table below represents the analysis of the perceptions of respondents about judgment.

Table 4 Showing Respondents’ Perception about Judgment

	One’s actions are judged		One is judged by people around one during one’s lifetime		Good people and bad people do not share the same destiny	
Opinions	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Yes	709	90.9	200	25.6	773	99.1
No	43	5.6	570	73.1	7	0.9
Don’t Know	28	3.6	10	1.3		
Total	780	100	780	100	780	100

Source: Field Survey September 2014-April 2016

Table 4 above presents an analysis of data about respondents’ perceptions regarding the belief in judgment under the variables. The proposition of the first variable on the table is that one’s actions are judged. Those who affirm this position are seven hundred and nine, which represent 90.9%; those who say “No” to this are forty-three, constituting 5.5% and those who are not sure are only twenty-eight people constituting 3.6%. A sweeping majority of 90.9% agree with this proposition.

The second variable on the table holds that one is judged by people around one during one’s lifetime. Those who affirm this by saying “Yes” make a total of two hundred people, constituting 25.6% of the respondents. Those who say “No” to this constitute 73.1% numbering five hundred and seventy people and those who are not sure are only ten, which make only 1.3% of the respondents.

The third variable on the table claims that good people and bad people do not share the same destiny. Those who agree to this are the majority, constituting 99.1%, numbering seven hundred and seventy-three people. Those who disagree with the proposition by choosing “No” are seven, which constitute 0.9% of the respondents. No one is non-committal.

The position of the respondents to the questionnaire on the concept of judgment can be corroborated by the interviews that were conducted in Agulu, Alor, Mbaukwu, Mgbakwu, Nri, Ogidi and Ukpo towns. An assessment of the above analysis shows that majority of people in Agulu, Alor, Mbaukwu, Mgbakwu, Nri, Ogidi and Ukpo believe that one’s actions are judged, but not by the people around them. It was observed by the researcher that those who objected to this view are people with western influence.

Abana (personal communication, February 20 2015), said that judgment takes place in spirit, and before one breathes out one’s last breath. According to him, when someone is in coma or about to die, he is summoned by the ancestors to the *obi* (big hut) that connects all the villages in the town. After the judgment, if he is found guilty, he will breathe his last breath and be sent to the boundary between the spirit world and the world of humans (*agbata mmuṛo na mmadu*). Every wicked man who dies is sent to this place after being judged by the ancestors. The good ones are being admitted into the cult of the ancestors. This view is corroborated by Uzodinma (personal communication, October 17 2015). The researcher sees this view as a resultant effect of western influence.

Oji (personal communication, November 11 2015) rather presented a different view. According to him, the belief of the Igbo people is that man is judged by the people around him while he is alive and not while he is dead. The people around him would watch his words, deeds and actions and certify him good or bad. He cited one Mr. Echieteka Nwankwo who when he died, the whole town was mourning for his death as against one Mr. Nweke

Okongwu, a notorious evil man who when he died, the whole town was celebrating his death. Okoye (personal communication, November 20 2014), Akunwata (personal communication, August 21 2015), Ngene (personal communication, March 15 2016), corroborated this view. The researcher upholds this view as a better presentation of Igbo idea of judgement.

An assessment of the above analysis shows that the majority of people in Agulu, Alor, Mbaukwu, Mgbakwu, Nri, Ogidi and Ukpo believe that the good people and the wicked do not share the same destiny. According to Amamchukwu (personal communication, June 9 2015), the Igbo distinguish between the land of the ancestors and the land of those rejected by the ancestors. For him the wicked have no permanent resting place. They are restless and wander about. They are in misery and anguish. The good ones have peace and are in a resting place and form part of the ancestors. Okafor (personal communication, April 2 2016) also said that the wicked ones are sent to the boundary between the spirit world and the world of humans. From there they come to disturb the peace of human beings and cause a lot of havoc to the community of the living. Obiakor (personal interview, February 17 2016) added that in some areas in Igboland, sacrifices such as *ilọ mmụọ* (placating or appeasing the spirits) are carried out to stop such wicked dead from causing problems for the living, especially their families. Egbenugo (personal communication, September 20 2014) stated categorically that the Igbo people do not expect any of such wicked people to be reincarnated. In addition, he said that *anaghi agọku ha mgbe ana awa oji* (we do neither invoke their names nor invite them during the blessing of kola). Reincarnation is rather desired for those resting in the ancestral community.

The following inferences can be deduced from the data above: The Igbo people of Agulu, Alor, Mbaukwu, Mgbakwu, Obosi, Nri and Ukpo believe that one's actions are judged. They also believe that one is judged right here on earth by the people living around one. They

equally believe that the good ones are admitted into the cult of the ancestors whereas the bad people are sent to the boundary between the spirit world and the world of humans (*agbata mmuḡ na mmadu*). They believe that the wicked people do not reincarnate. It is only those in the cult of ancestors that can return. They believe that wicked ones are wandering about and can cause a lot of havoc to the community of the living. This, therefore, necessitates the need for *ilḡ mmuḡ* (placating or appeasing the spirits).

4.4.3 Belief in Reincarnation

The belief in reincarnation seems to be a popular element of human existence. In every continent, country, and culture around the world, there are people who believe that life and death are cyclical, that people who die eventually return again to be born anew, starting all over with new lives. Nabofa (1978) held that the Urhoho people of the southern part of Nigeria describe the rhythm of human existence as being in cyclic form. One is born, grows old and dies, to be brought into life again by his offspring or his relations, to repeat the same process as many more times as possible.

Table 5 Showing Respondents' Perception about Reincarnation

	Departed parents can be born as a grandchild to any of the descendants or close relatives		A sign or mark on the body of the child can help to identify the ancestor who has reincarnated		Seven times is the maximum number an ancestor can return	
Opinions	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Yes	574	73.6	570	73.1	230	29.5
No	206	26.4	200	25.6	344	44.1
Don't Know	00	00	10	1.3	206	26.4
Total	780	100	780	100	780	100

Source: Field Survey September 2014-April 2016

Table 5 presents an analysis of data on Agulu, Alor, Mbaukwu, Mgbakwu, Nri, Obosi and Ukpou on the belief on reincarnation. The first variable on the table posits that ancestors could return to life again. One of the ways of doing this is for the departed parents to be born as a grandchild to any of the descendants or close relations. Those who affirm this position are five hundred and seventy-four, which represent 73.6%; those who say “No” to this are two hundred and six, constituting 26.4% and no one is non-committal. An enormous number of people agree to this proposition.

The second variable on the table claims that a sign or a mark on the body of the child can help to identify the particular ancestor who has returned. Those who affirm this by saying “Yes” make a total of five hundred and seventy people, constituting 73.1% of the respondents. Those who say “No” to this constitute 25.6% numbering two hundred respondents and those who are not very sure are only ten, which make only 1.3% of the respondents.

The third variable on the table holds that an ancestor has maximum number of seven chances to be reborn. Those who agree to this proposition are two hundred and thirty, constituting 29.5% of the respondents. Those who disagree with this proposition by choosing “No” are the majority, constituting 44.1%, numbering three hundred and forty-four people. Those who are non-committal are two hundred and six, constituting 26.4% of the respondents.

An assessment of the above statistics shows that the belief in reincarnation is intense. A sign or mark on the body of a child helps to identify a particular ancestor who did return. Nevertheless, opinions vary as to how many times a particular ancestor could be reborn. The majority of the respondents hold the view that an ancestor could not return as many as seven times. Nevertheless, the position of the respondents to the questionnaire on the concept of

reincarnation can be corroborated by the interviews that were conducted in Agulu, Alor, Mbaukwu, Mgbakwu, Nri, Obosi and Ukpo towns.

Ejidike (personal communication, March 28 2015), said that the Igbo believe in *ilọ- uwa*, that is, reincarnation. He is of the opinion that it is God who sends people back. As long as he is concerned, this will continue until the end. He called this end ‘the return of Christ’ and then reincarnation will be no more and the just will inherit the earth. For him, not all the ancestors are said to have reincarnated and not everybody is reincarnated but each person has a chance. Some people said, they will come and they come. Eyimekwu (personal communication, May 5 2015) corroborated with this when he said that reincarnation is the belief and practice of Igbo people. He said that Igbo people do not just believe it, they practice it. He said that *ilọ- uwa* or reincarnation is not just imaginary, it is real. He claimed that he is his mother’s father. According to him, he was conceived about the time his father’s mother died; and that was 1925. His mother told him when he was still very young, many years ago, that his father said he would return and enumerated many things he would accomplish in his return. One of the things he said would happen to him in his return is that he would never be sick. He believed *Chukwu* would grant him that. He testified that he has never been sick in his life, no headache; and no fever. According to Onyenyili (personal communication, August 9 2015), one can easily know the Igbo belief in *ilọ- uwa* or reincarnation through the proverbs concerning the belief. For instance, *Nwanyị luhie di, ọlọhie uwa*, that is, when a woman marries wrongly, she is also wrongly reincarnated; and, *otu nne na-amụ, ma ọ bughị otu chi na-eke* (A woman could have many children, though they are all from the same parents, they differ in character). In other words, the belief in reincarnation is profound.

An interviewee, Onyeogu (personal communication, August 10 2015) posited that the person that died is the one that returns; there is no new creation of man; those who departed are the ones returning to life again. He recalled that when a child is born, until the recent past, during

igụ aha (naming ceremony) the *okpala* (the family head) or the father of the child or both will consult the diviner to discover the ancestor who has been reincarnated, and especially to discover his name and his *nsọ* (prohibitions). The child must take the name of the reincarnated ancestor, but when no reincarnation has been confirmed, the patriarchal grandfather or the eldest man present has the prerogative of giving the child a name. The divination rite which precedes the naming ceremony is to establish his identity. The naming ceremony is to effect his incorporation into the society. The ritual for identifying the reincarnated dead person is called in many areas in Igboland as “*Igba agụ*” (divining for the reincarnate person). Only the traditional Igbo diviners (*dịbịa afa*) can authoritatively pronounce the name of the reincarnated person through *igba afa*, that is, divination.

Many of those interviewed believe strongly that reincarnation is real. Nkwoemezie (personal communication, March 30 2015), narrated the story of a young boy in her neighbourhood who told his father that he was his late father. Having observed some resemblances in his character and those of the late ancestor, the parents believed him and started showering a lot of respect and affection on him. The interviewee also noted that some children are born with the same birth marks on their faces or bodies like their fore-bears. These, according to her, are indications of reincarnation. This position is corroborated by Ezudu (personal communication, August 7 2015), he said: *Onye n’eché ka akọwara ya na ndị biara ụwa oge mbụ bụ ha na-abịachigha azụ?* (Who wouldn’t know that those who have gone before are the ones coming back again?). He even quoted Ecc. 1: 4, out of context though, to support his position- *Otu ọgbọ ala, ọgbọ ọzọ abịa; ma ụwa n’eguzoru mgbe ebighi-ebi* (i.e., *One generation passes away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abides for ever*). The views expressed above concerning the possibility of an ancestor coming back to life, due to the semblance between a deceased and his grandchildren may not be correct. While the researcher is not completely ruling out the possibility, given that it can only take place among

the people that believe in it, the research suggests that children look like their fore-bears and often behave like them sometimes because of the transfer of genetically-controlled characteristics such as hair colour, height and character traits from one generation to the next.

The youngest person interviewed, by name, Okeke (personal communication, March 23 2016), also affirmed his belief in reincarnation. He believed that he was in the world before and had returned through one of his grandchildren who gave birth shortly after his death. Uzoma Egede (personal interview, February 22 2016) believed that his father, Umeadi Egede was actually his own grandson. The parents corroborated the story and expressed their joy and satisfaction for the unique privilege. They explained that they became aware of this when *dịbịa afa* (diviner) was consulted as a result of the frequent illnesses he had when he was a baby. The *dịbịa afa* recommended some sacrifices and also declared that he was Umeadi Egede's father.

Some of the interviewees, however, objected to the position above. They were of the opinion that a reincarnated child could never have known personally that he was an incarnate of an earlier ancestor. Some of those interviewed at different times and at different places who hold this opinion include Azoka (personal communication, February 14 2016); Dim (personal communication, September 9 2014); and Okafor (personal communication, October 19 2015). Chikadibia added that the reincarnates are usually memoriless babies who are starting life afresh. Consequently, they cannot remember their past life experience. But according to Abana (personal communication, February 15 2015) the returned ancestors are not blank-minded people. A similar question was raised in Obosi and Mbaukwu and some of those interviewed shared a similar opinion that the returned ancestors are not memoriless babies.

Onwuka (personal communication, March 3 2016), is of the opinion that the dead are given help by the living to facilitate their possible return. This is done as part of burial rite and in

some cases it continues to the second burial. For him, an ancestor can return as many as seven times and hence the saying, *uwam-uwa-asaa*. Many people corroborated this view such as Afunugo (personal communication, February 20 2016), Nweke (personal communication, June 8 2015) and Ezedinachi (personal communication, August 9 2015). On the contrary Nwankwo (personal communication, April 15 2015), expresses the view that reincarnation is endless; and that the saying *uwam-uwa-asaa* stands for *okpu toro okpu* that is, endlessness. Many people share this view which, include Ukachukwu (personal communication, August 21 2015), Ike (personal communication, November 20 2014) and Ogaraku (personal communication, March 7 2016). However, Ekemezie (personal communication, February 20 2015), is of the opinion that reincarnation is ordained by God to be as many times as possible until the return of Jesus Christ. The researcher maintains that *uwam-uwa-asaa* stands for endlessness, that is, *okpu toro okpu*. The researcher expresses the opinion that *Uwam-uwa-asaa* in the understanding of Igbo people is rather an expression of a desire which is far from being a statement of fact. A desire, it should be noted is a craving or a longing for something which may or may not be granted. In other words, what the Igboman means when he says, *uwam-uwa-asaa* is that he wishes that his similitude will not be obliterated. Hence, the Igbo do say, *afu nwa echeta nna* (if you see a child, you remember the father) or *afamefula* (let not my name be obliterated). This is because of the belief that the parents are living in their descendants. The researcher rather affirms that this cannot be any other way except through transmission of genes. Of course, nobody would want his ancestral lineage to come to an abrupt end. The idea that it will cease at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is as a result of Christian influence.

It can, therefore, be deduced based on the opinions of the interviewees above, that life is perceived as a continuous experience, the human race is inherently immortal, a man is born, grows up, judged by the people around him, dies and returns to be born again as a child if he

is a good man. There is therefore, a communion and a communication going on all the time between those who have gone to *ala nna nna anyi ha* (the ancestral world) and those who are here on earth. The Igbo people never believe that their ancestors have lost their senses; rather, they strongly believe that the ancestors can see, hear, feel, and have human emotions. The ancestors are constantly invoked, and they are aware of the actions and sometimes the thoughts of their descendants who, on their behalf, are the temporary caretakers of lineage and posterity.

The Igbo are almost certain that there is no belief in reincarnation in the classical sense among the Igbo, that is, in the sense that reincarnation is the passage of the soul from one body to another. The Igbo speak of *ilo- uwa* but then, the researcher equally considered it as reincarnation too. However, the specific belief of the Igbo about those who depart from this world is that once they have entered the ancestral world, they remain there. And there, the survivors and their children after them keep unbroken intercourse with them, especially if they have been good persons while on earth and are ripe for death when they die. Nevertheless, the deceased persons do reincarnate or return in their grandchildren and great grandchildren who are brothers and sisters and cousins, aunts and nephews, uncles and nieces, *ad infinitum*. In spite of this repeated “rebirths” which should be rather exhausting, the deceased continue to remain in full life and vigor in the spirit world. This is why the living could pray to them always. It also proves that though the relative is dead, some link is still maintained through the birth of the child.

The situation of a “young dead” returning to life is the phenomenon known as *ogbanje*, born-to-die children. This was very rampant years back, the occurrence according to Okoli (personal communication, October 23 2015) has drastically reduced so much today. He narrated a story to the researcher as follows: in his family, he had a child who was reportedly

coming and going back. This incident occurred five times, usually before reaching age one. When the girl died the fifth time, he (Nwibe Okoli) cut off her fingers and broke her legs. Surprisingly, however, when this girl was born the sixth time, the fingers were wrinkled and stunted, the legs till today are wobbled. The researcher saw the young girl who was about 15 years then, whose picture he would have loved to take, but the parents were not favourably disposed to this. The hands and legs are greatly deformed.

The instances of *ogbanje* causing pains and financial loss were very common in the past, but most of the mortality termed *ogbanje* may be due to poor or inadequate medical care. A close look at the girls' limbs could infer congenital malformations which could sometimes result from ingestion of *akuruaku* (concussions) during pregnancy, particularly in the first trimester when certain drugs or substances could interfere with the normal growth and development of the foetus. This was suggested to the father, Nwibe Okoli, but he vehemently disagreed with the researcher and emphasized that the lady is an *ogbanje*. Further, the reduction in the incident of *ogbanje* today may be attributed to better environmental hygiene, improved antenatal and child care, increased public awareness on child immunization routines, and improved accessibility to modern health care delivery.

Okaro (personal communication, February 25 2016), narrated the story of a girl whose fingers were cut off with machet and her body partially burnt before burial. When she was reborn as an *ogbanje*, her body had black patches and each of her hands had only one finger. Jonas Okoye (personal interview, September 25 2014) also narrated to the researcher the story of an *ogbanje*, in his neighbourhood. According to him, a boy had died several times in infancy, and herbalist encouraged the parents to mutilate the body, the ears, the nose, and the legs were pierced and given several cuts. When the boy came back again the sixth time, all the marks appeared on his body. Odinyelu (personal communication, June 8 2015), explained that *ogbanje* are wicked children, self-centred, without interest for anybody, not even the

dibia (a native doctor). She added that *ogbanje* has rendered some native doctors to be mere liars. The situation is made worse when it is the only child in the family. Nwankwo (personal communication, April 15 2015) said that as a native doctor, he is saying without any fear of contradiction that *ogbanje* is not sickle cell as most people allege. For him sickle cell is sickness but *ogbanje* is not sickness. If you take an *ogbanje* to the hospital, the doctors will discover nothing. He (*ogbanje*) can decide to be sick at any time. He can die on a day you think he is most healthy. If he must die by falling from a palm tree, he will fall down the very day someone warns him not to climb. They can be very beautiful or handsome. People tend to love them more. They die when the family and friends will grieve most over their death. You can call it wickedness but they enjoy that. He boasted that he has successfully handled many of such cases although he admitted that such cases have drastically reduced at present. He suggested three ways of stopping *ogbanje* from agonizing the family by coming and going. The first is through divination. *Dibia afa ga-agba afa* (the diviner will seek to find out through the legitimate methods usually adopted). The *dibia* will discover the *iyi-uwu* (A special kind of stone which forms the bond between an *ogbanje* and the spirit world), of *ogbanje*. Once the *iyi-uwu* is discovered and destroyed the *ogbanje* will not die and ‘the cycle’ of his return will cease. The second way is by annoying the *ogbanje* and forcing him or her to think twice before coming back. Lastly, the *dibia* may order that a dead *ogbanje* child be denied of proper burial and to be mutilated and buried in the evil forest.

