

# Violence on Traditional Religious Artifacts by Christians during Evangelism/Crusades in Igbo land of Nigeria (2000-2017): A Historical Discourse

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**Abstract:** One of the fundamental obligations of Christians is preaching and spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ for the purpose of conversion. In Igbo land of Nigeria, this quest for preaching has been on the increase with more Christians becoming extraordinarily zealous to evangelize all kinds of people by 'fire or by force'. However, one disturbing thing is that some evangelism crusades organized in some areas are characterized by violent attacks on traditional religious artifacts. The main reason put forward for these attacks include the belief that traditional religious artifacts hinder the people's progress because they (the artifacts) carry with them the heathen evils of traditional idolatry. A historical discourse of such evangelism crusades held in Amansea, Ugbenu, Oraukwu, Igboukwuetc bear marks of violent attack on traditional religious artifacts. Evangelism in itself is not the problem but the deployment of physical violence and verbal attacks on the artifacts of traditional religious adherents. It is discovered that this brand of Christian evangelism is becoming offensive and irritating to some concerned traditionalists who are at the receiving end. A situation as this when unaddressed could trigger off dangerous crises and reprisal attacks capable of destabilizing the peace of the society. In addition to this, the study found out that violence on traditional artifacts obliterates history, culture, arts, religion, piety and impedes robust cross fertilization of ideas between old and the new. As great and rich symbolic repository of knowledge, artifacts provide successive generations with abundant information about how, why, what, when and where they are coming from in a variety of ways; their destruction is a regrettable loss to every society.

**Key words:** Christian, evangelism, violence, traditional, religious, artifact.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Christianity all over the world has remained one of the most popular religions with a basic duty to spread the gospel to every nook and cranny of the world in accordance with the biblical injunction to go and make disciples of all nations (Matt 28: 19). In Igbo land of Nigeria, the quest for evangelism has been on the increase among Christians with different churches engaging in one type of evangelism crusade or the other. One disturbing observation is that some crusades and evangelical outreaches often times are suspected not to be driven by the application of appropriate tenet and apposite evangelical ideology.

Perhaps this is the reason why instead of spreading the gospel during crusades some Christian participants and organizers of

crusades take to violent attacks on traditional religious artifacts which are the symbols of worship and religious expression of the traditional religion adherents. Different reasons have been adduced by crusaders as to why traditional and cultural paraphernalia, objects of worship and artifacts must be done away with. Christians who indulge in these destructions are in consensus that these objects are instruments through which satanic stronghold is used to keep the people under attack, bringing to them all manner of ill lucks, misfortunes, and even untimely death. Many Christian denominations, one way or the other, are involved in this reckless destruction of traditional religious artifacts and therefore fall short of what peaceful evangelism crusade entails. This study investigated the violent crusade activities of some few Roman Catholic Churches or some organizations inside the church in some parts of Anambra state to typify that violence on traditional artifacts are made during crusades by many other churches in various parts of Igbo land.

Violence as a concept in this paper is used in line with the definition of Fretheim (2004) who says that it is any action, verbal or nonverbal, oral or written, physical or psychical, active or passive, public or private, individual or institutional/societal, human or divine, in whatsoever degree of intensity, that abuses, violates, injures, or kills. For many people only physical violence truly qualifies as violence. But certainly, violence goes more than killing people directly, to include all those words and actions that kill people slowly. In view of these considerations violence comprehensively comprises psychological destruction; that which demeans, damages, or devalues or depersonalizes others.

Historical discourse is the way in which language is used within society to express broad historical meanings. It denotes written and spoken communications, talk or conversation. Historical discourse is poly-discursive in its nature as it embraces different words reflecting diverse aspects of human life in the past. Different written and oral speeches, talks, reports and observations in the past concerning episodes of attacks and destruction of traditional worship symbols in Anambra state form the subjects of the discourse. Violence, attack, vandalism and destruction of traditional religious artifacts in Africa by Christians have become part and parcel of African Christian history since the advent of Christianity. Attempt to thoughtfully and methodically engage in extended

expression of reflection on such matter is in the realm of historical discourse.

