

Boston College

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A Cultural Appropriation of the Concepts of *Ubuntu*, *Ujamaa*, and *Deou* for Trinitarian  
Theology

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The Bishops of Africa, in whom the Catholic Church during those days found herself expressed in a special way at the Tomb of the Apostle, confirmed their steadfast belief that the greatness and mercy of the one God were manifested above all in the Redemptive Incarnation of the Son of God, the Son who is consubstantial with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit and who, in this Trinitarian unity, receives the fullness of honour and glory. This — the Fathers affirmed — is our faith; this is the faith of the Church; this is the faith of all the local Churches which everywhere in Africa are on pilgrimage towards the House of God.

“Ecclesia in Africa,” Holy Father John Paul II

## **General Introduction**

The question of the Trinity has generated unfinished debates throughout the history of the Church in general and the Catholic Church in particular. How can one God be constituted of three Persons in one substance and nature simultaneously? How do the Persons communicate? Is it not the same God who operates as Son and Holy Spirit to fulfill his desire for creation and salvation? The two Persons, Son and Holy Spirit, have they not been created like human beings but only superior to them? What can human beings learn from the Trinitarian perspective of unity? These questions and many others have created theological doctrinal controversies that have seemingly never ended. At the same time, different contexts and cultural realities have approached the Trinity according to their own languages and way of life.

In this thesis, I argue that in the history of the Church the question of the Trinity has been influenced by cultures, languages and ways of life. But despite these differences, there is a common understanding of the relationship among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I argue therefore that the Trinitarian relationality as it was understood by the fathers of the Church and by subsequent theology is fundamental in appreciating human beings' relationships with each other.

Trinity cannot be Trinity for itself. Because God is Trinity therefore relational, human beings learn how to be related with each other. Bishop Christopher Mwoleka did not hesitate to

say that Trinity is about imitation and doing/acting.<sup>1</sup> To imitate the life of the three Persons of God; this imitation involves doing/working by loving other people as oneself (cf. the Decalogue).

I will use the historical investigation method to understand Trinitarian relationality and its impact on African Christianity today. In three chapters I will focus on this investigation. The first chapter will elaborate the Trinitarian relationality approach in the cultures and the languages of the early centuries, the Cappadocians in the East, Augustine in the West, and in the sixteenth century Ignatius of Loyola. I will take a theological approach to each of the three Trinitarian theologies. I will seek to demonstrate that each approach was meant to respond to heretics denying the factuality of the three distinct Persons in one God and emphasizing the Trinitarian relationality. The Cappadocians considered the Trinity as Three Hypostases in relation as one substance, and Augustine held that the Three Persons can be understood as relational love. In the same perspective of relationship, Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, perceived the Trinity's role in relation to us as the *missio Dei*, that is, to announce the Gospel and contribute to the well-being of human beings. The Trinitarian relationality of the early thinkers helps us to understand how the three Persons are related among themselves and to human beings.

The Trinitarian relationality as expressed by the early thinkers is understood by sub-Saharan Africa's cultures, languages and living realities as "being together." The second chapter will focus on an African theological vision for togetherness. The key concepts will be *Ubuntu* and *Ujamaa*. *Ubuntu* is a concept used in the context of South Africa to resolve the wounds of apartheid in its three periods of pre-, during, and post-apartheid. *Ubuntu* is the term used for togetherness. In Tanzania, during the post-colonial period, a relative concept is used in terms of "familyhood" to explain togetherness and its implications, the concept of *Ujamaa*.

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<sup>1</sup> G. Joseph Healey, and Christopher Mwoleka, *Ujamaa and Christian Communities* (Eldoret, Kenya: Gaba Publications, Amecea Pastoral Institute, 1976), 15.

The third chapter will introduce the concept of *Deou*. *Deou* is a word for human being or person in one of the Chadian languages called Murum; this concept expresses the inter-relationship that exists in the life of Murum people. This inter-relationship is a cultural model of living that binds *Deoudje* (plural of *Deou*) together. The theological consequence of the concept of *Deou* is to allow the people of Chad to experience themselves as one despite their diversity. This model for Trinitarian relationality is the aim of this work.

I will stand on the shoulders of giants to do justice to this work. I will draw on three sources. The first is “historical” in providing documents on the Catholic doctrine found in the Cappadocians, Augustine and Ignatius of Loyola. The second source will be African, mainly 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century theologians who try to understand and contextualize the Trinitarian relationality in the context of Africa. The third and last source will come from a single African country, Chad. This third source will be contextualized in Chad's socio-economic and political situation and describe how the concept *Deou* can respond to Chad's problems. This is a theological perspective of the concept *Deou*.

## **Chapter I: Appreciating the Trinity: The Cappadocians in the East, Augustine in the West, and Ignatius of Loyola in the Sixteenth Century**

### **Introduction**

In this first chapter I will focus on the cultures and languages of the early centuries, the Cappadocians in the East, Augustine in the West, and in the sixteenth century Ignatius of Loyola to show how despite differences there are common concerns about Trinitarian relationality. The Cappadocians were instrumental in decisively defeating Arianism, partly through clarifying the relations within the Trinity, especially in the Eastern Church, whereas Augustine in *De Trinitate* and other writings were immensely influential in the Western Church. The later Christian doctrine of the Trinity was developed through controversies, and so it is necessary to pay attention to the false starts and wrong turns that characterized the story of the development. This will also lay the groundwork for appreciating the Trinitarian perspective of the sixteenth-century mystic and founder of the Jesuits, St. Ignatius of Loyola. Though Ignatius was not an accredited theologian like the three brilliant Cappadocian thinkers (Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa, whom I will treat as a group rather than singly) and the equally brilliant thinker and rhetorician Augustine, he combined authentically mystical insights with impressive organizational skills. Ignatius's Trinitarian perspective is under-appreciated.

In the early Church, some voices that denied the divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit had been raised. One group, later recognized as heretics, considered the two Persons as the mode of being of God; others held that they are creatures of God, like angels. To provide a framework for interpreting non-orthodox teachings, in this chapter I will show how early theologians argued that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are Three Divine Persons, and that they are intimately,

inseparably, and eternally linked in their substance. This substance is known in theological language as relation; thus, the Three Persons are related in their innermost being. The Trinitarian relationships should not be seen solely *ad intra*, in itself only, but *ad extra* in order to affirm the impact of that relationality toward the salvific plan of God.

To look ahead momentarily, we will see that Ignatius' experience of the Three Persons' relationship will consider the Trinitarian aspect of relationality *ad intra* through his mystical visions and *ad extra* through the salvific mission given by the Son to be their servant, that also led him to the foundation of the Society of Jesus.

### **1.1. Cappadocian Views of Persons and Substance in the Trinitarian Relationality**

#### **Approach**

The Cappadocians fashioned their language for Trinitarian relationality in light of the controversies that emerged in three periods: pre-Nicene, Nicene, and post-Nicene. In the pre-Nicene period, the early Christian apologist and writer against heresy, Tertullian of Carthage (c. 155-220), developed Trinitarian language for this purpose. Tertullian developed the theory of "person" to explain the Three Persons of God as relation.<sup>2</sup> He inserted it into Trinitarian discussion to explain the relationality of the Three Persons in God. Tertullian's argument is expressed by Gilles Emery:

God is 'Trinity,' as Tertullian explains. It is in order to express this real otherness of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that Tertullian developed the systematic use of the word 'person' (*persona*). The Father and the Son are distinct 'as regards person, not substance' (*personae, non substantiae*), this substance being one.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Gilles Emery, *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God*, 60-61.

<sup>3</sup> Gilles Emery, *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God*.

Tertullian maintained the otherness of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in one was necessary to respond to heresies. First, the followers of Adoptionism, one of the first radical heresies that denied the Trinity, taught that: “Jesus would not be the Son of God by nature but rather by ‘adoption,’ in a manner comparable to saints.”<sup>4</sup> Others professed that: “Christ Jesus had been a simple and pure man who, thanks to his virtuous life and by the gift of the Spirit that had been given to him, had merited to become ‘God’ by grace.”<sup>5</sup> The other heresy, Sabellianism, taught that God is one and nothing other than that; God has His mode of operation; he operates as the Father, as the Son, and as the Holy Spirit.<sup>6</sup> These heresies deny the fact that the Father and the Son are eternally and equally related.

Confusion and debate about *ousia* and *hypostasis*, however, would contribute to debates about Jesus and the “nature of the Logos.”<sup>7</sup> Five years after the Edict of Milan was issued by Emperor Constantine in February 313, Arius denied the full divinity of the Son. As I will show below, he rejected the idea that the Son is an uncreated being and equal to God. By professing the supremacy of God the Father over the Son, Arius showed how the two do not have a common origin in the substance but rather the Father is the cause of the substance of the Son. Arius’s position provoked a considerable division in the Church of the Roman Empire because denying the full divinity of the Son is the denial of the inner relationship shared by the Father and the Son.

In 325, Constantine I, then Emperor, called for the Council of Nicaea to avoid any division of his Empire. There the first draft of the Creed was adopted in favor of the language *homoousios* to talk about the consubstantiality of God the Father and God the Son; the creed implied the

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<sup>4</sup> Gilles Emery, *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God*, 59.

<sup>5</sup> Gilles Emery, *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God*.

<sup>6</sup> Gilles Emery, *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God*, 61.

<sup>7</sup> Bernard Charles Barmann, “The Cappadocian Triumph over Arianism” (PhD thesis, Stanford University, 1975), 4.

rejection of Arius's doctrine. The emphasis on the equality of the three divine Persons by the creed of Nicaea against Arius promotes a relational understanding of the Trinity.

According to Lewis Ayres, the Trinitarian controversies started in the mid-third century based on the use of the language of *ousia* and *hypostasis* to identify the Trinitarian relationality:

One of the most striking aspects of Nicaea in comparison to surviving baptismal creeds from the period, and even in comparison to the creed which survives from the council of Antioch in early 325, is its use of the technical terminology of *ousia* and *hypostasis*. There is, however, a huge difference between deploying terms that appear to fulfil a technical clarifying function, and understanding those terms clearly. There is in fact evidence that these terms had been the subject of debate and confusion since the mid-third century.<sup>8</sup>

As an attendant at the Council of Nicaea, Athanasius was deeply influenced by the language of the Council. Ibrahim Bitrus affirms in the line of Ayres that: "Athanasius' ideas of the mutual understanding of the Father-Son relationship and the co-divinity of the Spirit in the Godhead are the two key components of his Trinitarian thought."<sup>9</sup>

In the next of generation of theologians, as Gerald O' Collins argues, the Cappadocians went beyond Athanasius of Alexandria (296-373).<sup>10</sup> The Cappadocians used Athanasius' arguments to justify the mystery of the Holy Trinity by introducing and developing their proper language like coequality, coeternity of *hypostaseis*, persons/subjects, and with one *ousia* or essence/being/substance.<sup>11</sup> In the same vein Paul Collins observes that:

The terminology of personhood varied in the antiquity between three main alternatives: *prosōpon*, *hypostasis*, and *persona*. The two terms *ousia* and *hypostasis* are usually understood to have been synonymous until the clarification

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<sup>8</sup> Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 92.

<sup>9</sup> Ibrahim S. Bitrus, *Community and Trinity in Africa*, (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, 2018. Print.), 68.

<sup>10</sup> Gerald O' Collins, *The Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*. 131.

<sup>11</sup> Gerald O' Collins, *The Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*.

which was accepted at the Council of Constantinople (AD 381) on the basis of the distinction drawn out by the Cappadocian fathers.<sup>12</sup>

The terms *ousia* and *hypostasis* are very important because the Cappadocians will use them to explain trinitarian relationality.

The post-Nicene period was dominated by neo-Arianism like *anomoeans* and many others similar theoreticians who rejected the Nicene understanding of the Trinity. The Cappadocian participation in the Trinitarian relationality debate is seen in the third period with the neo-Arians,<sup>13</sup> especially against “*anomoeans*.”<sup>14</sup> Following the logic of Adoptionism and Arianism, *anomoeanism*, the target of the Cappadocians in the fourth-century, tried to differentiate itself by arguing: “the Son is a creature made from nothing by the will of God: the Son can neither see nor know the Father perfectly and accurately, but he can reveal the Father only inasmuch as he is the perfect reflection of the Father’s will.”<sup>15</sup> Like Arius, the *anomoeans* did not view the Son and the Holy Spirit as having an inner relationship of equality with the Father.

In response to these groups considered heretical, the particular contribution of the Cappadocians is related to the theological development of language of the three *hypostaseis* with *ousia* to explain the Trinity: “The common nature (*ousia*) of the three persons was now (with the Council of Nicaea) admitted and the formula of the three *hypostaseis* in one *ousia*, which was implied in the manifestoes, was soon under the leadership of the Cappadocians to become the rallying point.”<sup>16</sup> To oppose the heretics, the Cappadocians used these technical terms to

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<sup>12</sup> Paul M Collins, *Trinitarian Theology, West and East: Karl Barth, the Cappadocian Fathers, and John Zizioulas*. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. Print.), 115.

<sup>13</sup> Bernard Charles Barmann, “The Cappadocian Triumph over Arianism,” 4-5.

<sup>14</sup> The Anomoeans are a 4<sup>th</sup>-century Christian sect. The sect is an extreme version of Arianism that professed that Jesus Christ had neither the same nature with the Father nor a like nature with the Father as Arianism professed. Anomoeans are known as Heterousians, Aetians, or Eunomians as well; Ayres, *Legacy of Nicaea*, 144-149.

<sup>15</sup> Gilles Emery, *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God*, 63.

<sup>16</sup> Scot Douglass, *Theology of the Gap: Cappadocian Language Theory and the Trinitarian Controversy*, American university studies v. 235 (New York: Peter Lang, 2005.), 4.

emphasize Trinitarian relationality. The Cappadocians then influenced the Ecumenical Council of Constantinople I (381) by their Trinitarian theological languages that led to the Constantinople Creed.<sup>17</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus, for example, was one of the presiders of the first Constantinople Council.<sup>18</sup>

In a recent study, Scot Douglass notices that the primary reason the Cappadocians opposed the *anomoeans* was not their teaching on the nature of God *per se*; instead, it was rather their views of the Son and the Holy Spirit as created or uncreated existence.<sup>19</sup> Douglass states that conscious of the limitations of language, the Cappadocians did not attempt to emphasize the preceding arguments held by other theologians to prove the Triune God; on the contrary, they asked essential questions on the matter of the Trinity, resolved them, and silenced their opponents who denied the nature of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.<sup>20</sup>

The Cappadocians' language of *hypostases* to signify the Persons' relationality was in the line of pre-Nicene, Nicene, and post-Nicene understandings of Trinitarian relationality. This *anomoeanism* position does not consider the fact that some scriptural passages express clearly the equality of the Father with the Son: "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus' reply to Philip was the perfect explanation of his unity with his Father: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." (Jn14:8-9).

All the heretical languages and expressions mentioned above denied the fundamental reality of God one in substance and three in Persons. Therefore, the essence and relation of the Son and the Holy Spirit are not internal to and eternal with the Father. In this perspective, the

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<sup>17</sup> Gilles Emery, *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God*, 2009, 77.

<sup>18</sup> Gilles Emery, *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God*.

<sup>19</sup> Scot Douglass, *Theology of the Gap*, 29-30.

<sup>20</sup> Scot Douglass, *Theology of the Gap*, 58.

Cappadocians objected to those false teachings by developing their teaching through the use of the languages like *ousia* and *Hypostaseis*.

The Cappadocians considered *ousia* as substance and *hypostaseis* as persons. These Persons are ontologically relational in substance. Modalism rejected the language of relationship or reciprocal relationality of the Father-Son saying: “how could the Son, eternally or in the incarnation had a relation of reciprocal dialogue with the Father, praying to Him.”<sup>21</sup> From this modalistic standpoint, by virtue of the Father and the Son's eternal and internal relationship, the Son should know His Father's thoughts, and there would be no need for the Son to pray the Father if they are interrelated in the substance. Adding to this, the opponents of modalism said: “It would also make impossible for the Christians to establish a fully personal dialogue and relationship with each of the Three Persons of the Trinity.”<sup>22</sup> In response to Modalism, “Basil countered this tendency by stressing the fullness and ontological integrity of each person in the Trinity. He distinguished between one *ousia* and three *hypostases* in God.”<sup>23</sup> *Ousia* or essence called *substantia* in Latin is the essential element of the being of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;<sup>24</sup> this *substantia* constitutes their communality, oneness, togetherness, and relationship.

The Cappadocians insisted that in God, the relations are intrinsic. In other words, God is relational by nature, and there is no way to think of God outside His relational reality. Basil said openly: “We cannot conceive of either [Father or Son] apart from their relationship with each other.”<sup>25</sup> O'Collins states that: “We find in the Cappadocian theology an early intimation of the *perichoresis*, or ‘cyclical movement,’ the being-in-one-another of the Trinity. In unique

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<sup>21</sup> Declan Marmion, and Rik Van Nieuwenhove, *An Introduction to the Trinity*. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 72.

<sup>22</sup> Declan Marmion, and Rik Van Nieuwenhove, *An Introduction to the Trinity*.

<sup>23</sup> Declan Marmion, and Rik Van Nieuwenhove, *An Introduction to the Trinity*.

<sup>24</sup> Declan Marmion, and Rik Van Nieuwenhove, *An Introduction to the Trinity*.

<sup>25</sup> Gerald O' Collins, *The Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*.

‘coinherence’ or mutual interpenetration, each of the Trinitarian Persons is transparent to and permeated by the other two.”<sup>26</sup> As I will show in the second chapter, this affirmation used in the language of “being-in-one-another” is what sub-Sahara African philosophical (ontological and epistemological) and theological cultures and languages called in Bantu language *Ubuntu*, to signify togetherness.

This togetherness does not exclude the possibility that each of the three Persons has His own distinctive representation. Gregory of Nyssa argued that: “We are not told that the Father does anything by Himself in which the Son does not cooperate or that the Son has any isolated activity apart from the Holy Spirit.”<sup>27</sup> In this disposition, O’Collins quotes Gregory of Nyssa saying: “Every activity originates from the Father, proceeds through the Son, and is brought to perfection in the Holy Spirit.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, the Trinitarian approach of the Cappadocians is essentially relational in nature and functionality; the three Persons act as one person. In fact, there is no Trinity without relation.

The impressive contributions of the Cappadocians are without precedent and are important to reframe the false teachings of the time. Around the same time, the Bishop of Hippo, Saint Augustine, in the same position, also countered the enemies of the Trinity by deepening the understanding of person and substance.

## **1.2. Augustine’s Views of Persons and Substance in the Trinitarian Relationality Approach**

To explain coherently and understandably the Trinitarian relationality language, Augustine called on many sources to prove the factuality of the Trinity to those who rejected it, the heretics.

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<sup>26</sup> Gerald O’ Collins, *The Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*.

<sup>27</sup> Gerald O’ Collins, *The Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, 134.

<sup>28</sup> Gerald O’ Collins, *The Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*.

His sources are the Holy Scriptures, theological reflection, and other modes of argument, which were used by the bishop of Hippo, as will be shown below.

