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TRINITARIAN AND IGBO ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESOURCES FOR MORE EFFECTIVE HUMAN RELATIONS

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Abstract

Trinitarian theology has a long history in Christian theological tradition both in the East and West. Despite the initial controversies it generated among the early Fathers of the Church, it became more or less a settled issue by the fourth century. Since then, theologians have reflected on the doctrine to the extent that it became an abstract theological speculation much removed from the daily lives of Christians. Just recently, with the work of such theologians as Jürgen Moltmann, John Zizioulas, and Catherine LaCugna, who are described as social trinitarians, this doctrine is brought down once more as the early Fathers did, especially the eastern Fathers, to have a bearing on the lives of ordinary Christians. This paper argues that the Igbo understanding of the human person and the Christian trinitarian theology have many lessons that would aid the understanding of the best principles for more effective human relations. The trinitarian perichoresis and Igbo anthropological relationality shed light on and model interpersonal and intersubjective approaches to relations among humans both in informal and organisational sectors. This involves a critical analysis of existing literature on the subject matter.

Keywords: Theology, Trinity, Igbo Anthropology, Human Relations

Introduction

The belief in the mystery of the Blessed Trinity has been at the foundation of the Church. The Catholic Church regards it as the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It serves as “the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them... the most fundamental and essential teaching in the ‘hierarchy of the truths of faith’” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC], 1994, para. 234). Lash (1986, p. 183) claims that “any doctrine of God which has ceased to be trinitarian in character has ceased to be Christian”. That notwithstanding, it took theologians centuries of debate and political interference to formulate and clarify the revealed truth regarding the Trinity and the nature of the relations between the three divine persons. Three significant factors remarkably aided the formulation of the trinitarian doctrine during those early periods. They include the Church’s councils, the writings of the Church Fathers, and the early Christians’ *sensus fidei* (sense of faith) (CCC, para. 250). The formulation of the doctrine became necessary as the early Christians struggled to make sense of their Jewish understanding of the unity of God as exemplified in such passages as “Hear; Oh Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord” (Deut 6:4) and the mystery of the Incarnation of Jesus who is God in the flesh, and the presence and action of the Holy Spirit as God acting in the world.

The mystery of the Trinity is a mystery of divine life and divine love for humans. It is not a mystery trapped within the Godhead. It has been progressively revealed to humanity from the moment God decided to create human beings, creatures other than himself, as an outpouring of his love beyond his being. This singular divine act made it possible for human beings to share in the divine life, though without sharing in the divine substance which



pertains exclusively to the unity of the indivisible Godhead, consisting of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

God is, therefore, essentially one but not solitary in his unity. He is instead a community of three persons who are distinct but not separate. It is a community of persons that does not confine its relations to themselves but instead extends that fellowship to the rest of creation, calling humans to a friendship that leads to sanctification and redemption. The relational God created man as a *homo socialis*, a being created in the image of the triune God. Therefore, human beings become not only *imago Dei* but *imago Dei* that is also *imago Trinitatis*. Human beings not only image God as one but also as three persons. Christians can make this affirmation of faith about humanity's capacity to image the Trinity. In line with Igbo anthropology, the human person is also created by God as a fundamentally relational being. Every person has no option but to be relational in his or her constitution and activities as a being unto others. The human person is, therefore, intrinsically a relational being whose existence can only be fully realised in relational terms.

This paper makes an effort to envisage how the values of relationality, mutuality, community, connectivity, and conviviality involved in the trinitarian theology and the Igbo anthropological view of the human person can help humans in their relations to one another. It is, therefore, an effort to anchor human relations firmly on solid theological and anthropological moorings. In a sense, we shall see who and what God is in himself and for us and how who we are in ourselves and for ourselves can be effectively utilised and harnessed to build effective human relations, yielding a humane and fraternal society where humans can comfortably achieve their full potential.

The Theology of the Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity teaches that only one God exists in three divine persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The early trinitarian formula could be seen in the great commission by Christ to his disciples to "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt 20:19). Paul's salutations in some of his epistles express this: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Cor 13:13). As the Church grew, the trinitarian doctrine continued to develop.

