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The Apparent Plurality of God in African Philosophy

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Abstract

That an African is notoriously religious as affirmed by Mbiti, is a fact which has been tested and proven by many Philosophers. This aspect transcends all categories of the African expression and appreciation of life, in such fashion that every element is seen as intrinsically connected with the Supreme Being. The consequence is a multiplicity of names for the Supreme Being that gives the impression of a plurality. This paper, while affirming the exigency of the African "God" concept maintains that underlying the

seeming plurality is a fundamental unicity. The African God, so to speak, is but one God, viewed from different dimensions of an African's relationship with him in all aspects of the African life. This paper argues that western contentions that conclude to the multiplicity of Gods in Africa are misconceptions and misunderstandings of African Traditional Religion and its inherent belief systems and modes of expression.

Keywords: African Traditional Religion, God, Worldview, Unicity, Plurality, Creation, Christianity

Introduction

For an African, affirming the existence of all creatures boils down implicitly to affirming the existence of the creator. If in Western thought and other regions of monotheistic religion, the question of God appears clearer and well structured, what is the case of Africa? How is God conceived in the traditions and in African philosophies? Contrary to those who deny any belief in a supreme Being in Africa, Africa has very little to learn on the question since besides being very religious, belief in a supreme Being is a pervading thread of an African's religiosity. Across Africa, Africans have their own sense of the same Being which merits great attention from any researcher worth the name.

The question of the multiplicity of God in the African cosmic worldview arises from several fronts: from the existence of multiple cultural conceptions of God and multiple linguistic expressions of the same (different African languages have unique names for God which give the impression of multiple supreme Beings in the African worldview); from the failure to understand that for the African the supreme Being is distinct from the deities or divinities; from the plurality of religious rites in Africa; and from the attempt to generalize the western religious experience of God and to interpret the African's religious experience of the divine through the lens of the western religious experience. However, in spite of the great diversity in Africa, of the complex and pluralistic nature of its religious rites, Africans subscribe to the existence of a single Supreme Being or God. This paper seeks to clarify the precise conceptual identity of God in African thought.

Taking a close look at the Western conception of God, we come to the realization that the entire western world has not come to a unique and universal conception of God. Despite the apparent multiplicity of divinities in Africa which appears to move towards polytheism, the African people have their unique and proper way of talking about God.

The Plurality of gods in African Cosmic Worldview

The African cosmic worldview admits of the existence of a multiplicity of gods, also known as deities or divinities. This is the basis for the claim that the African religious worldview is polytheistic. These divinities are distinct from and ontologically inferior to the Supreme God whom Africans also believe to exist and who is utterly transcendent, ineffable, all powerful and good. While the Supreme God is omnipotent, omniscient and ubiquitous, the divinities are comparatively limited in the sense of being specialized in function, having territorial significance – are context and culture bound and even possessing seasonal relevance. These divinities serve as the immediate intermediaries between humans and the transcendent God, Supreme Being. The understanding is that the Supreme God is so far removed from man, so transcendent that to reach him, man needs to pass through the aid of intermediaries. Belief in God and in divinities as well as the religious practices consequent upon such belief is informed by the situations and realities of the different cultural groups of people in Africa. The question that arises here is

whether the multiplicity of divinities presupposes or even suggests the existence of a plurality of Gods or Supreme Beings in the African's worldview. Do the Africans uphold the existence of one God or of many Gods? Is the existence of Gods in the African worldview merely apparent or real?

In the cultural and religious worldview of the Nso people of NW Cameroon, a distinction is made between *Nyuy* (God) and *nyuy* (god) or *anyuy* (gods). This distinction is at two levels, conceptual and linguistic. *Nyuy* refers to the supreme God who is utterly transcendent and the creator of the universe (*Nyuybom*). For the Nso people, plurality is a defining characteristic of divinities. The plurality of divinities (*anyuy*) is an ontological and existential necessity for the good of man.

According to the historian, Herodotus, as presented by Oum Ndigi, Egyptians are the most religious of peoples.¹ They know of many gods. Among these gods, they know of four major gods: *Atoum/Re of Heliopolis*, *Ptah of Memphis*, *Amon-Re of Thebes* and *Osiris*, who form the principal divinities. Each of the gods is linked to a town. There is neither town nor village which does not honour its god. The priests make of it a demiurge by attributing to it the works of the great creator gods. For the priests of Memphis, who put forth the third myth of creation, the demiurge is none other than *Ptah*, God in human form. *Ptah* creates the world and all it contains by the word.² He then pronounces their names to bring them into existence.