### **1.2.1. Scriptural and Theological Demonstrations of Trinitarian Relationships in Augustine's Views**

Given the acceptance of the existence of God by the theologians whose perspective of Trinitarian relationality was different in a subordinationist perspective, Augustine did not devote much attention to the question whether God exists or not; he focused rather on demonstrating the divinity and relationality of the Son and the Holy Spirit together with the Father. In the course of doing that, he deepened his understanding of the factuality and/or foundation of the Trinity. Augustine noticed that some people denied that “Father is God, and the Son God, and the Holy Spirit God and yet that this Trinity is not three Gods, but one God.”<sup>29</sup>

By way of developing and understanding the language of the unity and the equality of the Father with the Son, and with the Holy Spirit, Augustine acknowledged that the scriptural materials should be the foundation of his argument:

The purpose of all the Catholic commentators I have been able to read on the divine books of both testaments, who have written before me on the trinity which God is, has been to teach that according to the scriptures Father and Son and Holy Spirit in the inseparable equality of one substance present a divine unity; and therefore there are not three gods but one God; although indeed the Father has begotten the Son, and therefore he who is the Father is not the Son; and the Son is begotten by the Father, and therefore he who is the Son is not the Father; and the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son, but only the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, himself coequal to the Father and the Son, and belonging to the threefold unity.<sup>30</sup>

To argue coherently, Augustine did not start treating all three Persons of the Trinity together. He treated in the first position, the relation between the Father and the Son, and only later

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<sup>29</sup> Marcus Dods et al. *The Works of Aurelius Augustine. A New Translation, De Trinitate V, VI, and VII* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871), 8.

<sup>30</sup> Augustine, *Trinity*, 1.2.7.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as a pedagogical procedure to comprehend clearly and distinctly the mystery of the Trinity:

Those who have affirmed that our Lord Jesus Christ is not God, or is not true God, or is not with the Father the one and only God, or is not truly immortal because he is subject to change, have been confuted by the utterance of the clearest and most consistent divine testimonies, for example *in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God* (Jn 1:1). It is clear that we are to take the Word of God for the only Son of God, of whom he goes on to say, *And the Word became flesh* (Jn 1:14), with reference to his incarnation and birth which took place in time of the virgin. Now in this passage he clearly shows that he is not only God but also of the same substance as the Father, for after saying *and the Word was God*, he adds, *this was in the beginning with God*;<sup>31</sup>

Augustine, by demonstrating the language of the consubstantiality and distinguishing the Father from the Son through the passage of John, did not allow the possibility of separating radically the Father from the Son. Augustine went further to show how this Word of God is in the beginning of creation, and everything was made with him:

*All things were made through him, and without him was made nothing* (Jn1:2). By all things he means only what has been made, that is every creature. So, it is crystal clear that he through whom all things were made was not made himself. And if he is not made, he is not a creature, and if he is not a creature he is of the same substance of the Father. For every substance that is not God is a creature, and that is not a creature is God. And if the Son is not of the same substance as the Father he is a made substance; therefore, he is of one and same substance as the Father. And thus, he is not only God, but also true God; as the same John says quite explicitly in his epistle: *We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding to know the true one and to be in the true one, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and life everlasting.* (1Jn 5:20)<sup>32</sup>

To explain the Divinity of the Holy Spirit, Augustine, once more, went back to the Holy Scripture, in a precise, clear, and scholarly language saying:

But the place which makes it most evident that the Holy Spirit is not a creature is the one where we are bidden not to serve the creature but the creator (Rom 1:25)—serve, not in the sense in which we are bidden to serve one another in charity, which is *douleuein* in Greek, but in the sense in which only God is served, *latreuein* in

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<sup>31</sup> Augustine, *Trinity*, 1.2.9.

<sup>32</sup> Augustine, *Trinity*, 1.2.12.

Greek, hence the name “idolaters” for those who offer to images the service owed to God. As regards this service it is said, *The Lord your God shall you adore, and him only shall you serve* (Dt 6:13). This is clearer in the Greek text, which has *latreuseis*. Accordingly if we are forbidden to serve the creature with such service as this, in that it is said *The Lord your God shall you adore, and him only shall you serve*—which is why the apostle abominates those who *have worshipped and served the creature instead of the creator* (Rom 1:25); then the Holy Spirit is certainly not a creature, since all the saints offer him such service, according to the apostle's words, *For we are the circumcision, serving the Spirit of God* (Phil 3:3), which in the Greek is *latreuontes*. Most of the Latin codices have this too: *qui spiritui dei servimus*, we who serve the Spirit of God; the Greek ones all have it, or nearly all. But in some Latin copies, instead of *spiritui dei servimus*, we find *spiritu deo servimus*, we who serve God in the Spirit.<sup>33</sup>

In the same perspective, to show how the Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity, Marcus Dods finds the below passage as an irrefutable argument that justifies without contest the Divinity of the Holy Spirit saying:

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you. (Jn 26:13-15)<sup>34</sup>

This quotation proves that Augustine maintained that, in the same way, the Son declared his unity with the Father, “All that belongs to the Father is mine,” the same way the Holy Spirit does for the Son: “He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come”<sup>35</sup> does not mean the Son is superior to the Holy Spirit; it is their *modus operandi* that justifies their unity, togetherness or their internal unseparated relation with each other. Is this argument sufficient to conclude on the Augustinian approach to the Trinitarian based on their inner relationships? To respond to this question, Augustine developed his views theologically as well rather than focusing on through the scriptural considerations only.

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<sup>33</sup> Augustine, *Trinity*, 1.2.12.

<sup>34</sup> Augustine, *Trinity*, 2.3.5.

<sup>35</sup> Augustine, *Trinity*, 2.3.5.

Theologically, in the Augustinian language, substance (by opposition to the changeable accident) is an unchangeable element among the three Persons. This substance is neither changeable nor accidental but eternal. Augustine stated that when the Son says: “I and the Father are one!” it is according not to the accident but to the substance, which substance derives from the fact that the Father is unbegotten and the Son is begotten.<sup>36</sup> The substance is the eternal element that unifies the two Persons. Here Augustine, for the first time, clearly and openly recognized the term *ousia* or “substance” (in the Cappadocians’ perspective) as the same as “essence.” In addition, in chapter five of Book 5 of *De Trinitate* he affirms that nothing is spoken of God according to accident, but according to the substance or according to relation.<sup>37</sup> Augustine argues in favor of relationality in these terms:

But if the Father, in that He is called the Father, were so-called in relation to Himself, not to the Son; and the Son, in that He is called the Son, were so-called in relation to Himself, not to the Father; then both the one would be called Father, and the other Son, according to substance. But because the Father is not called the Father except in that He has a Son, and the Son is not called Son except in that He has a Father, these things are not said according to substance; because each of them is not so-called in relation with Himself, but the terms are used reciprocally and in relation each to the other; nor yet according to accident, because both the being called the Father, and the being called the Son, is eternal and unchangeable to them. Wherefore, although to be the Father and to be the Son is different, yet their substance is not different; because they are so-called, not according to substance, but according to relation, which relation, however, is not accident, because it is not changeable.<sup>38</sup>

In Augustine's language, the distinction between the unbegotten and the begotten lies in their relation. This Father-Son relationality is extended to the Holy Spirit. The mutuality, togetherness and relationality of the Holy Spirit with the other two Persons is a communion of the Father and the Son; and this same communion is perceived through His procession from the Father

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<sup>36</sup> Augustine, *Trinity*, 5.6.7.

<sup>37</sup> Augustine, *Trinity*, 5.6.7.

<sup>38</sup> Augustine, *Trinity*, 5.5.6.

and the Son.<sup>39</sup> Augustine did not stop at purely speculative explanation; he spoke in human and concrete language by introducing the triad of Lover, Beloved, and Love.

### 1.2.2. Augustinian use of Love as Substance and Love as Relation

For Augustine, God/Godhead is Love as relational substance, Lover is the Father, the Beloved is the Son, and in between the two, there is Love that is Holy Spirit.<sup>40</sup> Before developing his triad theory of love, Augustine cleared his ground saying:

Let no one say: 'I do not know what I should love.' Let him love his brother and he will love the same love. For he knows the love by which he loves more than the brother whom he loves. And so, God can now become more known to him than his brother, actually more known because more present, more known because more within him, more known because more certain...

One may object: "I see love and I conceive it in my mind as best I can, and I believe the Scripture when it says: 'God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God,' but when I see it I do not see the Trinity in it." But by the matter of fact, you do see the Trinity if you see love. But I will give you a proof, if I can, so that you may see that you do see the Trinity; only let love itself be present that we may be moved by it to something good.<sup>41</sup>

This human language introduced by Augustine is an appeal to human beings to the sweetness of brotherly love as the starting point in knowing the Trinity. For Augustine, the *sine qua non* to knowing the triune God through love is to love the love no matter what, in other words is to have faith.<sup>42</sup> Augustine did not invent his theory of love; he got his inspiration from the Holy Scriptures to explain the mystery of the Trinity, principally from the First Letter of John: "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God. And everyone who loves is born in God, for God is love" (1 Jn 4:7).<sup>43</sup> The same triad of lover, beloved and love led Augustine to analyze the

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<sup>39</sup> Augustine, *Trinity*, 5.11.12.

<sup>40</sup> Augustine, *Trinity*, 9.2.2.

<sup>41</sup> Augustine, *Trinity*, 8-15. & 8.8.12.

<sup>42</sup> Augustine, *Trinity*, 8-15. & 8.8.12.

<sup>43</sup> Augustine, *Trinity*, 8-15.

notion of mind, love, and knowledge. Augustine came to the conclusion that these three entities are different though related in substance or mutually relational:

But we have shown above, how all are in all, since the mind loves itself as a whole, and knows itself as a whole, and knows whole its love, and loves all its knowledge, when these three are perfect in respect to themselves. These three, therefore, are in a marvelous manner inseparable from one another; and yet each of them is a substance, and altogether are one substance or essence, while the terms themselves express a mutual relationship.<sup>44</sup>

Augustine applied his language of mind, love, and knowledge to understand how the three Persons in God are lover as the Father, beloved as the Son, and love as the Holy Spirit; three in one that is love. The question that may arise from this understanding is that if the Holy Spirit is love, how do we understand the identification of Godhead as love? To this question, Augustine answered that the love of the Holy Spirit is the unifying love,<sup>45</sup> the love that unifies the Father with the Son, like the Spirit of the Father and the Son, are not two spirits but one Spirit shared totally by the two Persons, which is called Holy Spirit.

According to O'Collins, Eastern theologians have criticized Augustine's analogical language of Love because it seems to depersonalize the Spirit and not express the position of the Holy Spirit as an independent entity within the Holy Trinity: "Eastern Christians have criticized this analogy for depersonalizing the Holy Spirit or at least for not allowing the identity of a distinct person to come through clearly."<sup>46</sup> If the Eastern theologians' perception of Augustinian analogy is right, the divinity of the Holy Spirit maybe lost in the divinity of the Father and the Son. But, as the below lines will show, Augustine did not attempt to undermine the divinity of the Holy Spirit, rather he expressed the love of the third Person as a unifier love. The vital argument held by O'Collins is:

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<sup>44</sup> Augustine, *Trinity*, 8-15. & 8.9.8.

<sup>45</sup> Augustine, *Trinity*, 8-15. & 9.2.2.

<sup>46</sup> Gerald O' Collins, *The Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*. 135

After all, in the I-Thou relationship, the mutual gift of Love that two persons bestow on each other is not a third person or at least does not emerge as an activity that defines a person distinct from the I and the Thou. What limits the mutual Love that finite creatures have for one another is not true at the divine level. God is Love (Jn 4:8,16).<sup>47</sup>

This language considers God as Love, which means it is the fundamental and relational attribute that characterizes each one of the three Persons. If God is Love, it is evident that Love is the essence, the substance of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But, again, if Holy Spirit is perceived as Love by Itself, the notion of proceeding from the Father and the Son may be a problematic question to respond to; because Love is not an exclusive property of the Holy Spirit but It belongs to the Three simultaneously. The bishop of Hippo went further than the Cappadocians in justifying in simpler language the relation that exists among the three Persons of God in Love as essence.

By using the language of Love to characterize the interpenetration (being together) that exists eternally among the Three Persons, Augustine did not want to negate one Person and favor the other two. His idea was to show how intimate, powerful, unseparated, and perichoretic they are so that talking about one Person implies the two others. And the defining word of the relationship among them is Love. The Father so loves the Son that He gives Him His whole Love in a way that their relationship is made of Love that is the Holy Spirit. If there is no discussion about which of the three Persons in God, and Love is the highest of God's attribution, then Love itself belongs to all the three Persons. When we say God, our Father is omnipotent, powerful, merciful, a king, everlasting, eternal, we are talking about the three Persons simultaneously. On the human side, when we say we love God, we love the three Persons at once. And when we say, "I love God," it does not mean that love is outside God; we love God with His own Love. That is

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<sup>47</sup> Gerald O' Collins, *The Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*.

why, as much as the justification of God through Love is difficult, there is an effort to understand that the three Persons are related in Love. Their relationality is perceived in the language of Love, and only Christian faith or belief can penetrate this Trinitarian relationality mystery adequately. This love is not an exclusive and selfish love that exists only within the three Persons of God, but it is a shared love that the Holy Trinity in communion shares with human beings through the incarnation of the second Person, the perfect image of God: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him might not perish, but might have everlasting life.” (Jn3:16). The mission of Jesus is binary oriented. On the one hand He is sent to share the life of the Holy Trinity with human beings, life of peace, love, justice, and reconciliation; and through this, on the other hand to show how people should be living united with one another, knowing that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. Being in the image and likeness of God establishes God-human and Human-God relationships, because the Holy Trinity shares his being with humanity, as Augustine is particularly interested in the language of the image of God in Book 15. 2 & 3, to concur with the Book of Genesis that says: “Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness.” (Gn1:26).

But this God-human and Human-God relationship should be extended to human-human relationship as mission that is turned from human beings to one another. The mission to announce the Gospel and contribute to the well-being of human beings. That is why, to offer a balance to the views expressed here, I will now present a thinker (or doer) whose Trinitarian relationality language is more contextual and experiential, Ignatius of Loyola.

### **1.3. Trinitarian Relationality in the Experience of Saint Ignatius of Loyola**

Born in October 23, 1491, the native of the Basque province of Guipúzcoa in Spain, Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, was youngest son of six brothers and three sisters of Beltrán Ibáñez de Oñaz y Loyola and Marina Sánchez de Licona.<sup>48</sup> In the course of his life Ignatius underwent a radical conversion from a glory-seeking soldier to a soldier of Christ. This transformation took place after a battle at Pamplona against the French in which he was struck by a ball that damage his right leg. Allowed to return to his family's castle by the enemy convalescing in his family castle, he requested books of chivalry to avoid boredom, but the only books available to him were those related to the life of Christ and of the saints.<sup>49</sup> The readings of the future founder of the Society of Jesus led to a paradigm shift in his life. When he read the life of St. Dominic and St. Francis he was inspired: "St. Dominic did this, therefore, I have to do it. St Francis did this, therefore I have to do it."<sup>50</sup> The beginning of his journey was the beginning of his experience with the Holy Trinity, as the following lines will show. Ignatius saw the trinitarian relationality approach through an anthropo-cosmological lens. He approached the Trinity through meditation and contemplation of the world and he was struck by God's intent to rescue fallen humanity and save it.

#### **1.3.1. Trinitarian Relationality in the Mystical Vision/Experience of Ignatius of Loyola**

While the Cappadocians and Augustine approached trinitarian relationality mostly in a speculative way, Ignatius drew his perspective from his own experience. Without doubt, the

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<sup>48</sup> Joseph N. Tylenda, trans., Luís Gonçalves da Câmara, *A Pilgrim's Journey: The Autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola*. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991. Print.), xiv-xv.

<sup>49</sup> John Charles. Olin, et al, *The Autobiography of St Ignatius Loyola, with Related Documents*, (1<sup>st</sup> Harper Torchbook ed. New York: London: Harper & Row, 1974. Print.), 21.

<sup>50</sup> John Charles. Olin, et al, *The Autobiography of St Ignatius Loyola, with Related Documents*, 22-23.

starting point of the conversion of Ignatius of Loyola is located in his reading of the life of Christ and saints. Despite his desire to visit the Holy Land,<sup>51</sup> his desire was gradually confirmed through his mystical vision of the Holy Trinity not as a demand but as a mission that had been gently laid on him like saint Paul: “Yet when I preach the Gospel, I have no reason to boast, because I am obligated to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” (1 Cor 9:16).

Ignatius of Loyola’s desire to serve God was confirmed through five mystical visions. Ignatius wrote that he had five visions that constituted the beginning of his dedication to serve God during his stay in Manresa. The first experience that he recalls was that “he saw the Most Holy Trinity in the form of three keys.”<sup>52</sup> The second experience depicted the creation of the world as God’s work. The third experience was about the presence of Christ in the eucharist. The fourth experience was the humanity of Jesus Christ and the appearance of Our Lady. The fifth and last experience concerned how God was dealt with him as a teacher to a student.<sup>53</sup> In these five experiences, Ignatius’ spiritual visions began from transcendental vision to immanence, from Trinitarian understanding *in se* to *ad extra* work of the Trinity through the contemplation of the world.

In Ignatius’ spiritual journey, two of Ignatius’ first companions, Father Lainez and Father Nadal described his profound experience of the Trinity. Lainez recounted, “He told me other things concerning visitations which he had relating to the mysteries of the faith, as on the Eucharist, the

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<sup>51</sup> John Charles. Olin, et al, *The Autobiography of St Ignatius Loyola, with Related Documents*, 24.

<sup>52</sup> John Charles. Olin, et al, *The Autobiography of St Ignatius Loyola, with Related Documents*, 37. The understanding of three keys worn together differs from cultural background of people. Some people consider as “unlocking of the doors to health, wealth and love,” others think that “The three keys are said to unlock the secrets to wisdom, life and love.” In the biblical account, it represents confidence, gatekeeper, guardian, success, as it is mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew about Peter: “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my Church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Mat: 16:18-19). According to John Charles, these three keys produce one single sound in the musical world (38). And this could mean three Persons produce one God in substance and relation.

<sup>53</sup> John Charles. Olin, et al, *The Autobiography of St Ignatius Loyola, with Related Documents*, 38-40.

Person of the Father especially, and for the certain time subsequently, I think, concerning the Person of the Word, and finally concerning the Person of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>54</sup> In the same vein, father Nadal said:

Father Ignatius received from God the singular grace to contemplate freely all the Most Holy Trinity, and to repose in this mystery. For, at times he was seized by the grace of contemplating the whole Trinity, and impelled towards it... sometimes he contemplated the Father, sometimes he contemplated the Son, and sometimes the Holy Spirit.<sup>55</sup>

Ignatius of Loyola incorporated all his spiritual experiences into the “Spiritual Exercises” in a manner that invites retreatants to meditate and contemplate the presence and the work of the Holy Trinity in their life. For instance, on the first day of the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises, in the first point Ignatius invites all the retreatants to begin with the contemplation of the world: “First those on the face of the earth, so diverse in dress and behavior: some white and others black, some in peace and others at war, some weeping and others laughing, some healthy and others sick, some being born and others dying, and so forth.” (Ex 106) This first contemplation helps retreatants to discover the realities of the world. Ignatius went further in asking to retreatants after contemplating the earth to elevate themselves to the contemplation of the Holy Trinity looking at the world as well: “Second, I will see and consider the three Divine Persons, seated, so to speak, on the royal canopied throne of Their Divine Majesty. They are gazing of the whole face and circuit of the earth; and they see all the peoples in such great blindness, and how they are dying and going down to hell.” (Ex 106). This second part, which is linked to the first becomes an important element in the salvific plan of God. Indeed, the contemplation of the Trinity in the

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<sup>54</sup> William J. Young, *The Spiritual Journal of St. Ignatius Loyola: February, 1544-45* (Woodstock, Md.: Woodstock College Press, 1958. Print.), vi.