Though God exists in three distinct divine persons, in his substance or essence, he is one, undivided and united. The three divine persons are consubstantial (*homousios*), co-equal and co-eternal. To articulate this sameness of substance of the three divine persons, the Council of Toledo XI (675, cited in CCC para. 253) asserts, "The Father is that which the Son is, the Son that which the Father is, the Father and the Son that which the Holy Spirit is, i.e. by nature one God." The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, but the three are one God. God is, therefore, not three; otherwise, we shall be professing tritheism; he is rather triune. None of the three persons separately considered is God in any lesser degree than the Trinity. The divine attributes of omniscience, omnipotence, eternity, perfect goodness, and uncreatedness belong to each person entirely. The Council of Toledo XI (675, cited in CCC 254) elucidates their distinctness when it states, "He is not the Father who is the Son, nor is the Son he who is the Father, nor is the Holy Spirit he who is the Father or the Son". The affirmation of faith in this doctrine is found in the Church's traditional prayers, baptismal formulas, and the creed.

While unity is attributed to God because of the three divine persons' shared essence, God is Trinity because of the relations of the three divine persons to one another. The Father begets the Son eternally, while the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son eternally.

Trinitarian Relations

The three distinct divine persons are mutually and intricately involved in one another. Their relation to one another happens among divine persons who are essentially the same. Johnson (1992, pp. 219, 222) affirms that trinitarian relations are a threefold divine communion (*koinonia*) of equals. There is no domination of one another; there is no hierarchy of persons; there is no diminution of their shared essence resulting from their distinctness and relations. *Perichoresis* is a critical concept often used to describe the internal relations between the three divine Persons. According to Prestige (1928), it is derived from two Greek words, *peri*, meaning “around”, and *choreo*, denoting “to come, to move”. *Perichoresis*, therefore, denotes “going around” or “encompassing”. As Prestige (1964) notes, whereas its verbal form, *perichoreo*, was first used by a fourth-century Cappadocian Father, Gregory of Nazianzus, the first appearance of the word as a noun – *perichoresis* – was in the writings of Maximus the Confessor in the seventh century.

Its Latin equivalent, *circumincersion*, is made up of two words, *circum*, “around”, and *incedere*, meaning “to go, to step, to march along” (Baker, 1983, p. 108). Cross and Livingstone (1974) spot the first usage of *circumincersion* in theological writing by the twelfth-century Burgundio of Pisa. The relation of the three divine persons is integral and involves mutual indwelling, compenetration, communion, and love. Jesus spoke about this mutual indwelling between him and the Father in his prayer for the unity of all his followers, “That they all may be one; **as you, Father, are in me, and I in you**, that they also may be one in us” (John 17:21).

The relation among the three divine persons is such that we can only say who each is within the relation of each to the others. Thus, the Father can be known only in relation to the Son and the Spirit. The same is true of the Son in relation to the Father and the Spirit and the Spirit in relation to the Father and the Son. Besides, God is not first of all one and then becomes three persons; he is eternally one and three. God’s nature is, therefore, eternally nothing but a communion of persons. The three cannot be sacrificed for the unity of the Godhead, nor unity for the three persons. The eternal existence of the Trinity entails eternal and inherent unity as well as diversity, equality, mutuality, community, and relationality.

In his effort to put into words the wonder of the relations between the three divine persons, St. Augustine (*De Trinitate* VI,5.7) perceives the Father as the Lover, the Son as the Beloved, and the Holy Spirit as the Love between the Father and the Son. Therefore, Augustine's Trinity consists essentially of the love demonstrated in the mutual relations among the three divine persons. *Perichoresis* is nothing but love. Gregory of Nyssa (*Ad Eustathium: De Trinitate*, 5) speaks this way about the ‘perichoretic’ indwelling of the three persons:

We consider that it is right to think that that which is joined to the Father and the Son in such sublime and exalted conceptions is not separated from them in any. ... For all the Divine attributes, whether named or conceived, are of like rank one with

another, in that they are not distinguishable in respect of the signification of their subject.

Moltman (1993, pp. 174-175) explains perichoresis thus:

The Father exists in the Son, the Son in the Father, and both of them in the Spirit, just as the Spirit exists in both the Father and the Son. By virtue of their eternal love they live in one another to such an extent, and dwell in one another to such an extent, that they are one. It is a process of most perfect and intense empathy. Precisely through the personal characteristics that distinguish them from one another, the Father, the Son and the Spirit dwell in one another and communicate eternal life to one another. In the perichoresis, the very thing that divides them becomes that which binds them together. The 'circulation' of the eternal divine life becomes perfect through the fellowship and unity of the three different Persons in the eternal love.