Once the universe is formed, the *Noun* does not disappear. The world is threatened to return to chaos if worship is not regularly done to the gods in the temples. We should note here that each Egyptian god receives a particular veneration according to its function: *The Sun*, creator of the world, *Re* is one of the oldest gods of Egypt. During the day, he goes across the sky and lights up the earth. In the evening, transformed as an old man, he descends under the earth, in the world of the dead where he sails the whole night. After having triumphed from all perils, he is reborn in the morning in the horizon, under the form of *scarabee*. He is venerated in the temple of Heliopolis. *Ptah* receives worship in the temple of Memphis, and it was one of the biggest in the country. *Ptah* is a creator god and the patron of craftsmen. *Amon-Re*, the god of Thebes, imposes himself as the chief god and protector of royalty and of empire. *Osiris*, is the very popular god of the dead.

These gods are still present in Egypt. Among the most frequently figured divinities in the temples, ranks *Thot*, the god of writing and wisdom, messenger of the gods; *Hathor*, goddess of joy, of love and of the necropolis of Thebes; *Sekhmet*, wife of *Ptah* with the head of a lioness, who spreads sickness and epidemics but also heals them; *Khnoum*, with the head of Aries, venerated in Elephantine, where he created men as a potter and where he watches over the flood of the Nile; *Anubis*, with the head of a black jackal, the god of the Dead and of Embalming; *Isis* and *Nephys*, the sisters of *Osiris*, who help him to resuscitate the dead; *Hapy*, the woman with the feather on the head, who is

the incarnation of the equilibrium of the world created by the gods and of Truth.³

Also in Central African Republic, we note that the god *ngakola* is venerated by dance, to symbolize the pacific and joyous face of god.⁴

Another example is from Chad. Before going for war, there is a god to whom worship is rendered, who in turn intercedes to the Supreme God to permit the people to carry out firth both on the ground and in the air.

For the Bamileke in Cameroon, the people carry out the veneration of many divinities. For example, before you get into a compound, you notice some small houses constructed in honour of a god, protector of the family.

In *L'Etre comme generation*, we learn that:

Dans les pays du golf, les sacrifices sont offerts à des entités divines différentes du Dieu unique. Elles sont *orisha*. C'est les vodous, ce terme en langue fon, signifie mystérieux inconnaissable. Les vodou sont nombreux: les célestes comme le couple *Mawi-Lisa*, les terrestres *Fa* ou protecteurs individuels. Le problème, le même, se pose ici avec plus de clarté, celui du rapport entre le couple céleste entrevu le Dieu suprême unique et les dieux terrestres *Fa*.⁵

As already stated, these different gods conceived by the different people of Africa can be classified as intermediaries. These intermediaries are different for different groups of African peoples. This leads us to discard the idea of polytheism since the different intermediaries do not equate to God.

The Unicity of God

According to J.S. Mbiti, the ontology of African peoples admits of the existence of God – the Supreme Being and this belief in God is naturally “expressed in proverbs, short statements, songs, prayers, names, myths, stories and religious ceremonies.”⁶ Mbiti further contends that the knowledge and understanding that God exists pervades life in traditional Africa such that God is not a stranger to the African peoples and that in traditional life in Africa it is quite impossible to have atheists.⁷ The African peoples refer to God by various names and these names express their unique conceptions of the Supreme Being and the meaning this Being holds in their lives. The Nso people of Cameroon call Him *Nyuy Mbom* (The Creator God, source and guarantor of being and life); the Yoruba of Nigeria refer to Him as *Oludumare* which means “The King or Chief unique who holds the sceptre, wields authority and has the quality which is superlative in worth, and he is at the same time permanent, unchanging and reliable”⁸ or *Olorun* which means “the owner of heaven” or “the Lord of

¹Cf. OUM NDIGI, *Cours d'Égyptologie*, Université Catholique d'Afrique Centrale, Yaoundé, 2008, unpublished work.

² Cf. *Les corps humain dans l'Égypte antique*, www.aphg.fr/egypte1.ppt, consulted on 20/01/2011.

³ Cf. J. FEDRY, *Course notes in 'Anthropologie*, Grand Séminaire St. Luc de N'djamena in 1986, unpublished work.

⁴ Cf. PL SOLNIER, *Peuple D'autrui, une approche anthropologique de l'œuvre pastorale en milieu centrafricain*, Pro mundi vita Belgique, 1976, 62.