This paper does not place a blanket condemnation on evangelism, but seeks to point out that the use of violent attacks on the traditional culture, religion and symbol of worship during Christian evangelism in some parts of Igbo land is provocative and falls short of and does not comply with coherent ethical standard of Christian evangelical principles. The ripple effect of such violent conduct is that it poses and possesses the potential to cause crises that could destabilize the societal peace in a wide variety of ways.

## II. HISTORICAL SURVEY OF VIOLENCE ON ARTIFACTS BY CRUSADERS/EVANGELIZERS

A gospel crusade is a concerted effort to evangelize a community or an area. It is described as a religious cause embarked upon by Christians who interpret the Bible most often according to their own taste. These Christians believe that it is their responsibility to forcefully convert others they identify as 'unbelievers'. The term crusade goes back to the middle Ages when European Christians tried to conquer the Holy land. At present the term is used for countless reasons. In the sense of its usage here it is a vigorous campaign for a religious change. One of the most famous examples of religious violence is the crusade of the Middle Ages where European Christians attempted to impose their vision of religion on the heretics, orthodox Christians, Jews, Muslims and all people who opposed them. Moslems engage in evangelism too. It is a duty in Islam, and is called *da'wa* which means to invite people to Islam, making an appealing message or calling people to embrace the faith proclaimed by Mohammed. Moslems as well, organized and engaged in counter crusade called revivals. All the above forms of crusades in the past involved at some point the destruction of artifacts.

Usually, people especially historians say that history is written by the conquerors and victors, but infrequently does one observe that it is not only written, but revised or changed with time. According to Clemens et al (2015), just as those in power manipulate facts, the lessons of history are adjusted and adulterated at their delight. Since the time of Thutmose the Third (1481- 1425 BC) in ancient Egypt, and likely even before then, there were instances of artifacts being destroyed, not for the reason of sheer destruction, but to get rid of family names, religion, dynasties and personalities from history. Statues and art works depicting Queen Hatshepsut (1507 - 1458), the fifth pharaoh of the eighteenth dynasty of Egypt, were damaged or demolished to remove her history and therefore her influence from Egyptian life. The Aztecs (Mexico) under Itzcoatl (1380 - 1440) destroyed the codices of the peoples they conquered and replaced them with state-sanctioned history, controlling societies by rewriting their history. One simple, streamlined narrative serves a spot better than nuance and variety.

Slogans of the past decade have been littered with stories of the destruction of artifacts in political hot spots in Asia. Just as the Khmer Rouge (1975 - 1979) had done in Cambodia decades before, the Taliban eradicated statues of the Buddha in Bamiyan (2001), a UNESCO World Heritage Site, to erase the fingerprint of an Indian religion brought to Afghanistan long ago. Both Christian and Muslim forces have taken credit for the destruction of some parts of the Library of Alexandria at different times, and both for the same reason: a war on worship of false gods. Acts of this nature are not meant to imply supremacy of one religion over another; they erase every sign of undesired religion altogether rather so that there is no debate.

A Syrian dome of St. Peter, the magnificent Bel Temple, the most impressive among the Classical period temples in the Near East, may have been the most recent victim to ISIS's barbarism. Today we see ISIS (the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) laying waste to the ancient Roman city of Palmyra and the ancient Assyrian capital city of Nimrud. Although some of this destruction is possibly wanton vandalism, ISIS has within it an organization committed to the destruction of Muslim and non-Muslim artifacts, called the "committee for the promotion of virtue and prevention of vice". More than just an outcrop of extremist religious zealotry, the destruction of cultural heritage by ISIS clearly serves propagandist and ideological purposes. In this quest, ISIS's path of destruction has not spared Muslim targets either for most of the buildings attacked by them so far are Islamic shrines. Their endgame is one of thought control. ISIS is destroying priceless artifacts and treasures to cement control over the message.