<sup>55</sup> William J. Young, *The Spiritual Journal of St. Ignatius Loyola: February, 1544-45*, vii.

Spiritual Exercises is the contemplation of the decision of God to come down, on earth, to save human race as it was for the people of Israel in Egypt:

The Lord said, “I have seen the affliction of My people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their oppressors, and I am aware of their sufferings. I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey.” (Exodus 3, 7-8).

Ignatius continuously invites the retreatants to hear the conversation among the three Divine Persons in this way: “let us work the redemption of the human race.” (Ex 107). This redemption passes through the incarnation of the second Person. For Ignatius, contemplation of the world and its needs on the one hand opens the possibility seeing how people on the earth live amid injustice, violence, killing, corruption, raping, social inequalities, in brief, sins that will lead them to hell. On the other hand, it portrays the decision of the three Divine Persons to send the second Person in the human beings amid to establish his kingdom, the kingdom of peace, justice, and reconciliation. Ignatius asks the retreatants to contemplate the above human realities and the divine will to save humanity “to draw some profit from each of them” (Ex 108). This contemplation should be a movement towards responding to the will of the Trinity to save humanity. Human beings, especially Christians, have the responsibility or mission to carry out the will of God by contributing to that salvific plan of God, that is, to work for the kingdom of God on earth. Ignatius understood this very well when he wrote, “Human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by means of doing this to save their souls.” (Ex 23). In his concrete understanding, praise, reverence, and serving God is the mission of humans. Praising and reverencing are oriented toward God; serving is also oriented toward God but also oriented toward human beings. Serving God should be understood as serving people in the name of God just as Saint John says about love: “Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For

whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen” (1Jn4:20).

### **1.3.2. Christian Life as Redemptive Mission Willed by the Holy Trinity in Ignatius’ Understanding**

Ignatius of Loyola shared his experience of Trinitarian relationality with his companions. The first companions (Ignatius, Francis Xavier, Pierre Favre, Diego Laínez, Alfonso Salmerón, Nicolás de Bobadilla, and Simão Rodrigues) decided in 1538 to go to Jerusalem in pilgrimage. They agreed to go to Rome to preach, give spiritual exercises, and work toward forming the Society of Jesus while they waited for winter to end and the spring weather that would enable them to sail to Jerusalem. The companions had divided themselves into small groups; Ignatius himself was with fathers Favre and Laínez.<sup>56</sup> Once on their way to Rome, Ignatius of Loyola experienced a strange vision at La Storta, a village about eight miles from Rome. Tired from their journey, they decided to rest and pray in the Chapel of the place. There, Ignatius, in his mystical vision, saw “God the Father together with Jesus, who was carrying his cross.”<sup>57</sup> This exceptional vision conveyed a particular message that would change Ignatius’ life:

Both Father and Son were looking most kindly upon him, and he heard the Father say to the Son “I wish you to take him as your servant.” Jesus then directed His words to the kneeling pilgrim and said: “I wish you to be our servant... Then he heard the Father add: “I will be favorable to you (in plural) in Rome.”<sup>58</sup>

The above quotation confirms the election of Ignatius of Loyola to be Most Holy Trinity’s servant, on the one hand, and, on the other, communicates the approval of the Trinity to make the

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<sup>56</sup> Joseph N. Tylenda, and Câmara, Luís Gonçalves da, 1520-1575, *A Pilgrim's Journey: The Autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola*, 176.

<sup>57</sup> Joseph N. Tylenda, and Câmara, Luís Gonçalves da, 1520-1575, *A Pilgrim's Journey: The Autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola*, 178.

<sup>58</sup> Joseph N. Tylenda, and Câmara, Luís Gonçalves da, 1520-1575, *A Pilgrim's Journey: The Autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola*.

Society of Jesus a missionary congregation to announce the Gospel. Ignatius of Loyola believed through his vision in the *La Storta* that his mission was to serve the Holy Trinity through human beings both individually and as a member of the group of first companions and that the mission was willed by the Triune God. The Trinitarian mission of Ignatius would become the mission of the entire Society of Jesus, a mission stated in broad terms as the “Formula of Institute of the Society of Jesus,” which stipulates:

Whoever desires to serve as a soldier of God beneath the banner of the cross in our Society, which we desire to be designated by the name of Jesus, and to serve the Lord alone and the Church, His spouse, under the Roman pontiff, the vicar of Christ on earth, should, after a solemn vow of perpetual chastity, poverty, and obedience, keep what follows in mind. He is the member of a Society founded chiefly for this purpose: to strive especially for the defense and propagation of the faith and for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine, by means of public preaching, lectures, and any other ministration whatsoever of the word of God, and further by means of the Spiritual Exercises, the education of children and unlettered persons in Christianity, and the spiritual consolation of Christ’ faithful through hearing confessions and administering the sacraments. Moreover, this Society should show itself no less useful in reconciling the estranged, in holily assisting and serving those who are found in prisons or hospitals, and indeed in performing any other works of charity, according to what will seem expedient for the glory of God and the common good.<sup>59</sup>

It is clear in the mind of Saint Ignatius and his first companions that the mission that was given to the Society of Jesus by the Holy Trinity was to work toward evangelization and contribute to the social good of human life. It would be worthy to mention here that Ignatius of Loyola did not identify the relation between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit explicitly as Holy Trinity in the Spiritual Exercises or in the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus; he rather substantiated Holy Trinity with other names:

The trinitarian horizon in the Exercises appears in a less explicit, but nevertheless very real way when Ignatius refers to God as ‘His Divine Majesty. From the context in the Exercises and its use in the *Spiritual Journal*, Ignatius is referring to the Trinity when he uses the expression ‘Divine Majesty.’ The same holds true for the

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<sup>59</sup> Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, Trans by George E. Ganss, (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970. Print.), 66-67.

Ignatian expression ‘God our Lord’ during the Exercises. Its context in the Exercises and its use in the *Spiritual Journal* clearly point to the Trinity.<sup>60</sup>

Harvey Egan, commentator on Ignatius of Loyola’s *Spiritual Journey*, admits furthermore that any time when Ignatius used words like “Infinite Goodness” (Ex52), “God” (Ex 58-9), “Divine Justice” (Ex 60) “Divinity” (Ex 124), “His Divine Goodness” (Ex 151, 157), and the “Divine Power” (Ex 363), he was alluding to the Holy Trinity. The reason that led Ignatius to avoid using the word Trinity to identify the Trinitarian relationality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit has not been given. In his *Spiritual Journal*, Ignatius mentioned the above names and also the Most Holy Trinity openly.<sup>61</sup>

## Conclusion

As we have seen in this chapter, the approach to Trinitarian relationality gradually developed over time. The sources changed from a transcendent and ontological understanding of the Trinity *in se* to a phenomenological and immanent one that involved people in order to change their situation according to the vision, analysis and understanding of Ignatius of Loyola. Like Augustine mentioned above, Ignatius of Loyola also considered God as love. For the founder of the Society of Jesus this love of God does not remain among the three Persons of the Trinity but it is poured out through incarnation of the second Person. The second Person came to save humanity as John declares: “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). From an Ignatian perspective,

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<sup>60</sup> Harvey D. Egan, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1976.), 127.

<sup>61</sup> William J. Young, *The Spiritual Journal of St. Ignatius Loyola: February, 1544-45*, 15.

John's use of "believe" in this passage means the response to God's love to thank and to serve Him in all things. In the words of Harvey Egan:

An encounter with such a God means not only loving reverence but also thankfulness through apostolic service. This God can and must be sought, found and served in all things. The exercitant's thankfulness incarnates itself as apostolic service, as his spontaneous, original and comprehensive response to a God who gives Himself in all things. The exercitant experiences that everything he is and has is an incarnation of God's love for him. Aware of the many blessings he has received, finding God in all things, the exercitant becomes not only contemplative and reverence, but also contemplative in action and thankful through service. Ignatius' mysticism and the spirituality proper to the Exercises do not let everything dissolve into the mystic act... Before such a God, reverence and thankfulness through apostolic service are the correct responses.<sup>62</sup>

Understanding the importance of the incarnation in the life of human beings, the Formula of the Institute and the 31<sup>st</sup> General Congregation quoted above, the Society of Jesus, evidenced already among the first fathers and up to today, is engaged without reserve to respond to human reality as its way to contribute to the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth willed by the Trinity through the incarnation of Christ to become one of us. Operating from the same perspective, General Congregations 32, 33, and 34 defined the mission of the Society of Jesus in the line of "The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms":

The mission of the Society of Jesus consists in this, that as servants of Christ's universal mission in the Church and in the world today, we may procure that integral salvation in Jesus Christ which is begun in this life and will be brought to its fulfillment in the life to come. Therefore, the mission of the Society is defined as the service of faith, of which the promotion of Justice is an absolute requirement.<sup>63</sup>

The Trinitarian relationality of the Cappadocians, Augustine, along with Ignatius of Loyola's visions that led to the foundation of the Society of Jesus are essential to knowing

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<sup>62</sup> Harvey D. Egan, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon*, 128-129.

<sup>63</sup> Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms*, A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts. Trans by Francis W. Sweeney, 1st ed. (Saint Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996. Print.), 61.

Trinitarian relationality from two different perspectives. The first perspective from the Cappadocians, Augustine, and other patristic authors was the attempt to locate Trinitarian relationality speculatively and doctrinally, while Ignatius of Loyola's perspective was immanently oriented through the effective work of the Trinity in human life. Thus, Trinitarian relationality can be explained both through speculative or doctrinal and human historical realities.

In the next chapter, I will explore the concept of *Ubuntu* and *Ujamaa* and see how the two concepts are related to Trinitarian relationality. Focusing on Africa and most notably on sub-Saharan Africa, the interest will be to see how the two concepts drawing from the Trinitarian relationality of the fathers of the Church and Saint Ignatius of Loyola can help understand the African perception togetherness/community. To deeply understand the African perception of togetherness, I will divide the following point into three. The first point will be to understand the concept of *Ubuntu* and a related concept, *Ujamaa*. After presenting the two concepts, I will show their relevance for understanding Trinitarian relationality. In this second point, the aim would be to investigate how African theologians understand Trinity from sub-Saharan cultural and religious African beliefs. The last point of this second chapter would be the *Ubuntu* as an expression of the *Missio Dei*. This missiological approach aims to understand how *Ubuntu* can be comprehended in its Trinitarian relationality form as a mission.

## Chapter II: Trinitarian Relationality: An African Theological Vision for Togetherness

### Introduction

The controversies surrounding the Trinity did not end with the contributions and debates of Western and the Eastern fathers of the early Church. The controversies have engaged many theologians worldwide up to the present day. African theologians seeking to develop and understand the doctrine of the Trinity through Trinitarian relationality in the context of African cultures and customs have added their own contributions to engaging the questions raised first in theological deliberations and controversies of the Patristic period. Some of the unresolved issues were rooted in the understanding of Trinitarian relationality proposed by the Cappadocians, Augustine, and later theologians and the oppositions of the so-called heretics as discussed in the preceding chapter. The traditional patristic arguments presented by the fathers of the Church with regard to Trinitarian relationality, in terms of “one substance” or “essence” of the “hypostases” have been viewed by contemporary African theologians as insufficient. Within the African context, the notion of the unity of the three Divine Persons in terms of substance or essence of the hypostases does not explain the *communal* relationality of the three Persons in a way that is meaningful for many African Christians. The reason for this, as I will show, can be traced to the fact that the terms substance, essence, and hypostasis are not found in African languages, cultures and customs. For Africans the term “togetherness in community” holds much more significance for understanding the relationality of the three Divine Persons.

Following this reasoning, I showed in the first chapter that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three different Persons related in the *ousia* or *essence*. Some African theologians such as James Henry Owino Kombo, a Kenyan Anglican theologian, and Bishop Christopher

Mwoleka of Rulenge Tanzania, think that the traditional patristic doctrine of Trinitarian relationality, though intelligible and theologically irreproachable when taken within its historical context, is not intelligible within the contemporary African context because the African theological vision of relationality lays stress on a particular kind of relationality, namely, community. Theologically speaking, an essential expression of the Trinity is "being together."

Western and Eastern theologians of early Christianity, such as the Cappadocians and Augustine, explained the Trinitarian relationships through philosophical, theological, and scriptural understandings that made sense to those who shared their worldview. However, contemporary African theologians, such as Owino Kombo, find that such understandings are quite distinct from the worldviews that are informed and influenced by African traditional realities. As a consequence, when it comes to enculturating the Christian faith in meaningful ways within the African context, these formulations are inadequate or inaccessible. Kombo explains why:

One cannot speak of African theology without granting it the right to be different (see Tienou, "The Right to Difference,").<sup>64</sup> African theology is not constructed with the West, Asia, or Latin America in mind; it is primarily an African theology, – as the name suggests – although, like any other theology, it seeks to convey a universal message. To maintain that African theology must be seen from within is not to suggest a theological moratorium. The African church (African Christian church in general) is a part of the universal church, and, therefore, it is only logical that there be active and living theological connections between the two. The connection, however, must be maintained in terms of mutual exchanges and multilateral influences. In order for this to genuinely happen, it is important that the global theological situation should hear and receive some of Africa's contribution to the development of Christian thought.<sup>65</sup>

The above quotation frames the environment within which this chapter operates. Sharing the perspective of Kombo, the Nigerian Lutheran theologian, Ibrahim Bitrus, writes: "The doctrine of

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<sup>64</sup> Tite Tiéno, "The Right To Difference: The Common Roots Of African Theology And African Philosophy" (n.d.): 31, accessed April 12, 2022, [https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ajet/09-1\\_024.pdf](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ajet/09-1_024.pdf).

<sup>65</sup> James Henry Owino Kombo, *The Doctrine of God in African Christian Thought: The Holy Trinity, Theological Hermeneutics, and the African Intellectual Culture*, Studies in Reformed theology v. 14 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), 21.

the Trinity that has hitherto been formulated with Western and Eastern philosophical and academic tools by Latin and Greek theologians for their own audiences appears irrelevant to the African context.”<sup>66</sup> There is a great need for African theologians to develop a doctrine of Trinitarian relationality that reflects their reality and opens up the possibility of a better understanding of the doctrine based on Scripture, the Christian Tradition as well as attentiveness to the ancestral insights derived from African Traditional Religion.

I begin this chapter by examining the African philosophical concept of *Ubuntu*; this concept will guide our theological investigation of Trinitarian relationality. Secondly, I explore the contours and content of the African theological understanding of community and the need for a communitarian approach to Trinitarian relationality. However, before exploring this second point, I present three distinct, and sometimes contested, interpretations of African Traditional Religion by responding to the question: Is African Traditional Religion *monotheistic*, *polytheistic*, or *communitheistic*? Finally, I propose some possible ways of explaining the doctrine of the Trinity within the African context that are more adequate theologically and more satisfactory culturally. Knowing that Africa is a vast continent with a diversity of cultures and customs, I focus my attention on sub-Saharan Africa, with an eye to paying particular attention to the context of Chad in Chapter Three.

## **2.1. Understanding the Concept *Ubuntu* and Its Relevance for Understanding Trinitarian Relationality**

Being a polysemous word, *Ubuntu* is interpreted differently in diverse socio-cultural contexts as well as by researchers in various fields of study including sociology, anthropology, political science, theology, and philosophy. In this section, my primary focus is on the

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<sup>66</sup> S. Ibrahim Bitrus, *Community and Trinity in Africa*, Routledge Studies on Religion in Africa and the Diaspora (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 109.

philosophical understanding of *Ubuntu* and the theological significance of the concept when it comes to explaining the doctrine of Trinitarian relationality within the context of sub-Saharan Africa. Even though my approach to *Ubuntu* is philosophically oriented, it is important to note that insights from other disciplines are included as needed. On the one hand, I argue that the concept of *Ubuntu* as well as the concept of *Ujamaa*, are major points of reference for studies related to the inter-related concepts of *oneness and manyness, individuals and community*, and the *humanness of human beings*. On the other hand, I also investigate the concept of *Ubuntu* as a concept of community that can be used to understand the relationality of the Three Divine Persons of the Trinity.

### 2.1.1. Meaning and Relevance of *Ubuntu* for Africa Today

From the outset, it is important to state clearly that, while the geographical circumscription of the origin, development, and understanding of the concept of *Ubuntu* pertains to sub-Saharan Africa, *Ubuntu* has been understood and practiced in diverse ways throughout the sub-continent. As the South African thinker, James Ogude argued in 2019, the recovery and revitalization of the concept of *Ubuntu* was done during the post-colonial and post-apartheid process of reconciliation in South Africa:

In the last two decades, the concept of Ubuntu has attracted the attention of scholars from a variety of disciplines, among them law, politics, sociology, and philosophy. This is particularly because the concept of Ubuntu was seen as capable of playing a significant role in the process of reconciliation after the end of apartheid in South Africa and in the aftermath of the first free election in 1994.<sup>67</sup>

As Coetzee and Roux have observed:

It is best, philosophically, to approach this term as a hyphenated word, namely, ubuntu. Ubuntu is actually two words in one. It consists of the prefix ubu- and the stem ntu-. Ubu evokes the idea of being in general. It is enfolded being before it manifests itself in the concrete form or mode of existence of a particular entity.

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<sup>67</sup> James Ogude, ed., *Ubuntu and the Reconstitution of Community*, World philosophies (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, Office of Scholarly Publishing, Herman B Wells Library, 2019), 98.

Ubu- as enfolded being is always oriented towards unfoldment, that is, incessant continual concrete manifestation through particular forms and modes of being. In this sense ubu- is always oriented towards -ntu. At the ontological level, there is no strict and literal separation and division between ubu- and -ntu. Ubu- and -ntu are not two radically separate and irreconcilably opposed realities. On the contrary, they are mutually founding in the sense that they are two aspects of being as a oneness and an indivisible whole-ness. Accordingly, ubu-ntu is the fundamental ontological and epistemological category in the African thought of the Bantu<sup>68</sup>-speaking people. It is the indivisible one-ness and wholeness of ontology and epistemology. Ubu- as the generalized understanding of being may be said to be distinctly ontological. Whereas -ntu as the nodal point at which being assumes concrete form or a mode of being in the process of continual unfoldment may be said to be the distinctly epistemological.<sup>69</sup>

Ogude adds that:

The notion of Ubuntu has become most prominent in the process of reflecting on the precolonial traditions in South Africa in order to search for a concept common to a diversity of people in South Africa that may help to constitute a postcolonial and post-apartheid South African community.<sup>70</sup>

In the final years of Apartheid and during the subsequent processes of reconciliation that occurred in South Africa, two great figures emerged. The first figure was Nelson Mandela (1918-2013), former political prisoner, head of the African National Congress, and the first black president of South Africa who served from May 10, 1994 to June 16, 1999. The second figure was Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1931-2021), the South African Anglican bishop, theologian, and chairperson of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In their respective speeches, both Mandela and Tutu, frequently used the concept of *Ubuntu* in their call for reconciliation. The reason for this can be traced to the fact that "Ubuntu usually is interpreted as meaning the African understanding of humanness."<sup>71</sup> The initial success of the reconciliation processes in South Africa

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<sup>68</sup> Bantu is ethnic groups of people living in majority in Sub-Saharan Africa. They live in a vast area in Central Africa, Eastern Africa, Southern Africa, and Western Africa countries. Bantu people speak Bantu languages.