⁵ R. NDEBI BIYA, *L'Etre comme génération*, Paris, CERT, 1995, 104.

⁶ J.S. MBITI, *African Religions and Philosophy*, London, Heinemann, 29

⁷ Cf. Ibid.

⁸ E. C. EKEKE – C.A. Ekeopara, God, divinities and spirits in African traditional religious ontology, *American Journal of Social and Management Sciences* Vol.1, Issue 2, 2010, 211.

heaven”⁹ whereas the Igbo refer to him as *Chukwu* which means “the Great One from whom being originates”¹⁰ Nearly all indigenous African cultures hold to the view that the Supreme Being is not a class of different beings but is rather a single, unique Being who is above all, the source of all and the sustainer of all. The question of the unicity of God in Africa, seems to be understood by all in the same way. This may be due to the great consideration which Africans have for divinities, of mediators, and even to the great importance they attach to rites of initiation, in short, to the sacred (to the extent that the person to whom the rite is destined seems forgotten). The sacred character and respect given appears to show that God cannot mix with the sphere of men, he is withdrawn and we can only get to him through rites and sacrifices. This God who is withdrawn resembles the “One” of Plotinus, as Azombo and Meyongo put it: *Nyambe* est Un, si purement un qu’on ne peut pas l’exprimer ni le penser de sorte qu’à la fin on ne puisse pas dire qu’il est Un, ni même qu’il est, d’une part, mais aussi, on ne peut dire qu’il est l’Un qui est toute chose.¹¹

We cannot clearly say what God is yet the African does not remain silent as does Wittgenstein: *that which can be said can be said clearly; and that which cannot be spoken of, has to be passed to silence.*¹²

By means of the attributes, the African can talk about God, for example, God is Powerful, Perfect, Good, and Creator. There is but one God who has created everything, who is all powerful and all willing. All powers, all the ancestral and genius wills are but an emanation of Him.¹³ This understanding of God in Africa favours the real presence of intermediary beings who put man in contact with God. According to Vincent Mulago, God relates with men through the spirits. Azombo and Meyongo corroborate this when they state that: “*Nyamuzinda* is essentially good but there exist between him and men *Bazimu*. It is these latter who immediately influence life. With *Nyamuzinda*, man can and should have the means to attract benevolence of the spirits and to identify their move.”¹⁴

Another illustration of the idea of God in the life of the African is seen in the Rwandan culture. We take from the testimony of Nothomb: “...on my turn, after many Europeans arriving in Rwanda, I could not but be impressed by the place occupied by God in the Rwandan culture.”¹⁵ From his testimony, this preeminence is remarked by the place occupied by the name of God in the life of men. Given the sense of the name of God *Immana*, many names bear

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ S. AZOMBO – P. MEYONGO, *Précis de philosophie pour l’Afrique*, Paris, Fernand Nathan, 1981, 122 {*Nyambe* is One, purely one that we cannot express nor think of to the extent that at the end we cannot but say that he is One, nor that he is, on the one hand, but also, we cannot but say that he is the One who is all things (translation is ours)}

¹² L. WITTGENSTEIN, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, P. KLOSSOWSKI (trans.), Paris, 1961, 203.

¹³ Cf. L.S. SENGHOR, *Liberté 1 : Négritude et Humanisme*, Paris, Seuil, 1964, 25-26.

¹⁴ S. AZOMBO – P. MEYONGO, *Op. cit.*, 125 (translation is ours).

¹⁵ D. NOTHOMB, *Un Humanisme africain, Valeurs et pierres d’attente*, Bruxelles, Ed. Lumen Vitae, 1965, 89 (translation is ours).

this word as suffix, like, *Habyarimana* (it is God who begets) and *Hahingimana* (it is God who cultivates). This can also be seen in the Nso people of Cameroon for whom God is referred to as *Nyuy* and the bear names like *Nyuyki*, *Berinyuy*, *Nyuykighan*, *Biimenyuy*, *Mbiydzenyuy*, *Dzesinygy*. All these names portray the effect God has on the lives of these people.

The Closeness of God

This apparently far-off God is also the closest. This proximity includes the giving of Theophanous names, the permanence of the presence of God’s name in all circumstances of life. This is expressed by Pahizi when he says:

Le nom de Dieu (*Eso*) ne se perd jamais dans la bouche de l’homme; si u veux voyager demain en allant te coucher tu te dis: que Dieu me réveille bien demain; as-tu heurte une pierre, c’est d’abord le nom de Dieu que tu invoques; as-tu trouve quelque chose en chemin, tu l’écries Dieu m’a donné.¹⁶

The name of God invoked here is that of the Unique God who cannot be confused with divinities, talk less of intermediary beings.