History has taught us that no regime lasts forever, which deepens the tragedy of artifact destruction, since it will always be for naught since a new regime is sure to undo what the old one did. ISIS is defacing historical architecture and artifacts and slaughtering anyone who stands in their way. On 18<sup>th</sup> August 2019 a Syrian archaeologist Khaled al-Asaad was publicly beheaded by ISIS after he refused to reveal the location of artifacts excavated from Palmyra.

At the local level in many countries this kind of control over history is still being sought and advanced by groups who think they are in vantage positions. In Africa and specifically in Igbo land, Christianity at the face value has gained enormous advantage over the traditional religion and has been seeking forceful control over it. For some Christians, traditional shrines and other symbols of traditional religion that exist in arts and culture should all be erased. The implication of this is that they do not want the practice of traditional religion in their societies any more. Only Christians and their worship artifacts should exist for the spiritual comfort of Christians. By destroying traditional artifacts, this brand of Christianity thinks that the traditional gods and spirits are as well destroyed. This is the way history would have it told in the future to come going by their own assessment. Destruction of images at this level is due to distrust or fear based around the

idea that they are imbued with the power of the evil Christianity accuses them to have.

### III. CASES OF VIOLENT ATTACK ON TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS ARTIFACTS IN ANAMBRA

It is an obligation for every Christian to preach the gospel of God's salvation for the conversion of souls as again stated in the biblical account of Mark - "Go and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16: 15). Many Christian evangelism crusades in Igbo land are more of violence and destruction of material things than the preaching of the gospel to the people for repentance. Some instances of these violent attacks on traditional religious artifacts in Anambra state will suffice. Verbal attacks on traditional religion with its artifacts, worship and practices are steady occurrences in all churches during sermons, prayers, etc, but are heightened during crusades. Verbal attacks are taken for granted as almost all brands of Christian religion speak against traditional religion regularly in different forms in and outside their worship centers. Physical attacks have resurfaced since verbal attacks no longer attract attention.

In the year 2000 Christian evangelism crusade held on 25<sup>th</sup> April in Amansea community, Awka north local government area of Anambra State, as organized by the Amansea Catholic community was enmeshed in violence. The crusade was meant for the evangelization of the people by preaching the gospel, as well as for the spiritual liberation of the people from the seemingly lack of progress in the community. The evangelism activities took off on the right footing until crusade participants mainly youths went on to destroy traditional religious artifacts such as the traditional shrines, the symbol of traditional deities (*Ikenga*), masquerades costumes, traditional wooden stools, mystical wands (*ofo*) and many other religious insignia of values. Some of the destroyed traditional deity temples and masquerade costumes during the crusade include *Onyimonyi* deity shrine (the god of procreation), *Ofufe-Ngenedeity* shrine (warrior god), *Ajanadeity* shrine (goddess of ritual purification), *Mgbadike* Masquerade costume, *Ijele* Masquerade costume and *Isiaba-Offia* Masquerade costume.

Another crusade organized on 18<sup>th</sup> April the year 2015 by St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Ugbenu, Awka North local government area of Anambra state, which was aimed at awakening the consciousness of the community in the things of God turned awry at some point. Violence erupted on the third day of the crusade rally as the participants violently went on rampage cutting to pieces various traditional religious grooves and burning to ashes many shrines and emblems of deities in the community. Deity shrines destroyed include temples of *Ngene-Ozo* (ancestral god), *Agwu-Amaedem* (warrior god), *Obubu Okechukwu* (fertility god) and *Uhihe-Ebenebe* (god of justice). These are deities responsible for procreation, food crops, gift sharing and river respectively. Angered by the action of the crusaders, the traditional religion adherents and custodians of the temples confronted them and

this led to a chaotic situation resulting in a free for all where injuries were inflicted on many people with churches and many private houses torched, cannibalized or destroyed.