For Moltman (1993, p. 173), the three persons of the Trinity are independent from the perspective of their indivisible divine nature. However, as persons, they depend on one another and are profoundly relational. In line with Richard of St. Victor's definition of divine person as "a non-interchangeable existence of the divine nature", where existence is understood as "existence in the light of another", Moltman affirms that each of the divine persons "exists in the light of the other and in the other". He concludes that the trinitarian unity is not found in the divine substance but in their relations.

In their reflections on the Trinity, the Fathers of the Church often distinguish between *theologia* (theology) and *oikonomia* (economy). While *theologia* refers to reflections on the inner life of God and the mystery of his being, *oikonomia* refers to all the ways God works in and with his creatures and makes himself known. The *oikonomia*, the works of God in history and human experience, helps to disclose who God is. In his work of creation, in his relationship with the people of Israel and the ultimate revelation of himself in Jesus, God continues to make himself known to humankind. At the same time, the *theologia*, the inner life of God, sheds light on the works accomplished by God in history (CCC Para. 236). The two are complementary in a sense.

LaCugna (1991) discloses that the mystery of God's being (*theologia*) is inseparably linked to salvation history (*oikonomia*), which is supremely manifest in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. She affirms that, even though *theologia*, which represents reflections on the intra-divine life of the three persons in one God, that is, life within Godself, is different from reflections on the extra-divine life of the Trinity manifest in salvation history (the *oikonomia*), *theologia* cannot exist without the *oikonomia*. For LaCugna, the distinction between the two is only methodological and epistemological, not ontological. Just like the Fathers of the Church, LaCugna notes that to understand the mystery of God's being, one needs to understand the relationship of God to humanity through what God has revealed about himself in the history of salvation. She concludes that "*theologia* is fully revealed and bestowed in *oikonomia*, and *oikonomia* truly expresses the ineffable mystery of *theologia*" (1991, p. 221). Hence, the immanent Trinity cannot be understood without the economic Trinity.

A more radical view concerning the relationship between immanent and economic Trinity was taken by Rahner (1970, p. 24) when he argues that "no adequate distinction can be made between the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the economy of salvation." Rahner intends to say that who and what God is, as revealed and communicated to us in the Word and the Spirit, does not contradict who and what God is in his divine being and intra-

life. We come to the knowledge of the intra-divine life through the extra-divine life of the Trinity in his relationship with the world.

The Human Person in Igbo Thought: Religion-Philosophical Enquiry

Just as with the concept of person within Trinitarian thinking, the Igbo concept of the human person is profoundly and fundamentally relational. There is no isolationist understanding of the human person in Igbo culture. The human person, *mmadu*, is always thought of within a network of relationships with the living and the dead (Muonwe, 2018a). However, even though *mmadu* is thought about as a unit, he or she has two significant aspects – the spiritual and the corporeal – *mmuo* and *ahu*, respectively (Nwala, 1985, p. 43).

Ahu, the material or corporeal aspect of *mmadu*, is what he or she shares with other corporeal beings in the universe. He or she can relate to them through the five senses of touch, sight, smell, hearing, and taste. *Mmadu* cannot function without this relationship. The Igbo also believe that these other beings humans interact with also have their spiritual dimension. This dimension of their existence can affect humans positively or negatively, depending on how humans treat them. Some acquire great significance within the religious realm and are used for sacrifices, as religious objects, or as totems. Some trees, for example, are revered as sacred because it is believed that they have re-incarnated in human form and that once they are carelessly felled, the human person in whom they re-incarnated would die.

The human person is connected to the spiritual realities in the Igbo universe, viz., God, deities, spirits, and ancestors, through the spiritual aspect of his or her existence (*mmuo*). The spiritual connection is often ritualised or embodied in language and other cultural, artistic, or symbolic creations. The human person, therefore, stands as a bridge in the traffic between the two Igbo worlds, this world (*uwa*, or *ala mmadu*) and the spiritual world (*ala mmuo*), and he makes sure he keeps the balance between them.