We are in the presence of two realities in the African conception of God. These are externally paradoxical realities. The African God is “incomprehensible and mysterious”¹⁷; unique and mysterious in the sense that he is at the same time accessible and a little familiar. The paradoxical approach searched by a quasi-totality of Africans is only a way open on the unique God, for, “the bantou spirit easily reconciles the One and the Ones, that is, the unicity and multiplicity because it admits that the One is above everything and in everything.”¹⁸

God is the fecundity principle, in which sense, there is a way of talking of his unicity. According to Robert Ndebi Biya, the fecundity principle attributed to God is defined as simplicity and not as composition.¹⁹ The problematic is that in the African context, we talk of God or of many gods. But there is only one God who is the origin and substance of that which is; he is outside and above creation, and is personally engaged in this creation in a way that is not out of him or out of his reach. God is at the same time transcendent and immanent. For John Mbiti “there are about 300 tribes in all of Africa, with the exclusion of communities which are strongly Christians or Muslims, without exception, men know of one God who is the supreme Being.”²⁰ It is the most concise and fundamental notion of God and we can even say that we find it in all African societies.

As elsewhere around the world, the African manifests his belief in God by belonging to a religion. This has a great influence on the African society. But in Africa there is not just one religion. Animism considers all beings as living and intentional. This religion is without the clergy, but the head

¹⁶ I. PAHIZI, « *Les noms théophores chez les Kabiyedina du nord Togo* » in *Les noms Théophores, I*, Afrique et Parole, décembre 1972, 25.

¹⁷ J.S. MBITI, *Concepts of God in Africa*, London, SPCK, 1970, 26.

¹⁸ Cf. S. AZOMBO – P. MEYONGO, *Précis de philosophie pour l’Afrique*, *Op. cit.*, 123 (translation is ours).

¹⁹ Cf. R. NDEBI BIYA, *Op. cit.*, 103.

²⁰ J. MBITI, *Religions and African Philosophy*, Yaoundé, CLE, 1972, 39.

of the family. According to J. K. Zerbo, animists believe in an absolute and Supreme God, who is only invoked in particular circumstances, when the other gods are powerless. These gods are objects or fetish. People think they have beneficial virtues on those who carry them or evil in certain cases. "If you ask them from where their force comes, this activity, they will respond that it is God (*Nyamuzinda*) himself who has put it.²¹ God is thus unique in Africa despite his apparent plurality.

The Existence of God

The only argument to prove the existence of God for the African can be summed up in this: *vivo, ergo Deus est*. Man rejoices in a life which he did not give himself; life then can only be given me by the *Fully Alive*. It is therefore not because He is creator that God exists, but it is because he exists that he is creator. For the African, the notion of creator is secondary in relation to existence. That is why the Yoruba, for example, call God *Olurun*, that is *total life*.²²

The *total life* can be defined as *personal and acting energy*, as continuous activity and perpetually present in the present. Life is thus, the being of God and cannot be distinguished. God should be seen as life and not as possessing life, for God and life are not two distinct entities or realities.

The anteriority of God as absolute and as plenitude (fullness) of personal life, shows the priority of the total presence of life. God does not take his vital dynamism from any other, for his life is neither sudden nor received from outside; it does not present itself as a progressive acquisition whatsoever. God is total life, an immanent life which he gave himself through his self-sufficiency and power. He is "God, Lord God, who created himself."²³ The *Alive God* does not die, for he is eternally in life to which he gives himself without reserve or limitation. Thus, God is eternal because his life is perfect, because it is original and infinite life. Consequently, we understand that God, who is total life, becomes the source of life for derived existence: man, and the cosmos.

In fact, God is the first before every other thing; he is first cause, the vital source from which all other existence takes its origin. God is the generative source of man and the cosmos. As the root of a tree nourishes all the branches of the tree without losing its *rootness* in its vivifying activity, so too does God give life to derived existence without losing his being. God has given life with an inexhaustible and free liberty, without this prodigality causing any mutilations or alteration on him.

Furthermore, God cannot be classified among beings which have a derived existence. He is life itself in its inexhaustible plenitude; meanwhile other existing beings only possess life as being received from the exterior. God remains the transcendent source of existence in his vital plenitude.