<sup>69</sup> P. H Coetzee and A. P. J Roux, *The African Philosophy Reader*, 2004, bk. 271, accessed February 9, 2022, <http://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=182963>.

<sup>70</sup> James Ogude, ed., *Ubuntu and the Reconstitution of Community*, 102.

<sup>71</sup> James Ogude, ed., *Ubuntu and the Reconstitution of Community*, 102.

can be attributed to the ways in which the true understanding of the concept of *Ubuntu* was embraced by the South African people. So, what, we may ask, from a South African perspective, is the true meaning of *Ubuntu* understood as humanness? According to Ogude:

*Ubuntu* is a notion of Nguni<sup>72</sup> languages, which are widespread in all Southern parts of Africa. It usually is translated as being the African understanding of humanity or humanness. The African understanding of humanity, in turn, usually is seen to be based on the particular meaning and importance that is given to the community in all African societies.<sup>73</sup>

The notion of *Ubuntu* is explained philosophically through three arguments. The first argument is that a person is fully a person only in relation to other persons.<sup>74</sup> This understanding is a fundamental element of the notion of community that is captured in the proverb: “*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*,” which is translated as “a person is a person through other persons.”<sup>75</sup> The second argument is that the “well-being of others is more valuable and more important than personal wealth.”<sup>76</sup> Being is expressed toward and through other people. It rejects the practice of self-centeredness, selfishness, egocentricity and all other extreme forms of individualistic behaviors. That is why Ogude says that: “The communal understanding of humanity that is linked to *Ubuntu* has often been contrasted with the problematic Western concept of competitive individualism.”<sup>77</sup> In short, the *Ubuntu* approach to life is communitarian oriented while competitive individualism, as often advanced by Western culture, is oriented toward the solitary and the self-focused individual. The third argument is that rulers receive their power to govern

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<sup>72</sup> Nguni people are members of the Bantu ethnic groups. They live in South Africa, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe. The Nguni people speak Bantu language.

<sup>73</sup> James Ogude, ed., *Ubuntu and the Reconstitution of Community*, 103.

<sup>74</sup> James Ogude, ed., *Ubuntu and the Reconstitution of Community*, 103.

<sup>75</sup> James Ogude, ed., *Ubuntu and the Reconstitution of Community*, 103.

<sup>76</sup> James Ogude, ed., *Ubuntu and the Reconstitution of Community*, 103.

<sup>77</sup> James Ogude, ed., *Ubuntu and the Reconstitution of Community*, 103.

people from people they govern.<sup>78</sup> The importance of this third point is illustrated by how kings, queens, presidents and prime ministers value their people.

*Ubuntu* does not deny the concept of person as an individual entity; however, it insists that a person be seen as part and parcel of a community. Each of the individuals that constitute a community plays a role in it. That is why Ogude, by analyzing closely the concept of *Ubuntu*, came to the conclusion that:

... the concept of Ubuntu refers to the experience of the multidimensionality of human reality rather than to the importance of community life in itself. On the contrary, the importance of community life that we find in African societies is a consequence of Ubuntu, but Ubuntu is not its origin. Also, the proverb saying that “a person is a person through other persons” may well be interpreted in the way I propose here. A person is a person through other persons because only together can individual persons create (constitute) a new dimension of human reality.<sup>79</sup>

Holding fast to the concept of togetherness as derived from *Ubuntu*, African communities that use the logic of the concept as their *modus operandi* resolve their problems together through the notion of palaver. Palaver is, in fact, a conciliation, dialogue, or discussion to resolve matters concerning disputes and other dilemmas of the community particularly in the traditional culture in the Bantu’s land.<sup>80</sup> Ogude defines palaver as: “The discussion is a fight that needs to restore the unity of a community.”<sup>81</sup> He took this saying from the French: “La palabre est une lutte qui doit restorer l’unité de la communauté.”<sup>82</sup> The term unity of the community becomes a key phrase to understand *Ubuntu*, that is why Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu used the concept among the

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<sup>78</sup> James Ogude, ed., *Ubuntu and the Reconstitution of Community*, 103.

<sup>79</sup> James Ogude, ed., *Ubuntu and the Reconstitution of Community*, 107.

<sup>80</sup> Bantu is a term that is used of more than 400 different ethnic groups in Africa. These ethnic groups are found in Southern Africa, Central Africa, Eastern Africa, and Western Africa. They are united by one single language family (the Bantu languages) and in some points, they have same customs.

<sup>81</sup> James Ogude, ed., *Ubuntu and the Reconstitution of Community*, 106.

<sup>82</sup> James Ogude, ed., *Ubuntu and the Reconstitution of Community*, 106.

people of South Africa in their efforts to heal and reconcile the wounds of colonialism and apartheid by speaking and listening to the truth in the context of community.

Placide Frans Tempels, a Belgian Franciscan missionary in the Democratic Republic of Congo, who became famous through his book *Bantu Philosophy*, defines *Bantu*, the plural of *Ubuntu*, differently. For him *Bantu*, which means familyhood or community, is a Vital Force. According to him, the term *Bantu* and Vital Force can be used interchangeably:

It seems to me that we shall not attain this precision by formulating the notion of being in Bantu thought as "being is that which possesses force." I believe that we should most faithfully render the Bantu thought in European language by saying that Bantu speak, act, live as if, for them, beings were forces. Force is not for them an adventitious, accidental reality. Force is even more than a necessary attribute of beings: Force is the nature of being, force is being, being is force<sup>83</sup>

Ogude perceives *Ubuntu* as “striving for experiencing the multidimensionality of human reality.”<sup>84</sup> When Placide Tempels uses the substantive *Bantu*, he is talking about the community of beings in general, and when Ogude uses the concept of *Ubuntu*, he alludes to a person in the community. The problem in Tempels’s philosophical approach is that his definition is more physical than spiritual as if *Bantu* people do not believe in supranatural forces; they do not think, they just act and live as if they are sufficient to themselves individually and unconsciously. To correct Tempels’s philosophical approach that qualifies *Bantu* in terms of forces, Ogude says:

What Tempels (1969) describes as a force therefore has to be reformulated as meaning the concrete experience of the multidimensionality of human reality. The individual person experiences vital force when she takes part in the process of reconstituting (re-viving) the community. Vital force, however, is neither the essence nor the being of the individual person nor that of any other entity.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> F. Placide Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy*. Access 3/7/2022. <https://www.pdfdrive.com/1-bantu-philosophy-by-placide-tempels-congoforum-e5991140.html>.

<sup>84</sup> James Ogude, ed., *Ubuntu and the Reconstitution of Community*, 109.

<sup>85</sup> James Ogude, ed., *Ubuntu and the Reconstitution of Community*, 109.

Thus, *Ubuntu* by being the “multidimensionality of human reality,” considers each human being’s experience, an experience that implies belonging or being part of a community. The philosophical grounding of the concept of *Ubuntu* also provides an answer to the theological questions found in the Holy Scriptures, namely: “Who is my mother and brothers?” (Mt 12:48) “Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10: 29) And “Where is your brother?” (Gn 4:9). Given the multidimensionality of human reality as viewed through the lens of the philosophical enterprise, each person is his/her brother’s/sister’s keeper; each person is valued, given dignity, and respected.

This philosophical understanding of *Ubuntu* has theological significance. Many theologians and scholars use the communitarian approach to justify the unity of the three Persons of God. This is a contemporary African contribution to Trinitarian relationality. In this perspective, the passage below shows how *Ubuntu* can be approached theologically. But before going into a theological understanding of *Ubuntu*, I must talk briefly about the related concept of *Ujamaa*. *Ujamaa* is a concept that is similar to *Ubuntu* in practice.

### **2.1.2. The Meaning of *Ujamaa* and its Relevance for Trinitarian Relationality**

In Swahili, the word *Ujamaa* means an extended family or familyhood. It was a social and economic policy that the people of Tanzania developed and endeavored to implement throughout the country.<sup>86</sup> The traditional concept of *Ujamaa* was advanced socially, politically and economically by the first president of Tanzania, Julius Kambarage Nyerere (1922–1999); he was president from April 26, 1964 to November 5, 1985. promoting the importance of *Ujamaa* across

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<sup>86</sup> “Nyerere argued that urbanization, which had been brought about by European colonialism and was economically driven by wage labor, had disrupted the traditional pre-colonial rural African society. He believed that it was possible for his government to recreate precolonial traditions in Tanzania and, in turn, re-establish a traditional level of mutual respect and return the people to settled, moral ways of life. The main way to do that, he said, was to move people out of the urban cities like the capital Dar es Salaam and into newly created villages dotting the rural countryside.” Accessed 15/02/2022 <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-was-ujamaa-44589>.

the country, Nyerere found it essential to infuse the concept into the daily life of the Tanzanian people. Through the means of collective farming and the “villagization” of the country, *Ujamaa* also facilitated the “nationalization of banks and industry and an increased level of self-reliance at both an individual and national level.”<sup>87</sup> Unfortunately, *Ujamaa*, the social and economic-political change from individual wealth to the communitarian aspiration of common goods, failed. Despite the failure to implement and sustain *Ujamaa* in social, economic and political spheres of influence, the concept of *Ujamaa* has been received successfully in the theological sphere, because it draws heavily from the cultural customs and social practices of communities in East Africa. In this same theological sphere, the concept of *Ujamaa* places emphasis on the values sharing, respect, hospitality, and communal consideration of the importance of each person as a member of the community. This philosophy of life takes into consideration the community as a whole; the building of the community depends on the efforts of each and every individual.

*Ujamaa*, primarily understood as a philosophy of life that advances the social, cultural, economic and political aspects of the concept of togetherness, is perceived by some East African Christian theologians and ecclesial leaders as an essential element when it comes to explaining the mystery and reality of Trinitarian relationality; it teaches people something important about the sense of collective sharing that is inherent in the concept of truly being together. When applying the concept of being together to the theological understanding of the mystery of Trinitarian relationality, it is important to stress that it does not exclude the diversity or singularity of the three Divine Persons. The reason is because in their togetherness, the three Persons share everything they possess with each other in such a way that none of them lacks anything. To underline the importance of imitating the sharing and inner life of the Trinity, bishop Christopher Mwoleka has

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<sup>87</sup> Alistair Boddy-Evans, “What Was Ujamaa and How Did It Affect Tanzania?” Accessed 15/02/2022 <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-was-ujamaa-44589>.

written, “The reason why we should first have to wait here for a number of years before going to heaven would seem to be that we should practice and acquire some competence in the art of sharing life. Without this practice, we are apt to mess up things in heaven.”<sup>88</sup> For the bishop, sharing what we have with the community in the here and now enables us to know what the inner life of God and life in God is all about. And, it is this experience that enlarges our capacity to share that life with Him. Thus, sharing the life of God is to love God and our brothers and sisters, which is summarized in the commandment of love, as Jesus responded to one of the Pharisees who wanted to know about the greatest of all the commandments according to Moses as reports the Gospel of Matthew. The commandments are bifold oriented focusing in love God and love of brothers and sisters (Mt22:37-40).

Love as expressed by Augustine is the internal and eternal relational point of the Divine community of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This same love found in *Ujamaa* through the language of togetherness and sharing should be the central point of human community as willed by the Holy Trinity.

It is important to state here that the traditional understanding of Trinitarian relationality in the Eastern and Western theological traditions, in the view of some African theologians mentioned previously, do not express adequately the full meaning of Trinitarian relationality in the context of Africa. As noted, before, the reason is simple: approaching Trinitarian relationality on the basis of essence or substance of the hypostases is not possible within the African context. The terms essence, substance, and hypostases do not exist in African thought or language, and they do not reflect the African reality. That is why some African theologians prefer to use the term community

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<sup>88</sup> G. Joseph Healey, and Christopher Mwoleka, *Ujamaa and Christian Communities* (Eldoret, Kenya: Gaba Publications, Amecea Pastoral Institute, 1976), 16.

to understand Trinitarian relationality instead of *ousia* or essence of the hypostases. For example, as the Tanzanian Bishop Christopher Mwoleka observes:

The school children in a Catechism class find the Trinity interesting because it is to them a riddle to play with. Teachers look for examples to illustrate this mystery without success. The theologians have made the Trinity a kind of intellectual exercise, speculating on it until their heads get dizzy.<sup>89</sup>

According to Bishop Mwoleka, a purely intellectual approach to comprehending the mystery of the Trinity does not help Africans to understand the mystery *per se*. The best way to appreciate the mystery of the Trinity is to imitate the mystery itself.<sup>90</sup> Unfortunately, by depending upon a purely intellectual method to understand the mystery of the Trinity, we may fall into the same error of Philip who asks Jesus to show the disciples His Father, as if that would be enough.<sup>91</sup>

Jesus responds by formulating series of questions for Philip:

Philip, have I been with you so long and yet you didn't know me? He who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say: show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? And Jesus continued to say: "He who believes in me will also does the works that I do, and greater works than these will he do."<sup>92</sup>

According to Bishop Mwoleka, God does not reveal Himself in the Trinitarian form "for the sake of speculation." God is not giving us "a riddle to solve" but rather, God is giving life to humanity.<sup>93</sup> Through life itself, God is telling humanity: "This is what it means to live, now begin to live as I do (God)."<sup>94</sup> There are two things that are to be noted in the Bishop's statement: the first is the communitarian character of the Trinity and the second is the emphasis placed on the sharing of life which is the *modus vivendi/essendi* of the three Divine Persons. Taking this

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<sup>89</sup> G. Joseph Healey, and Christopher Mwoleka, *Ujamaa and Christian Communities*, 15.

<sup>90</sup> G. Joseph Healey, and Christopher Mwoleka, *Ujamaa and Christian Communities*, 15.

<sup>91</sup> G. Joseph Healey, and Christopher Mwoleka, *Ujamaa and Christian Communities*, 15.

<sup>92</sup> G. Joseph Healey, and Christopher Mwoleka, *Ujamaa and Christian Communities*, 15.

<sup>93</sup> G. Joseph Healey, and Christopher Mwoleka, *Ujamaa and Christian Communities*, 15.

<sup>94</sup> G. Joseph Healey, and Christopher Mwoleka, *Ujamaa and Christian Communities*, 15.

approach to understanding the mystery of the Trinity, the concept of communion and sharing are intimately linked in such a way that they become inseparable. In the previous chapter, I explained how according to the thinking of the Cappadocian, Augustine, and other fathers of the Early Church, the three Divine Persons share their divinity equally; and they coexist in a way that what belongs to one belongs to the others notwithstanding their singularity. I also explained their belief that the Father so loves the Son that He shares with Him His entire love so that their mutual love generates the Holy Spirit. The act of sharing, therefore, should be understood as the most fundamental act to show one's love. But this act of sharing has to be directed toward other people, that is toward the community. Thus, along with other African theologians, I offer the concept of *Ujamaa* as an authentically African concept for understanding how the act of sharing is required for participation in the Trinitarian life of the Divine Persons.

## **2.2. The Mystery of Trinitarian Relationality in the Thinking of African Theologians**

The notion of community is very important in the life of Africans, community is approached socially, politically, economically, culturally, and spiritually. Through the concepts of *Ubuntu* and *Ujamaa* as mentioned above, Trinitarian relationality is, philosophically speaking, community oriented. For this reason, speaking as an African theologian, it is important to clarify for those unfamiliar with African Traditional Religion that in its essence, it is neither polytheistic nor monotheistic, but fundamentally communitarian. To demonstrate this position, I offer two pieces of evidence.

To begin, it is necessary to address separately two very different conceptions of God understood as *monotheism* [the One God] and *polytheism* [Many Gods]. The former maintains that African Traditional Religion is fundamentally monotheistic (one Supreme deity). In contrast, the

latter conception rejects that position and argues that African Traditional Religion is essentially polytheistic (many deities). After presenting these two distinct theories of monotheism and polytheism, I concern myself with the language of communotheism in African Traditional Religion and its relevance for an enculturated Trinitarian theology.

### **2.2.1. Monotheism in African Traditional Religion**

An American theologian of the twentieth century, Malcolm McVeigh (1907-1964), defines “African traditional religion” as a “technical term to describe the religious beliefs and practices of the Negroid Peoples of sub-Sahara Africa, prevalent before the arrival of Christianity or Islam and still adhered to by many Africans.”<sup>95</sup> According to McVeigh, African Traditional Religion is “the African equivalent of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity.”<sup>96</sup> This definition and understanding are essential in understanding monotheism and polytheism as concepts found in African Traditional Religion.

Monotheism has not played a significant part in the development of African Traditional Religion. Yet many African theologians approach this theological understanding by assuming an intrinsic monotheism. As Protestant theologian, A. Ogbonnaya Okechukwu, a native of Nigeria, writes: “In the debate about the Divine in Africa, the monotheistic strand has figured prominently. It is that strand within the debate about God that insists that the traditional African believes in a singular and personal God.”<sup>97</sup> For McVeigh, even though it is difficult to demonstrate monotheism functioning in African Traditional Religion, there exist some sayings that assume the supremacy of one, unique, and personal God, who is the ruler of everything in heaven and on earth; ancestors

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<sup>95</sup>J. Malcolm McVeigh, *God in Africa: Conceptions of God in African Traditional Religion and Christianity* (Cape Cod, Mass: C. Stark, 1974), 5.

<sup>96</sup>J. Malcolm McVeigh, *God in Africa: Conceptions of God in African Traditional Religion and Christianity*, 15.

