THE NAMES WE BEAR AND WHO WE ARE: A CULTURAL AND LITURGICAL STUDY OF NAMING AND IDENTIFICATION

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Abstract

Naming practices are discussed from cultural and ecclesiastical perspectives. A somewhat new trend here referred to as 'affective names' is identified and analysed. Affective names are so called because of their tendency to express a feeling, an emotion or wish of the name giver, and they are by definition names in the English language. Affective names are characterised as culturally 'surrogate' since they fit into neither the ecclesiastical nor the typical cultural tradition. Responding to a pastoral problem according to which affective names are sometimes contested as fitting names for Christian initiation, this paper argues that affective names are appropriate names, but for purposes of identification, their vernacular versions are encouraged for use during initiation ceremonies. The paper illustrates the need for liturgical identification by considering the way a 'seeming discontent' with the approval of the anaphora of Addai and Mari was settled. Thus, the paper demonstrates that seeming differences need not be taken too far. Finally, a new definition of Christian names is provided and its advantages are discussed.

1. Introduction

In both cultural and ecclesiastical circles, names play a significant role in terms of identifying the bearer with the community. In this way, names are not empty but rather share some connection with the background or world of meaning which they evoke. Thus, while some

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philosophers have debated the analytical details of rigidity and modality as well as counterfactual situations in relation to proper names,[2] genetic scientists and clinicians have generated 'sweet-smelling names' for their activities,[3] and a sociological approach has focused on how names are used to connect kith and kin in the society.[4] From a linguistic point of view, Umera-Okeke and Anyadiegwu[5] have emphasized the identity symbolism of names and called for a greater use of vernacular (Igbo) in contradistinction to English names the meanings of which are sometimes unknown to the bearers. This problem is however not peculiar to Igbo culture nor is the problem a simple lack of understanding of some of the names used. Given that an individual may have a dual (or more) affiliation, for example, being Igbo or Ogoni as well as Christian, the real problem seems to be that some of the names borne by certain individuals scarcely identify them with either culture, a characteristic which could be termed *cultural surrogacy*. It is this problem regarding personal names, not previously broached in the manner that I do, that this study addresses. Some paradigmatic examples of names that are culturally surrogate are the following: Destiny, Victory, Happy, Lucky, Favour, Progress, Pleasant, Beauty, Queen, Prince, Smart, Glory, and I refer to these names as 'affective names' since they express a feeling or a wish, or hark back to an admirable event which may even be biblical. On the one hand, affective names tend to be displacing not only traditional 'Christian names' like James, Mary, Polycarp, Scholastica, etc, but also cultural names like Dumbor, Diepreye, Uduak, Ndidi, Iheanyi, etc; and unlike the

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[2]G. Frege, 'On sense and reference.' In A. W. Moore (Ed.), *Meaning and reference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 23-42; Bertrand Russell, 'Descriptions,' In A. W. Moore (Ed.), *Meaning and reference,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 46-55; Saul A. Kripke, *Naming and necessity* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1980).

[3] Jeff Nisker, A brief and personal history of 'what's in a name' in reproductive genetics, *Medical Humanities*, Vol. 47 (2021): 228-234.

[4] Janet Finch, 'Naming names: Kinship, individuality and personal names,' *Sociology*, 42 no. 4 (2008): 709-725 DOI: 10.1177/0038038508091624

[5] Nneka Umera-Okeke & Justina Anyadiegwu, 'Language and Self-identity: Making a Case for Indigenous Igbo Names in Nigeria's ESL Situation,' *International Journal of Language, Literature and Gender Studies*, 5 no. 2 (2016): 25-35.

traditional 'Christian names,' affective names tend to be given at birth more freely and without baptism. Also, some who bear affective names are not given any cultural or vernacular names, or those are hardly known to the public. On the other hand, some pastors of souls reject the use of affective names for baptism while others reject both cultural and affective names. In this study, I wish to set the records straight. I argue that: (1) Affective names are indeed admirable and genuine names although they do not identify a person either by way of ethnicity or Christianity. While these names may not be condemned, their vernacular equivalents may be used. This is a way of recapturing the link between names and identification. (2) The drift towards affective names is concurrent with a shrinking use of our African languages, and there is need to revert this trend. Since names speak something of identity, African Christianity needs to re-grow a naming system which keeps members as Christians while preserving their African identity. (3) The use of names in vernacular during baptismal ceremonies, which is already being practiced in some places, deserves maximum encouragement.