The Creation Process

The African does not see the idea of creation as a continuous process. This notion wants that God should maintain derived existence in existence, in the measure itself of them being

the separation of the creator and the creature, and consequently the independence of various parts of time. If we say that creatures can only avoid disappearance if God recreated them continually, such a point of view will be going contrary to African thought. It is clear that God maintains man and the cosmos in existence, but it is as a result of him being the immanent cause and not the transient one. The African does not separate the creator from the creature, total life from derived life. In place of continuous creation, the African talks of the continuous action of God.²⁴ This is because God constitutes the internal dynamism of every existing being, and thus no part of time is independent of him. All of existence is only alive by virtue of their permanent dependence vis-a-vis God. Given that the notion of continuous creation shows the insufficiency of derived existence, the notion of continuous action underlines the foundation of their existential signification and guarantees their perenity. The life of derived existence can be maintained and has an authentic signification only in the measure that these existing beings accept to conform themselves to the continuous action of God, source of life, or order and existential harmony.

The Christian and African God

In conceptual terms, one would want to know the extent to which the Christian God shares attributes with the African God. John Mbiti has partially answered this question. In Africa, according to him, a "number of societies consider God to be omniscient, that is to know all things, to be simultaneously everywhere (that is, omnipresent) and to be almighty (omnipotent).²⁵ God's omniscience, says Mbiti, is absolute and that is why, according to him, the Zulu and the Banyarwanda call him *the Wise One*, the Akan, *He who knows or sees all*, while the Yoruba's would say *Only God is wise*.²⁶ All these attributes of God in African conception seem to agree with those of the Christian God.

The Yoruba believe that the nature of their God is such that He cannot be fully conceptualized. He is by his very nature too incomprehensible to the human mind.

However, it must be stated that Okotp'Bitek accused Danquah, Idowu, and Mbiti of being "intellectual smugglers" who "dressed African God in the Western robes." This view is supported by the use of terms such as *Ens Summum, Primum Movers*" etc., said to represent God or knowledge of God.²⁷ The African God is not a purely logical or rational God but a God of the heart. He is active, *Father-Mother*, the God of life, the giver of rain and children, the one who punishes evil and rewards good, not an Ideal God, an abstract entity or a logical being. Only the Western theory of knowledge can lead to a theoretical and detached God.

The African God is will rather than pure reason, that is, will to have meaning, purpose and value in life; will to live forever through re-birth. Naturally, the African theory of

²⁴Cf. Basile-Juleat FOUA, *Op. cit.*, 83.

²⁵John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, London, Heinemann, 1969, 30.

²⁶Cf. *Ibid.*, 30-31.

²⁷Cf. K.C. ANYAGWU, "African Religious Experience, in E.A. RUCH – K.C. ANYANWU, eds., *African Philosophy: An Introduction to the main philosophical trends in Contemporary Africa*, Rome, Catholic Book Agency, Agency, 1981, 161-176.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 123.

²² Cf. Basile-Juleat FOUA, *La Philosophie Négro-africaine de l'Existence*, Doctoral thesis, Université de Lille, 1967, 79.

²³ F.M. LUFULUABO, *Vers Une Theodiciee Bantoue*, Louvain, 1962, 15. (Translation, ours).

knowledge leads to an anthropomorphic God, to God conceived as a Person, a living Person, not an abstraction. This God-Person lives, suffers and desires, otherwise He would not be a Person. If the human being alone had feelings and emotions, then God could never hate or love, enjoy experience or suffer. He would be impersonal and lifeless. This Person-God is a reality immediately felt and lived. He is the Divinity, the giver of the experienced divine qualities. Only as a Person-Divinity, living and active, can He give meaning to experience and the universe. The divinity-God creates all things, that is, He is the author of all things. He creates man and manifests Himself in man. He is also collectively experienced because He is not an isolated being, for thus He would be merely the rigid God or a rigidly metaphysical Entity, as the theory of Monotheism. Rather, He is God of the universe, hence a universal Person, lived and felt, implying both individuality and universality.²⁸

Conclusion

The contention that there is a plurality of Gods in Africa is a western allegation owed to the misinterpretation of the African's religious worldview. It arises from the inability to make a distinction between God (the Supreme Being) and gods (the deities) in African Traditional Religion, an inability that results in confusing God with the gods or making God one of the gods. African Traditional Religion believes in the existence of one God or Supreme Being, This Supreme Being is given various names by different groups of African peoples depending on which of the attributes of this Being appeals more to their lives and consciousness. This multiplicity of names for the Supreme Being has been misconstrued as meaning multiple Supreme Beings and is therefore one of the reasons for the false claim that African Traditional Religion admits of a plurality in the Supreme Being. The Supreme Being is also revered and worshipped in through diverse indigenous rites and rituals, a diversity that expresses not a people's belief in the plurality of Gods but the richness of the Supreme Being and the richness in the traditional religion of the African peoples.

