
Professor Uzukwu is a Spiritan priest from Nigeria and currently Professor of Theology at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, USA. He is one of the leading exponents of the theology of inculturation in Africa and has made significant contributions, especially to the inculcation of Christian worship in Africa, with his books *Liturgy: Truly Christian, Truly African* (1982) and *Worship as Body Language* (1997). It is therefore no surprise that his current book deals with the question of inculturation, with special focus on how to work out a conception of the doctrine of God in African Christianity.

Given that his past work has largely been on the question of inculturing Christian worship in Africa, one may wonder why the current book focuses on the doctrine of God. The reason for dwelling on the doctrine of God is given in the conclusion of the book: the author has not been quite comfortable with the direction which some reflections on the doctrine of God in Africa have been taking. Naming names, he expresses concern that some young African theologians reject African traditional religious context as starting point for this doctrine. This neglect, he opines, may lead Africans to forget that the African traditional religious context has had and continues to have enormous influence on how many Christians understand the Christian God today. Thus, in this book, Prof. Uzukwu sees the African traditional religious context as determinative for how the Christian doctrine of God should be, and is, understood, especially in West Africa. Of importance to the doctrine of God, however, is the African spiritualized cosmology, a world vision in which belief in spirits and gods is commonplace. For Prof. Uzukwu, therefore, the Christian doctrine of God in Africa should be anchored in the belief in spirits and gods in the African traditional religious contexts.

In working out his thesis, Prof. Uzukwu divides the work into two sections. The first section is made up of two chapters and it lays out the theoretical foundation of the African worldview that warrants a reassessment of the Christian doctrine of God. The second section is made up of five chapters and a conclusion and this section appropriates the African spiritualized cosmology, the development of the Biblical doctrine of God, and the religious anthropology of the North African Church Father, Origen, to elaborate a West African Christian doctrine of God. In all this, he insists that the Spirit/spirits should be the point of entry into the doctrine of God and God/religion in Africa is, and should be, understood as aimed at creating and maintaining human wholeness. An African doctrine of God, Uzukwu opines, should be based on the anthropocentrism and spirituality of African Traditional Religion (ATR).

The theoretical foundation of Uzukwu’s reexamination of the Christian doctrine of God from a West African perspective is the epistemological flexibility or duality of the West African worldview. This flexibility or duality is one in which things do not stand alone and things cannot be understood only from a single perspective. The fact that things do not stand alone or that things are not to be understood from a single perspective always necessitates a second look or a second viewpoint. Made popular by the famous Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe, this notion of always taking a second look at things is expressed thus by the Igbo of Nigeria: *ife kwulu ife akwudebe ya* (whenever something stands, something else
stands beside it’ (p. 12). This duality is expressed among the Dogon of Mali in their cosmological myth in which humans were created in pairs (p. 10). Within this context of epistemological flexibility, one point of view is never the only point of view and so absolutist or totalizing perspectives are anathema. This discussion of absolutism is critical to the doctrine of God especially given the fact that absolutist notions, such as monotheism, have created the arrogance of hoisting a single worldview as the only legitimate worldview, thus orchestrating violence across the world. If there is a single point which the author wants to get across, it is that the West African Christian conception of God is and should be non-absolutist. The West African epistemological flexibility opens up space for other views, especially other views of the Christian God, to be considered.

This flexible epistemology is, however, especially relevant to the question of the doctrine of God because the doctrine of God in Africa is located within the context of plurality. The Christian belief in one God needs to be reimagined within the context of the existence of spirits and many gods if this belief is to make sense to Africans. While, like Christians, West African societies believe in one God, unlike Christians, this one God is often transcendent and not the center of attention. The center of attention is often the spirits and the gods who are seen as mediating the presence of the one God to the people. These spirits and gods are however not seen as being in competition with the one God because their activities do not threaten the dignity of the one God who is only experienced in a diffused manner. The one God of West Africa is therefore not a jealous God but rather a God whose nature is manifested through the activities of the gods and other spiritual beings. Thus, the relationship which Africans have with the gods or the spirits should not be construed as antithetical to their relationship with God, as is often imagined; rather, it should be seen as their way of participating in the one, transcendent, mysterious God.

Constructing a Christian doctrine of God in West Africa from the data given above requires the recognition that such a God is not just singular but made up of the amalgamation of the qualities of other deities and spirits. Drawing from the development of the doctrine of God in the Old Testament, Uzukwu argues that such an amalgamation of the qualities of other deities into the conception of deity is not foreign to the development of Yahwism. The one God of the Israelites is therefore not just a single God but a God made up of the qualities of many other gods, including even Canaanite gods (pp. 113-118). Further, this God is not just a single absolute deity who calls for the destruction of other deities, but rather a transcendent deity who resolves into mysticism, a God beyond our usual conception of God, especially as seen in the manifestation of God to Elijah in the sound of sheer silence (pp. 122-123). This mysterious God of the Old Testament is the God who becomes the God of Jesus Christ, thus demonstrating the complexity and relationality inherent in the Christian notion of God. This complexity and relationality are especially manifested in the doctrine of God of some West African Pentecostal churches whose view of God is an amalgamation of the qualities of some deities in their context. In fact, in the West African Christian context ‘deities are radically transformed into the dimensions of the one Holy Spirit of God’ (p. 159). The dimension of the Spirit therefore becomes the dimension in which God is experienced in West African Christianity.

God is experienced through the dimension of the Spirit because the spirit is central to what it means to be human. Drawing from Origen’s portrayal of the human \textit{pneuma} as the