In Igbo-Ukwu town of Aguata local government area of Anambra state, many traditional shrines and religious artifacts were destroyed during a crusade organized by the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of Nigeria in the community on 29<sup>th</sup> December, 2017. Some of the shrines destroyed include temples of *Ogwugwu Onye Mere OnyeYa* (god of revenge), *Udo-Nkwo* (prosperity deity), *Udo-Akukwa* (ancestral goddess), *Udo-Oti* (guardian of peace), *Mmuo-Obi* (conscience goddess), *Ogwugwu Osoro-Okwunuka* (guardian of justice and peace), *Oda* (guardian of accident) and *Udo-Akwari* (goddess of fertility). Among the items destroyed include mystical wands (*ofo*) and an ancient mammoth-size wooden gong. Pleadings to the traditionalists by reasonable personalities to shelve the planned burning down of five churches in the community in retaliation saved the day. The same act of violence on traditional religious artifacts took place at Oraukwu town in Idemili north local government area of Anambra state during a crusade organized by St. Mary's Catholic Church in 2016 at the area. During the course of the crusade, Christian youths went on rampage violently destroying many traditional shrines in the community. *Idemobi* and *Nwocha* shrines (river goddesses) were destroyed.

A list of such traditional religious artifacts destroyed during Christian evangelism indifferent Igbo communities of Nigeria is endless. These few examples are but only to act as a basis for discussion on violent attack on artifacts that pervades and permeates most Igbo communities of today. The violence takes the same shape and form in all the places.

### IV. SYMBOLISM, DESTRUCTION OF ARTIFACTS, AND EVANGELISM

Artifacts and art images are symbolic aspects of every religion and are considered to be one of the main characteristic features of religious expressions. According to Metuh (1978), religion deals with invisible and spiritual beings that cannot be subjected to empirical observation, hence the need for symbols. Symbols no doubt strengthen the link between human beings and the realm of the sacred or the supernatural. They represent concepts and give or show underlying meaning of objects or qualities. They are like triggers, they remind people of a culture the rules, beliefs and meaning both in good and bad ways; but most importantly in an ethical way they encourage good behaviors and eschew bad ones. The Roman Catholic Christians used above as a point study utilizes extensively the symbols of the cross of Jesus Christ, the Holy Bible, Holy Communion or the Eucharist (the blood and the body of Jesus Christ), chaplets, portraits of Saints and the Blessed Virgin Mary, churches etc as means of expressing their religious belief. In the same vein traditional religion adherents make use of deity images, *Ikenga*, mystical wands (*ofo*), masquerades and other artifacts as symbols of

worship. All of them are man-made objects that represent concepts as assigned to them by their religious users.

For Christians and traditionalists, symbols serve as a veritable visual identifier of their faith; hence, one cannot explain satisfactorily the destruction of the symbols of one religion by the other. The destruction of the symbols of traditional religion in many areas as discussed above is a huge spiritual, historical, social, economic, political and psychological loss. Traditional religious adherents in these Igbo areas are still counting their losses. Those artifacts destroyed were used in worship, festivals, rites of passage, and were daily reminders to the people of their beliefs; their traditions, their identity and most importantly their relationship and communion with the supersensible cosmic realities.

Historically these destroyed artifacts were visible links between the communities and their highly esteemed generational pasts. Substantial ingredients of the people's mythology, legend, cosmology and cosmogony that make up their worldviews are embedded, ingrained and typified by these symbolic artifacts. In the social dimension of it, these artifacts united the people as members of a clan and common faith tradition. In the same way the destruction of masquerade paraphernalia, shrines and costumes have robbed the traditionalists of their communal meal bonding, unity and enjoyment, derived from participating and watching the aesthetic nature and performance of these masquerades during numerous festivals that dot the people's social calendar. Economically the destroyed artifacts being ancient products in origin are at present irreplaceable due to the scarcity of ancient materials and dearth of skilled traditional artists to recreate them. Since these artifacts are destroyed, the traditional priests, together with other aids, who minister in these shrines, have lost their jobs. The sacrificial food, meat, drinks, crops, money etc offered by the traditional votaries in these shrines have ceased.