This article will be divided into five sections. In section 1, I will explore the nature and origins of names in the cultural setting. Section 2 will focus on the trends in name-giving. Here, a distinction will be made between biblical, canonised, cultural and affective names. The case will be made for the preservation of our cultural identities in section 3, and here I will make reference to a certain momentary 'discontent' with the ancient Eucharistic prayer of Addai and Mari which was recognised (early in this century) as valid by the Latin church even though it lacks a key identification feature of Latin-style anaphoras. In section 4, I will propose a possible solution to the baptismal names' discussion. I will encourage the use of select cultural names for baptism without, of course, condemning other kinds of names. Thus, 'Christian names' will be redefined as names used for baptism be they biblical, canonised, cultural or affective.[6] While the use of affective names is discouraged

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[6] The redefinition is necessary for the sake of clarity and to accommodate the new concept of 'affective names.'

('affective' being used in the restricted sense of the names as they appear in English), it will be noted that this is a trend that is concomitant with the shrinking use of vernacular as well as other changes during the past few decades which call for appropriate response on the part of the church. A proposal made here is that of measured accommodation. On a more theological note, the redefinition of the Christian name ties in with the universality of the people of God. Christianity is not amenable to a particular culture but rather to all. This has the implication that Christians do not need to be known only by name (of course, sometimes there should be indications) but also by deed. Section 5 will be my conclusion that the redefinition of a Christian name stands the chance of being advantageous not only to Christianity but also to various cultures in terms of promoting cultural names and eventually using them for the course of canonisation.

2. Names in Cultural Setting

'Personal names,' the main focus of this study, are a class of proper names. Proper names include personal names like Gbarabe, Iheanyi, Dooshima, Sweneyaw; names of places like Degema, Port Harcourt, the United Kingdom, Dodan Barracks, the River Niger, Freetown; and temporal names like Easter, Ramadan, Independence Day, April, Friday.[7] While some proper names always go with the definite article, personal names do not.[8] In focusing on personal names, consideration is given to first names not only because first names are usually the names given during naming ceremonies but also because they are sometimes subjects of debate during liturgical initiation rites. Primarily, it is the liturgical discussion that concerns us here, but it presupposes other cultural naming ceremonies which definitely come into play in this article as well.

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[7] An animal may also receive a proper name, e.g. Bucephalus, the horse of Alexander the Great, just as titles like Gberemene, Ooni, and any set of words used to designate an entity. See Tim Valentine, Tim Brennen & Serge Brédart, *The Cognitive Psychology of Proper Names: On the Importance of Being Ernest* (London: Routledge,1996) 3.

[8] Biblical scholars have indicated the contrary here, but the thesis remains in line with everyday communicative usage nonetheless. For the biblical case, see Fee (1971).

Needless to say, this discussion covers names that are borne by individuals as a stable mark of identification, not nicknames (even when those become stable) or names that are arbitrarily rained on someone by way of insult, as in the childhood chant, 'Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me.'[9] The stability of the personal names we study makes them part of the huge constellation of elements that constitute one's identity.[10]