The spiritual aspect of *mmadu*, that is, *mmuo*, is understood to be composed of some principles. Three are often mentioned: *obi*, *eke*, or *agu* and *chi*. *Obi* is regarded as a person's life force that does not survive the death of a person but connects him while alive with other celestial forces. It can be weakened or strengthened with magic or other rituals (Metuh, 1981, pp. 87-88; 1985, p. 97). *Eke* is the principle associated with the Igbo traditional concept of reincarnation. It is an ontological life force that connects one with his or her ancestors or kindred. Each person received his or her *eke* from God at birth. A child receives the *eke* of the one who is re-incarnated in him or her. This accounts for resemblances in behaviour or bodily features (Metuh, 1981; 1985). *Chi* is believed to be a spark of God in human beings, which *Chukwu* (the Supreme Being) gives to each at the point of creation. The British Anthropologist Percy Talbort (1926) describes it as "a kind of transcendental self... the Over-Soul" (p. 276). Others see it as the counterpart or complementary identity of a person in the spirit world. For Ilogu (1974, p. 34), *chi* is a person's "particular portion of the divine being", whereas Okere (1996, p. 156) regards it as a "part of God in man, or a divine part of man". Other nuances may not concern us here. However, the fact remains that *chi* forms a crucial point in a person's relationship with God (Muonwe, 2018b).

To Be Is To Be Involved in the Other. The Igbo Paradigm

In Igbo society, relationality is an ontological reality of the human subject. *Obi*, *eke* or, *agu*, and *chi* already point to "an intra-ontological relationality within the individuality of the

self that is further irresistibly relational and interdependent with other-than-self” (Muonwe, 2018a, p. 25). One does not first exist and then relate to the other as a way of expressing himself or herself. To be is to be in relation, to be involved in the other, and for the other to be also involved in someone. There is no room for the notion of a person as a solitary or static substance that has been part of the Western philosophical tradition. Uzukwu (1996, p. 37) observes this too among West and Southern Africa. It could also apply to Africa generally. This is contained, for example, in the proverb of the Sotho people of Southern Africa that Uzukwu refers to, viz., a person “is human because of others, with others, and for others”. The famous African maxim also captures this: “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am” (Mbiti, 1969, pp. 108-109). One’s individuality, instead of cutting him or her off from the rest of creation, is an avenue for connectivity with others. To be cut off from others is comparable to having gone out of existence, more or less. Udeani (2007, p. 64) has this to say: “the African individual is not an individual purely and exclusively in contrast to the others but is principally relational: one is in an individual-communal/interdependent relationship with the rest in an ontological as well as in a spiritual sense of the word”.

The Igbo understanding of the human person is rooted in the conviction that a person comprises a network of relationships. This belief is based on the idea that through *mmuo*, a person is connected with other spiritual beings, while *chi* uniquely links him or her to *Chukwu*, the Supreme Being. Additionally, *eke* links him or her to the ancestors. This means no person can be considered isolated from the complex relationships in which he or she is unavoidably involved, physical, spiritual, human or non-human. To exist is to be involved in relationships, and it is a constituent part of the self. One primarily exists by coexisting in a community populated by other humans and spiritual beings. Only within this community can one achieve his or her life aspirations. This concept is compelling and thought-provoking because it challenges the individualistic view of existence prevalent in many cultures. It highlights the importance of relationships and community in shaping our lives and reminds us that we are all interconnected. Embracing this belief can help us cultivate a more profound empathy and understanding towards others, leading to a more harmonious and fulfilling existence (Muonwe, 2018a).

In traditional Igbo villages, people are likelier to ask someone about one’s family or clan rather than asking, “Who are you?” (Metuh, 1985). This community-oriented context is seen as essential to fulfilling one’s life aspirations. A person needs the support of the human community and spiritual beings. Failure to take this seriously can lead to problems with the entire community (Ndukaike, 2006, pp. 244-245). The self is, therefore, trapped in a flux of relationships because it “is a congenitally communitarian self, incapable of being, existing and unthinkable – except in the complex of relations of the community” (Okere, 1996, p. 160).

Isiguzo, Ukagba na Utakpor (2004, p. 238) capture the Igbo concept of the interdependence of humans as embedded in some Igbo aphorisms and proverbs, such as “(a) when the nose is affected, the eyes weep; (b) a tree does make a forest; (c) when two palms are washed together, both are cleaner than when one palm washes itself alone; (d) *Mmadu bu chibeya*: man is god unto man”. Mbiti (1969, p. 108) emphasises that, in traditional African society, no individual can exist without other people because everyone owes his or her existence to others. Everybody is connected with all others as a community comprising the living and the dead. Every experience that humans have is, as Isiguzo, Ukagba, and



Utakpor (2004, p. 239) note, “an idiographic episode that refers to the self (*onwem*) and to others as well (*ndi ozo*)”.