Politically, powers are assigned to some symbolic artifacts by the traditionalists and every community member is bound to obey and abide by their decisions. In moments of crises and matters of grave community importance, masquerade artifacts imbued with divinatory and punitive powers give judgments and prescribe binding solutions to urgent and serious issues. Psychologically, the traditional Igbo people have been affected negatively by the loss of these artifacts. Many traditionalists especially the elderly ones among them, including those of them who have been forcefully converted into Christianity, complain that they feel empty and sad because of these losses. Depression, anxiety and poor systems of coping with stress have set in as these artifacts disappeared. The extent of losses the glorious destruction of traditional religious artifacts may have had on the people cannot be overemphasized. As an evil wind that blows nothing good to anyone, the forceful destruction rubbed off well on the traditionalists as they are ready today to return fire for fire should there be such violent evangelism again. This stance agrees with Kalu's (2003) comment that the destruction

of traditional artifacts by early Christian evangelists in Igboland ignited iconoclastic crises, "the traditionalists felt pushed to the wall, they reacted as they did in Bende and Aba Districts, 1949/50, 1951, and burned schools and churches" (p. 319).

For Forson (2014), the scriptural reason for involvement in evangelism is because it is a mandate from the Lord Jesus Christ. A mandate is a commission or order given from one person to another. In specific terms, it is an order or commission given from our Lord Jesus Christ to all Christian believers. The great commission as far as Christendom is concerned is essentially regarded as the template for Christian evangelism as laid down by Christ as mission statement for evangelism. According to Young (2013), it was five times that the Lord Jesus gave the Great Commission. Five times the scripture recorded the great commission: Matthew 28: 19-20, Mark 16: 15-16, Luke 24: 47, John 20: 2, Acts 1: 8. It is important to note that the mandate as outlined above essentially possesses not the impression of a violent or coercive mission. As a matter of fact it would have been difficult for any of the apostles to have deviated as a result of loss of evangelical mission into coercive and violent one as is the case in this present day Christianity.

Quoting the position of the Catholic Church in condemnation of coercive evangelism at Vatican council II, Robeck (1996) notes that, "the church strictly forbids that anyone should be forced to accept the faith, or be induced or enticed by unworthy devices" (p.4). Hence, doing so is a loss of evangelism sense of mission. In the words of Hollinghurst (2015), the overarching purpose of evangelism essentially considers methods, too, that are ethical.

It is not in doubt that the criticism that follows Christian evangelical works in recent times is traceable to the violence that characterizes them. Scott (1997), posits that

Christian evangelism falls into disrepute when it degenerates into stereotypes. It is impossible to evangelize by fixed formulae. To force a conversation along pre-determined lines in order to reach a pre-determined destination is to show oneself grievously lacking in sensitivity both to the actual needs of our friend and to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Such insensitivity is therefore a failure in both faith and love (p. 73).

In furtherance of his thesis Scott advised that evangelism is neither to convert people, nor to win them, though this is indeed vital to the goal of evangelism. Preaching the gospel is evangelism's first task.

Therefore the act of violence, coercion and forceful conscription of faith during evangelism should not arise. For Naylor (2004) dialogue is an essential prerequisite necessary to ensure true communication. The values and concerns of the hearer must be comprehended before using the gospel terminologies and categories to confront him. The essence of dialogue is to give each and every person concerned in a given

matter a voice to speak out his/her mind uninterrupted and without coercion at all. Since the issue of persuasion or the act of convincing someone cannot be separated from the principle of dialogue, it is pertinent for one to understand that the eloquence of the participating evangelist and crusader in presenting the message in a convincing manner before the proposed converts and the latter's acquiescence remain very crucial for their decision.