Scholars have articulated a great deal of what names, especially names given in parts of Africa, communicate. Depending on where one is born, the name given could contain information on one's tribe, family, birth history, cultural belief and social organisation,[11] social location, legal persona, gender, ethnicity,[12] family tree, deities believed in, totems, answers to mockery, praise of God,[13] while some names provide advice and caution for life.[14] A name also singles an individual out as destined for life, and so inserts the person into a family and society.[15] Elias had earlier made this point in his discussion of the I-we relation according to which one's forename indicates the answer to the question 'Who am I?' (I-identity)[16] while one's surname indicates the group to which one belongs (we-identity).[17] Besides individuating us in society and empire, names have also been used as 'technologies of exclusion and

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[9] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DI4KwLhv9dY

[10] Tim Brennen, 'On the meaning of personal names: A view from cognitive psychology.' *Names*, 4 (2000), 139-146 [145]. DOI: 10.1179/nam.2000.48.2.139.

[11] Irene Odotei, 'What is in a name? The social and historical significance of Ga names,' *Research Review* 5 (1989), 34-51 [34].

[12] Finch, 'Naming names,' 709.

[13] Umera-Okeke & Anyadiegwu, 'Language and Self-identity,' 23, 33.

[14] E. Mensah & J. Ishima, 'Sentential names in Tiv.' *Studia Linguistica* 74 no. 3 (2020): 645-664.

[15] Olive Akpebu Adjah, 'What is in a Name? Ghanaian Personal Names as Information Sources,' *African Research and Documentation*, 117 (2011): 3-17 [3].

[16] N. Elias, *The Society of Individuals* Edited by M. Schröter (ed.), translated by E. Jeffcott (New York: Continuum, 1991), 184.

[17] Elias emphasises the importance of the we-I relation together, but here we are focusing more on the forename since that has arguably more relevance for liturgical initiation rites.

belonging'[18] a handy example of which is the renaming of slaves. Moreover, it has been suggested that names tend to have a strong impact on life such that a person's life can turn out to be peaceful or problematic depending on the person's given name.[19] These onomastic dimensions explain why name givers, usually parents, also reflect themselves in the names they give. That is, when giving names, parents look both at the past and at the future keeping account of their experiences and their wishes and hopes for the child they name.[20] This is an aspect of naming which may have assumed greater expression in recent times in the phenomenon of 'affective' name-giving. As we will see, affective names tend to almost entirely reflect parental wishes and hardly represent any identifiable traditional culture, a characteristic which places affective names in a 'borrowed' culture at best. This characteristic may be referred to as *cultural surrogacy*. It may be helpful to take a look at some of the changes that have occurred with regard to names and naming practices.

3. Evolution of Names and Naming Practices

In this section, we shall be looking at a certain pattern which can be discerned in naming practices among Christians in Nigeria. The pattern is made up of different types of names which show a certain evolutionary trend in their appropriation. We shall first classify the different names before focusing on one of them.

Types of Names: Three types of names and naming practices can be identified among Christians in Nigeria, and they include cultural, canonised and affective names.

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[18] G. Palsson, 'Personal Names: Embodiment, Differentiation, Exclusion, and Belonging.' *Science, Technology& Human Values*, 39, no 4 (2014): 618-630 [620].

[19] R. Possa-Mogoera, 'A bad name is an omen: Stigmatising names among the Basotho,' *Literator*, Vol. 41, no. 1 (2020) a1710. https://doi.org/ 10.4102/lit.v41i1.1710

[20] Tania Zittoun, 'Symbolic Competencies for Developmental Transitions: The Case of the Choice of First Names,' *Culture and Psychology*, Vol. 10, no. 2 (2004): 131–61 [143]. doi.org/10.1177/1354067X04040926