It can be deduced from the opinions of those interviewed in the above communities that *ogbanje* are completely irresponsible, wicked and wasteful; they keep coming and dying prematurely, causing a lot of grief, pains and disgrace to their families. However, most of the children referred to as *ogbanje* might have died on account of causative factors such as medical pathologies like sickle cell anemia, severe chronic nutritional deficiencies, and some salient systemic disorders which parents are unaware of.

The ancestors on the other hand are honourable, revered and important members of the family. Many of their children and relations would often pray that they should reincarnate through them. Most of those interviewed expressed this similar opinion. Ngene (personal communication, June 9 2015) reported that her first son is an incarnate of her late father. She gave birth to her son two months after her father's death and was named *nna-nna* (father has come back). She believes that her son is a replica of her late father and this brought her and her family great joy and prestige. They sometimes call the son "*nnaa*" (father) to show their affection and respect.

In summary, *ogbanje* (born to die group of people) cannot be regarded as the Igbo belief in the destiny of man. Most times, the assertions made on the reincarnates are mere expression of respect for one's forebears, particularly those who were virtuous. One can identify three things which must be considered as elements affecting the belief in reincarnation among the Igbo people: (a) the acknowledgment of gene factor or heredity; (b) development of culture as a way of life of the people; and (c) and the environmental influences. The character traits are basically hereditary. *Ilo-uwa* or reincarnation is only tenable within the belief system of *ndi Igbo* (the Igbo people). Belief, according to Oxford Dictionary of Psychology (2003), is any proposition that is accepted as true on the basis of inconclusive evidence. It is conviction, faith or confidence in something or someone. On the other hand, the researcher contends that the term *ilo- uwa* in the Igbo philosophy and cosmology can have a scientific explanation based on human nature itself given that the proofs of fact itself are themselves proofs of genetic inheritance. It is on this premise that the author proffers *oyiyi* as the better term to be used in the place of *ilo-uwa* or reincarnation. Nevertheless, the Igbo have created a theology of death by insisting that God is almighty and is the Creator Spirit and that through Him and

never without Him- and the ancestors- death can be defeated through reincarnation. If this is true, it still stands in contradistinction to the Biblical view of history.

CHAPTER FOUR

EXEGETICAL AND THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

4.1 Background

No religion can be said to be adequate until it has tackled the problem of death and man's final destiny. This is true of every society of men as well as the Jewish people. It appears that the best way to approach the ancient Jewish concept of death and immortality which informed the Matthew's writing is to start from the Jewish context of the spiritual anatomy of man. Abogunrin (1991) pointed out that in the Old Testament man is not considered as an immortal soul temporarily inhabiting a mortal body, but rather as a body-soul unity. Of course, the Hebrews could only conceive of man in his totality, as the vital union of body and soul. According to ancient Jewish belief, man is a product of two factors, namely *nepeš* (breath or soul which is the principle of life) and *basher* (body or flesh which is the complex organ that *nepeš* animates). Man may therefore be described as the animated body, but this falls short of a true description of man, since in this regard he is not different from the animal creation (Gen. 2: 19). Genesis 2: 7 says: "Then the LORD God formed man out of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being". Clark (1967) contended that man's distinctiveness is based on the fact that to him alone is imparted the breath of life by the direct activity of God. Although the use of *nepeš* in Genesis 2: 7 denotes a complete being, according to the general understanding of the Old Testament, neither *basher* nor *nepeš* can make a complete man. The separation of both of them means that man ceases to be, in any real sense of personality. Man is a unity of personality, and the dissolution of either the soul or the body means the true end of life. *Nepeš* is closely connected with blood, and the loss of any of them is the tangible mark of a passing away of life. Therefore *nepeš* is spoken of as being breathed out (Gen. 2: 7; 35: 18; 1 Kg. 17: 22). The whole of man's intense emotions and desires are attributed to his *nepeš*. That is, the term is

used inevitably for living self, or as a substitute for a personal pronoun. Similarly, transition is made from a dead body or carcass (Num. 5: 2; 6: 6, 11; Hag. 2. 13).

Man also has a *rūah* (spirit) denoting the invasive power of God. From the time of the exile, there was a tendency to replace *nepeš* with *rūah* as the centre of aspiration and desires. The absence of *rūah* is the loss of life and vitality, and ultimately death (1Kg. 10: 5; Ps. 104: 29). The return of *rūah* means revival (Gen. 45: 27). While *nepeš* refers to the life concretely manifested, *rūah* means the hidden strength of a living person. So, for the Hebrews, there is no distinction between the soul and the body. What lives in the underworld is not just the soul but the whole man. Hence the dead are not called *nepeš* nor *rūah*, but *rephaim*. At death, a shadowy image of man is detached from him. As long as the body exists or at least the bones remain, the essential person still exists like a shade under the condition of extreme weakness (Job 26: 5-6; Isa. 14: 9- 10; Ez. 32: 17- 32). The soul continues to feel the care and honour bestowed on the body.

Israel was introduced to the myth of the dying and rising gods from the time of her conquest. Baal was tied to an endless national cycle of conflict, defeat and victory. This called for the prophetic polemic that Yahweh is not Baal. The realm of the dead was stripped off its power and removed far from the sphere of Israel's religious concern because of its mythical association with divination of nature. Thus the clear concept of resurrection was pushed to a far circumference of Israel's faith. The process of fuller meditation on the fate of the dead could only begin when the prophetic battle had been won, and this victory was not won in a day (Isa. 17: 10f; 63: 3ff; Jer. 7: 18; Ez. 8: 14; Zech. 12: 11). It, however, reached its climax in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The first believers regarded it as a major event which had been foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures. Paul could write that Christ's death and resurrection was according to the Jewish ancient Scriptures (1 Cor. 15: 3) and thus the kerygmatic statement. That Jesus's tomb was discovered empty in Easter morning was the

affirmation of Matthew (Matt. 28: 1- 10). At any rate, the resurrection is not only an event in history but also the basis of believer's resurrection. The bodies of the believers will be raised, transformed and be made like the Lord's resurrection body and with the *parousia* comes the ultimate victory given that Jesus the first man has risen from the dead and this constitutes a token and a pledge that the ultimate age has been inaugurated.

The early believers believed that Jesus was raised bodily and that his earthly body was transformed into a new "glorified body" that was indeed physical but possessed strange new properties. Davis (1993) affirmed that there was continuity between the old body and the new body, but the new body was no longer as bound by certain of the laws of the nature as was the old. In other words, there are both continuity and change between Jesus's pre-resurrected body and post-resurrected body. Hawthorne (1983) noted that Christ's resurrected body is not the exchange of one sort of the body for another; it is that one body becomes or is transformed into another. In fact, the central point in 1 Corinthians 15 is that the bodies of believers will be raised, transformed and made like Jesus' resurrected body. The nature of Christ's resurrection forms the basis of Paul's discussion on the nature of the resurrection of the faithful. Pannenberg (1965) opined that Paul must have had the same mental image of the resurrection of Jesus because he described the resurrection of Jesus and that of Christians to be two completely parallel events. So, when Matthew wrote that Jesus's tomb was empty he was affirming that Jesus was genuinely dead and later genuinely alive, and that his body was transformed into a new body with material continuity between his former body and his new body, but denied that Jesus was restored to the kind of life he experienced earlier.

The Jews could not forget that they were the chosen people of God. To them, that involved the certainty that someday they would arrive at world supremacy. In their early history, they

looked forward to the coming of a king of David's line who would unite the nations and lead them to greatness. A shoot was to come forth from the stump of Jesse (Isa. 11: 1, 11: 10). God would raise up a righteous branch for David (Jer.23: 5). Someday, the people would serve David, their king (Jer.30: 9). David would be their shepherd and their king (Ezek.34: 23, 37: 24). The booth of David would be repaired (Amos 9: 11); out of Bethlehem there would come a ruler who would be great to the ends of the earth (Mic. 5: 2-4).

Neath though it is, the whole history of Israel contradicted these hopes. After the death of Solomon, the kingdom- small enough to begin with- split into two under Rehoboam and Jeroboam, and so lost its unity. The northern kingdom, with its capital at Samaria, vanished in the last quarter of the eighth century BC before the assaults of the Assyrians, never again reappeared in history and is now referred to as the lost ten tribes. The southern kingdom, with its capital at Jerusalem, was reduced to slavery and exile by the Babylonians in the early part of the sixth century BC. It later came under the rule of the Persians, the Greeks and finally the Romans. History for the Jews was a catalogue of disasters from which it became clear that no human deliverer could rescue them.

Jewish thought stubbornly held to the conviction of the chosennes of the Jews but had to adjust itself to the facts of history. It did so by working out a scheme of history. The Jews divided all the time into two ages. There was this present age, which is wholly bad and beyond redemption. For it, there can be nothing but total destruction. The Jews, therefore, waited for the end of things as they are. There was the age which is to come, which was to be wholly good, the golden age of God, in which would be peace, prosperity and righteousness, and the place of God's chosen people would at last be upheld as theirs by right.

How was this present age to become the age which is to come? The Jews believed that the change could never be brought about by human agency and, therefore, looked for the direct intervention of God. He would come striding on to the stage of history to blast this present world out of existence and bring in his golden time. The day of the coming of God was called the day of the Lord and was to be a terrible time of fear, destruction and judgment, which would be the signs of the coming new age.

Thus, the essential part of the Jewish thought of the future is the “day of the Lord”; that day when God is going to intervene directly in history, and when the present age, with all its incurable evil shall be transformed into the age to come. Very naturally, the New Testament writers to a very great extent identified the second coming of Jesus and the day of the Lord. In Jewish thought, both judgment and a new creation are certain. For them, God contemplates the world both in justice and in mercy; and that God’s plan is not the obliteration of the world, but the creation of a world which is nearer to His heart’s desire.

Jesus final discourse answered the disciples’ questions (Matt. 24: 1-3) with an initial didactic section (Matt. 24: 4- 35) followed by exhortations (Matt. 24: 36- 25: 46) on alertness (Matt. 24: 36- 25: 13), trustworthiness (Matt. 25: 14- 30), and compassion (Matt. 25: 31- 46). Jesus first warned His disciples that they will face traumatic yet not terminal circumstances (Matt. 24: 4- 14). These would include messianic pretenders (Matt. 24: 4- 5), warfare (Matt. 24: 6- 7a), famines and earthquakes (Matt. 24: 7b), persecution (Matt. 24: 9), apostasy (Matt. 24: 10), and false prophets (Matt. 24: 11). Their responsibility is not to be misled (Matt. 24: 4), to realize that the end is not yet (Matt. 24: 6), and to persevere in discipleship and mission (Matt. 24: 13- 14). These, “the beginning of birth pains” (Matt. 24: 8) will characterize His coming.

In Matthew 24: 15, the language turns from ominous to grave with the allusion to Daniel's "desolating sacrilege" (Dan. 9: 27; 11: 31; 12: 11). This time of great tribulation is unprecedented and will never be equaled (Matt. 24: 21, 29; cf. Dan. 12: 1; Joel 2: 2; Rev. 7: 14). It is therefore best to take this section (Matt. 24: 15: 28), with its emphasis on Judea (Matt. 24: 16), as envisioning the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, which anticipates the ultimate judgment that ends the present world.

The coming of Jesus to judge humanity after this tribulation is described with standard Biblical apocalyptic imagery in Matthew 24: 29- 31. Jesus used the fig trees as a parabolic image to stress the urgency and certainty of His coming (Matt. 24: 32- 35). At Matthew 24: 36 the tone becomes more paraenetic with the stress shifting from "What will happen?" to "So what?" *That* Jesus will come is certain although *when* He will come is unknowable. Thus Jesus emphasized alertness in the allusion to Noah's time (Matt. 24: 36- 42) and in three parabolic images: a thief in the night (Matt. 24: 43- 44); faithful and evil slaves (Matt, 24: 45- 51); and wise and foolish bridesmaids (Matt. 25: 14- 30). A further parable emphasized faithful use of God's gifts (Matt. 25: 14- 30). The discourse then ended with a vivid portrayal of the last judgment (Matt. 25: 31- 46). Thus, the grim picture of the judgment of the slave (Matt. 25: 30) sets the scene for this account of Jesus coming with his angels (Zech. 14: 5; cf. Matt. 13: 41, 49; 16: 27; 24: 31) as the glorious Son of Man to judge the nations.

4.2 Preliminary Observation

4.2.1 Delimitation of the Text

A proper exegesis of Matthew 25: 31- 46 calls for understanding of the sense of the text. This will be possible if the text could be set out as a unit. This, therefore, calls for the delimitation of the text.

Matthew 25 is divisible into three parts:

1. the Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids (Matt. 25: 1- 13);
2. the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25: 14- 30); and
3. the Last Judgment (Matt. 25: 31- 46).

It could be delimited from its preceding (Matt. 25: 14- 30) and subsequent (Matt. 26: 1- 5) pericopae from the point of view of characters involved, events, theme and presentation.

The characters involved include ο(ui(o\\$, tou= a)nqrw/pou, oi(a&ggeloi, pa/nta ta\ e&qnh, ta\ pro/bata, ο(basileu\\$, a)delfw=n mou.

Jesus has been described as the Son of Man who judges the nations as a shepherd separates a flock. But when He begins to speak here, He is identified as king who determines who will enter His kingdom.

All nations are gathered on His right hand and left just as a shepherd separates sheep from the goats. This implies that the judgment is universal.

The sheep metaphorically represent the righteous while the goats represent the wicked. In the preceding passage (Matt. 25: 14- 30), the characters are the master, faithful and wise servants and the evil servants. The subsequent unit (Matt. 26: 1-5) has Jesus, His disciples, chief priests, the Scribes, elders of the people and Caiaphas as its characters.

Matthew 25: 31- 46 centred on the last judgment. The discourse which began with the disciples' question about Jesus' coming (Matt. 24: 3), ends with His coming to judge all the nations. But the disciples' question was primarily chronological, and this passage deals with the significance of His coming not its timing. This delimits our unit from the preceding pericope (Matt. 25: 14- 30) which stressed the result of alertness and faithful stewardship. It also delimits it from the subsequent (Matt. 26: 1- 5) which is transitional in that it marks the beginning of the passion narrative.

This narrative is one of Matthew's numerous endeavors to mirror the Lord's eschatological elucidations, teachings which border on an approaching eschatological dispensation. A number of features indicate this orientation from the narrative. First is its introductory adverbial expression: %Otan de\ e&lqh| o(ui(o\\$ tou= a)nqrw/pou e)n th=| do/ch| au)tou". To begin with, we see the component of future time o[tan, which is meant to indicate an eschatological consummation. Next, we see the component of a future event e&lqh which is meant to imply first a complete break from the present trend, and accordingly the enunciation of a future dispensation. Next is the component of a future condition e)n th=| do/ch| au)tou, an indication of a condition far removed from that in the present life. Δοξη a declension of δοξα meaning 'glory' implies a condition akin to immortal life as opposed to that in the ethereal mortal life. Thayer (2005) associated it with praise, glory and honour, relating it to another word τιμος meaning "honour". According to Thayer (2005) this word is a translation of the Hebrew *kabod* in a use foreign to Greek writ... splendour, brightness.... of the sun, moon and stars (1 Cor. 15: 40) use of the heavenly brightness by which God was conceived of as surrounded (Lk. 2: 9; Acts 7: 55), and by which heavenly beings were surrounded when they appeared on earth (Lk. 9: 31; Rev.18: 1).

The word *δοξη* is a singular, dative, feminine noun. However, recall that the commonest use of the dative case is to denote the person *to* or *for* whom anything is done, that is, the indirect object. It appears that the Son of man is the passive element in this glory. The glory was given to him by the Father. In other words, during the last judgment believers will be clothed with glory by their Saviour and Lord.

Thus, that the above narrative deals with first, a future time, secondly a future dispensational event, and thirdly a future condition far removed from this mortal life, are a sufficient

indication that the narrative in its totality is unique. The preceding and subsequent texts do not have such unique introduction.

4.2.2 Textual Criticism

The research text, Matt 25: 31-46 has some noticeable textual problems. Resolution of the salient textual difficulties is of absolute necessity in order to probably get to the original message. In v. 32, Nestle Aland reads *sunacqh, sontai*. This is a future tense, 3rd person plural indicative mood, passive voice. Some manuscripts and uncials have *sunacqh, setai* 3rd person singular as alternative reading. This is testified in A W G D f¹ 579. 700. 892. 1241. 1424 *pm*; Eus. Apart from manuscript A, the rest of the manuscripts that have the alternative reading are all later texts whereas the research text is witnessed in much older manuscripts. Again, *sunacqh, sontai* posited a more difficult reading. This is because, in Greek grammar, neuter plural nouns take singular verbs. Thus, since *ta. e; qnh* is a neuter plural noun, it ought to govern *sunacqh, setai* which is a singular verb. It follows therefore that the alternative reading is an attempt to correct a grammatical error in the original text. The researcher therefore settles that the research text is closer to the original on two grounds: ancient nature of the texts with the reading and application of *lectio difficilior*.

V. 33 shows transposition of words. The researcher's text has *auvtou/*. Codex Alexandrinus (a), texts of Vulgate (*vg^{ms}*), A 579 *pc*; Eusebius transposed *auvtewn* for *auvtou/*. This most probably a correction of the text because evidently since *dexiw/n* is in the genitive plural there ought to be agreement between the two words. Thus one can affirm that later texts and translations corrected the original text to maintain grammatical correctness.

V. 39 has a textual difficulty. Some MSS like a A L W 067 ^{f^{1.13}} 33 ũ have avsqenh as an alternative reading to avsqenou/nta contained in our text as also testified in B D Q 0281 *pc*; CL. avsqenou/nta is present active participle masculine while the alternative reading is in feminine. Judging the fact that other manuscripts that toe the same line as the text that the researcher is using are all later manuscripts and the fact that it makes for easier reading, we take it to imply that there was a willful attempt to correct the original text.

In v.40 some manuscripts and uncials like (45) B* 0128*. 1424 ff¹ ff²; Cl^{pt} Eus GrNy omitted tw/n avdelfw/n mou. The researcher judges it a careful omission since the sentence is fully meaningful with e`ni. tou,twn tw/n avdelfw/n thereby avoiding the problem of limiting good deeds to one's brothers.

There are other textual problems but the researcher limited this paper necessarily to only the very salient ones.