<sup>97</sup> A. Okechukwu Ogbonnaya, *On Communitarian Divinity: An African Interpretation of the Trinity*, (1st ed. New York, N.Y.: Paragon House, 1994. Print.), 14.

and other divinities play the role of intercessors or intermediaries.<sup>98</sup> In the same vein, Ogonnaya tells of an African aphorism that says God was previously living together with human beings. Nonetheless, God decided to withdraw to heaven and leave the earth for human beings because of human sinfulness.<sup>99</sup> Following McVeigh's arguments on hierarchy in African Traditional Religion, he begins with the ancestors who take care of families, the deities who take care of tribes, and the Supreme God who is regarded as the Ruler over all. God leaves ancestors and divinities to handle lesser things; God deals only with extensive and significant matters.<sup>100</sup> Within the same hierarchical perspective, Bolaji Idowu, a leader in the Methodist Church in Nigeria (1913-1995), famous in the Yoruba people's ethnographic era and theological studies, separates God from other divinities.<sup>101</sup>

To show cosmologically the singleness [uniqueness] of God, Aloysius M. Lugira, write:

The Banyarwanda of Rwanda in Central Africa speak simply of creation by saying, "There was nothing before God created the world." In the same region the Baila of Zambia call God "Creator." The Baila name is derived from the verb that means "to make, to originate, to be the first to do anything." So God is thought of as the Originator of all things. The Ngoni people of Southern Africa call God as Creator "the Original Source," and the Zulu of South Africa believe that God "made all things"; pointing to heaven they say, "the Creator of all things is in heaven." The Banyankore of Uganda in Eastern Africa refer to God as "the Creator who sets things in order, creates everything and gives new life," while the Akan of Western Africa refer to God as "He who alone created the world."<sup>102</sup>

Even though the Kenyan Anglican priest, philosopher, writer and father of the modern African theology, John Samuel Mbiti, accepts the plurality of the divinity, he understands divine activities as manifestations of the personified God.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> J. Malcolm McVeigh, *God in Africa: Conceptions of God in African Traditional Religion and Christianity*, 34-35.

<sup>99</sup> J. Malcolm McVeigh, *God in Africa: Conceptions of God in African Traditional Religion and Christianity*, 25-26.

<sup>100</sup> J. Malcolm McVeigh, *God in Africa: Conceptions of God in African Traditional Religion and Christianity*, 35.

<sup>101</sup> A. Okechukwu Ogonnaya, *On Communitarian Divinity: An African Interpretation of the Trinity*, 14.

<sup>102</sup> Aloysius Muzzanganda Lugira, *African Traditional Religion*, 3rd ed., World religions (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2009), 40.

<sup>103</sup> S. John Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 117.

Viewed from the critical perspective of Ogbonnaya many scholars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century who present African Traditional Religion as monotheistic may be overly influenced by the Western theology that assumes the validity of this theological claim:

The idea that African traditional religions are monotheistic in nature has been very strong in African scholarly thought since the 1930s. I [Ogbonnaya] believe that African scholars have taken the Western theologians too seriously in their understanding of God as an absolute, universal, personalistic principle.<sup>104</sup>

Pursuing his argument, Ogbonnaya says: “There is no such monotheistic radicality in African traditional religions. Those African scholars who, like their Western partners, have proposed that African religion is characterized by monotheism are not wholly correct.”<sup>105</sup> This monotheistic approach that affirms the radical Oneness of God excludes the possibility of the Divine inner relationality. But if this relationality exists “monotheistically,” it must exist with inferior beings such as ancestors and lesser deities. Any form of monotheism, rooted in African Traditional Religion, cannot contribute in any real way to the possibility of enculturating the mystery of Trinitarian relationality in Africa.

### **2.2.2. Polytheistic Understanding of African Traditional Religion**

Despite some scholarly arguments used to defend monotheism in African Traditional Religion, the concept itself is inadequate to explain the broad and complex reality of African Traditional Religion. Those who defend polytheism reject monotheism as an explanation based on the understanding of deities, not of divinity. Deities here are understood in the line of Mbiti as “the activities and manifestations of God,” while divinity is the nature of the Supreme Being. Some

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<sup>104</sup> A. Okechukwu Ogbonnaya, *On Communitarian Divinity: An African Interpretation of the Trinity*, 14.

<sup>105</sup> A. Okechukwu Ogbonnaya, *On Communitarian Divinity: An African Interpretation of the Trinity*, 14.

scholars like Okechukwu Ogbonnaya and the Nigerian Methodist theologian, E. Bolaji Idowu (1913-1995) believe that the term polytheism itself is ambiguous:

The term polytheism is pejorative and value-laden. In the Western mind, the term connotes an inferior concept of the Divine. It is regarded as the bastion of superstitions, even by Africans. This understandably has created an African reaction against the use of the word polytheism in the African context.<sup>106</sup>

Idowu disagrees with the use of the term polytheism. In his opinion, polytheism is an ideology that people use for their own agenda. Ogbonnaya accentuates: "Idowu indicts this conception of gods in Africa for perpetuating what he calls 'priestcraft,'<sup>107</sup> meaning the ideological, oppressive manipulation which he maintains often attends the worship of these gods."<sup>108</sup> According to Lugira, however, these theologians, like Mbiti, are actually talking about the ways in which the Supreme Being acts or manifests Himself, the example from the Yoruba people may help clarify matters:

The Yoruba are a Nigerian ethnic group of 12 million people with a rich religious tradition. At the top of their religious ranking is Olodumare, the Supreme Being. Next are the associates of God known as divinities, gods, or deities. These are ranked according to the importance of the function they oversee. Next are the spirits of ancestors and those of the ordinary dead. The pantheon of Yoruba gods is known as the Orisa. It has a membership of as many as 1,700 divinities. Examples of a few of the most important follow.<sup>109</sup>

Through the arguments mentioned earlier, neither monotheism nor polytheism contribute in any helpful way to the formulation of a Christian understanding of the mystery of Trinitarian relationality within the African context. Ogbonnaya is one example of an African theologian who rejects these two unhelpful theological perspectives, thus proposing a third perspective and

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<sup>106</sup> A. Okechukwu Ogbonnaya, *On Communitarian Divinity: An African Interpretation of the Trinity*, 21.

<sup>107</sup> Priestcraft is a word that is used in this context to qualify priests who exploit or manipulate people by means of religious ideology.

<sup>108</sup> A. Okechukwu Ogbonnaya, *On Communitarian Divinity: An African Interpretation of the Trinity*, 22.

<sup>109</sup> Aloysius Muzzanganda Lugira, *African Traditional Religion*, 53.

understanding communotheism that is a reflection of communitarianism. Theologians who share Ogbonnaya's point of view believe that importing monotheism and polytheism into African theological perspectives on the mystery of the Trinity is simply an attempt to Africanize a longstanding Western debate. The "Africologues" Molefi Kete Asante and Ama Mazama in their contribution to monotheism and polytheism debate that: "Most Africans believe in a Supreme God who creates the universe or causes it to be created, although it is believed that this entity may remain distant because the Supreme Deity is not a manager, but a creator."<sup>110</sup>

The problem of the oneness and manyness of God is not a new problem within African Traditional Religion. Gregory of Nyssa held that Jewish culture was monotheistic while the Greek perspective was polytheistic:

Yet again, the unity of the [divine] nature must be retained from the Jewish conception, while the distinction of Person, and that only, from the Greek. . . For the triune number is, as it were, a remedy for those in error about the unity; while the affirmation of the unity is a remedy for those who scatter their beliefs among a multitude [of gods].<sup>111</sup>

Given the impression that neither of these two perspectives is particularly helpful, following a number of colleagues, I would like to suggest another approach that makes it possible to explain the mystery of Trinitarian relationality in the light of African Traditional Religion and African societal practices, namely, the communotheism and the communitarian dimension of African thought.

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<sup>110</sup> Molefi Kete Asante and Ama Mazama, "Polytheism or Monotheism," in *Encyclopedia African Religion*, (SAGE Publications, Inc. 2455 Teller Road Thousand Oaks, California 91320, 2009), access 01/22/2022. <https://www.pdfdrive.com/encyclopedia-of-african-religion-e8517625.html>

<sup>111</sup> Edward Rochie Hardy, *Christology of the Later Fathers* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 274.

### 2.2.3. Using a Communitarian Approach to Enculturating an African Trinitarian Theology

The concept of relationality that Western theologians have proposed as the essence of the Persons of the Trinity, and that Eastern theologians have proposed as the substance of the three Persons, can contribute to reconceptualizing and making intelligible an understanding of the community of the three Persons of God in Africa compatible with African cultural and religious beliefs and realities. Observing that this quest is not unique to the African context, the Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff, in an effort to make the concept of Trinitarian relationality intelligible within the Latin American context, also makes use of the concept of communion to signify the relationality of the three Divine Persons. He states that:

To say that God is communion means the three Eternal Ones, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are turned toward one another. Each divine Person goes out of self and surrenders to the other two, giving life, love, wisdom, goodness, and everything possessed (the Father is not the Son and the Holy Spirit and so forth) not in order to separate but to come together and to be able to give themselves to one another.<sup>112</sup>

The basis of systematic Trinitarian theology that defines the relation of the three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in substance or essence as Trinity, three Persons in One, remains the fundamental definition of orthodox teaching for Christians throughout the world. At the same time, the contextual question that African theologians also must keep in mind has to do with the disconnect between the contemporary African audience to which the doctrine is addressed and the intelligibility of the original philosophical and theological constructions that contributed to the formulation and development of Trinitarian theology.

In African Christian theology, the concept of Trinitarian relationality is used correlatively with communion, community, or the communitarian to characterize the essence or the substance

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<sup>112</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000. Print.), 3.

of the Three Persons of God. Using communion or *koinonia* instead of a relation in substance or essence, Okechukwu states:

The concept of the Divine as community actually does more justice to African conception of God. For this we need another term: a word like *communitarianism*, a community of gods. Community, in African sense, will reflect better the affirmation of both the one and the many than categories of monotheism and polytheism. The noun *communitarianism* communicates the idea that divinity is communal.<sup>113</sup>

This contextual approach to African Trinitarian relationality uses the term *communitarianism* to give expression to a “communal” understanding of God. This approach is differentiated from approaches that focus on the binary opposites of monotheism or polytheism. In doing so, it advances the claim that African Traditional Religion is neither monotheistic nor polytheistic in a binary way, but rather *communitarianistic*. By way of definition, Ogbonnaya says:

This discussion proposes a third category – the Divine as community- as a more adequate way of conceiving and explaining Divinity in Africa contexts. Divine Communitarianism is the position that the Divine is a community of gods who are fundamentally related to one another and ontologically equal while at the same time distinct from one another by their personhood and functions.<sup>114</sup>

Until recently, Christian theologians who were also scholars of African Traditional Religion, did not make the Trinity a primary focus of their theological investigations. As a consequence, their failure, inability or lack of interest in doing so has left a new generation of African theologians with a contextual theological challenge, namely, to explain the mystery of the Trinity *in se* and enculturate the doctrine of the Trinity within the context of sub-Saharan Africa. Even though the communitarianistic approach of Trinitarian relationality may not give full expression to the identity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as, three distinct Persons in One, contemporary theologians such as Ogbonnaya assert that the doctrine of Trinitarian relationality does not

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<sup>113</sup> A. Okechukwu Ogbonnaya, *On Communitarian Divinity: An African Interpretation of the Trinity*, 28.

<sup>114</sup> A. Okechukwu Ogbonnaya, *On Communitarian Divinity: An African Interpretation of the Trinity*, 23.

*explicitly* exist in the Hebrew Bible or the New Testament.<sup>115</sup> Ogbonnaya also asserts that the people of Israel knew God as YHWH and that YHWH was understood to be a particular God higher and greater than all other gods.<sup>116</sup>

Ogbonnaya goes further by saying that there is some evidence for an early African intuition of the relationality of the Trinity. Raised in the North African city of Carthage, Tertullian adopted a Trinitarian approach that has resonated with other African theologians who, being in the same African context, understood it very well: “Tertullian has left us with a legacy of doctrine that was first revealed implicitly in the scriptures and later made explicit by the Church leaders and theologians of the first four and five centuries. Most of these leaders were African such as Origen, Augustine, and Athanasius.”<sup>117</sup>

Indeed, the assertions made by Ogbonnaya are provocative and compelling from an African-centric perspective. Generating a hypothesis more than proving one, he gives an interpretation to Tertullian’s legacy that frames Trinitarian relationality in a way that shows the relation between the Oneness and the Many-ness of the Trinity as well as the mystery as intuited from African Traditional Religion as the community or communion of the three Divine Persons.

If, as Ognabayya argues, the Trinity may be understood as fundamentally communitarian; might this concept of communitarianism be understood appropriately as a dynamic equivalent of what has been understood in the tradition as Trinitarian relationality? If, in the words of North American theologian Catherine LaCugna, “Trinitarian theology is par excellence a theology of relationships: God to us, we to God, we to each other,” it is reasonable to assert as she does, that “The doctrine of the Trinity affirms that the ‘essence’ of God is relational, other-ward, that God

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<sup>115</sup> A. Okechukwu Ogbonnaya, *On Communitarian Divinity: An African Interpretation of the Trinity*, 53.

<sup>116</sup> A. Okechukwu Ogbonnaya, *On Communitarian Divinity: An African Interpretation of the Trinity*, 1st ed. (New York: Paragon House, 1994), 53–54.

<sup>117</sup> A. Ogbonnaya Okechukwu, *On Communitarian Divinity: An African Interpretation of the Trinity*.

exists as diverse persons united in a communion of freedom, love, and knowledge.<sup>118</sup> Influenced by Ognabayya's theological proposal of communotheism and building on LaCugna's explanation of "diverse persons united in a communion of freedom, love and knowledge," I turn now to a theological exploration of the concept of *Ubuntu* and its significance for a contextual interpretation of the Trinitarian mission understood by Saint Ignatius and others as the mystery of the *Missio Dei*.

### **2.3. *Ubuntu* as an Expression of the *Missio Dei***

As we consider the concept of *Ubuntu* as community, the notion of God's mission becomes undeniably important. In Chapter One, I discussed the significance of the Trinitarian theology of Ignatius of Loyola and the importance of the *Missio Dei*. Ignatius and his first companions, by way of following Jesus's steps, decided to support human well-being in a concrete historical manner by proclaiming the Good News. Vinita Hampton Wright understands the mission of Ignatius of Loyola as coming from selfish and self-centered person to other-centered person: "Rather than focusing on himself and his dreams of glory, he [Ignatius of Loyola] must follow Jesus' example and move outward, looking at what other people needed and dreamed for."<sup>119</sup> Ignatius's *Missio Dei* attempts, therefore, to, "Being people for others."<sup>120</sup> This is to signify the disposition to move focus from oneself and self-care to others and care about them. As a legacy from Ignatius of Loyola's to the Society of Jesus, the Jesuit formation is to form "men and women for others."<sup>121</sup> This Ignatius's understanding of the *Missio Dei* is perfectly seen in the relationality perspective of *Ubuntu* "a person is a person through other persons." Because, as mentioned above, a person as

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<sup>118</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*, 1. HarperCollins paperback ed. (New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 243.

<sup>119</sup> Vinita Hampton Wright, "Being People for Others," no. 8/19/2022 (n.d.), accessed May 13, 2022, <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/being-people-for-others/>.

<sup>120</sup> Vinita Hampton Wright, "Being People for Others."

<sup>121</sup> Vinita Hampton Wright, "Being People for Others."

being member of a community has a mission to transform his or her environment. Thus, Ignatius and *Ubuntu* are the instruments for the societal transformation through the mission God has entrusted them to be men and women for others.

Based on the desire to proclaim the Gospel, the first fathers of the Society of Jesus were hungered to spread the Gospel and contribute to the social good of human life. As an African Jesuit, I want to reflect upon the ways in which their participation in the *Missio Dei* was a reflection of *Ubuntu*, a way of proceeding that is essentially community-oriented and a mission that involves communitarian transformation.

Looking to four biblical foundations for a communitarian understanding the *Missio Dei*, I begin by considering the two related passages. In Isaiah 61:1, the Prophet declares: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free” (Isaiah 61, 1). This prophecy is later fulfilled, as we read in the narrative found in the Gospel of Luke: “and [Jesus] began by saying, ‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’” (Luke 4, 21). These two passages display on the one hand the mission of Jesus as the fulfillment of the Scripture and on the other hand, they demonstrate Trinitarian relationality through the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus. The three Divine Persons are represented in the person of Jesus to bring forth the salvific mission to humankind. This salvific mission is not destined for an isolated individual but for the “community” to which that individual belongs.

Looking to another passage from the Gospel of Mark: “‘The time is fulfilled,’ He said, ‘and the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe in the gospel!’” (Mk 1:15), we see how Jesus’s announcement invites the question: “What is the kingdom of God?” Given the perspective taken in this thesis, I define the kingdom of God as an historical actualization of the kingdom of heaven

where the whole people, as a *community* of the daughters and sons of God, live in peace, harmony, and justice among themselves under God's commandment of love.

When John the Baptist sends his disciples to ask Jesus Christ: "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else," Jesus showed clearly the two dimensions of his mission that derive from the establishment of the kingdom of his Father. He said to those who had been sent by John the Baptist, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, *and* the good news is proclaimed to the poor." (Luke 7: 20-22). The first dimension is related to the human corporal or physical well-being of the people: the blind who see, the lame who walk, the leprosy who are cleansed, the deaf who hear, the dead who are raised. And the second dimension focuses on the proclamation of the Gospel to the poor, the needy, the marginalized, the oppressed.

Appealing to the African concept of Ubuntu, I want to put forth an approach to Christian theological inquiry regarding these two dimensions of mission by exploring the concept of *Ubuntu*. To be specific, I want to use a Christian lens that allows one to see Ubuntu as an expression of the *Missio Dei*. According to Michael Jesse Battle, an Episcopal moral theologian involved in spreading the spiritual writings, reconciliation efforts, works and thoughts of Desmond Tutu, *Ubuntu* may be explained in the following way:

Ubuntu can be understood as the very thing that God in Christ was up to – reconciliation of a wayward creation to itself and its Creator. As people of faith, how do we become the loving and reconciling gaze of God toward a disoriented world? The key to a Christian practice of Ubuntu is embodied in the liturgies of confession and forgiveness, both individual and corporate. A frank and completely truthful assessment of Western lifestyles is essential to cultivate Ubuntu into our lives.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Michael Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me*, 139.

Thus, the purpose of *Ubuntu* is to create the possibility for a community to live a good life and prepare them for the *beata vita*. *Ubuntu* is much more than a speculative philosophical, anthropological, sociological, or theological concept. *Ubuntu* is a state, a condition, a reality,<sup>123</sup> a behavior that allows people to be in perpetual togetherness, collaboration, and unification; in brief, being one in diversity as daughters and sons of the same Father, created in the image and likeness of God.<sup>124</sup>

## Conclusion

*Ubuntu*, along with the related concept of *Ujamaa*, through the desire of belongingness, togetherness, and being one with others, creates an environment of well-being that enables communities to participate in the image and likeness of God as a whole: “Make a plan for *Ubuntu* locally and globally. Reflect on how you can participate in the image of God, who represents the unity and perfection of interdependence persons.”<sup>125</sup> In the interdependence of persons, “*Ubuntu* does not allow us to be isolated in comfortable places to the detriment of others, but pushes us to seek to build bridges to places and people we are ignorant of and estranged from.”<sup>126</sup> The goal of *Ubuntu* is to challenge the community to do good and avoid evil; it can be linked to Jesus Christ’s deeds and words that challenged people of his time: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Mt 5:43-44).

As noted above, in the process of Desmond Tutu’s ministry of reconciliation in South Africa, Tutu used *Ubuntu* as to heal people’s wounds from the dehumanizing effects of

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<sup>123</sup> Michael Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me*, 141.

<sup>124</sup> Michael Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me*, 141.

<sup>125</sup> Michael Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me*, 141.