The African heritage as such, is very rich. It is purely historical, cultural, and religious.²⁹ These three characteristics make African philosophy an unrepeatable question. This is so because an African is notoriously religious- he eats, dresses, speaks and works religiously. His religion cannot be separated from his daily life. Gone is the time when the debate about the existence and nonexistence of African philosophy used to hold waters. Now is the time for practical evaluation of how the Africans view the world and live in this world.

African philosophy is the product of the thinking and experiences of its forefathers. They formed religious ideas, formulated religious beliefs, and observed religious rituals and ceremonies.³⁰ Religion has been at the centre of recent philosophical debate in Africa for two major reasons. The first is that many central canonical questions in pre-colonial Africa take a religious dimension in a bid to seek for answers, because the God of African philosophy is not the common *god of philosophers*. The second reason is whether distinctive African modes of reasoning exist. To these thoughts, we are most affirmative.

Moreover, the debate on the plurality of God in African philosophy according to Mbiti, is not relevant because there are not many gods but one Supreme Being who created the entire universe and all it contains. He adds that the idea of God and religion developed together with all the other aspects of the African heritage and therefore belongs to each people within which it has evolved.³¹ This means that religion is not preached from one people to another. Rather, a person must be born into a particular community so that he can learn to know God vis-à-vis the manner in which the people do. Hence, this idea of many Gods like in the Graeco-Roman world is not tenable in African thought patterns.

Noteworthy too is Mbiti's contention that this debate, rather than tearing peoples apart, ought to seek for points of contact between ATR and the Christian religion.³² This entails forming in all, the capacity to make a synthesis that will maintain the original and positive values of African traditional religious identity, whilst simultaneously remaining open to change as evident in Inculturation. Today, many people view God from the African perspective very negatively because they use scientific methods to study religion in Africa.

In the above light, Mbiti contends that sources of error in this debate came in the period of Charles Darwin with his theory of evolution. The study of this hypothesis was applied to human culture and especially to religion. Hence, ATR was seen as a religion which was still in its early evolutionary stages.

Mbiti consents once more that knowledge of God in African philosophy is not documented like in the case of Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. Religion permeates and pervades every aspect of life in Africa, for where the African is, there is his religion and there is God. Thus, there are about a thousand peoples in Africa and each has his own interpretation of God, yet the same God is worshipped in different ways according to their diverse cultures.³³

More so, the notion of a plurality of God in African philosophy is not a tenable one because the missionaries who came to Africa in and during the colonial period did all they could to eliminate the particular African ways of worship. Reacting very bitterly to this, Mbiti asserts that African religion and knowledge of God, is made more manifest on communal not individual grounds.³⁴ The missionaries brought Christianity and without adequate preparation and understanding of African cultural values, forced it upon the indigenes, who could not immediately abandon their traditions and rituals and embrace this new religion. Thus, the missionaries were among the first to talk of a plurality of Gods in African philosophy and religion.

Accordingly, African religion is an essential part of the life of every person in Africa. Its influence covers all of life, from before birth till long after one has died. People find it very useful and therefore try all they can to transmit it through myths, stories, proverbs and conversation. In fact, it is transmitted informally. Young people also learn by participating in the celebration of rituals, ceremonies and festivals.³⁵ As a consequence, every group has a unique way

³¹Cf. J. S. MBITI, *Introduction to African Religion* 14.

³²Cf., *Ibid.*, 14.

³³Cf. J. S. MBITI, *Introduction to African Religion*, 15.

³⁴Cf. *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁵Cf. *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁸Cf. *Ibid.*, 169.

²⁹Cf. J. S. MBITI, *Introduction to African Religion*, 13.

³⁰Cf. *Ibid.*, 14.

of interpreting its myths and proverbs and so anyone who is a stranger will think that there are many gods in Africa. No! Africans believe in one God, who is worshiped in different ways by the various diverse groups of people in the continent.

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