4.2.3 Presentation of a Working Translation

The Greek Text: Matt 25:31-46

31 {Otan de. e;lqh| o` ui`o.j tou/ avnqrw,pou evn th/| do,xh| auvtou/ kai. pa,ntej oi` a;ggeloi metV auvtou/(to,te kaqi,sei evpi. qro,nou do,xhj auvtou/\

32 kai. sunacqh,sontai e;mprosqen auvtou/ pa,nta ta. e;qnh(kai. avfori,sei auvtou.j avpV avllh,lwn(w[sper o` poimh.n avfori,zei ta. pro,bata avpo. tw/n evri,fwn(

33 kai. sth,sei ta. me.n pro,bata evk dexiw/n auvtou/(ta. de. evri,fia evx euvwnu,mwnÅ

34 to,te evrei/ o` basileu.j toi/j evk dexiw/n auvtou/(Deu/te
oi` euvloghme,noi tou/ patro,j mou(klhronomh,sate th.n
h`toimasme,nhn u`mi/n basilei,an avpo. katabolh/j ko,smouÅ

35 evpei,nasa ga.r kai. evdw,kate, moi fagei/n(evdi,yhsa kai.
evpoti,sate, me(xe,noj h;mhn kai. sunhga,gete, me(

36 gumno.j kai. perieba,lete, me(hvsqe,nhsa kai.
evpeske,yasqe, me(evn fulakh/| h;mhn kai. h;lqate pro,j meÅ

37 to,te avpokriqh,sontai auvtw/| oi` di,kai oi le,gontej(
Ku,rie(po,te se ei;domen peinw/nta kai. evqre,yamen(h'
diyw/nta kai. evpoti,samenÈ

38 po,te de, se ei;domen xe,non kai. sunhga,gomen(h' gumno.n
kai. perieba,lomenÈ

39 po,te de, se ei;domen avsqenou/nta h' evn fulakh/| kai.
h;lqomen pro,j seÈ

40 kai. avpokriqei.j o` basileu.j evrei/ auvtou/j(VAmh.n le,gw
u`mi/n(evfV o[son evpoi h,sate e`ni. tou,twn tw/n avdelfw/n
mou tw/n evlaci,stwn(evmoi. evpoi h,sateÅ

41 To,te evrei/ kai. toi/j evx euvwnu,mwn(Poreu,esqe avpV
evmou/ îoi`Ð kathrame,noi eivj to. pu/r to. aivw,nion to.
h`toimasme,non tw/| diabo,lw| kai. toi/j avgge,loi j auvtou/Å

42 evpei,nasa ga.r kai. ouv k evdw,kate, moi fagei/n(evdi,yhsa
kai. ouv k evpoti,sate, me(

43 xe,noj h;mhn kai. ouv sunhga,gete, me(gumno.j kai. ouv
perieba,lete, me(avsqenh.j kai. evn fulakh/| kai. ouv k
evpeske,yasqe, meÅ

44 to,te avpokriqh,sontai kai. auvtou. le,gontej(Ku,rie(po,te
se ei;domen peinw/nta h' diyw/nta h' xe,non h' gumno.n h'
avsqenh/ h' evn fulakh/| kai. ouv dihkonh,same,n soiÈ

45 to,te avpokriqh, setai auvtoi/j le, gwn(VAmh.n le, gw u`mi/n(evfV o[son ouvkh evpoihsate e`ni. tou, tw n tw/n evlaci, stwn(ouvde. evmoi. evpoihsate

46 kai. avpeleu, sontai ou-toi eivj ko, lasin aivw, nion(oi` de. di, kaioi eivj zwh.n aivw, nion

Working Translation

31 "Now when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.

32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.

33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;

36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?

38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You?

39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'

40 And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

41 "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:

42 For I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink;

43 I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'

44 "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?'

45 Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'

46 And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

4.3 Syntactical Analysis

31 {Otan de. e;lqh| o` ui`o.j tou/ avnqrw,pou evn th/| do,xh| auvtou/ kai. pa,ntej oi` a;ggeloi metV auvtou/(to,te kaqi,sei evpi. qro,nou do,xhj auvtou/\

31 "Now when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne.

{Otan: Gk. subord. conjuc. meaning 'whenever' or 'when'. It is described as subordinating because its usage deals with linking words as dependent ideas. Jesus is speaking of a time that is not known to his followers and of which is futuristic.

de.: this also is another Gk. coordinating conj. that links words as parallel ideas. It could be seen as a continuative too, e.g. and, then.

e;lqh: From e;rcomai. Gk. vb. subj. aor. act. in the 3rd pers. sg. This is not a mood of doubtful assertion in that His coming is purposive. It has to do with His glorious return for judgment. The verb e;lqh is translated as "will come" which implies definitive and certainty. Besides, by its aorist nature, it is a punctiliar (or point) tense. In other words, "when the Son of Man shall come in His glory", it will be a one-time event and will never be repetitive.

οὐ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου- noun. nom. masc. sg. meaning “son” and ἀνθρώπου- noun. gen. masc. sg. meaning “man”; οὐ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (the son of man) was Jesus’ self-chosen title. The tradition is quite consistent that the title occurs exclusively on His lips. In explicating His nature, Jesus used this appellation with its meaning in Daniel and fused it with the Suffering Servant motifs of Isaiah. For Richardson (1958), “The bold new teaching about the Son of man, that is, a Messiah who should suffer, was the original work of Jesus himself, and no other plausible suggestion has ever been put forward” (p. 136).

ἐν τῇ δόξῃ αὐτοῦ- noun. dat. fem. sg. translated as “glory”; ἐν- Gk. prep. dat. used to show relationship to the vb. or other words in the sentence; αὐτοῦ- noun, pro. gen. masc. 3rd. pers. sg. in this context it is translated as “his”. He does not define ἐν τῇ δόξῃ αὐτοῦ (in his glory), but clearly he means that when he returns at the end of this age he will come in majesty and splendor.

πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι μετ’ αὐτοῦ- Adj. nom. masc. pl. translated as “all”; ἄγγελοι- noun. nom. masc. pl. translated as angels; μετ’- prep. gen. used in this context as “with”; πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι μετ’ αὐτοῦ is therefore translated “all the angels with him”. “All”? Yes, the whole heavenly world will also be present at this spectacle- world history’s consummation, examination and judgment.

καθίσει- Vb. indic. fut. act. 3rd pers. sg. It is in the third person singular future from the root verb καθίσει, ζω translated in this verse as “He shall sit”. When the Son of Man comes for the purpose of judgment, He will take His seat or sit down with authority on the throne of His glory. This is a statement of fact.

qro,nou: Gk. Masc. noun. gen. sg. meaning “throne of”, by implication referring to the power of or seat of. In other words, to,te kaqi,sei evpi. qro,nou do,xhj auvtou (then He will sit on the throne of His glory) commands power and authority. “In his glory... on his glorious throne” (literally, “on his throne of glory”). Matthew used the word “glory” as if to say, ‘You want glory?– The Return of the Son of Man for judgment, there is glory!’ The human heart craves the glorious. The epitome of glory will occur at the world’s End. “His glory...his... throne”. The doubled “his” deifies the Son of Man, as does his sitting on the throne. Marguerat (1981) opined that there can be no doubt that our text transfers the authority of God to the coming Son of Man, since glory, angels, and the throne are all God’s exclusive accoutrements; yet here they are emphatically the Son of Man’s. The text is reminiscent of Daniel 7: 13 which also posits the Son of Man seated on his throne for judgment. This underscores the eschatological nuances of the text.

32 kai. sunacqh,sontai e;mprosqen auvtou/ pa,nta ta. e;qnh(kai. avfori,sei auvtou.j avpV avllh,lwn(w[sper o` poimh.n avfori,zei ta. pro,bata avpo. tw/n evri,fwn(

32 All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate them as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

pa,nta ta. e;qnh: e;qnh- Noun. acc. neut. pl. meaning “nations”; pa,nta- adj. nom. neut. pl. translated as “all”; therefore pa,nta ta. e;qnh is translated as “all the nations”. Harrington (1991) argued that pa,nta ta. e;qnh means all the Gentile nations, excluding the Jews, but the notion of separate judgments for Jews and Gentiles is doubtful. Garland (1993) also argues that pa,nta ta. e;qnh does not include Jesus’ disciples, who are not being judged here but stand with Jesus. However, it seems that the

helpful action of the sheep/righteous in the passage demonstrates that they are Jesus' disciples. It is therefore, best to give $\text{pa, nta ta. e; qnh}$ an unrestricted meaning.

sunacqh, sontai : Gk. vb. indic. fut.pass. 3rd. pers. pl. translated as "will be gathered". It is derived from the root verb suna, gw which means "assemble", "gather together". "All the nations will be gathered before him" makes it clear that Jesus' final judgment is universal.

e;mprosqen : Prep. gen. Some authors straightly described this as improper prepositions because originally prepositions were derived from adverbs, consequently there are some prepositions that functions as adverbs and as well as prepositions. This results in some authors expressly referring to them as adverbial prepositions. The preposition is translated as "before", "in front of" or "in the presence of" as it uses a genitive object. We are to envisage all human beings of all time assembled in one place before Him. It is the most significant mass meeting of all time.

avfori, sei : Gk. vb. indic. fut. act. 3rd. pers. sg. translated as "he will separate". The root verb is avforizw denoting to set boundary of; separate, set apart, to exclude etc. Two ominous verbs of separation now play counterpoint to the numinous nouns of glory immediately preceding. It appears to be the Great Divorce. At the end of history waits not a glorious unification of all things (as in Ephesians and Colosians), but, in Jesus' teaching particularly, an awful separation of all persons.

w[spen : Conj. subord. It is a subordinating conjunction in the comparative meaning "just as", "even as" denoting exactly like.

poimh. n : Gk. noun. nom. masc. sg. meaning "a Shepherd".

ta. pro, bata : Noun. acc. neut. pl. it is the direct object of the verb.

avfori,zei: vb. indic. pres. act. 3rd pers. sg. avfori,zw (fut. avforiw and avfori,sw) separate, take away, exclude (from one's company) set apart.

evri,fwn: Gk. masc. noun. gen. plural meaning "goats"; it is in the genitive as a result of the preposition avpo. which the noun is the direct object.

Jesus takes illustration from pastoral processes and says separation will be like when the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats (cf. Ezek. 34: 17). In other words, Jesus is referring to well-known pastoral practice. His hearers would be well aware of separation into two sharply different groups. He gives no explanation as to why these names are chosen for the groups, but it emerges that those called "sheep" are those who receive a favorable judgment and those called "goats" are those regarded unfavorably.

33 kai. sth,sei ta. me.n pro,bata evk dexiw/n auvtou/(ta. de. evri,fia evx euvwnu,mwn

33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

sth,sei: Vb. indic. fut. act. 3rd. pers. sg. meaning "he will set".

me.n: A post positive conjunction that is not usually translated but gives an indication that

de. in the second clause of the sentence should be translated as a contrast.

dexiw/n: Gk. adj. neut. gen. pl. translated in the passage as "right hands". This is used substantially in this context.

de.: A post positive conj. used as a contrast meaning "but".

evri,fia: The neut. noun "goats"; this noun appears in the acc. pl. which have been previously used in the gen.

euwnu, mwn: Neut. adj. gen. pl. meaning “left” (hands).

To be at the ruler’s right hand was to be in the place of highest honor the ruler could give. The “left” was thought of as the side of ill omen, so it is the appropriate place for the less favoured “goats”.

34 to,te evrei/ o` basileu.j toi/j evk dexiw/n auvtou/(Deu/te oi` euvloghme, noi tou/ patro,j mou(klhronomh,sate th.n h`toimasme, nhn u`mi/n basilei,an avpo. katabolh/j ko,smouÅ

34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

evrei/: Fut. of “he says”; act. indic. vb. 3rd pers. sg. fut. translated as “he shall say”.

basileu.j: The masc. nom. sg. noun 3rd pers. declension, meaning “King”.

deu/te: vb. impv. aor. 2nd pers. pl. It is plural of deu/ro translated as “come!” mostly as hort. particle.

euvloghme, noi: Vb. particle. pf. pass. voc. masc. 2nd pers. pl. It is perfect because the action is concluded, but the results of the actions are still in existence. It is a passive because the subject is receiving the action and as a participle, the verb is declinable in voice and mood. The verb is translated here as “You blessed”.

patro,j: Masc. sg. gen. noun of the 3rd declension meaning “father”.

klhronomh,sate: vb. imp.aor. act. 2nd pers. pl. The verb is in the second person plural aorist active imperative mood. That is the subject would carry out the action that has been

commanded. It is derived from *klhronome, w* “inherit”. This verb draws attention to a significant aspect of their salvation. Morris (1992) noted that *klhronome, w* is used three times in Matthew, and eighteen times in the New Testament. For him, it is the normal word for inheriting possessions (e.g., Gal. 4: 30; MM gives examples of this use from the papyri); and that it also can be used of secure possession in general and among the Jews especially of a place in the messianic kingdom. Something that is inherited comes to one as a gift, not as the result of one’s own earnings, and that may be why the word is used of the life of the world to come. Dalman (1902) categorically stated that “To possess one’s self of the future age is a very popular Jewish expression, whose use from the end of the first century onwards can be demonstrated” (p. 125). For him the use was congenial to Christians, all the more so since their heavenly possessions came to them as the result of a death, the atoning death of their Saviour.

h`toimasme, nhn: vb. ptc. pf. pass. acc. fem. sg. Derived from *e`toima, zw* meaning “prepare”, “make ready” or “get everything ready”.

u`mi/n: 2nd pers. personal pron. in dat. pl. translated as “for you”.

basilei, an: A fem. noun of the 1st declension in acc. sg. meaning “Kingdom”.

katabolh/j: Gk. fem. sg. noun in the gen. case meaning “foundation”. The kingdom they will inherit is no afterthought, but one “prepared for you from the foundation of the world”. This strong expression brings out the truth that this has always been in the plan of God. Jesus is not speaking of some afterthought, but of what God had always planned to bring about, and that will come to its consummation at the end of the age. He leaves the sheep in no doubt but that they are entering into a glorious destiny. This should not be overlooked when we come to consider the words commending those who go into the

kingdom. This passage is often interpreted as though those on the King's right merited their salvation, yet here we have the kingdom prepared for them by God before ever they were born. We should not miss the implication that they are God's elect. Hendriksen (1973) corroborated with this view when he said, "Before the good deeds of these 'sheep' are mentioned (verses 35, 36) emphasis is first of all placed on the fact that the basis of their salvation, hence also of these good deeds, is their having chosen from eternity" (p. 888).

κο, σμου: 2nd declension masc. sg. noun in the gen. case meaning "world".

35 εὑπει, νασα γα.ρ και. εὑδω, κате, μοι φαγει/ν(εὑδι, γησα και. εὑποτι, σατε, με(ξε, νοj η;μην και. σὺνηγα, γετε, με(

35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;

εὑπει, νασα: vb. indic. aor. act. 1st pers. sg. The root verb is *πεινα,ω* "to hunger" or "to be hungry".

γα, ρ: Gk. coordinating conj. that is explanatory of the reason for the action meaning "forth". Jesus commended "the sheep" for their good deeds. We should not understand this in the sense these good works have earned them their salvation; grace is as important throughout this Gospel as anywhere in the New Testament. Jesus is not saying that these are people whose good lives have earned them salvation as their right. He is saying that God has blessed them and brought them into His kingdom and He proceeds to cite evidence that shows that they do in fact belong to that kingdom. Their lives are evidence that God has been at work in them. Hamann (1984) upheld this view when he wrote:

I can say: 'It has rained *for* the atmospheric conditions were right for rain', or 'It has rained *for* the streets were wet'. The 'for' in one case gives the reason for the rain, and in the other case, the evidence for it. It is in the second sense that the for of verse

35 must be understood. The Judge points to the work of verses 35 and 36- He might have mentioned other works as well- as evidence for the position assigned to the sheep (p. 256).

evdw, kate, : vb. indic. aor. act. 2nd pers. pl. Translated as “you gave”. The root verb is di, dwmi which means “to give”.

moi: personal pronoun in the first person singular dative meaning “to me” also translated as mine.

fagei/n: vb. inf. Aor. act. from the root verb εφαγωω (I ate). Here, it is used as a verbal noun meaning “meat”.

evdi, yhsa: Another first person singular active indicative verb in the aorist tense, translated as “I was thirsty”.

evpoti, sate: Vb. indic. aor. act. 2nd pers. pl. meaning “you gave drink”.

me: A personal pronoun in accusative singular meaning “me”.

xe, noj: A masculine noun in the singular nominative meaning “stranger”.

h; mhn: The verb “To be” in the imperfect middle voice in the first person singular meaning “I was”.

sunhga, gete: Gk. vb. indic. aor. act. 2nd pers. pl. The verb is translated as “You took in”; from the root verb “suna, gw” with the idea of convening, gathering together, taking in.

36 gumno, j kai. perieba, lete, me(hvsqe, nhsa kai.
evpeske, yasqe, me(evn fulakh/| h; mhn kai. h; lqate pro, j meÅ

36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

gumno, j: Adj. nom. masc. sg. meaning “naked”.

perieba, lete, : Gk. vb. indic. aor. act. 2nd. pers. pl. meaning “You clothed”.

hvsqe, nhsa: Vb. indic. aor. act. 1st. pers. sg. meaning “I was sick”.

evpeske, yasqe, : Vb. indic. aor. mid. Dep. 2nd. pers. pl. “You visited”.

fulakh/: Noun. dat. fem. sg. translated as “prison”.

h; lqete: Gk. vb. aor. act. 2nd. pers. pl. translated as “you came”.

37 to, te avpokriqh, sontai auvtw/| oi` di, kai oi le, gontej (Ku, rie(po, te se ei; domen peinw/nta kai. evqre, yamen(h' diyw/nta kai. evpoti, samenÈ

37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?

avpokriqh, sontai: Vb. indic. fut. pass. dep. 3rd. pers. pl. translated as “ they will answer”.

auvtw/|: Noun. pro. Dat. masc. 3rd. pers. pl. meaning “to him”. In fact it is in dative because it a direct object to avpokriqh, sontai, this verb usually takes a dative object.

di, kai oi: Adj. masc. nom. pl. meaning “righteous”.

le, gontej: Vb. pct. pres. act. nom. masc. pl. Greek participles are verbal adjectives that are declinable. This verb is translated as “saying”.

ei; domen: Vb. indic. aor. act. 1st. pers. pl. meaning “we saw”.

evqre, yamen: Vb. indic. aor. 1st. pl. meaning “ we fed”.

diyw/nta: Vb. pct. pres. act. acc. masc. 2nd. pers. sg. meaning “ thirsty”.

evpoti, samen: Vb. indic. aor. act. 1st. pers. pl. translated as “ we drank”.

38 po, te de, se ei; domen xe, non kai. sunhga, gomen(h' gumno.n kai. perieba, lomenÈ

38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You?

39 po, te de, se ei; domen avsqenou/nta h' evn fulakh/| kai. h; lqomen pro, j seÈ

39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'

40 kai. avpokriqei.j o` basileu.j evrei/ auttoi/j(VAmh.n le,gw u`mi/n(evfv o[son evpoi,h,sate e`ni. tou,twn tw/n avdelfw/n mou tw/n evlaci,stwn(evmoi. evpoi,h,sate

40 And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

avpokriqei.j: Vb. ptc. aor. pass. dep. nom. masc. sg. "he will answer".

evpoi,h,sate: Gk. vb. indic. aor. act. 2nd. pers. pl. translated as "you have done".

evlaci,stwn: Adj. superl. gen. masc. pl. "least".