<sup>126</sup> Michael Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me*, 141.

apartheid.<sup>127</sup> For Tutu, *Ubuntu* speaks directly about the inner nature of the human person. For him, the very being of a human person is characterized by generosity, hospitality, friendship, caring, and compassion.<sup>128</sup> Human nature is made for sharing and participation in common projects/goods. In other words, as a human being, I share what I have with other people as well as assisting them in what they are going through. It is in this way, that a person realizes his/her personhood in relation to other persons. This is one reason why Tutu believes that:

A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are.<sup>129</sup>

By quoting Martin Luther King Jr, Michael Battle says in support of Tutu: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”<sup>130</sup> Tutu is aware of that when he says that social harmony is for Africans the “*summum bonum*,”<sup>131</sup> nobody should be insensitive or indifferent to the segregation and discrimination undergone by the people of South Africa before, during, and after the colonial period. When there is already a wound, there is no need to prevaricate, we must heal it. The medication to heal South Africa’s wound was justice and reconciliation. Battle affirms that the concept of reconciliation was the battle horse of Tutu; it enabled him to bring the people of South Africa together though the society was inclining in the opposite direction “toward division and individualism.”<sup>132</sup> Recognizing the need for restorative justice, Tutu clearly understood that forgiveness and reconciliation, while essential to the process of creating the conditions for togetherness, the spirit of *Ubuntu* required more because:

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<sup>127</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, 1st ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 31.

<sup>128</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, 31.

<sup>129</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, 31.

<sup>130</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, 31.

<sup>131</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, 31.

<sup>132</sup> Michael Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me*, 24.

This is a far more personal approach, regarding the offense as something that has happened to persons and whose consequence is a rupture in relationships. Thus, we would claim that justice, restorative justice, is being served when efforts are being made to work for healing, for forgiveness, and for reconciliation.<sup>133</sup>

It maybe reductionist to think that *Ubuntu* in its entirety can be summarized in reconciliation, forgiveness, peace, and justice. If restorative justice, the campaign for peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation have succeeded in bringing people together for the present, something more is needed for the future. *Ubuntu* is, in fact, a spirit to be cultivated in order to prepare a new generation to embrace togetherness and self-donation, as Battle puts it rightly:

Many children who grow up in the United States no longer play in nature where they could learn firsthand about the intricacies of the interdependence of life – rather, the norm for many children (and adults) has become video monitors in which they encounter self-identity through cyber worlds or once-removed realities. Many children (and adults!) no longer know where milk really comes from or what their McDonald’s hamburger really means within the cycle of life and commerce. Cultivating a communal self requires interpersonal habits, but such habits cannot be attained outside of being in physical and conscious proximity to others. Personal, communal, and global solutions to our many crises require intentional formation of young minds for community. My solution to these problems is to cultivate the spirit of Ubuntu.<sup>134</sup>

The concept of Trinitarian relationality held by the early fathers of the Church as the substance of the hypostases or the essence of the three Persons must be understood as a perspective from which the doctrine of the Trinity could be understood. The insertion of *Ubuntu*, along with *Ujamaa*, into the discussion of Trinitarian relationality, is a means through which human beings are called to live together in harmony, respect, and dignity. The three concepts taken together - Trinitarian relationality, *Ubuntu*, along with *Ujamaa* - helped to resolve intellectual, social, economic, religious, and political conflict in South Africa's process of reconciliation and forgiveness in the post-apartheid period, and in Tanzania’s period of post-independence. In the

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<sup>133</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, 55.

<sup>134</sup> Michael Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me*, 27.

next chapter, I will propose that within the context of Chad, these three concepts have to be explored in greater depth as a means for resolving the country's multiple problems of injustice, corruption, political instability, social and economic failure, and all other practices that do not respect the dignity of every human being who has been created in the image and likeness of God. I will argue further that all Chadian Christians, and most urgently, theologians, ought to commit to contributing to the building of a society where the life of people should be considered the life of God. In light of this imperative, I will present some of the problems the Chadian community is confronting and how Chadian people might helpfully may reflect upon Trinitarian relationality, as understood in African terms, to resolve their conflicts, heal their wounds and be reconciled in justice and peace. Following the ideas used by the fathers of the Church as well as the concepts of *Ubuntu*, along with *Ujamaa*, I will introduce a particular concept from the Murum culture of Chad, namely, the concept of *Deou* which means human being or person. The concept of *Deou*, even though it is defined as person in the singular, has a broader meaning that takes into account all of human life in its entirety - politically, sociologically, culturally and legally.

To understand the profundity of the concept of *Deou* in relation to Trinitarian relationality, I will present three points that will disclose the understanding of the concept of *Deou* in the Murum Land in Chad. The first point will focus on the ways Murum culture perceives the concept of *Deou*, and how the concept shapes the entire Murum people's behavior. The second point will focus on the concept *Deou*, its relevance for understanding Trinitarian relationality and how the concept *Deou* can be framed in such a way that people can understand the theological connection between Trinitarian relationality, understood from a communitarian perspective, and what this means for life in the human community that is made in the image and likeness of God. The third

and final point will focus on how the concept of Deou can be used, theologically and societally to contribute to conflict resolution in Chad as Ubuntu did in South Africa.

### Chapter III: *Deou to Deou se Deoudje* and the Doctrine of Trinitarian Relationality

Dear brothers and sisters, the final word of the Synod was a summons to hope addressed to Africa. This summons will be vain unless it is rooted in the love of the Blessed Trinity. From God, the *Father* of all, we receive the *mission* of passing on to Africa the love with which Christ, the firstborn *Son* has loved us, so that our *activity*, impelled by his *Holy Spirit*, may be guided by hope and become a source of hope. While earnestly desiring to help implement the directives of the Synod on such burning issues as reconciliation, justice and peace, I express my trust that “theologians will continue to probe the depths of the trinitarian mystery and its meaning for everyday African life”. Since the vocation of all men and women is one, we must not lose our zest for the reconciliation of humanity with God through the mystery of our salvation in Christ. Our redemption is the reason for the confidence and the firmness of our hope, “by virtue of which we can face our present: the present, even if it is arduous, can be loved and accepted if it leads towards a goal, if we can be sure of this goal, and if this goal is great enough to justify the effort of the journey”.

“Africae Munus,” Pope Benedict XVI

#### Introduction

In the previous chapter, I elaborated on two important concepts that prevail in sub-Saharan Africa that shed light on the doctrine of the Trinitarian relationality: *Ubuntu* and *Ujamaa*. I noted that *Ubuntu* (person) and *Ujamaa* (familyhood) helped to promote togetherness as a sub-Saharan *modus vivendi* and *modus operandi*. Both *Ubuntu* and *Ujamaa* are concepts rooted in African Traditional Religion, at the same time, for African Christianity both concepts hold great potential for informing and influencing an authentically African appreciation and appropriation of the doctrine of Trinitarian relationality. Thus, these two concepts enable African Christians to recognize that the Trinity is not only a doctrine *in se* but also a way of understanding how humanity, created in the image and likeness of God is called forth to imitate the dynamics of Trinitarian relationality in all spheres of life through loving, sharing, and caring for others in personal and familial/communal ways. Given their rootedness in African Traditional Religion, the recovery and reappropriation of *Ubuntu* and *Ujamaa* in post-apartheid South Africa (after 1990)

and post-independence Tanzania (after 1961) respectively, helped to address many of the social, political, theological, juridical issues that had devastated the two countries.

In this chapter, given my interest in developing a contextual theology of Trinitarian relationality for Chad, I introduce a third concept, that of *Deou*, in addition to the concepts *Ubuntu*, and *Ujamaa*. The concept of *Deou* is taken from the culture of the Murum, an ethnic group found in the southern part of Chad. The concept of *Deou*, which is defined in reference to the concept of person, is fundamental in addressing and overcoming the injustices and vices that have damaged Chadian society, specifically in Murum land. Some of these include practices that do not respect human dignity such as corruption, political instability, social and economic insecurity, androcentrism, domestic violence, sexual abuse, tribalism, nepotism, perpetrated wars, and religious intolerance as causes of division and dehumanization.

In this chapter, I go beyond my efforts in chapter two, in which I argued that Trinitarian relationality can be best understood by using the concepts of person as implied in *Ubuntu* and familyhood as implied in *Ujamaa*. In constructing an African Theology of Trinitarian relationality, building upon the concept of communitarianism and the Southern African foundation of *Ubuntu* and the Eastern African foundation of *Ujamaa*, my objective was to advance an authentically African interpretation of the communitarian dimension of the creation of human beings in the image and likeness of God.

By contextualizing the doctrine of Trinitarian relationality, understood as divine community, and mindful of the insights derived from the concepts of *Ubuntu* and *Ujamaa*, I now draw upon insights derived from the concept of *Deou* rooted in the culture and customs of the Murum people. My incorporation of the concept of *Deou* into my theological vision of Trinitarian relationality provides a contextualized theological foundation that can be formative for Christians

in Chad. To the extent that they properly understand the mystery of Trinitarian relationality and recognize themselves as a community of persons whose participation in the *Missio Dei* is consequential for the promotion of love, justice, peace, and reconciliation throughout the country, they hopefully will experience the fullness of life as promised by Jesus Christ (Jn 10:10).

Since the independence of Chad on August 11, 1960, the country has never been peaceful. All types of conflicts have been fueled by the political agenda of “divide and conquer.” As a consequence of this political agenda, conflicts have been created, sustained and intensified. Muslims are against Christians, women are subjugated by men, herders are at odds with farmers; rebellions and social unrest have increased as ethnic groups have been incited to struggle against one another. Oppressive, antagonistic and violent social relations have become the societal norm in Chadian society. Looking at these social challenges through the lens of the concept of *Deou*, one inevitably sees that some of the practices and customs of communities must be questioned and addressed by those who identify themselves as Christians. I propose that understanding Trinitarian relationality in a communitarian way will provide theological foundations and ethical virtues for assisting Christians in Chad to cultivate love, justice, peace, and reconciliation among all people.

As one considers the current realities experienced by the people of Chad, one can grasp the theological urgency and ethical need to articulate an authentically African theology of Trinitarian relationality and its correspondence to the life of human communities. To embrace this communitarian approach, people are called to recognize its formative potential for helping the community of faith to respond to the complex problems of Chad. As Bishop Mwoleka observes, what is needed is “a transformation from ‘cupiditas’ to ‘caritas,’” which he understands as a transformation “from self-centered love to other-centered love.”<sup>135</sup> True love, as exchanged in the

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<sup>135</sup> G. Joseph Healey, and Christopher Mwoleka, *Ujamaa and Christian Communities*, 17.

Holy Trinity, is a love that can never be fully explained or understood, yet insights from the African concepts of *Ubuntu*, *Ujamaa* and *Deou* can provide individuals and communities with some comprehension of the mystery. Murum Christians, hopefully, will find ways of learning from the Trinity in their efforts to make a better world for themselves and others. Ultimately, my goal in proposing a Chadian contextual theology of Trinitarian relationality, as inspired by Bishop Mwoleka, is to, “put the Trinity before men [and women], not in abstract ideas, but in concrete facts of our earthly human life: Present the life of the Trinity as shared and lived by us Christians here and now.”<sup>136</sup>

Proceeding from this perspective, I divide this chapter into three parts. In each part, I describe the actual situation in which the people are living and then consider how the people of God in Chad might respond to their circumstances as a consequence of their understanding of Trinitarian relationality as informed by the concept of *Deou*. In the first part, I give the background of the Murum people and explain the idea of *Deou* as it has been understood in Murum culture. In the second part, I discuss the way insights derived from the concept *Deou* can be used to better understand the mystery of Trinitarian relationality; in the third and final part, I deal specifically with the subject of conflict resolution in Chad and the importance of cultivating a deeper understanding of the theological significance of the concept *Deou*. In this way, I hope to respond to the challenge identified by Vatican II’s Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, which says:

Never has the human race enjoyed such an abundance of wealth, resources and economic power, and yet a huge proportion of the world citizens are still tormented by hunger and poverty, while countless numbers suffer from total illiteracy. Never before has man had so keen an understanding of freedom, yet at the same time new forms of social and psychological slavery make their appearance. Although the world of today has a very vivid awareness of its unity and of how one man depends on another in needful solidarity, it is most grievously torn into opposing camps by conflicting forces. For political, social, economic, racial and ideological disputes still continue bitterly, and with them the peril of a war which would reduce

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<sup>136</sup> G. Joseph Healey, and Christopher Mwoleka, *Ujamaa and Christian Communities*, 16.

everything to ashes. True, there is a growing exchange of ideas, but the very words by which key concepts are expressed take on quite different meanings in diverse ideological systems. Finally, man painstakingly searches for a better world, without a corresponding spiritual advancement.<sup>137</sup>

*Gaudium et Spes* describes the situation of the people of God in Chad very well. That being said, I now turn to an exploration of Trinitarian relationality as understood in terms of *Deou*, with a sincere hope that my efforts will provide the people in the Land of Murum with opportunities to offer some response to the challenges that are before them.

### 3.1. Murum Culture and the Concept of *Deou*

Murum is a small ethnic group, part of larger ethnic group called *Ngambay*. The Murum people live in the Southern part of Chad; the language spoken is Murum. That language is similar to approximately seventeen other languages and dialects which are spoken in southern Chad and the northern parts of the Central African Republic. The languages similar to Murum are: Daba, Gor, Gulay, Horo, Kaba, Laka, Mango, Murum, Mbay, Nangnda, Bebote, Bejonde, Maguer, Pen, Nar, Ngam, Ngambay and Sar.<sup>138</sup> The ethnologist John M. Keegan considers Murum a dialect of Ngambay.<sup>139</sup> Negor and Mekongoto (1978) consider Murum a distinct language spoken in the Gabri Ngolo, Dormo, and Murum-Tulum cantons, which lie north of the city of Doba and west of the Gulay speaking cantons.<sup>140</sup>

Being a small ethnic group, Murum people belong to an oral tradition group (like many other ethnic groups in Africa), and there is little concrete data about Murum people for two

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<sup>137</sup> Pope Paul IV. Pastoral Constitution On the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium Et Spes*). 4. December 7, 1965. Papal Archive. The Holy See.  
[https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_cons\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html)

<sup>138</sup> M. John Keegan, *The Central Sara Languages*, 9rd ed. (Cuenca: Morkeg Books, 2014), 1.

<sup>139</sup> M. John Keegan, *The Sara Bagirmi Languages Project*, n.d., accessed March 24, 2022, <https://morkegbooks.com/Services/World/Languages/SaraBagirmi/#title>.

<sup>140</sup> M. John Keegan, *The Sara Bagirmi Languages Project*, n.d., accessed March 24, 2022, <https://morkegbooks.com/Services/World/Languages/SaraBagirmi/#title>.

reasons.<sup>141</sup> The first reason is related to the influence of the Ngambay people. Murum people share much with the Ngambay people. Regarding language, they understand each other despite some slight differences, but they are essentially the same people. The second reason is cultural and androcentric, and relates to the male initiation rite called “Yondô.”<sup>142</sup> “Yondô” is a cultural patrimonial that Murum people share with Ngambay people and a more significant part of the people of the Southern part of the country. Because of the code of secrecy, information about the initiation processes of Yondô are not revealed, or disclosed.

The concept *Deou*, defined as “person,” is singular; the plural of *Deou* is *Deoudje* to mean “people,” but to be more specific, *Deoudje* means persons. The concept *Ubuntu* has a parallel understanding in Murum culture as expressed in the saying “*deou to deou se deoudje*” that means “A person is a person in relation with other persons.” The concept of *Deou* is not simply another word for *Ubuntu* and *Ujamaa*; it possesses a depth of meaning that also includes Murum customs, culture, and practices. This concept denotes the communitarian nature of the Murum people. It consolidates in one word many of the values and characteristics of the Murum people. Hospitality and conflict resolution are among two of the attributes of *Deou* in Murum territory. Reflecting on the attribute of hospitality, Racheal Mafumbate defines hospitality as: “extension of generosity, given freely without strings attached.”<sup>143</sup> Mafumbate expresses that the practice of hospitality is

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<sup>141</sup> M. John Keegan, *The Central Sara Languages*, 9rd ed. (Cuenca: Morkeg Books, 2014), 1.

<sup>142</sup> Yondô is an African (Chadian) traditional religion practice. The practice is done in most of villages in the southern part of Chad as a rite of initiation for young boys. The Yondô or initiation takes place generally between July and August. The practice happens every year in some tribes and in others once every ten years. For the initiation, people are mobilized home after home to recruit young boys; those young boys could be children of seven years of age or older. The boys to be initiated are led to a forest/jungle where they are required to pass initiation tests. Some families compel their offspring to partake in the event. People who are not initiated are considered as Koy (an owl with horns) to signify an uninitiated person. The Koy is denied certain privileges in the village such as eligibility for marriage, owning a house, having friends who have been initiated, being considered as an adult, having authority or a position of leadership in the village, being counselor to the chief of the village (*U.S. Library of Congress*: <http://countrystudies.us/chad/27.htm>).

<sup>143</sup> Rachael Mafumbate, *The Undiluted African Community: Values, The Family, Orphanage and Wellness in Traditional Africa*, n.d., 8, accessed March 24, 2022, <https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/Undiluted%20African%20Community.pdf>.

one of the few numbers of ancient African culture that still remain in Africa today.<sup>144</sup> She emphasizes:

A sense of hospitality used to be inherently indispensable in the survival of African values. There used to be a spontaneous welcome and accommodation to strangers and visitors. Africans would easily incorporate strangers and give them land to settle hoping that they would go one day and land would revert to the owner. It is, thus, the willingness to give, to help, to assist, to love and to carry one another's burden without necessarily profit or reward as the driving force. Unlike in the West, no appointment and special invitation were needed for one to visit a distant relation or neighbor. On arrival when there is food, the visitor is invited to eat. The visitor would be treated kindly, just as one would wish to be treated when visiting another home.<sup>145</sup>

To further illustrate this perspective, if a stranger arrives at night to a village in Murum Land, the host, that very night, would slaughter a chicken or goat (depending on the availability of the animal), the mother of the house would cook for the stranger, reserving for the stranger the most prized part (the gizzard in the case of a chicken), so as to recognize the value and importance of the stranger who is welcomed as a guest. In Murum culture, a stranger should be treated like royalty because he/she could be a messenger; if you treat him/her well, he/she may share with you good news or, if not treated well, bad news. The narrative of Abraham and the three strangers in the book of Genesis may elucidate this approach. Abraham was not expecting to have a child with Sarah due to the ages of the couple, but the cordial welcoming that Abraham gave to the three strangers resulted in the promise of having a child, as we read in the Book of Genesis 18: 1-14; 21, 1-3. The Murum people similarly believe in such providential interventions.

Another example characteristic of Murum culture is conflict resolution. This is evident especially in the use of palaver. The palaver is the *modus vivendi* and *modus operandi* of Murum

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<sup>144</sup> Rachael Mafumbate, *The Undiluted African Community: Values, The Family, Orphanage and Wellness in Traditional Africa*.