A historical account of Paul's evangelical mission in Athens as expressed in the book of Acts gives a vivid picture of Paul's use of dialogue in his evangelism of the Athenians. In Athens, Paul employed the principle of dialogue to explain to the Athenians the facts about their religion and the gods the people worship. In-depth analysis of Paul's conversation with the people of Athens as written in Acts 17: 16-34 shows Paul's ingenuity in his passionate bid on daily basis to help them to understand the true nature of their god and hence they became convinced to accept the gospel. It is therefore fundamental for one to grasp the fact that the purpose of dialogue is not to manipulate or intimidate. The purpose is nothing else but information communication.

The ability of one to communicate information to another person and wait for the person to communicate back his own is dialogue. In the words of Sweet (2005), communication does not begin with being understood, but with understanding others. Arinze (2014) elucidates the point better and directly by saying that the attitude of the Catholic Church towards people of other religions and cultures who embrace the faith has been one of openness. Long time ago in history the congregation for the evangelization of peoples (earlier called *de propaganda fide*), in sending its first missionaries to Indochina (today Vietnam) in 1627, admonished them to respect the cultures and traditions of those peoples and to reject only that which is diametrically opposed to the Christian faith.

Speech is symbolic and no evangelism can take place without speech. If evangelism is carried out by the symbol of speech, is it proper that people engaged in evangelism should be destroyers of symbols. Does the destruction of symbols destroy also those things being symbolized by the symbols? Igbo traditional religious symbols or artifacts are believed to be abodes of traditional spirits of various kinds and merely getting rid of the symbols cannot destroy the spirits believed to inhabit them. Spirits are conceived as nonphysical supernatural beings that belong to an order of existence beyond the observable senses of man and they are incapable of being destroyed by man. Man can only destroy symbols or artifacts made by his fellow man but not the spirits beyond and behind the artifacts. In plain language those who destroy in the name of evangelism are willfully demolishing people's property and should be held accountable for their illegal acts, the irrational fanatical emotionalism prompting them notwithstanding.

## V. CONCLUSION

Misunderstanding a culture's symbol is a common root of prejudice (Brown, 2009). Christians pray at the feet of a man nailed to a cross, the Hindus chant in front of a four-armed elephant named *Ganesh*, the Masons meditate on the inevitability of death before skull and crossed bones among other items. A *mezuzah* that contains the *shema* written on a scroll is often attached to the front door house of the Jews who touch it before entering their homes. They also wear *tefillin* called phylacteries while praying. Muslims use prayer beads referred to as *Misbaha*, *Tasbeeh* or *Sibha* while praying. Buddhists use prayer beads called *malas* while praying. In short the use of objet d'art, insignia or artifact in symbolic rituals are found in every religion.

Since every faith has its own symbolic artifacts, why are Igbo traditional symbolic religious artifacts being misunderstood and mishandled? The ludicrousness of denigrating Igbo traditional religious artifacts during evangelization could only be as a result of superiority complex, abysmal ignorance or bigotry of the Christians, largely instigated by the deficiency of the power of the Holy Spirit of God that is supposed to accompany genuine crusades. Immediately after the instruction to go and preach repentance and forgiveness to all nations in the name of Jesus Christ in the Great Commission, the risen Christ cautioned "And behold, I send the promise of my father upon you; but stay in the city (Jerusalem), until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24: 48 – 49). They were asked to tarry because they needed power; spiritual power, power from above, the power that enlightens and gives understanding to the word of God. They needed power but not the power of authority, nor the power of position or office, nor the power of numbers or human intelligence.