41 To,te evrei/ kai. toi/j evx euvwnu,mwn(Poreu,esqe avpV evmou/ Îoi`Ð kathrame,noi eivj to. pu/r to. aivw,nion to. h`toimasme,non tw/| diabo,lw| kai. toi/j avgge,loi,j auttou/

41 "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:

euvwnu,mwn: Adj. pro. Gen. neut. pl. translated as "left hand".

Poreu,esqe: Gk. vb. pres. mid. or pass. dep. 2nd. pers. pl. translated as "Depart".

kathrame,noi: Gk. vb. ptc. perf. pass. voc. masc. 2nd. pers. pl. translated as "ye cursed".

The perfect tense shows it is an occurrence resulting from an action. The subject here is receiving the action because it is expressed in the passive voice. As a participle, it is a declinable verbal adjective.

pu/r: Another neuter noun in the accusative singular meaning "fire".

h`toimasme,non: This is also a perfect passive participle in the neuter singular accusative; translated as "prepared".

diabo, lw|: Adj. pro. dat. masc. sg. singular meaning “devil”

46 kai. avpeleu, sontai ou-toi eivj ko, lasin aivw, nion(oi` de. di, kai oi eivj zwh.n aivw, nion

46 And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

avpeleu, sontai: Greek verb third person plural in the future middle voice of the indicative mood; translated as “they shall go away”.

ko, lasin: A feminine noun in the singular accusative, meaning “punishment”.

aivw, nion: An adjective in the feminine singular accusative, meaning “ eternal”.

(NB) Some verses were not touched because the verbs in them had already been parsed.

4.4 Semantic Analysis of the Text

Matthew 25: 31- 33 presented the setting of this passage. The gloomy picture of the judgment of the lazy slave in Matthew 25: 30 sets the scene for this account of Jesus’s coming with his angels (Zech. 14: 5; cf. Matt. 13: 41, 49; 16: 27; 24: 31) as the glorious Son of Man to judge the nations. An added detail is the mention of his sitting on his glorious throne (Matt. 19: 28; cf. Matt. 5: 34; 23: 22; Luke 1: 32; Rev. 3: 21). Waltke and O’Connor (1990) held that the expression *ἐπὶ θρόνου δόξης αὐτοῦ* is an instance of attributive genitive, analogous to construct state in Biblical Hebrew. Wallace (1996) and Zerwick (1963) observed that *δόξης* functions adjectively with the head noun *θρόνου*. This judgment is universal: all nations are gathered on his right and left, just as shepherd separates sheep from goats (Matt. 13: 41, 49; Ezek. 34: 17- 22). Harrington (1991) argued that “all nations” mean all the gentile nations, excluding the Jews, but the notion of separate judgment for the Jews and Gentiles is doubtful. Garland (1993) argued that *πάντα τὰ ἔθνη* does not include Jesus’s disciples who are not being judged here but stand with Jesus. But it seems that the helpful action of the sheep/ righteous in the passage demonstrates that they are Jesus’s disciples. It is best to give *πάντα*

τὰ ἔθνη an unrestricted meaning. Wallace (1996) pointed out that the Greek **Matthew 25:32** οὐ ποιμήν is an instance of the generic article, which describes shepherds as a class rather than an individual shepherd.

In this context (unlike in Matt. 20: 23), the right hand is the place of honour (Matt. 22: 44; 26: 64; cf. 1 Kings 2: 19), and the left hand is the place of shame (cf. Matt. 6: 3; 27: 38; 1 Kings 22: 19). This “judgment” is not like a trial, containing suspense about the verdict, but is like a post trial hearing where the sentence is pronounced (cf. John 5: 22, 27; 2 Cor. 5: 10). In view of other passages, it is fitting for sheep to stand for genuine followers of Jesus (cf. Matt. 9: 36; 10: 6, 16; 15: 24; 18: 12; 26: 31; cf. 2 Sam. 24: 17; Jer. 23: 3- 4; Ezek. 34: 6; John 10: 1). Sheep were probably more valuable to peasants than goats because of their wool. Turner (2008) noted that this passage differs from other judgment scenes because it evidently assumes, rather than mentions a resurrection (cf. Acts 17: 31; Rom. 14: 10- 12; 1Cor. 15: 51- 57; 2 Cor. 5: 10; Rev. 20: 11- 15).

Matthew 25: 34- 40 deals with the king and the sheep that have been described as the Son of Man, who judges the nations as a shepherd separates a flock. But when he begins to speak here, he is identified as a king (Matt. 2: 2; 21: 5; 27: 11, 29, 37, 42) who determines who will enter his kingdom. Jesus first told the sheep on his right hand that they whom the Father has blessed (Matthew 5: 3- 12) will inherit (Matt. 5: 5; 19: 29) the kingdom because they helped him when he was hungry (Matt. 14: 16; 15: 32), thirsty (Matt. 10: 42, away from home (Gen.18: 1- 8; Job 31: 32; Heb. 13: 2; 1Tim. 5: 10), naked (Rom. 8: 35; 1 Cor. 4: 11; 2 Cor. 11: 27), sick (Sir.7: 35), and imprisoned (Matt.10: 18- 19; Ps. 69: 33; Heb. 10: 34; 13: 3). Cuvillier (2001) noted that when the righteous (Matt. Matt. 10: 41 13: 43, 49) profess ignorance of this merciful ministry (cf. Job 22: 6- 7), he told them that they did it for his little brothers and sisters. Turner (2008) remarked that the righteous are amazed because they did not realize that these six acts of ministry to Jesus’ suffering people would be regarded as

ministry to him (Matt. 10: 40; cf. 1 Cor. 4: 8- 13; 2 Cor. 6: 1- 10). This is the central basis of judgment in this passage (cf. Prov. 19: 17). God's preparation of the kingdom for the blessed ones here contrasts with the preparation of eternal fire for the devil and his angels in Matthew 25: 41 (cf. Matt. 20: 23; 22: 4; Rom. 9: 23).

Matthew 25: 41- 45 is symmetrically repetitive of Matthew 25: 34- 40 except that those on the king's left must depart into eternal fire (Matt. 7: 23; 18: 8; cf. Ps. 6: 8; Isa. 30: 33; Rev. 18: 20; 20: 10) because they did not help Jesus when he was in need (cf. Luke 16: 19- 31). They too are amazed at the basis of the judgment. Theirs is a catastrophic sin of omission. The horrifying words "Depart from me" (*poreu/esqe a)p' e)mou=, poreúesthe ap' emouí*) are similar to the strong statements in Matthew 4: 10 and Matthew 16: 23. It is noteworthy, against a fatalistic view of eternal punishment, that the eternal fire (Matt. 3: 12; 13: 42, 50; 18:8- 9) is not prepared for those on the king's left but for the devil and his angels, who are evidently the demons (Matt. 4: 24; 8: 16, 28- 34; 9: 32- 34; 12: 22- 29, 43- 45; 15: 22; cf. 2 Cor. 12: 7; Jude 6; Rev. 12: 7, 9). Also unlike the kingdom in Matthew 25: 34, the place of eternal fire is not said to be prepared from the creation of the world.

The summary in Matthew 25: 46 recapitulated the judgment of those on the right and on the left. The order of the previous narrative (right then left) is inverted here. Those on the left go to eternal punishment (Matt. 25: 41), and those on the right to eternal life (Matt. 25: 34; cf. Matt. 19: 16, 29; cf. Dan.12: 2; John 5: 28- 29). The unique gravity of this judgment is stressed by the repetition of the word "eternal", and the inversion of the narrative order results in stressing the bliss of those who in faith have obeyed the Golden Rule (Matt. 7: 12; 19: 19; 22: 39; Lev. 19: 18).

This passage speaks clearly on the most awesome matter: world history's consummation, examination and judgment. The juxtaposition of eternal life and eternal punishment in

Matthew 25: 46 renders the notion of reincarnation not of comparison, but of contrast. The blessed will experience unspeakable joy in God's presence forever; and the cursed will experience unspeakable horror in separation from God. Matthew's description of the destiny of the lost utilizes two metaphors, fire (Matt.3: 12; 13: 40, 50; 18: 8- 9; 25: 41, 46; cf. 2 Thess. 1: 18; 2 Pet. 3: 7; Jude 7; Rev. 14: 10; 19: 20; 20: 10, 14- 15; 21: 8) and deep darkness (Matt. 8: 12; 22: 13; 25: 30; cf. 2 Pet. 2: 4; Jude 6, 13). The eternally excruciating experience of hell is unspeakably worse than these two metaphors portraying it.

Turner (2008) noted that the interpretation of Matthew 25: 31- 46 is earnestly debated in an extensive body of literature. Gray (1989) equally noted thirty- two different interpretation of the passage. But, Ladd (cited in Longenecker and Tenney, 1974) pointed out that three are most commonly encountered.

Barclay (1975); Beare (1981); Boring (1985); Catchpole (1979); Christian (1975); Cranfield (1994) and Davies and Allison (1997) took the parable as a description of the final judgment, which will be based only on our treatment of our needy fellows. This view appears to stress social consciousness and Jesus' love command. It takes Jesus' "least of these" as anyone in need and makes salvation depend on one's efforts to help such. Some scholars who hold this view such as Boring (1995) and Brunner (1990) are rather sensitive to the fact that it is not distinctively Christian and attempt to place it in a Christian context. Others like Beare (1981) have no qualms but that it makes salvation depend on good works. Turner (2008) pointed out that the strength of this view is its ability to handle the sheep's surprise when they learn they have been helping Jesus. However, for Turner, the identification of Jesus's "brothers" (and sisters) as everyone, in need is not tenable in the light of Matthew's use of this word elsewhere. Keener (1999) expressed the opinion that the view is "exegetically compelling even though it would on the other grounds be entirely consonant with Jesus tradition" (pp.

604- 5). For the researcher, there is no doubt that Jesus modelled and elsewhere taught the necessity of helping all who were needy, but this particular passage appears not to be part of that teaching. Besides, witnessing to needy is the activity of the community of believers.

A second view sees this passage as the judgment of the nations that survive the future eschatological tribulation. Barbieri (cited in Walvoord and Zuck, 1983); Toussaint (1980) and Walvoord (1974) were of the opinion that the basis of judgment is how nations have treated the Jews during their persecution by the antichrist. The strength of this view appears to be its grasp of the necessary connection in Matthew and elsewhere in New Testament, between faith and works. However, Matthew's use of the term "brother" does not permit the identification of Jesus's "least of these" as Jews per se.

As does the first view, the third view takes the passage as depicting the final judgment of all humanity, but it disagrees on the identity of the needy in the parable, taking them either as Christians in general or Christian missionaries in particular. In this view, the faith of individual members is tested by their treatment of the community that embodies and extends the message of Jesus. The sheep are those whose faith is demonstrated by works that help needy fellow believers; the goats are those whose lack of such helpful works demonstrates they are not true followers of Jesus, whether they profess to be so or not. The researcher adopts this view. This is because it is the view most widely held throughout the Church's history. Turner (2008) underscored that the strength of this view lies in its understanding of Jesus' needy disciples in the Matthean context rather than in a modern context that emphasize the brotherhood of all humans. Blornberg (1992) noted that one supposed weakness of the view is that it does not account for the surprise of the sheep at their inheritance of the kingdom, but the sheep are not so much surprised that they enter the kingdom as they are surprised that their service to destitute strugglers was actually service to Jesus himself.

Turner (2008) remarked that the identity of “the least of my brothers and sisters” is the watershed of the entire discussion. In Matthew a brother (*adelphos*) is a sibling, either biologically (Matt. 1: 2, 11; 4: 18, 21; 12: 46- 47; 13: 55; 14: 3; 17: 1) or spiritual brothers (and sisters) are fellow disciples, siblings in the community/ family of those who follow Jesus (Matt. 5: 22- 24, 47; 7: 3- 5; 12: 48- 50; 18: 15, 21, 35; 23: 8). A related term in Matthew is “little ones” (*hoi mikroi*, Matt. 42; 18: 16; cf. 11: 11), whose repentance renders them humble disciples who no longer seek worldly power and status. One dare not cause the spiritual ruin of these little ones (Matt. 18: 16), and genuine forgiveness must occur if one of them sins against the other (Matt. 18: 21, 35). In Jesus’ radically egalitarian community, it appears that status and prestige are out of place given that all his disciples are siblings in the same family (Matt. 20: 20- 28; 23: 8- 10). When this community/ family goes out in mission, it will encounter the most severe difficulties and will need help to endure its hardships. This help will come from those who are receptive to the message embodied and proclaimed by the community, who will be rewarded (Matt. 10: 40- 42).

Matthew 25: 31- 46 portrays the occasion of this reward. At the final judgment, helping “the least of my brothers and sisters” is tantamount to helping Jesus himself (Matt. 25: 40, 45; cf. Matt. 10: 40; 18: 5; Prov. 19: 17; Luke 10: 16; John 13: 20 Gal. 4: 14). The word “least” (*elachistos*) was used as the superlative of *mikros* (BADG 314), and in Matthew 25: 40, 45 it repeats and intensifies the parallel expression in Matthew 10: 42, which uses *mikros*. The usage of *elachistos* elsewhere in Matthew illumines the teaching that Jesus’s disciples are those of little earthly significance but great heavenly significance. Bethlehem is not really “least” among Judean villages when its significance in God’s plan is considered (Matt. 2: 6). Even the least of God’s commandments has eternal significance (Matt. 5: 19). Similarly, the real significance of Jesus’ disciples may now be masked by their lack of the basic necessities, but final judgment will reveal that their troubles are in reality the troubles of Jesus. Their

identification with him and mission for him has put them in such dire straits, and his reward will unveil their true status as they inherit the kingdom of God.

Manek (cited in Lindars and Smalley, 1973) and Michaels (1965), remarked that itinerant preachers especially need the kind of support described in Matthew 25: 35- 36 (cf. Matt. 10: 40; 3 John 5- 8), but it is doubtful that they alone hold this view. All of Jesus's disciples are identified with him and persecuted because of their connection with him (Matt. 5: 11; 10: 18, 22, 25; 23: 34). The privation of Jesus' little brothers and sisters in Matthew 25: 35- 36 is due to their testimony for him. When one shows mercy to a follower of Jesus, in a profound sense one is showing mercy to Jesus himself.

The author is of the opinion that the argument for a restrictive meaning of Jesus' little siblings in Matthew 25: 40, 45 must be balanced by the fact that in Matthew Jesus modeled and taught his disciples to love and help all people, even their enemies (Matt. 5: 47; cf. 4: 23- 24; 5: 7; 9: 13; 12: 7; 14: 14- 21). Be it as it may, there is still a special love for one's fellow disciples, and a particular task to meet their needs (cf. Gal. 6: 10).

At the very crux of these varied interpretations of the text lies the chronic New Testament ambivalence on the procedure or qualification for the *σωτηρια*, an issue which came to the forefront even at the point of determining which books were to be granted canonical authority in the New Testament. It was the argument as to whether salvation (*σωτηρια*) was an issue for purely faith (*πιστις*) or purely works (*ἔργον*, *ἔργασια* or in some cases *πραγμα* which means deeds as in James 3: 16 or *πραξις* as in Matthew 16: 28, or purely works or in some cases. Paul had engaged in a long disputation with the Jews who in any case had been the foundation disciples of Jesus and had sought to bring in the liturgical elements from their Judasitic background into the new faith. But Paul, perhaps had the exclusive advantage of being more lettered. He wrote some of the earliest New Testament documents while the

others were still engrossed in the urgent expectation of the *παρουσία*. So, as is evident from the New Testament content, the Pauline party won the dispute, and salvation (*σωτηρία*) had to be an issue of faith (*πίστις*) alone, as a gift of grace (*χάρις*). This was obviously strange to the background from which the Jewish worshippers came. Paul's argument was indeed eloquent:

th/| ga.r ca,riti, evste sesw|sme,noi dia. pi,stewj\ kai.
 tou/to ouvk evx u`mw/n(qeou/ to. dw/ron\ouvk evx e;rgwn(i[na
 mh, tij kauch,shtai (Eph.2: 8,9).

In the context of the theological disputation between Paul and the Jews of the Judastic background, the sense of this insistence can be appreciated. Judaism is a religion of liturgical rituals and observances. These Jews have learnt to hold firmly to these liturgical and ritualistic observances in the sense that their salvation (*σωτηρία*) firmly depended on it. God had commended these ritual observances within the context of His relationship with the people, in the sense that the relationship depended on those observances. However, a few times in the text, one would observe assertions to the effect that even those commended liturgical and ritualistic observances did not please God: “For thou desirest not sacrifices, were I to offer them; thou has no delight in burnt sacrifices” (Ps. 51: 16), a text which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews broadly elucidated upon to show as it were, that although God commended those observances, it was not for their face value but as a prelude to understanding and then moving into more intimate relationship built upon trust and faith. This again is an issue that Paul holds onto in order to make a clean break between the new faith and the liturgical and ritualistic systems of Judaism. So, in fact, when the apostle Paul used the word, *ἔργων* he referred to all external works undertaken as a means of earning salvation (*σωτηρία*).

James on the other extreme represented the Jewish liturgical ritualistic party, and did not mince words in asserting that faith (*πίστις*) the internal conviction, if it is not backed up by

visible evidence on the outside (*ἔργων*) might in fact be assumed to be altogether absent: “Οὕτως και ἡ πιστις, ἐαν μη ἔχη ἔργα νεκρα εστιν κατ’ ἐαυτην” (James 2: 17). James here nailed the issue with a critical finality. He took Paul’s *πιστις* and made the external *ἔργα* its living spirit, without which Paul’s *πιστις* is altogether dead (*νεκρα*). Here, James used the most virulent word to drive home his conviction on the dispute. Very clearly, James led this side off the divide and has no doubt attracted clients to it. Paul being the offensive element on the other side of the divide has rather fewer echoes of support that can be discerned in the New Testament, except perhaps for the volumes of his writings and the tilt towards them in the canonization.

So, very clearly, one of James’ converts to his side of divide is Matthew. Matthew’s *εκκλησια* becomes a living working assembly strongly devoted to the tenets of Jewish liturgical and ritualistic observances. Matthew’s *σωτηρια* becomes one to be earned by the *ἔργα*. And Matthew’s eschatological judgment is to be based strictly on the *ἔργων*. Matthew summarized his position thus: “Ζητετε δε πρωτον την βασιλειαν (του θεου) και την δικαιοσυνη αὐτου, και ταυτα παντα προστεθησεται ὑμιν” (Matt. 6: 33).

Note Matthew’s *δε πρωτον*, an emphasis of place; what is to be sought, pursued and diligently and vigorously aspired to, according to Matthew’s Jesus, is *την βασιλειαν (του θεου)* (textual variation here) *και την δικαιοσυνη αὐτου*. For Vine (1996) *δικαιοσυνη* is:

The character or quality of being right or just; it was formerly spelled “righteousness” which clearly expresses the meaning. It is used to denote attribute of God. It is found in the sayings of the Lord Jesus of whatever is right or just in itself, whatever conforms to the revealed will of God. *Δικαιοσυνη* has been appointed by God to be acknowledged and obeyed by man; the sum total of the requirement of God; religious duties distinguished as

armsgiving, man's duty to his neighbour, prayer, his duty to God, fasting, the duty of self-control (p. 535).