<sup>145</sup> Rachael Mafumbate, *The Undiluted African Community: Values, The Family, Orphanage and Wellness in Traditional Africa*.

people in their processes of conflict resolution. The Gospel of Matthew presents how the reconciliation is supposed to be done, which is not far from what Murum people do. If someone does something wrong, talk to the person individual, in case you do not manage to convince the person, as help from some people, in case you do not manage again, ask help from the community and if the person still remains unchangeable, consider the him or her as tax collector (Mt 18: 15-17)

In Murum territory, a palaver is generally done under a tree in the middle of the village, or in the house of the village chief, or an elder. In Matthew's Gospel, the person who refuses to listen is to be treated as a pagan or tax collector, but for Murum people, if one of the opponents refuses to reconcile, he/she is expelled from the village because he/she is no longer considered an extended member of the community. By rejecting reconciliation, one refuses to be part of the community, to be one with others and to be together. This practice of palaver in the Murum Land ends with a feast as a sign of reconciliation or coming together. There is a saying in Murum: "*nguang dese ndon kara daou tonna yaba doum nade,*" which is translated as "tooth and tongue bit each other, but they still come together." That is to say, there is no way for human beings *not* to reconcile themselves with others. If one is asked, "*Ito deou ndoul ya wa?*" which literally means, "are you a black person?" it has nothing to do with the color of one's skin; rather, it is a reference to one's behavior. The question "*Ito deou ndoul ya wa?*" asks "are you a human being?" This is to say by inference that if you are a human being, you belong to a community of human beings; thus, your behavior should be in correlation with moral values and principles of the community to which you belong; namely, a community that is governed by the principle of togetherness. As soon as one breaks with the moral values and principle of togetherness, he/she is no longer considered a human being. So, the question, "are you a human being?" is a communitarian behavioral question in the

line of togetherness as expressed in the saying “*deou to deou se deoudje*.” “A person is a person in relation with other persons” expresses the notion of “familyhood,” similar to the Tanzanian concept of *Ujamaa*. The Murum term is *noudji* and this concept of familyhood, is by extension understood to mean community, the community within which *deoudje* live. Thus, the community to which individuals belong becomes family.

Viewed from an African perspective, family is not restricted to a father, a mother, and children, rather, family is understood more broadly as community. That is why Philomena Mwaura, who studies the extended family, states:

The extended family provided the individual with a personal and corporeal identity. One was assigned to a particular community and was assigned distinct roles at various stages of life on the basis of age, gender and social status. The cultural, social and moral norms of the community that were applied within the extended family helped an individual to grow into productive and respected member of the community. Those norms served as a blueprint for life. The extended family was, and continues to be, the first religious community to which an individual belongs. It was through parents, grandparents and other members that one learned about religious and spiritual heritage. It was possible where one learned about God, spirits, ancestors and the afterlife. The extended family was and is also a means of mutual support. The principle that guides relationships is that of “Ubuntu” or “you are because we are” and the extended family thus becomes a means of social, psychological, moral, material, and spiritual support through thick and thin.<sup>146</sup>

From the same standpoint, Monde Makiwane and Chammah J Kaunda, Human Sciences Research Council, South Africa, describe the family in Africa:

A family is generally constituted by three processes, which are blood relations, sexual unions or adoption. Societally sanctioned sexual unions between (two and in cases of polygamous unions, which are not uncommon in Africa, more than two) adults, and on the other hand, blood relations in Africa typically constitute wider relationship than those that are characteristically in western nuclear families. African families are typically extended to aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins and other relatives that form a family that functions in unison. The broad concept of family in many African societies is illustrated in Mandela’s autobiography “Long Walk to Freedom” where he states, “My mother presided over three huts at Qunu, which as I remember, were always filled with babies and children of my relations.

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<sup>146</sup> Philomena N. Mwaura, “The Family in Africa,” *Catholicism*, no. 23 October 2015 (October 23, 2015): 15, accessed March 22, 2022, <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/family-in-africa-3973>.

In fact, I hardly recall any occasion as a child when I was alone. In African culture, the sons and daughters of one's aunts and uncles are considered brothers and sisters, not cousins."<sup>147</sup><sup>148</sup>

To be more precise, Monde Makiwane and Chammah J Kaunda emphasize the fact that in African communities, there are no territorial boundaries when it comes to talking about family:

In several African communities, family is not limited to space and time, thus, it cuts across generations, relatives living far and near, the living and those who have joined the ancestors, as well as the ancestors themselves who continue to play a role in the lives of the living. This may be viewed as a very inclusive family system, which models the broader inclusive nature and type of African communities, creating a family-like lens through which several social actors are included and relationships interpreted. Obligations to wider kin vary with time, and typically more widely invoked during times of crises, or during certain life cycle events such as funerals and this remains a common practice in extended families on the continent, despite social change.<sup>149</sup>

### **3.1.1. Trinity and the Unified African Family**

In this section, my objective is to demonstrate the ways in which this unifying and inclusive account of the family holds theological significance when it comes to understanding Trinitarian relationality. By way of example, Pope John Paul described the Trinity in familial terms, during his Apostolic Visit to Latin America. In a homily that he preached on Sunday, January 28, 1979, he spoke the following words: "Our God in his deepest mystery is not a solitude, but a family, since he has in himself fatherhood, sonship and the essence of the family, which is love. Therefore, this subject of the family is not extraneous to the subject of the Holy Spirit."<sup>150</sup> By extension, we may conclude that when our human family imitates the family constituted in the Trinitarian

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<sup>147</sup> Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*, 1st ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1994), 2.

<sup>148</sup> Makiwane Monde, J Kaunda Chammah, and Human Sciences Research Council, "Families and Inclusive Societies in Africa," *16th sustainable development goals (SDG 16)* (n.d.), <https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2018/05/1-2.pdf>.

<sup>149</sup> Makiwane Monde, J Kaunda Chammah, and Human Sciences Research Council, "Families and Inclusive Societies in Africa," *16th sustainable development goals (SDG 16)* (n.d.), 2.

<sup>150</sup> Puebla de Los Angeles, Mexico, Palafox Major Seminary Sunday, January 28, 1979.

relationality of the Father-Son-Holy Spirit, human beings, in general, and the people of Chad, in particular, also would share in the fullness of life and love.

Returning once again, as I did in Chapter Two, to the thought of Brazilian theologian, Leonardo Boff, his interpretation of the “human family” as a “symbol of the Trinity” merits further consideration. He states:

Every being bears the traces of the three divine Persons in his or her entire being and activity. Every human being is born in a family, where signs of the presence of the triune God can be seen. God is communion and community of Persons – and the family is built on communion and on love. It is the primary expression of human community.<sup>151</sup>

In his “Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology: *Readings from Mysterium Liberationis*,” Boff expresses the view that, “Christianity’s most transcendent assertion may well be this: In the beginning is not the solitude of One, but the communion of the Three eternal Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”<sup>152</sup> This assertion of Boff prefigures all of his Trinitarian relationality projects. He pays a great deal of attention to the dignity of the poor, the marginalized, and vulnerable people in Latin America. Furthermore, Boff goes on to say: “The Trinity, which is the coexistence and co-life of the Father with the Son and the Holy Spirit, constitutes the root and prototype of this universal communion that have largely fallen into oblivion.”<sup>153</sup> By asserting this, Boff suggests that people theologize about the co-existentiality of the Three Divine Persons in terms of their singular and particular relation, but fail to extend this understanding to the being and nature of human persons as well. Similarly, Catherine LaCugna thinks that Trinity should be approached from the living experience of the people in a community:

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<sup>151</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2000), 39.

<sup>152</sup> Leonardo Boff, “Trinity” in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology: Readings from Mysterium Liberationis* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1996), 75.

<sup>153</sup> Boff, “Trinity,” *Systematic Theology: Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology: Readings from Mysterium Liberationis*. 75.

“The doctrine of the Trinity is ultimately a practical doctrine with radical consequences for the Christian life. Because of the essential unity of *theologia* and *oikonomia*, the subject matter of the doctrine of the Trinity is the shared life between God and creation.”<sup>154</sup>

The Trinitarian relationality of the Cappadocians and Augustine was precise, and theologically and philosophically oriented. The doctrine of the Trinity elucidated by the early Church fathers laid down the principle of a mutual and inner relationship of the Three Divine Persons. The contribution of African Christian theologians is that Trinitarian relationality may be understood as communitarian. In this sense, the African contribution to Trinitarian theology takes account of the Chadian reality as it draws attention to the struggles of communities as they endeavor to overcome the political, social, and cultural obstacles that delay the development of the country and undermine the human dignity of its people. For this reason, the significance of the culture practice of palaver is so important for those communities that, given the unsettling social, political, cultural, economic and religious climate of Chad, are in desperate need of a means to address and resolve the problems the country is facing so as to understand and heal the wounds of catastrophic conflict.

### **3.1.2. Understanding the Concept of *Deou* in a Chadian Contextual Theology of Trinitarian Relationality**

The true nature of God is Trinity. The term Trinity, however, implies the notion of plurality in one. As we have seen with the Cappadocians, substance is the ontological unifier of the hypostases, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Augustine, after recognizing the essence as the unification point of the three Persons, appreciated that this unity is communion. That is why Augustine also acknowledged that the mutuality and relationality of the Holy Spirit with the other

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<sup>154</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*, 1, HarperCollins paperback ed., (New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 377–378.

two Persons is a communion of the Father and the Son, and this same communion (the Holy Spirit) is perceived through His procession from the Father and the Son. The notion of communion implies relationality. When one acknowledges that communion is the coming together of many entities, one is justified in using the concept: “*deou to deou se deoudje*.” If “a person is a person in relation with other persons,” it requires an inner relationship not only in an ontological transcendental understanding, but also, in the historical human concreteness of life. The concept *Deou*, as Bishop Mwoleka said for the concept of *Ujamaa*, “could be a Trinitarian life expressed in human and material terms.”<sup>155</sup> Human relationality, as seen from the perspective of the concept of *Deou*, is the fundamental element that identifies the apologetic concept of togetherness “for whoever is not against us is for us.” (Mark 38: 40).

Believing in faith that the Father loves the Son completely, that He gives Him His entire love, and that the act of giving and receiving love is the Holy Spirit, it can be said that love is the fundamental element that links the Divine Persons inseparably. If love is the unifying dynamic of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and human persons are created in the image and likeness of God, love should be the unifying dynamic of *Deoudje* (Persons) that expresses the real togetherness as a symbol of love. As of St. Paul says:

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away...For now, we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So, faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (1Cor13, 1-13)

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<sup>155</sup> Bishop Christopher Mwoleka and Fr Joseph Healy, eds., *Ujamaa and Christian Communities*, 1976 , 17.

The concept of *Deou*, understood as including the concept of love, suggests something much more profound than a social contract. This love is not selfish or self-centered, but rather other-centered. That is why, in writing to the Corinthians, Saint Paul made the case for togetherness through love. As Boff points out very clearly, “the union among the Three Divine Persons is due to the oneness of the essence or nature of God, which is life, love, and communion.”<sup>156</sup> This perspective of Boff is an accurate description of the union among *Deoudje* (persons), which is intimately connected to the concept of *Deou*. The concept of *Deou* is essentially constituted by life, love, and communion. Appreciating the concept of Trinitarian relationality as many (three Persons) in one (God/Godhead) makes the concept of *Deoudje* in *Deou* easy to understand, provided that one also understands the significance of togetherness in community. This togetherness, that is exemplified in life, love, and communion of Trinitarian relationality, has consequences for human communities in search of justice, peace, and reconciliation for everybody, especially the vulnerable.

### **3.2. The Concept of *Deou* and Conflict Resolution in Chad**

The Christian contribution to conflict resolution in Chad based on the concept of *Deou* is undeniable today. Most of our human conflicts are generated from the fact that we do not take another person as an alter ego, or other *Deou* like me and you. People crush others because they feel more human than others. From the independence of the country on August 11, 1960, up to today, the country has never been in peace. To create an efficient political plan to subjugate the population and rule over them, politicians have silenced the population by instituting a state of

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<sup>156</sup> Leonardo Boff “Trinity” *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology: Readings from Mysterium Liberationis*, 76.

injustice, corruption, impunity, nepotism, clientelism, ethnicism/sectarianism, and a brief dictatorship, all with a simulacrum of democracy.

The unfortunate situation in Chad is based fundamentally on injustice, corruption, and nepotism. The corruption is generated from the injustice, and the nepotism proceeds from the injustice and the corruption. The report of GAN Integrity which is a business anti-corruption portal shows that:

Corruption is a very high-risk to companies seeking to invest in Chad. Corruption is systemic and often takes the form of nepotism and cronyism. It pervades all levels of the economy and is perpetuated by a weak rule of law and a lack of security. Chad is one of the world's poorest countries, and the majority of Chadians work outside the formal economy. Key anti-corruption legislation includes the anti-corruption law, which criminalizes active and passive bribery and stipulates harsh penalties. However, enforcement is poor, and prosecutions usually target political opponents of the government, Chad has not signed the United Nations Convention against Corruption<sup>157</sup>

In Chad, the human being is no longer seen as an image and likeness of God. According to USAID, "Chad is a low-income, land-locked country that suffers from chronic food and nutrition insecurity due to the effects of regional conflict, frequent drought, limited income-generating opportunities, and restricted access to social services."<sup>158</sup> In the same line, World Food Organization affirms that: "Regional conflicts, in combination with environmental degradation, rapid desertification and intercommunal tension over diminishing natural resources, have contributed to exacerbate hunger and poverty in the country."<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> GAN Integrity, *Chad Corruption Report*, April 2020, <https://www.ganintegrity.com/portal/country-profiles/chad/>.

<sup>158</sup> USAID, "Food Assistance Fact Sheet - Chad," n.d., accessed April 9, 2022, <https://www.usaid.gov/chad/food-assistance#:~:text=Chad%20is%20a%20low%20income,restricted%20access%20to%20social%20services.>

<sup>159</sup> World Food Programme, *Saving Lives Changing Lives*, 2022.

Chad is one of the poorest countries in the world; the social and economic situation creates conflicts within the country, as the April 2021 Report of the IPSS (Institute for Peace and Security Studies) states:

One of the structural causes of the current security situation in Chad is related to the country's socio-economic challenges. Chad is one of the poorest countries in the world with about 46.7%<sup>5</sup> of the country's population living below the poverty line. Malnutrition (2.2M ppl.) and food insecurity (3.7M ppl.), as well as limited access to basic services such as health care and education have created seething resentment towards the government. They have caused unrest in the country and non-state armed groups have exploited these vulnerabilities to mobilize individuals discontented with livelihood insecurities. In addition, the resettlement of the northerners in the southern areas of the country has led to frequent clashes and violence between the indigenous and non-indigenous communities over land use rights. It has also placed mounting demographic pressure on the limited resources, eventually resulting in inter-community fighting and sectarian conflicts.<sup>160</sup>

The roots of these conflicts date to the country's independence. The first Chadian President, Ngarta Tombalbaye, on acceding to power in 1960, imposed "Yondô" on the entire country, including those whose culture did not practice it. As discussed earlier in the chapter, "Yondô" is, in fact, "a ritual of masculine initiation exclusive to some tribes in the southern part of the country and whose objective would be to teach courage, endurance, dignity, and the sense of secrecy."<sup>161</sup> Tombalbaye tried desperately to institutionalize the practice of "Yondô" all over the country. Succès Masra, a Chadian politician and Béral Mbaikoubou, currently an elected National Assembly Deputy of Chad, have stated:

Soon, the institutionalization of "Yondô" constitutes the incarnation of the sexist discriminatory politic. Indeed, being a masculine practice, if this ritual rises to be a unique way to accede to the heart of the State decisional sphere, it comes that women see themselves as more and more rejected from the strategic circle of the country.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Cynthia Happi, *Chad Conflict Insights*, April 21, 2022, accessed February 4, 2022, <https://media.africaportal.org/documents/Chad-Conflict-Insights-vol-1-23042021.pdf>.

<sup>161</sup> Succès Masra, *Tchad, éloge des lumières obscures: Du sacre des cancre à la dynastie des pillards psychopathes*, Points de vue (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008), 20.

<sup>162</sup> Succès Masra, *Tchad, éloge des lumières obscures: Du sacre des cancre à la dynastie des pillards psychopathes*, 23.

The institutionalization of “Yondô,” authoritarianism, favoritism, and extreme corruption provoked many rebellions and the seeds of the North-South conflict. In the view of the people of the North, the majority of whom are Muslims, the first president favored people from the Christian majority in the South. The attitude of President Tombalbaye occasioned a civil war in the country in 1979, four years after the Coup d’état which provoked his death. Since the time he was killed, the conflict has never ceased. Chadian people still bear the stigma of the so-called “Septembre Noire,” or “Black September,” to signify the attempt to exterminate people from the South in September. The orchestrator of this act was El Hadji Hissen Habré called “HH.” Habré was the fifth president of Chad from 1982 to 1990. Human Rights Watch says this about him:

The abuses began as soon as Habré came to power in 1982 when he sent his forces to control the south, whose leaders opposed his rule. In the repression, culminating in “Black September” 1984, villages were attacked, pillaged, burned, and destroyed. Educated Chadians from the south were systematically arrested and executed.<sup>163</sup>

In the same report, Human Rights Watch goes on to say: “An analysis of the documents identified by name 12,321 victims of abuse, including 1,208 who were killed or died in detention. Habré was personally sent 1,265 direct communications from the DDS<sup>164</sup> about the status of 898 detainees.”<sup>165</sup> Many peace and reconciliation efforts have been convened, up to the present date, but all have been unsatisfactory. In August 1979, the civil war ended with the signing of the Lagos Accord, and a national unity government was established. In 1993, a national conference was held to heal the wounds of the dictatorship of Habré and to examine ways of establishing a transitional

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<sup>163</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Chad: Habré’s Government Committed Systematic Atrocities*, 2013. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/12/03/chad-habres-government-committed-systematic-atrocities#>

<sup>164</sup> DDS (Direction de la Documentation et de la Sécurité) in English Documentation and Security Directorate. DDS was supposed to national Documentation and Security Directorate turned to Habré’s political secret police.

<sup>165</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Chad: Habré’s Government Committed Systematic Atrocities*, 2013. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/12/03/chad-habres-government-committed-systematic-atrocities#>

government. On August 19, 2005, a peace accord was signed between rebels and the government. On February 09, 2006, another accord was signed in Tripoli in Libya.<sup>166</sup> Many other accords have been organized to analyze the fundamental problems the country faces and to look for remedies. Unfortunately, none of the accords succeeded in satisfying the people's aspirations; rather, the injustice, corruption, and nepotism actually worsened in the country.

Since Habré's regime, politicians have used tribalism, regionalism, and religion to divide the people of Chad. Because the President is from the Zakhawa tribe, he tells his tribe: "people hate me because I am Zakhawa." When he addresses the people from the northern part of the country, he tells the Northerners: "people hate me because I am from the north." And when he addresses the Muslims, he says: "People hate me because I am a Muslim." These political speeches divide the country, particularly the Muslim majority from the North to the Christian majority from the South.<sup>167</sup>

Hissen Habré was expelled by Idriss Déby Itno in 1990. Déby, who was a former army commander-in-chief of Hissen Habré, came to power at the head of a popular mutiny against the Habré. This shows how the use of guns to fight, to conquer and to conserve power radically destabilizes Chad. Déby was the first president who started organizing democratic elections although they were only simulacra. According to a National Public Radio (NPR) report, Déby "won a series of elections beginning in 1996, all the while weathering numerous rebellions and coup attempts."<sup>168</sup> The same NPR report said that:

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<sup>166</sup> Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Kanem-Bornu". Encyclopedia Britannica, 11 Jun. 2015, Accessed 27 March 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Kanem-Bornu>.