From the Divine *Koinonia* to Effective Human Relations

Human relations involve connecting, interacting, communicating, and “communing” among human beings. It affirms the essential nature of man as a being for, involved in, another. Human relations disavow solitariness and “monadization.” Human relations uphold the innate capacity of humans to create an environment of love, communion, effective communication, and mutual help among themselves, especially among those who share a common history, culture, social environment, workplace, or organisation and those with a diversity of beliefs, cultures, and nationalities, or those brought together by the moment's needs. It is the art of effectively coordinating human strengths and weaknesses to breed a humane and welcoming environment for the people involved in a relationship or professional engagement.

For interpersonal relations among people to be effective, Obiefuna (2018, p. 18-19) asserts that there must be a “conscious desire, intentionality, to understand oneself and understand others.” Understanding oneself should first involve knowing we are made for ourselves and others. Interpersonal relation is part of our being. The Igbo understanding of the human person situates a person within a network of relationships that he or she cannot avoid because it is part of his or her being. Humans are caught up in an intricate web of relations with God and other spiritual realities around them, including their ancestors. One is also convolutedly involved in the life of one's brother or sister, relations, and the community, part of which one is, and who help to give one his or her identity. Knowing that one is inseparably involved in this level of connectedness will propel Igbo people to be true to their nature by maintaining this network rather than weakening it. It will help them to preserve or promote those values and qualities that enhance togetherness, openness, love, and fraternity since we are all more or less one.

Some questions are pertinent. How can our understanding of the relations between the three divine persons aid relations among humans for a better society? Can we learn anything from the intra-trinitarian perichoresis and extra-trinitarian life for our growth in community life and love among ourselves? Van der Beek (2022, p. 4) thinks that the discourse on the Trinity should be restricted to the discourse on God and should not be applied in any form to relations among humans. His point is that the mystery of the divine being cannot be grasped by analogy. “Humanity,” he maintains, “is not a unity as the triune God is”. However, many theologians have tried to make sense of the trinitarian faith in the relationship among human beings and between them and the rest of creation. They argue that who God is and what God is for us should guide who we should be for our fellow human beings and the whole of creation. When Jesus invites us to be perfect as the heavenly Father is (Mtt 5:48), he not only posits God as the only perfect being but also as a model to inspire the Christian quest for holiness and oneness with God. Besides, using analogies drawn from God's dealings with man is also a way of accepting the inaccessibility and incomprehensibility of the divine being, which we can only mirror in our limited horizons.

Zizioulas (1995, 1997, and 2006) developed the concept of the social Trinity from the perspective of the Cappadocian Fathers (Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory Nazianzus) whose theology mainly dwelt on the mutual compenetration and indwelling by the three divine persons, which was captured by the concept of divine perichoresis. For

Zizioulas, these Fathers of the Church produced a masterpiece theology of the Trinity that would offer a check to Western individualism and reconceptualise being, making it grounded on the notion of person and not on an Absolute Immovable Substance. Zizioulas was worried that the doctrine of the Trinity was allowed to run out of relevance in the practical lives of Christians. He blames many theologians for failing to articulate the practical significance of the distinction of persons in the Trinity in the lives of believers while overstressing the unity of the Godhead. He asserts, "It is the other and our relationship with him that gives us our identity, our otherness, making us 'who we are', that is, persons" (Zizioulas, 2006, p. 166). Kasper's (2012) view matches that of Zizioulas when he opines that God, thought of as a person, has the advantage of showing that the utmost and decisive reality is not substance but person and that it is in the self-communicating love that the meaning of being is to be found.

Zizioulas points out three aspects of the Trinity that should be taken seriously for trinitarian theology to be relevant in the contemporary world: the question of God's being in his relation to the world, the question of God's being unto himself, and the relevance of trinitarian theology to ecclesiology. He believes that theology has the task of unravelling the significance of trinitarian theology in humanity's quest for personhood, autonomy, and the world's continued existence (1995, pp. 22-23, 29). Zizioulas (1997, p. 26) believes trinitarian theology has profound existential implications. It must serve as a source of genuine human interaction and existence in the world.