Thus, from Vine's insight, Matthew's *δικαιοσύνη* is not in the abstract sense of Paul's *πίστις* translating into *σωτηρία*, but in the sense of physical, practical religious duties and liturgical and ritualistic observances.

Thus, in the text under consideration, Matthew's Jesus, Master (*Κυριος*) judges the world eschatologically by the practical *δικαιοσύνη*, which is derived from moral duties of charity, by which as it were, *σωτηρία* is vigorously earned. Matthew's *σωτηρία* is not an issue to be settled at the abstract, non-measurable levels of Pauline *πίστις*, which according to James reduced to a mere hypocritical attitude to the needs of the brethren in the house. Instead, it is an issue that bears directly on the measurable indices of religious duties and observances, summarized as *δικαιοσύνη*. Thus, the highest way to understand Matthew's *δικαιοσύνη* is in the sense of of "works of righteousness", *ἔργα την δικαιοσύνη*, which in itself forms theological posture on one side of the New Testament ideological divide headed by no less a personality than James himself, the leader of the emerging congregation. Gleanings from the Dead Sea Scrolls Book of War would reveal the level of tension that existed between these groups, or how in fact the believers of the Quaram Community reacted to the raging storm of theological disputation.

4.5 Hermeneutical Application of the Text

History provides us with concrete examples of the divine judgment to which all men and peoples are subject. At the time of the Exodus, God "judged Egypt" which means that He punished the oppressor of Israel whom He wished to set free (Gen. 15: 14). The chastisements of Israel in the desert, as a tangible evidence of God's wrath, are all judicial sentences against an unfaithful people. The annihilation of the Canaanites during the conquest is another example which demonstrated both the severity and moderation of the

divine judgment. An investigation of past history showed a decision of the divine judge at the root of all the catastrophes which descend upon a sinful race; this is true of the destruction of Sodom (Gen. 18: 20; 19: 13), of the deluge (Gen.6: 13), of original sin (Gen. 3: 14-19). Hence, the judgment of God constitutes a permanent threat that hung over the head of mankind, not only in the world to come but also in the present history.

The coming into the world or simply put, the birth of Jesus Christ is a fact of history. His crucifixion, demise, resurrection and ascension are equally historic. Apostle Matthew now told us that He will come again in the glory of His Father. This coming is purposed – world history’s consummation, examination and judgment. Bruner (1990) noted that the Last Judgment paints a picture of a general truth that all human beings will one day come before “the bar of history” (p. 568). While that day is uncertain, the signs that will precede that day are not mistaken. The signs include manifestation of many false Christs or Messiahs, wars and rumours of wars, nation rising against nation, kingdom rising against kingdom, famines and earthquakes, manifestation of false prophets, multiplication of wickedness, great apostasy and mission (Matt. 24: 3ff). It is an open secret that most of those signs are with us. For instance, the Messianic pretender Bar Kokhba led a second Jewish revolt against Rome that ended in 135 A.D with the total banishing of all Jews from Jerusalem. Bruner (1990) noted that another kind of false messiah is described by Josephus who wrote of the six thousand refugees who died in the flames of burning temple in the first Jewish war, AD 70, seduced on the false messiah, who had on that day announced to the people in the city of Jerusalem that God commanded them to go to the Temple to receive the signs of their salvation. False messiahs continue to arise in more recent times. For Matthew’s Jesus these are heralds of the end though the end is sure – and that end is His universal kingship resulting from His last judgment.

This conserves the fact that history is going somewhere. Sometimes people have felt that history was plunging to wilder and wilder chaos that it is nothing more than the record of human sins and follies. Sometimes, people have felt that history was cyclic and that the same weary round of things would happen over and over again. The Stoics believed that there are certain fixed periods, that at the end of each the world is destroyed in a great conflagration; and that then the same story in every tiny detail takes place all over again. Stoic philosopher, Chrysippus (cited in Barclay, 2009) had it:

Then again the world is restored anew in a precisely similar arrangement as before. The stars again move in their orbits, each performing its revolution in the former period, without any variation. Socrates and Plato and each individual man will live again, with the same friends and fellow-citizens. They will go through the same experiences and the same activities. Every city and village and field will be restored, just as it was. And this restoration of the universe takes place, not once, but over and over again- indeed to all eternity, without end (p. 365).

This is a grim thought that human beings are bound to an eternal treadmill in which there is no progress and from which there is no escape. But the coming of Jesus has in it this essential fact – there is one divine far- off event, to which the whole creation moves, and that event is not dissolution but universal and eternal rule of God. The last judgment is to usher in this event.

Therefore, Hagner (1995) cogently observed that “The final section of eschatological discourse ends fittingly in a great judgment scene” (p. 704). Eschatology appears in each of Jesus’s first four discourses especially at or near their conclusions (Matt.7: 22; 10: 32, 39- 42; 13: 49; 18: 35), and so it is not surprising that Jesus ends all his teachings (Matt. 26: 1) in Matthew with eschatology. His teachings equip disciples with ethics befitting his reign (Matt.

5- 7), with warnings about the opposition to ministry (Matt. 10), with awareness of the mixed response to kingdom message (Matt. 13), with values for the kingdom community (Matt. 18), and with perspective on the future that handles both the unknowable date and the prospect of delay in Jesus's coming (Matt. 24- 25). Turner (2008) remarked that this vigilant perspective does not veer off into frivolous enthusiasm, on one side, or into cold apathy, on the other. For him, its hallmark is faithful stewardship (Matt. 25: 14- 30) exercised in helping those in need, especially one's fellow believers (Matt. 25: 31- 46). In other words, the anticipation of judgment to come should motivate people into a life of faithful stewardship.

Barclay (2009) pointed out that given that God will judge us according to our reactions to human need, it must not only be help in simple things but it must be help which is uncalculating. Things which Jesus picks out- giving a hungry person a meal, or a thirsty person a drink, welcoming a stranger, cheering the sick, visiting the prisoner- are things which anyone can do. It is not a question of giving away huge sums of money, or writing one's name in the annals of history; it is a case of giving simple help to the people we meet every day.

Those who helped did not think that they were helping Christ and thus piling up eternal merit; they helped because they could not stop themselves. It was the natural, instinctive, quite uncalculating reaction of the loving heart. Whereas, on the other hand, the attitude of those who failed to help was: if we had known it was you we would gladly have helped; but we thought it was only some insignificant person who was not worth helping. It is still true that there are those who will help if they are given praise and thanks and publicity; but to help like that is not to help; it is to pander to self-esteem. Such help is not generosity; it is disguised selfishness. The help which wins the approval of God is that which is given for nothing but for the sake of helping.

Jesus confronts us with the wonderful truth that all such help given is given to himself; in contrast, all such help withheld is withheld from himself. How can that be? If one really wishes to bring delight to those who are parents, if one really wishes to move them to gratitude, the best way one can do it may be to help their children. God is the great Father, and the way to delight the heart of God may be to help His children, our fellow men and women. Every person we meet is dying for a drop of love. Basic help for each person's need is what Jesus sings here. Jesus deflects his disciples' goals one last time from great plans for personal success and redirects them to little deeds in other people's service.

When the Son of Man will come in His glory, it will be a one-time event and will never be repetitive. The body of the believers will be raised, transformed, and be made like that of the Lord's resurrected body. There will be continuity between the the old and the new body. However, like the old body, the new body will not be subjected to certain laws of nature. His coming is purposive- the final judgment of the whole race. Bruner (1990) noted that the Last Judgment paints a picture of a general truth that all human beings will one day come before "the bar of history" (p. 568). Indeed, there will be a great divorce. People will no longer make decisions; the time for human decisions is over; decisions are made for them, decisions that determine their destinies for ever. Jesus's depiction of the Last Judgement began with two glories in Matthew 25: 31; it ends with two eternities- one of punishment, the other of life. Heaven and hell do not have equal status in the purpose of God. The kingdom has always been God's goal for His people (Matt. 25: 34); hell was "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25: 43), and if people go there it is because they have rejected their true destiny. Contrary to the cyclical view of history, the kingdom of God is the goal of history; and in the Last Judgment, evil will be destroyed forever. When this happens, what then happens to reincarnation? So, in the light of Matthew's Final Judgment, the belief in reincarnation stands in sharp contrast. It is the linear, sequential view of history, the Christian

viewpoint shown in the Bible that culminates in eschatological judgment and the final determination of the ultimate destiny of man, as shown in the narrative under consideration in Matthew 25: 31- 46.

CHAPTER FIVE

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MATTHEAN ESCHATOLOGY AND IGBO VIEW OF AFTERLIFE

5.1 Similarities Between Last Judgment and Reincarnation

The Supreme God and the Matthean God is not merely a power but a Person. The Igbo name for the Supreme God is Chukwu, perhaps a combination of *chi* (spirit) and *ukwu* (great), or more precisely, *chi-ukwu* (great God). Other names are: *Chineke* (God who creates), God of grace, the great God who has the power, God who controls life, He that makes and controls the world. God both in Igbo traditional belief and Matthean and Biblical concept is not merely a power but a Person. He has a personal name and many attribute names. He is the fountain of life. Generally speaking, however, God is neither human nor an ancestor. He is believed to be judge, ruler of morals, and the final tribunal before whom man must appear after death.

Concepts such as love, forgiveness and justice only have meaning within the concept of personality; in fact, morality of any kind can only be measured in personal terms. If there were no people to experience injustice, suffering and cruelty, moral categories would be emptied of their meaning. And only with a proper understanding of a personal God is an ultimate reference point for questions of morality found. We cannot appeal to impersonal God for justice; a personality is required to form opinions and to render judgments.

Moreover, in Igbo anthropology man is a unity of personality. The living dead are thus regarded as persons and not souls. In the same vein, resurrected individuals in Matthean eschatology are not souls but spiritual beings or persons. They are not disembodied souls but unity of personalities.

Again, both in the last judgment and reincarnation the righteous and the wicked do not share the same fate. In the last judgment, the righteous go to heaven where there are peace, joy, rest and every good thing while the wicked are sent to hell, where there are torments, pains, gnashing of teeth and all manners of suffering. In the same vein, the good ones in Igbo concept of reincarnation are admitted into the abode of the ancestors where there is peace, joy, rest and from where they can reincarnate while the wicked are sent to the boundary between the spirit world and the world of humans (*agbata mmuo na mmadu*) where they wander aimlessly, restlessly, and from where they attack the living.

Furthermore, the last judgment and Igbo notion of reincarnation deal with the issue of eternal histories of man. They proffer their own unique solutions to the problem of evil. To this extent, the last judgment and Igbo version of reincarnation agree.

5.2 Differences Between Last Judgment and Reincarnation

Reincarnationists frequently object to the Biblical theme of judgment and to the teaching that ungodly and the wicked will be banned from the kingdom of God, insisting that a loving God could do no such thing. The Igbo Traditional religion sees God basically as a loving God and judgment and punishment of evil are left at the mercy of the cult of the ancestors who are believed to be very close to him or to humans who are living. But would a God who did not react against evil be morally perfect? Would such a God be truly good? Imagine a society where laws are not enforced. Thievery, murder, rape and violence would go unpunished; society would break down into anarchy. Survival of the fittest would be the only recourse, and the weak and the helpless would suffer continually at the hands of the strong, the cunning and the ruthless.

Only God's judgment provides us with an ultimate sense of justice. Leon Morris (cited in Packer, 1973) summarized this well:

The doctrine of final judgment...stresses man's accountability and the certainty that justice will finally triumph over all the wrongs which are part and parcel of life here and now. The Christian view of judgment means that history moves to a goal. Judgment protects the idea of the triumph of God and of good. It is unthinkable that the present conflict between good and evil should last throughout eternity. Judgment means that evil will be disposed of authoritatively, decisively, finally. Judgment means that in the end God's will, will be perfectly done (p. 130).

The Biblical truths of judgment and condemnation of the wicked must be considered forthrightly, for they are consistent themes throughout Scripture. The Bible teaches that God is, among other things, perfect, changeless, absolutely good and righteous, unspeakably holy, and completely sovereign over His creation. Hence, God has strong opinions and feelings about evil, suffering and unrighteousness. If He did not, we would have grounds for questioning His moral character. God cannot let evil pass. He must deal with it, for while He is loving and merciful; He is also just.

Thus God could justly obliterate all sinful and ungodly people in an instance, destroying them forever or punishing them brutally with a single word of command. But this would be inconsistent with His love and mercy. What God has chosen instead is to give all of us a chance to repent. And the basis and condition for that repentance is staggering- God chose to absorb the penalty for sin Himself by becoming human and offering up the very incarnation of Himself as payment for the penalty of our evil. This, of course, is what the crucifixion of Jesus Christ is all about. God sealed the facts of His victorious love and forgiveness when

Christ rose from the dead. This love and forgiveness is available to all who will acknowledge and receive it. “We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. “For our sake, He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5: 20-21).

Yet there are many who will not respond to God’s appeal in Christ. The Scriptures plainly stated that these will be judged at the Great White Throne in the Final Judgment (Rev. 20: 11-15). No one will be condemned unless one has freely rejected God’s offer of mercy and forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, divine judgment understood in the light of the redemption offered in Christ does not raise moral problems; it settles them. God’s judgment will be totally just. No one can accuse God of living in an ivory tower and not having empathy or understanding for the human condition. He experienced the full range of problems associated with the human predicament for thirty-three years, and He even knew a slow and agonizing death at the hands of His persecutors. When God renders the final judgment, even the condemned will agree with the verdict. His justice is perfect, and all will concur that they have been justly tried and sentenced, for God knows all things, including the hidden thoughts and intentions of each person’s heart (Heb. 4: 12). Thus, the need for justice, in accord with the nature of God, is met in the offering of God on the cross, and judgment is based on each person’s response to God’s offer of mercy and forgiveness.

Furthermore, the last judgment means that history moves to a goal. The goal of history is the kingdom of God. Thus, a linear sequential view of history, such as is shown in the Matthean narrative under consideration, stands in contrast to the circular view of history consisting of successive births, deaths, and rebirths as explained in the Igbo worldview. This endless cycle of births, deaths and rebirths, with slight occasional slants, which excludes “growing

spiritually towards or like God, though some may act as intermediaries between men and God and may have power and knowledge than human beings” is rather what is held in Igbo traditional belief.

Natural justice demands that inculpable conditions of life should not deprive one of one’s legitimately deserved reward or merit. There is a kind of ambivalence in the notion of justice vis-a-vis the Igbo idea of reincarnation. The belief establishes a spiritual justice applicable unprejudicially to all, whether the powerless or the mighty, under a changeless condition of spotless life, founding lineages, ripe old, and proper burial; but these conditions are not within the reach of the poor, the invalid and those who die young. While this belief has the merit of encouraging moral progress and social achievements, it does need a better understanding of justice. The radical implication is that the poor and the invalid may never have the chance of becoming an ancestor and thus have a remote chance for *ilo-uwa*.

On the other hand, it is evident in the Matthean last judgment that justice demands equity and fair play. Every Tom, Dick and Harry, irrespective of colour, race, age, tongue and tribe is given equal chance of participating in the last judgment. It is all-inclusive. There is no exemption. Nobody is considered as a sacred cow. Given that justice insists that evils which either defied or eluded the courts of men shall finally be called to account and treated as they deserved. It is only an infinite God that can perceive without error the interwoven lines of responsibility, the multiple vectors of influence, and the shades of motive and intention that comprise the moral fabric of human life. In the scales of divine judgment will be placed- endowment and opportunity; deception and innocence; malice and simplicity; pretence and sincerity. All the threads must be unravelled and all the knots untied. Moreover, the spreading consequences of evil deeds that keep unfolding from generation to generation must converge in a single point of ultimate finality. Such evil must be contained in finiteness and not be

permitted to expand infinitely. To cap it all, everybody shall be given his/her due recompense whether old or young, invalid or normal, wicked or righteous.

Furthermore, in Igbo concept of reincarnation, it is clear that what reincarnates is not the personhood of the ancestor but an aspect of self. This is why it is sometimes considered as “partial reincarnation”. Sometimes, it is construed to mean “perpetuation of ancestors through reproduction”, “life-giving will”, “vital influence”, “secretion of vital force”; or “personality traits personified”. This, therefore, necessitates another body to express itself. Of course, an aspect of self can never be a complete self. It cannot assume the prerogatives of a complete personality. It negates the concept of personal identity and promotes symbiotic association of personalities.

On the contrary, the last judgment is concerned with the whole nature of man. It is not an aspect of man that survives death but the whole nature of man. Soul without self is not a complete self. A complete self is necessary for personality identity otherwise one may be dealing with a mistaken identity. The same person who lived and died is the same person who would face judgment and no other. For instance, Okeke would not live and die in this world and in the world to come only an aspect of Okeke would appear before the judgment seat. This is rather unthinkable. The last judgment pictures man in his unity of personality. It is concerned with the holistic nature of man- soul, body and spirit; and not an integral part of him; and to insist otherwise, is to distort reality. Besides, it may be true that certain memories or characteristics of ancestry may be stored in our chromosomes and DNA structure; each person may also be a combination of all the ancestors who have preceded him. There is nowhere in the Matthean thinking whereby hereditary personality traits are personified and are given the status of personhood or whereby “being” (a living creature) is confused with “force” (a physical action). The Matthean perception of man remains ideal and the same both

in life, death and final judgment. It abhors any symbiotic association of personalities inherent in reincarnation.

Furthermore, in the last judgment Christians will possess bodies that are not only new but will also possess higher powers than the ones they had before in their earthly lives. Their bodies will not only be transformed but will also be glorious. Resurrected individuals are not the causal elements that bring about transformation. They are rather the passive elements. Their transformed and glorious bodies are the direct activity of God. These bodies are no longer subjugated to earthly limitations. Although they are changed when they die, yet they remain the same. The new bodies have that material continuity with the old ones. The only thing now is nothing other than that they seemed to belong to a different order of reality. This is not so in the Igbo belief in reincarnation where the ancestors are the active agents in reincarnation and where the reincarnated individuals still undergo earthly limitations as in the days of the past.

Again, in Igbo traditional religion, admittance into ancestral cults is based on good works, befitting burial and the verdict of the ancestors. It is therefore a religion of “works of the law” centred on the imperfect judgment of created beings. On the other hand, Matthean gospel is the gospel of good works that result from the grace of God. It is good news of a God who is gracious to undeserving sinners. In grace, He gave His Son to die for mankind. In grace, He calls us to Himself. In grace, He justifies us when we believe. “All is of God”, as Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5: 18, meaning that “all is of grace”. Nothing is due to our efforts, merits or works; everything in salvation is due to the grace of God. In other words, in Matthean eschatology, judgment is by the Lord Jesus Christ who is the only perfect Judge and admittance into heaven is faith in Jesus Christ that manifests in good works.