They needed power not only to change men but to be, first of all, changed men. They needed power not only to convert the world but to be, first, converted. The disciples were to teach men externally or outwardly; they were to minister to men but the power of God in the Holy Spirit internally applies the word to convert men. They needed power but not the power to engage in the battle of the physical. They needed spiritual power to identify and engage demons in a spiritual way. They needed power to build, not to destroy. They needed power to bring about peace, not crises. They needed power to convince, not to confuse.

The religion and tradition of Igbo people are the threads that hold their clans together, and if the symbols of that religion are pointlessly destroyed thereby weakening that tradition, Christianity, the agent of that destruction, cannot provide an adequate replacement. This is part of the reason why Christian religion is not deeply rooted in Igbo people in spite of the large followership it commands. Very often Christians profess their religion in the day time and patronize traditional religion in the dark of the night. The lack of spiritual power, power from above, that characterizes the sort of evangelism under which guise traditional artifacts in Igbo land are destroyed in

recent times is incapable of converting new members. It is important to note that such selfish evangelism is held only to satisfy the wishes of these destroyers who are already Christians but needed miraculous freedom from the fear of perceived evil spirit-attackers dwelling in traditional religious artifacts in their communities.

In actual sense no human being converts or liberates one another. Humans can preach but real liberation or conversion is a thing of the heart that happens spiritually. The Christians who claim to be liberated or set free from demonic attack after the traditional religious artifacts had been destroyed are one and the same with the evangelists or crusaders who led them in the same destruction. They are self-made Christians devoid of power of Christ in the Holy Spirit and agents of crisis, confusion and disorder. As self-made Christians they boast and pride themselves as custodians of Christianity in their respective communities. They have the right to read, interpret and apply the scripture the way they wish. As Christians devoid of power they apply human knowledge and human strength in their methods of conversion. As agents of crises and disorder they foment troubles under the guise of practicing their religion.

Igbo traditional artifacts are of critical importance to the effective evangelization of Igbo people. Christianity was born from within the Jewish tradition, and Islam developed from both Christianity and Judaism. This shows a rich cultural borrowings and interchange among these great religions. Early Christian art and architecture adapted Roman artistic forms and motifs but gave new meanings to what had been heathen symbols to express and deepen their Christian faith. They applied well known customs to develop their religion and doctrine.

After Christianity became legal in 313 CE, Christians started using the Roman architectural form of the Basilica. Temples, robes, crosses and chants, Christmas trees, etc form an important part of Christianity, but their origins are found in heathenism. Christians borrowed the terms believers and disciples (among many other things) from the Old Testament to describe themselves. One essential feature of Christianity wherever it goes is to discard part of the culture of a people, change some and use some to advance the gospel. Traditional artifacts can be used in various ways to spread the gospel. For one, they are symbols that can readily be made to bear new Christian meanings. Instead of destroying them their traditional users can, with the power of God in the Holy Spirit, be convinced to allow them sing another song in another religion. Since traditional artifacts constitute deep spiritual rallying point for the community members, focusing on them for successful conviction costs less and means everything.

Long time ago in history, Inman (2014) in his book originally published in 1869 observed that as the Hebrews and Christians believe their religion to be God-given, so other nations, having a different theology, regard their own

tenets. To suggest otherwise is to say that the seeds sown by God for earlier faiths was a mistake. Isaiah 45:1 speaks of God releasing Israel from Babylonian exile through the non-Israelite anointed one, Cyrus. Matthew 8: 10 speak of Jesus honouring the Roman centurion because of the officer's compassion for his slave (a rare act in the ancient world) and respect for Jesus. The non-Israelite, Balaam from Syria received prophetic word from Yahweh (Numbers 22-24). Jonah (1: 7) was identified as being the reason behind the tempest through a non-Israelite prophetic artifact (Ugwueye, 2019). Judeo-Christian God from time to time recognizes, accepts and works with people and artifacts or symbols beyond the biblical faith for the good of the faith. In the light of the above, Igbo traditional artifacts ought to be made to work for the spread of the Christian gospel instead of being violently attacked during crusades.

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