<sup>167</sup> Mayke Kaag, "Transnational Islamic NGOs in Chad: Islamic Solidarity in the Age of Neoliberalism," *Indiana University Press* 54, No. 3, Muslim West Africa in the Age of Neoliberalism (Spring, 2008), pp. 3–18, no. 2008 (n.d.): 8, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27666905?seq=6>.

<sup>168</sup> Scott Neuman, "Chad's President, Idriss Déby, Reportedly Killed During Clash With Rebels," National Public Radio (April 2021), accessed April 12, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2021/04/20/989052863/chads-president-idriss-deby-reportedly-killed-during-clash-with-rebels>.

His critics accused Déby of repression amid crackdowns on his opponents. The public was also growing increasingly discontent over his management of the country's oil wealth. In 2018, Déby pushed through a new constitution allowing him to remain in power until 2033. Last year, he took the title of "Marshal."<sup>169</sup>

Speaking last year ahead of April's elections, he said: "I know in advance that I will win, as I have done for the last 30 years."<sup>170</sup> Freedom House rates Chad as "not free" and says that although it has had regular presidential elections since 1996, "no election has ever produced a change in power."<sup>171</sup>

The era of Déby was crowned by repression of the population and his political opponents, as the statement below describes. Déby was killed by the rebels at war in April 21, 2021, he was replaced by his son in a movement tending towards monarchy. According to Human Rights Report on Chad of 2018:

Human rights issues included arbitrary killings by the government or its agents; torture by security forces; arbitrary and incommunicado detention by the government; harsh and potentially life-threatening prison conditions; denial of fair public trial; political prisoners; censorship of the press and restrictions on access to social network sites by the government; arrest and detention of persons for defamation by the government; substantial interference with the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association; significant restrictions on freedom of movement; restrictions on political participation; corruption; violence against women, including rape and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), with government negligence a factor; criminalization of same-sex sexual conduct; and child labor including forced and other worst forms; and trafficking in persons, particularly children.<sup>172</sup>

After the death of the president Idriss Déby Itno, the Chadian people hoped for a change in the country, but a group of fifteen military Generals took power by violating the Chadian Constitution, Number 81, that stipulates:

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<sup>169</sup> Scott Neuman, "Chad's President, Idriss Déby, Reportedly Killed During Clash With Rebels."

<sup>170</sup> Scott Neuman, "Chad's President, Idriss Déby, Reportedly Killed During Clash With Rebels."

<sup>171</sup> Scott Neuman, "Chad's President, Idriss Déby, Reportedly Killed During Clash With Rebels."

<sup>172</sup> Human Rights, "Chad 2018 Human Rights Report" (April 12, 2022), <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1145786/download>.

In case of vacancy of the Presidency of the Republic for any cause, or of definite incapacity as declared by the Supreme Court, referred to by the Government, and deciding with the absolute majority of its members, the duties of the President of the Republic, with the exception of the powers specified in Articles 85, 88, 95 and 96, are provisionally exercised by the President of the National Assembly and, in case of incapacity of the latter, by the First Vice President. In every case, it proceeds to new presidential elections at least forty-five (45) days and ninety (90) days at most after the vacancy is opened. (Constitution of 2018, article 81)

For Daniel Eizenga, an American researcher, who worked as a “research fellow responsible for conducting policy-relevant research advancing understanding of pressing security challenges facing Africa,” “The junta executed a constitutional *coup d’état* to maintain power and continuity of rule within Déby’s family and allies.”<sup>173</sup> At the end of this constitutional *coup d’état*, a national dialogue is now being organized for the people to reconcile themselves with their past wounds orchestrated by the government, opposition armies and rebellions.

This dialogue will succeed only when each daughter and son of Chad discovers that he or she is *Deou*, and that he or she belongs to a community called/condemned to be in relation with *Deoudje*. Being in relation with other people implies respect, love, share, peace, justice, and reconciliation as the use of palaver in the community I talked about in the above lines.

### **3.3. Applying the Trinitarian Concept of *Deou* to Chad’s Situation**

Fully aware of Chad's catastrophic situation and how dialogues and accords have been unsuccessful, I propose something new that I hope will help Chadian Christians and the country at large, to see the true state of affairs and effectively work toward peace, justice, and reconciliation. Above all, for a dialogue to be effective and beneficial for the entire community, the concept of *Deou* has to be used theologically and juridically in conflict resolution in Chad. The method of

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<sup>173</sup> Eizenga Danial, “Research Fellow,” *African Center for Strategic Studies*, no. 12/17/2021 (n.d.), <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/a-crucial-moment-in-chads-transition/>.

palaver should draw upon inter-relatedness and the concept of *Deou* to reconcile people of Chad divided by corruption, injustice, and nepotism.

Theologically speaking, if the people of Chad (Christians specially) were to recognize that they are created in the image and likeness of the Holy Trinity, they would see themselves as having the same Creator who dwells in heaven and on earth through and in other people. By identifying the society as an image of the Holy Trinity, Boff, metaphorically speaking, identifies three major forces in the society that he relates to the three Divine Persons: economy, politics, and culture. Talking about the economy, Boff does not intend to speak only about material and economic matters *in se*; he is alluding to basic needs of the society such as food. Because, for him, “eating, making a living, and assuring food for someone hungry are profoundly human and hence spiritual. This power underlies all the rest since there is no life without it (food). And without life, there is neither society, nor religion, nor adoration.”<sup>174</sup>

The second point discussed by Boff is political power. Political power builds a society in which people are interconnected and in relation to one another.<sup>175</sup> Unfortunately, politics in Chad divides people by using religions, tribes, and languages to polarize people. Political power that is supposed to create an environment for social, economic, peace, security for the population fails:

Corruption is a very high risk for companies seeking to invest in Chad. Corruption is systemic and often takes the form of nepotism and cronyism. It pervades all levels of the economy and is perpetuated by a weak rule of law and lack of security... Key anti-corruption legislation includes the anti-corruption law, which criminalizes active and passive bribery and stipulates harsh penalties. However, enforcement is poor, and prosecutions usually target political opponents of the government. Chad has not signed the United Nation Convention Against Corruption.<sup>176</sup>

The third and final power, according to Boff, is culture. For him, culture creates:

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<sup>174</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 41–42.

<sup>175</sup> Leonardo Ibid., 42.

<sup>176</sup> New ebook, *Chad Corruption Report*, April 2020, <https://www.ganintegrity.com/portal/country-profiles/chad/>.

Values and meanings that give validity and expression to our life and what we do. Cultural power gives rise to religious rituals, philosophies, the arts, and all the symbols by which we express our thoughts and values. No one lives without valuing the things he or she does or that are nearby.<sup>177</sup>

The three forces or powers have to be held together to make a better world where justice, peace, and reconciliation can be lived out daily. When Boff proposes these three forces, he is alluding to the life of the Trinity as a community. The way human beings behave should be reflective of the “Holy Trinity, Perfect Community.” By recognizing the perfect relationship in love among the Three Divine Persons, each person should apprehend his/her membership/belonging to a society where human being should be all in all. Belonging should lead human beings to say “I am a member of the human family; humans are in me and I in them, which facilitates a clear and strong relationship among the *Deoudje*.” As Jesus said: “I am in the Father, and the Father is in me.” (Jn14:11) Mindful of this passage, Boff observes:

The communion that is to be fashioned between human beings is one that embraces their whole being, right down to the roots of their love. It must also manifest itself in every aspect of life, including economic, social, and political life. Produced by the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, it is the communication of their own trinitarian communion.<sup>178</sup>

Juridically speaking, justice should be like a compass that shows people how they should behave in the society. For the dialogue to result in a true reconciliation in Chad, justice has to be considered in all its aspects. The notion of justice is to be taken seriously as the Psalmist says: “Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute” (Ps82:3). Similarly, the Prophet Isaiah cries out: “Learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression: bring justice to the fatherless and please the widow’s case.” (Is1:17). In calling for effective dialogue and reconciliation in South Africa, Tutu said:

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<sup>177</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 42.

<sup>178</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 42.

One might go on to say that perhaps justice fails to be done only if the concept we entertain of justice is retributive justice, whose chief goal is to be punitive, so that the wronged party is really the state, something impersonal, which has little consideration for the real victims and almost none for the perpetrator.

We content that there is another kind of justice, restorative justice, which was characteristic of traditional African jurisprudence. Here the central concern is not retribution or punishment. In the spirit of *ubuntu*, the central concern is the healing of breaches, the redressing of imbalance, the restoration of broken relationships, a seeking to rehabilitate both the victim and the perpetrator, who should be given the opportunity to be reintegrated into community he has injured by his offense.<sup>179</sup>

By considering that “a person is a person in relation with other persons,” forgiveness after true reconciliation is done, reunifies. Knowing that the concept of *Deou* is other-centered or toward others, we know the fundamental social contract is to live together peaceably as one in the community. Bishop Mwoleka suggests that we should start living the life of the Holy Trinity *hic et nunc*.<sup>180</sup> In Murum Land, the personal pronoun “I” or the possessive pronoun “Mine” are not very often used. The use of personal pronouns “We, They, You” or the possessive pronouns “Our, Their” are very often used. The singular personal and possessive pronouns are known as selfish and egoistic. What belongs to one person in the community belongs to the entire community.

## Conclusion

The concept of *Deou* like *Ubuntu*, and *Ujamaa*, is very important in the building of Chadian society. Considering the concept of *Deou* as a person is a person in relation with other persons introduces the notion of relationality. Like the Holy Trinity related in love, *Deoudje* should be related in love as well, given that they are created in the image and likeness of the same Holy Trinity: “Let us make man [woman] in our image, after our likeness...” (Gn1, 26). The concept of *Deou* taken from Murum culture, language, and custom is a key element for familyhood that should inform Chadian’s principles and values for togetherness. *Deou* calls humanity in general and

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<sup>179</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, 54–55.

<sup>180</sup> Christopher Mwoleka and Joseph Healy, *Ujamaa and Christian Communities*, 15–17.

Chadian society in particular to solidarity, sharing, and loving; by doing that, justice, peace, and reconciliation would be effective among *Deoudje* in Chad.

## General Conclusion

“Life is a life of sharedness; one in which another is a part thereof.” This participatory process ignores the calculation of personal outcomes. Instead, it takes life as an active participatory and meaningful space with the full opportunity to live together and extend the sense of personhood together. This life is identified with insights, symbols, proverbs, belief systems, belongingness, and witticisms.<sup>181</sup>

In this conclusion to the thesis, I would like to do four things. The first is to review the contents of the thesis by giving a brief summary. The second is to present some of the strengths of the thesis. The third is to consider some of the difficulties I encountered while writing the thesis. Finally, I present some possibilities for future research arising from the insights I gained while writing this thesis.

In the thesis entitled “Trinitarian Relationality and the Understanding of the African Concepts of *Ubuntu*, *Ujamaa*, and *Deou*,” I argued that Trinitarian relationality as it was understood by the fathers of the Church and subsequent theologians is fundamental for appreciating the relationships that human beings have with each other. The Holy Trinity chooses not be Trinity for itself. The Trinity chooses to create human beings and to instruct them in the ways of togetherness, community and remaining in relationship with one another. Bishop Christopher Mwoleka did not hesitate to say that Trinity is about imitation and doing/acting.<sup>182</sup>

The first chapter presents Trinitarian relationality in the fathers of the Church, in particular the Cappadocians and Augustine. Their works have enlightened the entire Trinitarian doctrine of the Eastern and Western Churches even until today. The Cappadocians as well as Augustine were confronted the heresies of their time. Theologians holding heretical positions questioned how one

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<sup>181</sup> Mahmoud Masaeli, “Africa’s Ethics of Elegance,” in *African Religion and Culture: Honouring the Past and Shaping the Future*, First edition. (13245 Trebleclef Lane Silver Spring 20904, Maryland, United States of America, 2021), 9, file:///Users/amedetaroh/Downloads/APASBOOKFOUR2021AFRICANRELIGIONANDCULTURE.pdf.

<sup>182</sup> G. Joseph Healey, and Christopher Mwoleka, *Ujamaa and Christian Communities* (Eldoret, Kenya: Gaba Publications, Amecea Pastoral Institute, 1976), 15.

God could be seen as three Persons. The three Persons are equal, and eternally interconnected. Given the limits of a short thesis, I take Arius as a representative heretic. Arius asserted that the Son is a created being superior to all other created beings, therefore unequal to God. By professing the supremacy of God, the Father over the Son, Arius showed how the two do not have a common origin in the substance but rather the Father is the cause of the substance of the Son. This perspective was also applied to the Holy Spirit. The Cappadocians on the one hand held that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three Persons called *Hypostases*, the *hypostases* are eternally and internally related in *Ousia* or substance. On the other hand, Augustine understood Trinitarian relationality from the perspective of three Persons in one essence. The notion of love was very important to the Bishop of Hippo as he developed his understanding of Trinitarian relationality. Love was the most important characteristic of the Holy Trinity. That is why Augustine affirmed that the Father so loves the Son that He gives Him His entire love and the love of the Father and Son generates the Holy Spirit.

In this same first chapter, I also turn to Ignatius of Loyola in the sixteenth century, who presented Trinitarian relationality through the notion of *missio Dei*, the mission of God in the hands of human beings. That is why the vision that Ignatius had at *La Storta* represents the pinnacle of the mission of the Society of Jesus: “Both Father and Son were looking most kindly upon him, and he heard the Father say to the Son ‘I wish you to take him as your servant.’ Jesus then directed His words to the kneeling pilgrim and said: ‘I wish you to be our servant Then he heard the Father add: ‘I will be favorable to you (in plural) in Rome.’”<sup>183</sup> As a consequence, Ignatius understood that the mission given to the Society of Jesus by the Holy Trinity involved evangelization as well as contributing to the flourishing of human life and society.

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<sup>183</sup> Joseph N. Tylenda, and Câmara, Luís Gonçalves da, 1520-1575, *A Pilgrim's Journey: The Autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola*.

The second chapter examines the meaning of Trinitarian relationality as understood from the perspective of African contexts, cultures, and customs. It reviews the longstanding debates about African Traditional Religion, and concludes that the consensus today is that ATR is neither monotheistic nor polytheistic, but rather “communotheistic.” Building on the concept of communotheism and its relevance for understanding Trinitarian relationality, the thesis considers two concepts that contribute to an understanding of togetherness in the context of sub-Saharan Africa. *Ubuntu* refers to a person that is opened to other persons. This concept can be used to understand how each person of the Trinity is eternally opened to the others. This consideration introduces the notion of the oneness and manyness of God, which is how the notion of communotheism is perceived in Africa. That is why *Ubuntu*, understood as “being together” provided an open door for peace, justice, and reconciliation for the people of South Africa to heal their post-apartheid wounds. The second concept of *Ujamaa*, “familyhood,” emerging from the context of Tanzania, is understood, like *Ubuntu*, as the concept of communality or togetherness. In terms of Trinitarian theology, this concept of togetherness can be used to comprehend in human terms the indisputability of the inner Trinitarian relationality reality. Being together is being one. Used to heal the wounds of colonialism and promote solidarity in the Tanzanian community, the concept of *Ujamaa*, understood as familyhood contributes to theological imagination, and lends itself to reflecting upon human efforts to imitate the life of the Holy Trinity through familyhood and togetherness in community.

In the third chapter of the thesis, the African concepts used to arrive at a contextual theology of Trinitarian relationality, are applied to Chadian context, where the concept of *Deou*, which means person, is examined in greater detail. In similar ways, *Deou*, like *Ubuntu* and *Ujamaa*, focuses on the person who is opened to the other and seen as member of a community.

This contextual application of the concept of *Deou* is my original contribution to Trinitarian relationality for the people of Chad. I hope it will help them to build a society of justice, peace, and reconciliation where people can live in harmony as sons and daughters created in the image and likeness of God.

Writing this thesis, I discovered many things that have contributed to my own understanding of Trinitarian relationality. I understand that Trinitarian relationality enables one to consider both the life of God One and Triune *in se* and through that lens to see the communal nature of life as experienced by human beings. This same Trinitarian relationality helps us to understand human contributions to the great project of God, and to participate in the *missio Dei* by contributing to the building of the Kingdom of God, the kingdom of peace, justice, and reconciliation.

In the sub-Saharan African perspective, Trinitarian relationality helps to revisit the understanding of the Trinity in general and it shows how Chadian people can take advantage of this knowledge to rebuild a peaceful and just nation amidst a catastrophic reality. This thesis, opens up the possibility, in my opinion, to consider other people as myself, being created in the image and likeness of God. And finally, Yondô, my initiation into the Murum culture in my village helped me to know my culture, to understand it, and, at this point in my life, to find authentically African ways to understand Trinitarian relationality.

This thesis carried with it many challenges. The first challenge I encountered while researching was a lack of documents related to Murum culture and customs. It was difficult to find data because of the lack of openness on the part of the Murum people. The second challenge I encountered was the lack of concrete African words, culture, customs, and beliefs to accurately

translate *ousia* or substance, and essence, and other technical terms used in the development of the doctrine of the Trinity.

There are interesting and unresolved questions and elements of this research to which I hope to return in the future. Some of these include: How can an understanding of Trinitarian relationality that is informed by the concept of *Deou* help to address and resolve social and cultural concerns? How can deepening our understanding of Trinitarian relationality expressed in the concept of *Deou* help address and resolve ongoing political challenges regarding peace, justice, and reconciliation in Chad in a practical way? Finally, I hope to translate this thesis into French and make it available for Chadian religious leaders, seminarians, and all other Christians interested in promoting enculturation within the context of Chad.

As an African, Chadian, and member of the Society of Jesus, this work is very important to me, because it helps to rediscover my mission to preach of the Gospel and advocate for peace, justice, and reconciliation in the world in general, and in Africa including Chad in particular. My understanding of the Trinitarian relationality shaped by my Murum culture, language, and beliefs should help to see how the process of enculturating Christianity within my cultural and traditional religious beliefs through the understanding of Christian notion of love. That is why, learning from the Ignatius perspective of the mission of God, my mission is to advocate for the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth; the kingdom of peace, justice, and reconciliation among daughters and sons of God in Chad.

In his remarks at the Tomb of St. Francis on the Vigil of the saint's Feast, Pope Francis offered a prayer that sums up many of my aspirations.

O God, Trinity of love,  
from the profound communion of your divine life,  
pour out upon us a torrent of fraternal love.

Grant us the love reflected in the actions of Jesus,  
in his family of Nazareth,  
and in the early Christian community.

Grant that we Christians may live the Gospel,  
discovering Christ in each human being,  
recognizing him crucified  
in the sufferings of the abandoned  
and forgotten of our world,  
and risen in each brother or sister  
who makes a new start.

Come, Holy Spirit, show us your beauty,  
reflected in all the peoples of the earth,  
so that we may discover anew  
that all are important and all are necessary,  
different faces of the one humanity  
that God so loves. Amen.

*Given in Assisi, at the tomb of Saint Francis, on 3 October, Vigil of the Feast of the Saint, in the year 2020.*

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