Compared to the Matthean last judgment, the Igbo reincarnation never solves the problem of evil; evil is not conquered by man forever. The idea of evil continuing forever is unthinkable in Christianity owing to the last judgment. Evil was conquered by the death and resurrection of Christ and will be put away forever when He returns to judge the world as we see it in the Matthean eschatology. Besides, in the Matthean eschatology, God is at the centre; He is worshipped while in reincarnation theology, He is reduced to anthropology, making humanity the measure of all things.

Moreover, reincarnation has to do with individual destinies whereas the last judgment has to do with destinies of all the people. In the last judgment we are to envisage all human beings of all time assembled in one place; it must be a staggering sight, the most significant mass meeting of all time. At this end of history from Matthean perspective awaits not only a glorious unification of all things but also an awful separation of all persons. This is not what is obtainable in Igbo cosmological notion of reincarnation.

In the last judgment, there is continuity between the resurrected body and the old body unlike the reincarnated ancestors who are reborn in new bodies which only resemble the ones inside the grave. For instance, the fact of the resurrection is not a return of Jesus to physical earthly life, but an event in which Jesus passed from earthly, mortal existence, into the realm of immortality and glorification. His body was not left in the grave. He will also, not die again. Those who resurrect at the close of the age will also die no more, just as Christ dies no more. However, the Igbo people believe that the incarnate, that is, the ancestor who returned into the world will die again.

Furthermore, the most distinctive proofs of *ilo-uwa* or reincarnation are based on visible or sensible resemblance; the reappearance of marks on the body, the 'relacking' of a lacking part of the body, the facial and physical resemblance, the vocal and oratorical resemblance

and all other resemblances. This is anchored on resemblance theory. This is not so obtainable in the last judgment where personal identity is not negated.

Finally, in Igbo eschatology, there is no end of the world, no resurrection, no last judgment as we see it in Matthean eschatology.

5.3 Correlation Between Reincarnation and the Last Judgment

According to Barlow and Durand (2005), “Correlation is the degree to which two variables increase or decrease together; in a negative correlation, one variable decreases as the other variable increases” (p. 104). The relationship between reincarnation and the last judgment is rather negative, and non-perfect. The index of relationship between the two can present some left to right downward trend.

In the understanding of Igbo people, reincarnation is a belief in the indestructibility of the human personality. It shows clearly the lack in Igbo any anthropology of any form of dualism. There are atonement, mercy and forgiveness. The wicked and the righteous do not share the same destiny.

Resurrection is a one-time event into an ultimate and perfect immortal state that precede the last judgment whereas reincarnation is a many-times occurrence into imperfect moral states. Whereas Eastern concept of reincarnation cannot be grafted into Christianity in that it presents a systematic alternative to resurrection, Igbo concept of reincarnation can. The Igbo cosmological notion of reincarnation can be considered as a knowledge of the destiny of man in the bud whereas the Christian teachings on the last judgment can be considered as the knowledge of the destiny of man in full blossom.

5.4 Theological Implications for Christian Ministry

Eastern concept of reincarnation presents a systematic alternative to resurrection. The Igbo idea of reincarnation is an attempt to explain a reality to which the doctrine of resurrection of the dead for Christian is the only answer. Traditionally, the Igbo recognize the existence of the Supreme Being. For the Igbo, God is the ultimate power who brings about reincarnation, and without Him, there can be no reincarnation. This absolute faith in God is laudable. Apart from the Jewish religion, one can hardly find a people whose God has such attributes as found in the names which the Igbo have for their *Chukwu* (God). There is no doubt that God, as the Igbo religion claims, can cause a dead person to return to life through birth. That God has the power to do a thing is not to say that He has done it or will do it. The belief in the almighty power of God in Igbo religion is in consonant with the teaching of Scripture and Tradition. But, this is not all there is to the God of Christian religion. On the contrary, God is Three but One, and One but Three. This notion is not part of Igbo religion. One can then say that the understanding of God in Igbo religion is not the same with the understanding of God in the New Testament. Igbo notion of reincarnation presupposes the existence of God understood as *Chukwu* and not the existence of God understood as Trinity- Three Persons in One substance.

Resurrection of the dead then is the working of the Trinity. Significantly, the resurrection of the dead is one of the events of the end of time and history. It points to the mystery of the coming of the Kingdom (Mk.1: 15; Matt. 6: 10; Lk. 11: 2) when God will be all in all (1 Cor. 15: 28). The non-existence of this basic factor in Igbo religion and consequently in the idea of reincarnation calls for radical evangelism; man will be raised by God through the merits of the paschal mystery of Christ in the Holy Spirit.

The Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the dead takes the bodily dimension of the risen state seriously. Reincarnation presupposes the bodily reality not exactly in the sense it is believed in the Christian doctrine. The difference is that instead of this bodily reality being awaited at the resurrection of the dead, the Igbo religion teaches that it can also be assured through reincarnation. Properly conceived, the bodily reality of the resurrection should act as a key towards an inculturated teaching for the Igbo on the resurrection. The Church teaches that the resurrected body will be real and recognizable. The reappearance of marks and signs on the body are some of the proofs of reincarnation. The Igbo can easily be led to understand that at the resurrection each person will be identified, and the dead ancestors will be recognizable, and the marks or signs will be present. Thus, what the Igbo find in nature are facts but the interpretation from a Christian perspective is wrong. They find reappearance of marks and signs and resemblance of characters and qualities of a deceased person in a child and find parallels between the two. There are facts which no one can deny. However, the interpretation and conclusions which they present as answers for the signs, marks and characters follow from the logic of Igbo religion, and thus, the conclusion that the very deceased person is reincarnated in the child.

In Igbo religion, there is no personal identity in the reincarnated person. The Igbo do not see personal identity as necessary. The resurrection of dead restores the inalienable integrity of man after death. For the Igbo, reincarnation proposes a “resemblance theory” based on some “marks on the body” or “behavioural patterns” or “physical appearance” or the like. Dialogue can begin with Igbo anthropology which sees man as a unity and thus must always be considered in his integrity. From this perspective, true identity can be assured when God raises the dead at the *eschaton*. Christian anthropology can act as the point of departure in this dialogue and meet that of the Igbo.

Igbo religion accords a special place to the ancestors. For the Igbo, ancestors are saints. They are symbols of good life and material achievement. Their authority is not disputed and extends beyond the living. When a child is born, it is a common practice to consult a diviner to ascertain the ancestor who has been reincarnated. During naming ceremony, the child must take the name of the reincarnated ancestor unless there is no confirmation of the reincarnated ancestor. So, a presentation of Christ as the Ancestor of all ancestors may likely appeal to the Igbo mind (Lk. 3: 23- 38). At any rate, Christ must be seen as the universal Ancestor and not a tribal one. If for the Igbo the “holy dead” join the community of the “saints” or “ancestors”, and if all who die with Christ and in Christ join the communion of the saints in heaven where Christ is the head of the family, then the ancestral sainthood can be seen and understood from a Christological point of view. In this sense, Christ is not just one of the ancestors, He is the Ancestor, in the same way He is the Resurrection and not just one of those who take part in resurrection. As the first fruit of God’s salvation, He has opened once and for all the eternal heaven which Adam had closed. As the first harvest of God’s creation, He has justified His own by virtue of His glorious resurrection. He is the resurrection (Jn. 11: 25). In Him, therefore, the final stages of time are inaugurated (cf. 1 Cor. 10: 11). A believer is already living in his resurrection in Christ, who is not just the giver of resurrection but Himself the resurrection.

Again, if sainthood is explained from the point of view of the ancestral saints, it is likely to seize the imagination of the Igbo faster. In certain areas, priests should oblige to allow the parents to give their children the local names of their choice. This creates an enabling environment for inculturation. Still, an official list of local names which does not contain any idea of reincarnation may be required. Given that the Church stresses that baptism is incorporation into the Christian community, and that it confers rights and duties, and if the ancestors are ‘like saints’, and if by taking a saint’s name there exists a special relationship

between the two parties, then it will not be unreasonable to develop a baptismal catechism adapted for the naming ceremonies. In this case, the priest can be invited during the naming ceremony during which time he may ratify the name sacramentally through baptism.

It is not surprising that the most startling characteristic of the first Christian preaching is its emphasis on the resurrection. The first preachers were sure that Christ had risen, and sure, in consequence, that believers would in due course rise also. This sets them off from all the other teachers of the ancient world. There are resurrections elsewhere, but none of them is like that of Christ. They are mostly mythological tales connected with the change of the season and the annual miracle of spring. The Gospels tell of an individual who truly died but overcame death by rising again. And if it is also true that Christ's resurrection bears no resemblance to anything in unbelieving world, it is also true that the attitude of believers to their own resurrection, the corollary of their Lord's, is radically different from anything in the heathen world. Nothing is more characteristic of even the best thought of the day than its hopelessness in the face of death. Clearly, the resurrection is of the very first importance for the Christian faith.

The Christian idea of resurrection is to be distinguished from both Greek and Jewish ideas. The Greeks thought of the body as a hindrance to true life and they looked for the time when the soul would free from shackles. They conceived of lifeafter in terms of the immortality of the soul, but they firmly rejected all ideas of resurrection (cf. the mockery of Paul's preaching in Acts 17: 32). The Jews were firmly persuaded of the values of the body, and thought these would not be lost. They thus looked for the body to be raised. But they thought it would be exactly the same body. The Igbo have no concept of resurrection and like the Jews they place high premium on the values of the body. The Christians thought of the body as being raised,

but also transformed so as to be a suitable vehicle for the very different life of the age to come (1 Cor. 15: 42ff). The Christian idea is thus distinct.

Not only did Jesus rise, but one day all men too will rise. Jesus refuted the scepticism of the Sadducees on this point with an interesting argument from the Scripture (Mt. 22: 31-32). The general NT position is that the resurrection of Christ carries with it the resurrection of believers. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live" (Jn. 11: 25). Several times, He spoke of raising believers up at the last day (Jn. 6: 39-40. 44:54). The Sadducees were grieved because the apostles were "proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 4: 2). Paul told us that, "As by a man came death, by a man came also the resurrection of the dead (Thes. 4: 14). For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15: 21f; cf. 1Thess. 4: 14). Likewise Peter said, "We have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1: 3). It is plain enough that N.T. writers did not think of Christ's resurrection as an isolated phenomenon. It was a great divine act, and one fraught with consequences for men. Because God raised Christ He sets His seal on the atoning work wrought out on the cross. He demonstrated His divine power in the face of sin and death, and at the same time His will to save men. Thus, the resurrection of believers follows immediately from that of their Saviour. So characteristic of them is resurrection that Jesus could speak of them as "sons of God, being sons of the resurrection" (Lk. 20: 36). The Christian hope for life beyond death is not based on the belief that part of man survives death. All men, through their descent from Adam, are naturally mortal. Immortality is the gift of God, which will be attained through the resurrection of the whole person.

This does not mean that all who rise to blessing. Jesus spoke of "the resurrection of life" but also of "the resurrection of the judgment" (Jn. 5: 29). Unlike reincarnation, the plain N. T.

teaching is that all will rise, but that those who have rejected Christ will find the resurrection a serious matter indeed. For believers, the fact that their resurrection is connected with that of the Lord transforms the situation. In the light of His atoning work for them they face resurrection with calmness and joy.

The NT insists on the prospect of divine judgment as besides death, the single unavoidable fact of a man's future: "It is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment" (Heb. 9: 27). This fact expresses the holiness of the Biblical God, whose moral will must prevail, and before whom all responsible creatures must therefore in the end be judged obedient or rebellious. When God's will finally prevails at the coming of Christ, there must be a separation between the finally obedient and the finally rebellious, so that the Kingdom of God will include the one and exclude the other forever. No such final judgment occurs within history, while God in His forbearance gives all men time to repent (Acts 17: 30f; Rom. 2: 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9). But at the end the truth of every man's position before God must come to light.

This truth in all its intents and purposes has a universal implication. So, for about two centuries, it appears that Africa has always been at the receiving end instead of making its own peculiar contributions. Hence, the Church in Africa is today facing many serious challenges threatening her very existence. She is being called upon to justify her continued existence in Africa. While God exists totally free from culture, human beings are totally immersed in culture. But God from the beginning has used human culture as the milieu to reveal Himself to mankind. In communicating His revelation to man, God has often submitted to cultural limitations because human beings cannot comprehend truth outside their own cultural understanding. Therefore, God has always revealed Himself in terms of human language and culture. African religion and culture which shaped the lives of our fathers have continued to exert great influence on life in Africa. It therefore means that Biblical

interpretation in Africa must take cognizance of this particular spiritual, cultural and intellectual milieu. In order to achieve a dream society of justice and fairness, and eternal bliss in the hereafter, a proper theological repositioning of Igbo cosmological thought would entail the most urgent task in the interpretation of the Bible in such a way that the Word will become incarnate as it were, once again in the language and life of the Igbo people. This is because Western interpretation of the Scriptures itself has become too weak to meet the challenges of the Western world as well as those of Africa and other parts of the Third World. African Biblical scholars and those who are familiar with the life situation in Africa may have to see it as a felt need to come to the Scripture afresh to discover answers to the problems of our time and age on our continent.

Any viable Christian theology in Africa must have a Biblical basis and this sound Biblical basis can only be provided by Africans who can combine Africanness with sound Biblical scholarship. These are Biblical scholars who are living and practising in Africa in order to make the Word become incarnate in the life of and through the peoples of this continent. As long as African exegetes keep the Bible close to their ears, hearts and minds, their interpretation will be viable, relevant and a lasting service, not only to the Church in Africa, but also to the Catholic Church. These exegetes will present the Biblical message to Africans in the perspective of their worldview. This is the only way that Christ the Eternal Word can once again, as it were, become incarnate in the culture, life and thought of Africa.

5.5 An Igbo Christian in a Maze of Matthean and Igbo Perceptions of Reality

The way people see reality can be termed their worldview. In other words, a worldview is the way people see or perceive the world, the way they know it to be. What men see is in part what is there. It is partly who they are. But, these combine to form one's reality, one's worldview.

In the first place, an Igbo Christian is born and reared into Igbo culture. He is enculturated, to use the term of the anthropologists. By this process culture is made to be uniquely his own—the cultural reality of Igbo people becomes his reality over a period of time. As the Church carries out her evangelistic campaigns among nations, she encounters different cultures and becomes involved in the process of enculturation. Man is the subject in this encounter, and in this respect, an Igboman. The Gospel and culture now meet in Igboman and whatever the resultant effect happens to be, proves the usefulness or futility of this meeting. As it is, the linear, sequential notion of life as portrayed in the Matthean eschatology has to collide with the Igbo cyclical view of history as represented in the notion of reincarnation. Consequently, following this encounter, the Igbo Christian experiences a split personality. However, the Gospel is expected to be an agent of liberation from alienation and divided personality. It is expected to be an agent of integration and unification of personality. Resulting from an Igbo Christian experience, the converse appears to be the case.

P. O. Ezeanya (personal communication, June 2 2016) narrated how an Igbo Bishop at the middle of his sermon burst out to his congregation: “In fact, *n’ uwam ozo mmabukwa onye ojii* (in my next world I will not be a black man). This is the crux of the matter. The man is fundamentally cyclic in thought, although in his utter consciousness he preaches eschatological, sequential notions of life. If this man, irrespective of his position, learning, experience and exposure lives in the two worlds, would one expect an average Igbo Christian to lead less?

Moreover, here is an Igbo Christian whose aged father on his death bed assures him that he is going to come back. The Christian goes on to give birth to a son who bears the same birth marks that were seen on his dead father, and perhaps with other identifiable qualities peculiar to his dead father. Sometimes, the child would confess to the father that he is the late father.

To the Christian, these are facts no one can deny although the conclusion results from the logic of Igbo Traditional religion.

Again, Cardinal Arinze (cited by Obilor, 1994) said:

When they find themselves in moment of crisis- sickness, matrimony, birth of a child, funeral of relatives, construction of a house and, for students, facing important and difficult examinations- it is not rare to find them having recourse to superstitious practices of the Traditional Religion (p.280).

So, it is an open secret that an Igbo Christian lives in two worlds: the world of his culture and world of his Christian profession. Thus, there is a serious tension in his response to crisis of life. It appears as if such a Christian has two minds. One believes, the other disbelieves, and the individual is a walking civil war in which trust and distrust of God's demands and principles wage a continual battle against his traditional religious beliefs. He definitely becomes unstable in all his ways. This might even give rise to truncated value system. Confucius (cited by Sathaye, 1965) rightly said, "Better than one who knows what is right is one who is fond of what is right, and better than one who is fond of doing what is right is one who delights in doing what is right" (p.5). Little wonder then that most Nigerians (including the Igbo) are "in all things religious" yet honesty, kindness, dedication to duty, hospitality and respect for human life have become things of the past.

Today, the major ethical problems include tribalism, armed robbery and corruption, greed and dishonesty, indolence and negligence of duty, political violence and murder, cheating, profiteering, fraud, *et cetera*. The prevalence of gambling and betting is not only a problem to those families which have gamblers as heads; it has moral implications which affect society as a whole. The rising rate of divorce, juvenile delinquency, alcoholism and drug addiction

have further compounded the moral problems. There is also the prostitution of the mind and body in various forms.

Until recently, Nigeria was used to vital documents getting missing from files or important files disappearing altogether. But the common thing today, after the known and the unknown looters of Nigeria national wealth have done their worst, is for the building containing the vital documents relating to the frauds to be burnt down either by bush fire caused by unknown hunters or perhaps by some mysterious beings from beyond this terrestrial globe. The value system has broken down; to an average Nigerian, it appears that no value exists outside the 'almighty Naira' which everybody is busy chasing around. The prodigal display of ill-gotten wealth by emergency contractors and politicians, retired civil servants and military officers has increased the thirst of most Nigerians for the Naira. It is now common to spray in dollars or sterling in order to prove that one has made it.

Recently, many Nigerian young graduates flooded the Immigration Office Department with applications for employment. What were they looking for? It is nothing other than the problems of insensitivity to poverty, hunger, suffering and social justice as well as the prodigal display of wealth by rich to the agony and annoyance of the common people which has resulted in increased crimes. This has led to two forms of vices in Nigeria. The first is the vice by which the poor are kept poorer and the rich get richer. The second is the vice by which the poor protest against poverty. Most systems appear to have broken down, and almost everywhere nothing really appears to work. What is witnessed in public offices, post-offices, banks, hospitals, etc. reveals to what extent the people's sense of values has degenerated and how much society has moved far away from a general nobility of thought. So you see, let the people believe that there is no life beyond the grave, no meeting of a righteous God in judgment, and they throw off the normal restraints. The tendency is to give

themselves over to passions of the flesh and the mind, and to trample upon the rights of their fellow men. That is why Myers (cited by Mbachii, 2014) said, “Underlying our teachings, preachings and counseling is the assumption that private beliefs determine public behavior: if we want to alter people’s actions, we therefore need to change their hearts and minds” (p. 135). However, moral imperatives appear to be less urgent where one is imbued with the thought of second chance evident in reincarnation.