LaCugna (1993) is a renowned promoter of utilising trinitarian theology to enhance human relationships and address social problems. As a feminist theologian, she tries to make the doctrine of the Trinity relevant to women's struggle to retrieve their full humanity and personhood amidst the androcentric bias that has long become entrenched in society. For her, for the doctrine of the Trinity to remain significant, it must become relevant to the life of believers (LaCugna, 1993). LaCugna (1991) insists that God is fundamentally relational and that this divine life is what we are invited to share in our lives as Christians. According to her, the heart of Christian life is nothing but being united to God as we experience him in Jesus Christ through communion with one another. LaCugna asserts that to exist as a person is to exist as a relational being in complete self-reference to others. She points out that we are not created as closed units but with openness to all realities, and to be saved as a Christian is to live in communion with others. This is the ideal, she says, to which our Christian faith and life should be directed.

In his critique of the substance ontology of personhood, Medley (2002) also notes that to be is nothing other than to be in relation. He argues that when relationality is at the heart of being, it renders the reification and "monadization" of personhood, which privileges solitary existence over communion, isolation over togetherness and connectedness, and domination over fraternity and autonomy. Medley maintains that, given the notion of personhood in the Trinity, the primary conception of personhood includes relatedness, connectedness and mutuality and that any understanding of personhood that does not prioritise these is inauthentic because it would undoubtedly lead to its conception as self-contained, self-assured, self-governing, and independent. Communion, he maintains, enhances particularity rather than diminishes, blurs, or compromises it. Relationality, therefore, depends upon an undeniable diversity within unity and a unity that irresistibly finds its expression through an uncompromising diversity.

Human communion, non-human communion, and divine communion are involved in one another. Within this communion relationship, human beings are invited to live freely and graciously with God, their fellow human beings, and the entire creation, just as God related to the world. Thus, human relations should mirror divine relations because, as Medley (2002) succinctly notes:

connectedness and relationality find their source in God as Trinity or as God-in-relation-for-us. Our relationships with one another and with all creation are intrinsically shaped by our relationship with God, and our relationship with God is intrinsically shaped by our connectedness to others. (p. 113).

It has earlier been stated that the relation among the three divine persons is part of what makes for the identity of each of them; that one can only be known within the context of his relations with others. Similarly, among the Igbo, humans exist authentically only within the network of relations to which they are inextricably tied. Their capacities and abilities are best realised within the context of the community. The Igbo saying, *igwebuike* (community is strength), also points to the communal dimension of the life of the people. One's strength derives from one's connection with the community. One's association with the community could help one to accomplish better what one fails to achieve alone. This also underlies the Igbo belief that no individual, no matter how influential or wealthy he or she is, is greater than the community (*ofu onye a naghị akarị ọha*).

Conclusion

Effective human relations entails adequate understanding of oneself and others – knowing the abilities, strengths, desires, and affinities, as well as inadequacies, weaknesses, worries, and dislikes of oneself and those of others. It also involves being sympathetic and empathetic towards the other person and realising that the existence of the other and his or her presence calls one to duty, the duty to care, love, and appreciate the other, to see the other as a partner in progress in forging a better society for oneself and others. It means appreciating the dignity of the other and giving him or her his or her due respect and honour.

The Christian faith in the mystery of the triune God calls for an unbounded and unconditional love to one's brothers and sisters, neighbours and strangers, and even one's enemies. God's extra-trinitarian love is boundless and all-encompassing and without discrimination. His offer of salvation in his only beloved Son is open to all – Jews, pagans, men, women, the rich and the poor alike. St. Paul observes that Jesus came and offered his life for our sake even when we were his enemies because of our sins and unfaithfulness (Rom. 5:8-9); so is the activity of the Holy Spirit in the world.

The divine perichoresis is something Christians should look at and ask themselves questions regarding their relationship with their fellow human beings. Even though the three divine persons are essentially the same and are not individuals as humans are, as we worship the triune God, we need to appear before him united and not broken from our fellow human beings. We need to appear before him, conscious of how scandalous it is to promote injustice, hatred, and divisions along ethnic, religious or social lines. The African maxim of "I am because we are" and the Igbo belief in the human subject's inherent intra-personal and interpersonal relationality should remind Igbo Christians to always place effective human relations above all else as they witness to their faith in the triune God.

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