In Matthean eschatology, we encounter a view of history that is unfolding of a plan, and that there is a guiding hand and a guiding mind behind it and in it. J. A. Froude (cited by Barclay, 1967) put it clearly: “One lesson and one only history may repeat with distinctness is that the world is built somehow on moral foundations, that in the long run it is well with the good, and in the long run it is ill with the wicked” (p. 33). This is, of course, the Biblical view of history. The Bible saw history as nothing other than the result of the direct plan and action of God. If history is the arena of purpose then history is the arena of God.

God in the understanding of Igbo Traditional Religion is described in a modern theological sense, as *the wholly other*. The characteristic of God is that He belongs to another different sphere of being to which for man is no possible approach. Thus, He can only be reached through the intermediaries. But in the Matthean God, we encounter both the paternity and fatherhood of God. A Christian believes in the paternity of God; he does believe that God is the source and origin and goal of all life; that God is the One from whom life comes and to whom life goes. But even more, the Christian believes in the fatherhood of God, that intimate, loving, caring fellowship which goes so much further that paternity can ever go. The intimacy of the relation of the Christian to God is seen best of all in the name which Jesus used for God, and the name which Paul said that the Christians too may use, the name

Abba (Mk. 14: 36; Rm. 8: 15; Gal. 4: 6). Commenting on the significance of *Abba*, Barclay (1967) said:

Abba is a name by which a little child addressed his father in the home circle in the time of Jesus, as *jaba* still is in Arabic today. In any secular context it would be translated simply as Daddy. Nothing shows so well the intimate fellowship of the Christian with God. Here is no God transcendent in infinite might and majesty, unapproachable, different and separate; here is no God who is an abstraction or a philosophic idea, or a grudging or a passionless deity. Here is a God who is as near to us as a father is to a little child (p. 44).

All this goes to show that in Christianity there is a new relationship between God and man. The relationships of king and the subject, master and slave, judge and criminal, immortal and mortal, holy one and sinner, are all obvious and natural. All these relationships are in one way or another based on a relationship whose essence is law. The idea is that God lays down His law; man obeys or disobeys, accepts or rejects; and is accordingly found innocent or guilty. What Christianity does is to remove the fear and the distance in the relationship between man and God and establish first and foremost a relationship of love.

Barclay (1967) concisely stated the implication of this new relationship thus:

This means that there has entered into life a quite new conception of the meaning of sin. It certainly does not make sin any less serious, but it brings it into a different realm of thought. In this relationship sin is no longer a breach of law; sin is a breaking of God's heart; for sin ceases to be simply sin against law and becomes sin against love.

It is precisely that fact which makes sin so serious. It is always perfectly possible to make satisfaction for a sin against law. When the penalty which the

law inflicts has been paid, when the sentence has been served, then the law has no more claim upon a man. But sin against love is very different thing. Law's claim is always limited; love's claim is always unlimited. A man might well be able to meet the stern severity in the eyes of a judge without flinching, when he could not meet the sorrow and the pain in the eyes of someone whose heart he had broken (p. 48).

The fact that our relationship with God is not one of law but one of love makes our obligation to God infinitely greater and infinitely more abiding, and makes sin not less but more serious. A society that is ruled by love is a society that is at peace with itself, its maker and its nature. This is what Christianity offers. This is an alternative godly lifestyle- one which gives the answer to our depraved society. Indeed, a life ruled by the love of God is a life delivered from split personality or syncretistic practices. This new theological repositioning may not only help to achieve a dream society of love, justice and fair play, it may also usher the Igbo people into eternal bliss in the hereafter.

Would the Matthean linear, sequential view of history not, indeed, be abiding and universal? Would it not be for all men of every time in history and of every culture on earth? For it shows evil will be overcome at the end. It proffers hope and reward to the faithful at the end. They that have this hope purify themselves and strive to be at peace with their Maker, neighbor and nature. It demands the distinctive attractiveness of an alternative daily lifestyle- one which gives the answer to corruption, cynicism and self-centredness. The beauty of such holiness is a part (an essential part) of Christian apologetics. But the cultural contexts in which God revealed it and the Church delivers it are distinct and different. They cannot be superimposed upon one another in the life of an Igbo Christian. If Christian meaning is not to

be lost in the communication process as the Church strives to pass on the gospel message, inculturation is required.

Prior (1993) stated that “The longest journey in the world is from the head to the heart” (p. 38). This maxim is often quoted to draw a distinction between what is believed in the mind and what is felt in the heart. Clearly, there can be a wide gulf between the two. The Igbo Christian experience with regard to reincarnation appears to confirm it. The convictions and knowledge about God may lead one to say one thing; one’s experience of the environment may tell one and others something entirely different. This spells the need for serious inculturation.

For Schineller (1990), “Inculturation refers to the correct way of living and sharing one’s Christian faith in a particular context or culture” (p. 13). Obilor (2003) collaborated this when he said that “Proper inculturation occurs when man is alive in his culture and in his Christian faith” (p.113). This is true because the end result of inculturation is to produce an integral human person. This is what we lack most in Africa. Inculturation functions as the means to create the required equilibrium and the integration of the two worldviews. There is a crying need to examine the gospel in the light of the Igbo worldview and then adapt the message, encode it in such a way that it can become meaningful to Igbo Christian in his practical life. There are many facets of inculturation but at the very least it involves appropriate responses to cultural differences in local perceptions in the missionary source and in the substance and style of the missionary’s message. Until this is done, and before then, it appears that an Igbo Christian cannot but revel in the two worlds- the world of his culture and world of his new faith.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary

An average Igbo Christian is torn apart between the Igbo and Christian worldviews. He embraces his new religion without proper conversion and integration into his former culture and religion. When the Christian finds himself in moment of crisis such as sickness, birth of a child and funeral of relatives, it is not rare to find him having recourse to superstitious practices of the Traditional Religion. The relationship between reincarnation and the last judgment is found to be negative and non perfect. The index of relationship between the two presents some left to right downward trend. The Igbo notion of reincarnation is an effort to explain a reality to which the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead for the Christian is the exclusive answer. But properly conceded, Igbo cosmological notion of reincarnation could be considered as a revelation of the destiny of man in a bud compared with Christian perception of destiny of man which could be considered as the revelation of the destiny of man in full blossom.

The pericope considered in the Matthean Gospel (Matt. 25: 31- 46) revealed that it is the linear, sequential view of history, the Christian viewpoint that culminates in the eschatological judgment with split ending in view and not the circular view of history consisting of successive births, deaths and rebirths that is the final destiny of man. History ends in either heaven or hell. It is here on earth that decision that determines one's destiny is made and not in the world to come.

The study shows that Igbo concept of reincarnation is a complex one and viewed and understood in various ways. Opinions range from *Ilo-uwa*, partial reincarnation, cyclical

reincarnation with maximum number of seven chances of reincarnation to cyclical notion of reincarnation in an unending process. The author favours the cyclical notion of reincarnation in an unending process because of its claim to be the original belief of the ancient Igbo. However, this cyclical process is not the same with what is obtainable in the East and West. Whereas the Western and Eastern views see reincarnation as a goal of ultimate perfection for the human race; an evolutionary progress towards perfection which one achieves through reincarnations; in some sense the conduct of one's past lives will influence the kind of lives he will supposedly have in future incarnations; the doctrine of "second chance" after this life; survival of the self in successive afterlives; the perishability of the bodies into which the reincarnations occur; and the existence of multiple worlds or realms in which reincarnations take place; Igbo reincarnation rather sees the process as a reward for the good life lived, and as a phenomenon in which an identifiable personality in the Igbo spiritual world is believed in a mysterious but real way to transmit his personality traits on a newborn personality without destroying that personality or substituting himself or herself for that new personality. The researcher considers this a product of genetic influence.

The last judgment and the reincarnation agree to the points that the Supreme God and the Matthean God is not merely a power but a Person; and that the resurrected individuals and the living dead are not souls but spiritual beings or persons. On the other hand they differ in that the doctrine of final judgment stresses man's accountability and reward and the certainty that justice will finally triumph over evil. For the Igbo, merit for reincarnation hinges on spiritual justice applicable unprejudicially to all, whether the powerless or the mighty, under a changeless condition of a spotless life, founding lineages, ripe old age and proper burial. Undoubtedly, this raises moral problems as it needs a better understanding of justice. However, the divine judgment understood in the light of redemption offered in Christ does

not raise moral problems; it settles it. Be it as it may, in Igbo eschatology there is no end of the world, no resurrection and no last judgment as seen in Matthean eschatology.

The study reveals that any viable Christian theology in Africa must have a Biblical basis and this sound Biblical basis can only be provided by Africans who can combine Africanness with sound Biblical scholarship. These are Biblical scholars who are living and practising in Africa in order to make the Word become incarnate in the life of and through the peoples of this continent. As long as African exegetes keep the Bible close to their ears, hearts and minds, their interpretation will be viable, relevant and a lasting service, not only to the Church in Africa, but also to the Catholic Church. These exegetes will present the Biblical message to Africans in the perspective of their worldview.

Resulting from the study is the fact that our relationship with God is not one of law but one of love, thereby making our obligation to God infinitely greater and infinitely more abiding, and making sin not less but more serious. A society that is ruled by love is a society that is at peace with itself, its maker and its nature. This is what Christianity offers. This is an alternative godly lifestyle- one which gives the answer to our depraved society. Indeed, a life ruled by the love of God is a life delivered from split personality or syncretistic practices. This new theological repositioning may not only help to achieve a dream society of love, justice and fair play, it may also usher the Igbo people into eternal bliss in the hereafter.

The research shows that the Igbo Church needs a genuine Igbo expression of the Christian faith and a corresponding theology for a possible inculturation. This includes seeing Christ as the Ancestor; making room for local names which do not contain any idea of reincarnation and possibly combining naming ceremony with baptism in some areas. The Church certainly

should be at pains through her teachings and practical life to introduce a fulfilment into the Christian conscience, that is, belief in the resurrection of the dead.

There are many facets of inculturation but at the very least it involves appropriate responses to cultural differences in local perceptions in the missionary source and in the substance and style of the missionary's message. Until this is done, and before then, it appears that the Igbo Christian cannot but revel in the two worlds- the world of his culture and world of his new faith

6. 2 Conclusion

People from Agulu, Alor, Mbaukwu, Mgbakwu, Nri, Obosi and Ukpo towns, like people from all other towns in Igboland, have been so moulded by their religious experiences that it is no longer a question of mere belief but a way of life. This is perceptible in Igbo Christians' adherence to the faith. The Igbo Christian is hampered by a gross ambivalence in his commitment to the faith. In moments of crisis and difficulties, an Igbo Christian often falls back on the abandoned traditional means of seeking solution. This is common both for the literate and the uneducated.

Although life in the present day Agulu, Alor, Mbaukwu, Mgbakwu, Nri, Obosi and Ukpo towns, like most Igbo communities, has witnessed a lot of changes, and things are still changing, yet the traditional beliefs and practices are still quite important. The traditional belief in the concept of reincarnation is very strong and can help in the understanding and application of the last judgment. This should lead to an affirmation that the African heritage should no longer be simply dismissed as "pagan" but taken seriously and as much as possible, be harnessed with caution to adequately explain the truth of the Christian faith.

The originality of African thought consists in the way Africans belong to holistic culture, which has a unique contribution to make to the understanding and appreciation of Christian faith and doctrines, but the use of such beliefs needs prudence and care. For Ukpong (2005), “This is a hermeneutic process of appropriation which, in the case of Africa, is concerned to make a specifically African contribution to biblical interpretation and actualize the creative power of the Bible in African society” (p.38).

That which brought the Church into being and gave it a message was not the hope of the persistence of life beyond the grave, nor the confidence that the dead ancestors will return to their immediate families and relatives, nor the confidence in God’s supremacy over death, nor the conviction of the immortality of the human spirit. Rather, it was the belief in an event in time and space: Jesus of Nazareth was raised from the dead. There are stories of restorations to life, but these are mere ‘resuscitations of corpses’. Jesus’ resurrection is not the restoration to physical life of a dead body; it is the emergence of a new order of life. It is the embodiment in time and space of eternal life. It is the beginning of the eschatological resurrection.

The forward-looking character of Israelite faith dates from the call of Abraham (Genesis 12: 1-3) and the promise of the land of Canaan, but it is in the message of the prophets that it becomes fully eschatological, looking towards a final and permanent goal of God’s purpose in history. The prophetic term, “the day of the Lord” (with a variety of similar expressions such as “on that day”) refers to the coming event of God’s decisive action in judgment and salvation in the historical realm. For the prophets, it is always immediately related to their present historical context, and by no means necessarily refers to the end of history. Increasingly, however, there emerges the concept of a final resolution of history: a day of judgment beyond which God establishes a permanent age of salvation. Yes, there arises the

emergence of the concept of fully transcendent eschatology, which expects a direct and universal act of God, beyond the possibilities of ordinary history, issuing in a radically transformed world. And this, among other things, is part of the Christian message and hope.

The distinctive character of New Testament eschatology is determined by the conviction that in the history of Jesus Christ, God's decisive eschatological act has already taken place, though in such a way that the consummation remains future. The role of Jesus in the New Testament eschatology goes beyond the role of the Messiah in Old Testament or later Jewish expectations. Certainly, He is the heavenly Son of man (Dan. 7), the eschatological prophet (Isa. 61; cf. Lk. 4: 18- 21), the suffering Servant (Isa. 53), and even the Davidic king, though not in the way his contemporaries expected. But the New Testament's concentration of the eschatological fulfillment in Jesus Christ reflects not only His fulfillment of these particular eschatological roles. For New Testament theology, Jesus embodies both God's own work of eschatological salvation and also man's eschatological destiny. So He is, on the one hand, the Saviour and the Judge, the Conqueror of evil, the Agent of God's rule and the Mediator of God's eschatological presence to men: He is Himself the fulfillment of Old Testament expectations of God's own eschatological coming (cf. Mal. 3: 1 with Lk. 1: 76; 7: 27). On the other hand, He is also the eschatological Man: He has achieved and defined in His own risen humanity, the eschatological destiny of all men.

Significantly, the Early Church considered "the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment" foundation doctrines (Heb. 6:1-2). Without the incarnation, there would have been no resurrection. The resurrection gives a glorious hope to the believer, but it adds to the woes of the unsaved (2Cor. 2:14 -16). The rejection of a free salvation compounds the consequences of evil. Divine judgment is a moral necessity. Christians are dealing with a moral order that demands not only "justice" and "self-control" but "future judgment" (Acts

24: 25). Its ground is the holiness and justice of God, and its objective is to reveal and adjudicate the behaviour of moral agents. Let the people believe that there is no life beyond the grave, no meeting of a righteous God in judgment, and they throw off the normal restraints. The tendency is to give themselves over to passions of the flesh and the mind, and to trample upon the rights of their fellow men. Boettner (1989: 84) underscored that “Fear of punishment is not the highest motive to morality, but it is an effective one, and where it is absent crime soon becomes rampant.” So the “secrets of men” will be disclosed (Rom. 2: 16; cf. Mk. 4: 22; Luke 12: 2), and character will be evaluated with perfect equity in the light of knowledge and opportunity (Rom. 2: 7-11). The end of the Age will come. A final separating classifying sentence will be pronounced. The lie will be flushed out from hiding, and truth, so often trampled, will prevail.

Justice demands judgment, because justice insists that evils which either defied or eluded the courts of men shall finally be called to account and be treated as they deserve. Only an infinite God can perceive without error the interwoven lines of responsibility, the multiple vectors of influence, and the shades of motives and intention that comprise the moral fabric of human life. In the scales of divine judgment, God will place endowment and opportunity, deception and innocence, malice and simplicity, and, pretense and sincerity. All the threads must be unraveled and all the knots untied. Moreover, the spreading consequences of evil deeds that keep unfolding from generation to generation, must converge in a single point of ultimate finality. Such evil must be contained in finiteness and not be permitted to expand infinitely.

Hence, Christians teach about the Return and Judgment of the Lord Jesus Christ. They believe in world history’s consummation, examination and judgment. For Christians, it is in this side of eternity that decisions are made. However, at the last judgment, the time for

human decisions is over- here decisions are made for them, decisions that determine their destinies forever. Thus, a Christian understands that there will be a great divorce at God's Final Judgment. For a Kingdom has been prepared for the devil and his angels. From the beginning Jesus teaches that the world history has been structured with a split ending in view. History ends in either heaven or hell.

An Igbo Christian lives in two worlds- the world of his culture (which is inseparable from the world of his former religion) and the world of his Christian religion (into which he is baptized without conversion and reintegration into his former culture and religion). There is a disharmony or imbalance in his response to crisis of life. Proper inculturation occurs when man is alive in his culture and his Christian faith. The Matthean eschatology sees life as linear and sequential, proceeding towards ultimate consummation with a split ending in view in contradistinction to Igbo cyclical notion of history as uphold in their belief in reincarnation. This spells a lot of theological implications for Christian ministry for the Church in Igboland. The Church in Igboland needs a genuine Igbo expression of the Christian faith and a corresponding theology in order to communicate better with God and all mankind.

The process of healing and placing an Igbo Christian in the right perspective concerning *ilo-uwa* or reincarnation must be gradual, profound and all-embracing. This is because it involves the Christian message and also the Igbo way of life. The suggestions given above result from the fruit of study and reflection in the course of this study and never perfunctorily. *Ilo-uwa* or reincarnation is part of the whole complex of beliefs which are intrinsically linked to Igbo culture and tradition. It cannot be addressed in isolation. Only in this perspective can one heal and correct wrong perception of belief in *ilo-uwa*. The foundation of the perfecting and healing process is the resurrection of Jesus. The easter-event gives meaning to the mystery of life and death. It can be misrepresented through bad customs and other social

factors, but it can never be totally obliterated. *Ilo-uwa* or reincarnation is a human effort to penetrate the mystery of life and death and to explain this mystery in concrete terms. In this sense, one can only hope that the Igbo, through their search for the explanation of what they observe in nature, may discover in their midst the answer in Christ.

6. 3 Recommendations

1. Given that God in Igbo religion is understood as *Chukwu* and not as Triune God, it is therefore recommended that the concept of Holy Trinity should form part of the Church's evangelistic tool in her evangelistic enterprise.

2. The Church in her evangelistic outreach should present the resurrection of the dead as the work of the Triune God. She should be able to teach that the resurrection is one of the events of the 'end of time' and history.

3. The Igbo belief in the bodily reality of the dead in reincarnation should be used as a key towards inculturated teachings on the resurrection. This is because while the Church teaches that bodily reality is anticipated at the resurrection of the dead, the Igbo religion believes that it is assured through reincarnation.

4. Sacrifice is the knife-edge on which Igbo religion rests. The fact that in Igbo religion sacrifices for the dead are intended to remove all obstacles for the dead, including those which may frustrate the possible reincarnation, gives impetus for evangelization. The Church should therefore use Igbo sacrifices as an inculturated teaching towards a better understanding of Christ Jesus once and for all sacrifice for sins on the cross.

5. Christ can be presented to the traditionalists as the Universal Ancestor. Just as He did not only rise from the dead but also seen as the Life and Resurrection, in the same vein He can

also be seen as the Ancestor. Consequently, the Church can begin dialogue here and launch into a better understanding of true meaning and value of the Lordship of Christ.

6. Igbo religion has no room for the Holy Spirit given that it lacks the concept of the Three Persons in One God. Nevertheless, it has ample room for spirits and thus attuned to pneumatology. This can serve as a possible element of inculturation. Proceeding from what the Igbo Christians know through the traditional religion about the spirits in general, the Church can produce for them a serious teaching which will give the Holy Spirit a right place in the Igbo system of belief.

7. Although Igbo religion sees man as a unity both in life and death, yet it does neither answer the question of personal identity nor consider personal identity as being important. At best, it revels in resemblance theory. The Church can take Igbo anthropology from that standpoint and lead the Igbo Christians to a better perspective of personal identity of man after death when Christ raises him up at the last day.

8. Given that Easter event gives meaning to the mystery of life and death, and that it can be misrepresented through bad customs and practices, the onus of responsibility lies on the Church to continue to teach and affirm the doctrine of resurrection of the dead.

9. Admission into the ancestral cult is based on the judgmental decisions of the ancestors which are rather anchored on spotless life, founding lineages, ripe old age and proper burial. These conditions are not within the reach of everybody. However, this could serve as a bridge to Igbo Christians to a better understanding of last judgment with a split ending.

10. An Igboman should see the proofs of reincarnation as positive effects of genetic inheritance.

6.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

1. As this work is not conclusive, there is still room for improvement. As a result, there is a need for more research to be made on the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead and the Igbo belief in reincarnation.
2. Research is also needed in the area of the resurrection of the dead in Pualine soteriology and kerygma.

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APPENDIX “A”
RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of Religion and Human Relations

Faculty of Arts

Nnamdi Azikiwe University

Awka

Date.....

Dear Sir, Ma,

This questionnaire is designed to obtain information for research on the concept of Reincarnation among the Igbo.

The research is a Ph.D Thesis to be submitted to the Department of Religion and Human Relations, Faculty of Arts, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka.

The information obtained from you will be treated confidently; I therefore solicit your cooperation and honesty in responding to the questions.

Thanks in anticipation of your kind consideration.

Yours faithfully,

Valentine C. Mbach

SECTION A

(DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION)

INSTRUCTION :Please tick appropriate and fill in where necessary

1. Sex: Male () Female ()

2. Age: Below 20 years ()
20-35 years ()
36-50 years ()
51-75 years ()
Above 75 years ()

3. Highest Academic Qualification
 - i. Primary School Leaving Certificate ()
 - ii. Standard Six ()
 - iii. Secondary School Leaving Certificate/ 'O' Level/Grade II Teachers' Certificate ()
 - iv. 'A' Level, NCE, OND ()
 - v. First Degree/HND ()
 - vi. Post Graduate ()
 - vii. Others.....

4. Marital Status
 - i. Single ()
 - ii. Married ()
 - iii. Divorced ()
 - iv. Widow/Widower ()

5. Occupation

- i. Students ()
- ii. Trader/Artisan ()
- iii. Farmers ()
- 6. Civil Servants
- i. Retirees ()
- ii. Herbalists ()
- iii. Clergy ()
- 7. Religion of Respondent
- i. African Religion ()
- ii. Christianity ()
- iii. Islam ()
- iv. Others ()
- 8. Religious Denomination or sect.....

SECTION B

THE CONCEPT OF AFTER-LIFE AMONG THE IGBO

QUESTIONNAIRE

A. THE CONCEPT OF DEATH AMONG THE IGBO

- 1. Do you believe that death is not the end of man’s existence? Yes () No ()
Don’t know ()
- 2. Have you ever thought of dying too? Yes () No () Don’t know ()
- 3. Do Igbo people believe that there is another life-after death? Yes ()
No () Don’t know ()
- 4. Give reasons for your answer.....

.....
5. Is it through that the spirit of man cannot die? (Immortality of soul?)

Yes () No () Don't Know ()

6. Give reasons for your answer.....
.....

B. THE CONCEPT OF JUDGMENT

7. Do you believe that one's actions are judged? Yes () No () Don't know ()

8. Is it true that one is judged by people around one during one's lifetime?

Yes () No () Don't know ()

9. Give reasons for your answer.....
.....

10. Do the good people and the bad people share the same destiny?

Yes () No () Don't know ()

11. Give reasons for your answer.....
.....

C. THE BELIEF IN REINCARNATION

12. Is it possible for ancestors to return to the world again and be born as children?

Yes () No () Don't know ()

13. Please support your answer with a story of such occurrence in your family or any other family.....
.....
.....

14. Does a sign or a mark help to identify an ancestor who has reincarnated?

Yes () No () Don't know ()

15. Support your answer with a story.....

.....
.....

16. Is it true that seven times is the maximum number of times an ancestor can return?

Yes () No () Don't know ()

17. What do you know about *ogbanje*, born-to-die children?

APPENDIX “B”

**STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE FOR RESEARCH IN THE
BELIEF IN REINCARNATION AMONG THE IGBO**

Date of Interview.....

1. Name.....
2. Sex.....
3. Age.....
4. Academic/professional qualification.....
.....

A. THE CONCEPT OF DEATH AMONG THE IGBO

1. What is your opinion about death?
2. Do you believe that death is not the end of man’s existence?
3. What are the reasons for your answer?
4. What is the general belief of this town about life-after death?

B. THE CONCEPT OF JUDGMENT

1. Do Igbo people believe in judgment, that is, that one’s actions are judged?
2. Can you please explain how this judgment is carried out in the understanding of the Igbo thought?
3. Give reasons for your answer and possibly, some examples.
4. Do the good people and the wicked people share the same destiny?
5. Give reasons for your answer.

C. THE BELIEF IN REINCARNATION

1. Is it possible for ancestors to return to the world again and be born as children?
2. If yes, can you please support your answer with a story of such occurrence in your family or any other family?

3. Does a sign or a mark help to identify an ancestor who has reincarnated?
4. Can you please support your answer with a story?
5. Is it true that an ancestor has a maximum number of seven chances to return?
6. What do you know about *ogbanje*, born-to-die children?

APPENDIX “C”

LIST OF THOSE INTERVIEWED

S/N	NAME	AGE	OCCUPATION	ADDRESS	DATE OF THE INTERVIEW
1	Chief Okoye Egbenugo	71	Trading	Ovollo, Mbaukwu	20/9/14
2	Mrs. Mgboye Ibezim	68	Trading	Ovollo, Mbaukwu	20/9/14
3	Mr. Humphrey Dim	80	Herbalist	Ovollo, Mbaukwu	20/9/14
4	Chief Godwin Nwafor	86	Trading	Ovollo, Mbaukwu	20/9/14
5	Mrs. Nwodu Dim	71	Farming	Ovollo, Mbaukwu	20/9/14
6	Igwe Ezenna	73	Tailoring	Ogba, Mbaukwu	25/9/14
7	Mr. James Akum	56	Palmwine tapper	Ogba, Mbaukwu	25/9/14
8	Chief Jonas Odum	70	Trading	Ogba, Mbaukwu	25/9/14
9	Mr. Dominic Okpala	72	Herbalist	Ogba, Mbaukwu	25/9/14
10	Mr. Nwodum Ike	74	Palmwine tapper	Uru, Mbaukwu	20/11/14
11	Mr. Onyeka Nweke	63	Palmwine tapper	Uru, Mbaukwrru	20/11/14
12	Chief Jonas Okoye	67	Farming	Uru, Mbaukwu	20/11/14
13	Miss. Kate Okonkwo	29	Student	Uru, Mbaukwu	20/11/14
14	Mr. Henry Nwokoye	74	Herbalist	Namkpu, Mbaukwu	27/11/14
15	Chief Gabriel Uchendu	70	Farming	Namkpu, Mbaukwu	27/11/14
16	Chief Daniel Okeke	62	Politician	Namkpu, Mbaukwu	27/11/14
17	Mr. Nwoye Okpala	65	Farming	Akabo, Mbaukwu	21/12/14
18	Mr. Okoye Udo	69	Herbalist	Akabo, Mbaukwu	21/12/14
19	Mr. Ajagu Ejje	67	Herbalist	Akabo, Mbaukwu	21/12/14
20	Mr. John Abana	62	Photographer	Uruoji, Nri	15/2/15
21	Mr. Samuel Abana	62	Farming	Uruoji, Nri	20/2/15
22	Mr. John Jideobi	65	Farming	Uruoji, Nri	20/2/15

23	Mr. Nweke Igwenagu	64	Civil servant	Uruoji, Nri	20/2/15
24	Mr. Onyema Ekemezie	72	Farmer	Uruoji, Nri	20/2/15
25	Mr. Uzochkwu Okeke	42	Civil servant	Obeagu, Nri	20/2/15
26	Mr. Anthony Enue	46	Civil servant	Obeagu, Nri	20/2/15
27	Mr. Akuchukwu Ofodile	43	Teaching	Obeagu, Nri	20/2/15
28	Mr. Charles Ejideaku	56	Civil servant	Agbadana, Nri	28/3/15
29	Mr Gerald Ejide	48	Driving	Agbadana, Nri	28/3/15
30	Mr. Igrige Okonkwo	73	Herbalist	Agbadana, Nri	28/3/15
31	Mr. Charles Tabansi	55	Trading	Agbadana, Nri	28/3/15
32	Mr. Uzodinma Obidigwe	67	Driving	Agbadana, Nri	28/3/15
33	Mr. Okechukwu Nwoye	66	Trading	Agbadana, Nri	28/3/15
34	Mr. Victor Okoye	75	Trading	Akamkpisi, Nri	30/3/15
35	Mr. Anthony Nwankwo	55	Native doctor	Akamkpisi, Nri	30/3/15
36	Mrs. Mgboye Nwoemezie	81	Trading	Akamkpisi, Nri	30/3/15
37	Chief Nkwo Nnabuchi	68	Politician	Amaezike Mgbakwu	15/4/15
38	Mr. Echidime Anaezeofe	70	Farming	Amaezike Mgbakwu	15/4/15
39	Mr. Ogwudile Nwankwo	56	Native doctor	Amaezike Mgbakwu	15/4/15
40	Mr. Rowland Nnabuichi	73	Farming	Amaezike Mgbakwu	16/4/15
41	Mr. Jekwu Anakwe	55	Trading	Amaezike Mgbakwu	16/4/15
42	Mr. Nnaeto Osinomumu	71	Farming	Amaezike Mgbakwu	5/5/15
43	Mr. Uche Eyimegwu	58	Trading	Amaezi Mgbakwu	5/5/15

44	Mr. Osita Nwankwo	60	Farming	Amaezi Mgbakwu	6/5/15
45	Mr. Chukwuma Animora	63	Farming	Amaezi Mgbakwu	6/5/15
46	Mr. Nwike Uchefuna	60	Trading	Amaezi Mgbakwu	7/5/15
47	Chief Anaegbuna Ibekwe	65	Farming	Amankpu, Mgbakwu	7/5/15
48	Mr. Sunday Onyemazu	48	Trading	Amankpu, Mgbakwu	8/5/15
49	Mr. Nweke Odinyelu	67	Farming	Amankpu, Mgbakwu	8/6/15
50	Mr. Ndukaife Nweke	71	Farming	Amankpu, Mgbakwu	8/6/15
51	Mr. Ofolee Amamehuka	76	Farming	Amade, Mgbakwu	9/6/15
52	Mrs. Nnebugwu Ngene	57	Farming	Amade, Mgbakwu	9/6/15
53	Mr. Ozoemena Oraekie	66	Trading	Uruotulu, Mgbakwu	7/8/15
54	Mr. Charles Oraekie	60	Politician	Uruotulu, Mgbakwu	7/8/15
55	Mr. Chiekwu Ezudu	64	Farming	Uruaku, Mgbakwu	7/8/15
56	Mr. Nwoye Ezeudu	62	Farming	Uruaku, Mgbakwu	7/8/15
57	Mr. Solomon Nwangwu	60	Trading	Isiekwulu, Ukpo	8/8/15
58	Mr. Edwin Ezeaku	71	Trading	Isiekwlu, Ukpo	8/8/15
59	Mr. Odogwu Ezedinachi	72	Trading	Isiekwulu, Ukpo	9/8/15
60	Mrs. Nkechi Okoye	53	Trading	Isiekwulu, Ukpo	9/8/15
61	Mrs. Mgbeke Onyeyili	67	Trading	Isiekwulu, Ukpo	9/8/15
62	Chief John Omejilichi	73	Politician	Oranto, Ukpo	10/8/15
63	Mr. Andy Modili	63	Politician	Oranto, Ukpo	10/8/15
64	Mrs. Chibugwu Onyeogu	71	Farming	Oranto, Ukpo	10/8/15

65	Mrs. Joy Nwobor	62	Trading	Oranto, Ukpo	14/8/15
66	Hon. Onyeka Nzeako	46	Politician	Oranto, Ukpo	14/8/15
67	Mr. Patrick Okeke	61	Trading	Akaezi, Ukpo	18/8/15
68	Mrs. Ada Nwobor	53	Teaching	Akaezi, Ukpo	18/8/15
69	Mrs. Ekene Nwoye	69	Farming	Akaezi, Ukpo	18/8/15
70	Mr. Obidike Oforah	42	Teaching	Akpu, Ukpo	21/8/15
71	Mr. Ozoemena Ukachukwu	63	Farming	Akpu, Ukpo	21/8/15
72	Mr. Ncheta Egede	55	Teaching	Akpu, Ukpo	23/8/15
73	Mr. Chetanna Okeke	51	Civil servant	Akpu, Ukpo	23/8/15
74	Mr. Nwandu Oji	73	Farmer	Nneogidi, Agulu	11/10/15
75	Mr. Alphonsus Okeke	66	Trading	Nneogidi, Agulu	11/10/15
76	Mr. Okechukwu Onyejiakor	61	Driving	Uhueme, Agulu	13/10/15
77	Mr. Godwin Nwafor	71	Herbalist	Uhueme, Agulu	13/10/15
78	Chief Chuka Okoli	80	Trading	Ukunu, Agulu	15/10/15
79	Mrs. Mgboye Nwankwo	77	Farming	Ukunu, Agulu	15/10.15
80	Mr. Kenneth Okoye	47	Civil servant	Odidama, Agulu	17/10/15
81	Mr. Uche Uzodinma	51	Teaching	Odidama, Agulu	17/10/15
82	Mr. Chikadibia Okafor	62	Pastoring	Nkitaku, Agulu	19/10/15
83	Mrs. Bridget Mmaduka	56	Weaving	Nkitaku, Agulu	19/10/15
84	Sir Joshua Okeke	70	Trading	Ifiteani, Agulu	21/10/15
85	Chief Johnson Okafor	75	Trading	Ifiteani, Agulu	21/10/15
86	Mr. Edwin Okonkwo	60	Farming	Umunonwu, Agulu	23/10/15
87	Mr. Nwibe Okoli	55	Trading	Umunonwu, Agulu	23/10/15
88	Mr. James Nweke	63	Herbalist	Umuowelle, Agulu	27/10/15
89	Mrs. Mgbafo Ezudu	70	Farming	Umuowelle, Agulu	27/10/15
90	Mr. Kenneth Nwafor	51	Teaching	Umufite, Agulu	29/10/15

91	Mrs. Nwanke Ezeajuba	60	Trading	Umuifite, Agulu	29/10/15
92	Mr. Ignatius Azoka	72	Trading	Uru, Ogidi	14/2/16
93	Mr. Amobi Azoka	67	Trading	Uru, Ogidi	14/2/15
94	Mr. Joseph Azoka	50	Teaching	Uru, Ogidi	14/2/16
95	Chief Johnson Obiakor	61	Trading	Ikenga, Ogidi	17/2/16
96	Mrs. Janeth Obiakor	51	Teaching	Ikenga, Ogidi	17/2/16
97	Mr. Chuka Achebe	45	Civil servant	Nkwere-ogidi, Ogidi	18/2/16
98	Mr. Pius Achebe	55	Trading	Nkwere-ogidi, Ogidi	18/2/16
99	Mr. Dennis Ezudu	61	Trading	Nkwere-ogidi, Ogidi	18/2/16
100	Mr. Nnaemeka Afunugo	63	Trading	Ire, Ogidi	20/2/16
101	Mrs. Godwin Okafor	66	Herbalist	Ire, Ogidi	20/2/16
102	Mrs. Chinwe Okeke	51	Teaching	Ogidiana, Ogidi	22/2/16
103	Mr. Uzoma Egede	70	Trading	Ogidiana, Ogidi	22/2/16
104	Mr. Thomson Onuegbu	66	Politician	Ogidiana, Ogidi	22/2/16
105	Chief Samuel Amobi	72	Trading	Umuru, Ogidi	25/2/16
106	Mrs. Agness Okaro	56	Teaching	Umuru, Ogidi	25/2/16
107	Mr. Chidozie Nwasike	61	Trading	Umuru, Ogidi	25/2/16
108	Mr. Kenneth Iwuorah	63	Trading	Ikenga, Ogidi	26/2/16
109	Mr. Kingsley Nwasikeh	46	Civil servant	Ikenga, Ogidi	26/2/16
110	Mr. Herbert Okonkwo	64	Trading	Uruezoni, Alor	3/3/16
111	Mr. Nnamdi Onwuka	55	Farming	Uruezoni, Alor	3/3/16
112	Chief Godwin Okeke	63	Politician	Umuokwu, Alor	5/3/16
113	Mrs Juliet Okafor	51	Teaching	Umuokwu, Alor	5/3/16
114	Mr. Urudinachi Ogaraku	70	Farming	Isieke, Alor	7/3/16

115	Mr. Egozoba Nwoye	54	Driving	Isieke, Alor	7/3/16
116	Pastor Sunday Eze	48	Pastoring	Umuochi, Alor	7/3/16
117	Mr. Ndukaku Ngene	63	Herbalist	Umuochi, Alor	15/3/16
118	Master Christian Okeke	27	Student	Umunambo, Alor	23/3/16
119	Miss Ijeoma Okeke	40	Student	Umunambo, Alor	23/3/16
120	Mr. Kachi Okoye	50	Teaching	Umunambo, Alor	23/3/16
121	Mr. Ozoemena Okonkwo	61	Driver	Agbo, Alor	27/3/16
122	Mr. Ikenna Onyeogu	70	Herbalist	Agbo, Alor	27/3/16
123	Mr. Gilbert Ilouno	71	Farming	Okebunoye, Alor	2/4/16
124	Mr. Chitaku Okafor	60	Trading	Okebunoye, Alor	2/4/16
125	Mr. Emma Ngige	59	Trading	Ide, Alor	4/4/16
126	Mr . Cosmas Okoye	60	Civil servant	Ide, Alor	4/4/16