Cultural Names: Cultural names come from the culture of the newborn and are thus always in vernacular.[21] These names could be given by parents based on their experience or prospects, by ancestors who signal the parents in a culturally familiar way, by tradition as in some cultures where the newborn is named after the village or kindred, or by some other undisputed means. Cultural naming is the default type of naming among most Nigerians. As such, it is both older and more widely used than other naming practices. That is to say, in traditional society, any child born is given a cultural name even if other types of names will later be added. It also means that a cultural name could be of any kind including the name of a town, tribe, market day, month, river, farmland, a crop, fruit, journey, an ancestor, a mountain, an animal, a dress, a utensil, a type of food or drink, a deity, wizard or witch; they could also be sentences or expressions of happiness, progress, fear, warning, determination, masculinity and femininity, war, dispersion, famine, boom, marriage, weather condition, bitterness, pain, poverty, death, and so forth. These names are thus given indiscriminately in traditional society, and they express the people's integrity and interaction with life, death and the beyond. They have the advantage of being easily pronounced and understood while being amply revealing and portraying of the culture and individual.

Canonised Names: Canonised names are the so-called names of saints which came mostly from the West and particularly with the introduction of Christianity in Nigeria towards the end of the 19th century. This category lumps together names of perceived good figures in the Judaeo-Christian Bible like David, Jeremiah, Daniel, Elizabeth, Hannah, Priscilla, Titus, James, and names of canonised Christians like Ignatius, Scholastica, Francis, Clare, Dominic, Clement, Agnes, and more. Canonised names are also known as Christian names since they are the names used during Christian initiation.[22] Needless to say, canonised

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[21] As can be noticed, cultural names can actually be divided into subgroups but that is not really necessary in this paper.

[22] Islam also has an equivalent of 'canonised' names which would include names of Qur'anic figures and well as other key figures that are treated with honour in the religion.

names are usually given during Christian initiation, not at birth like cultural names.[23] More so, canonised names are borne even when their meanings are unknown. There is a basic motivation that bearing a saint's name enrolls an individual under the saint's patronage and intercession. This underscores what I would designate as an element of 'affect' in Christian naming, but I will return to that shortly.

Affective Names: 'Affective names' as used here refers to names in English language which express a favourable feeling or favourite wish of the name-giver. Examples of such names include Progress, Destiny, Lucky, Joy, Happy, Mercy, Delight, Prince, Queen, and Pleasant. Affective names represent the most recent trend of name-giving that can be observed in the southern parts of Nigeria. Although the use of some affective names can be traced to the last decades of the 20th century, it is in the 21st that a significant number of parents are embracing it. Unlike cultural names which can be identified with various cultural traditions, and canonical names which can be traced to the Christian tradition, affective names stand for no particular systematic tradition. The names seem to emerge from a cluster of developments which are modern, scholarly, Christian, and fashionable. They are modern in the sense that they are independent, unbound to any tradition. They are scholarly to the extent that they are promoted in the lingua franca of education, just as they depict clarity of understanding for the educated. A certain influence from new Christian movements can be gleaned in the adoption of some of these names. Moreover, they sound contemporary and likeable and are unlikely to be disesteemed by most modern children. In virtue of the mentioned characteristics of affective names, especially the 'modern' characteristic, it seems proper to describe them as culturally surrogate. This view might have contributed to the experience of refusing affective names for Christian initiation rites. Yet, it seems that affective names have a positive motivation.

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[23] Today, however, some parents do not mind giving a Christian name at birth. Soon enough, though, these names are used for baptism.

Besides the characteristics of affective names which have been mentioned, some other reasons which I have come to learn about in the course of pastoral experience why affective names have sometimes been discouraged during Christian initiation rites include the following: (a) The so-called 'affective names' are English words, some of them are adjectives or titles, not names at all; (b) They seem to have been copied from new religious movements and using them amounts to imitation; (c) They seem to express feelings and emotions; as such they lack substantive theology. These are some of the demerits of affective names accentuated by those who discourage their use including some ministers of baptism. However, a more holistic understanding of affective names may be of far greater benefit for us.

Ethnographic studies have shown that people often take names to express 'the core elements of one's person.'[24] It may be that parents who present their candidate with a particular affective name desire an embodiment of the content of that name for their child. The number of such parents is probably on the increase today because we are transiting into a school society. More so, the attraction of affective names is understandable given the simplicity of the names. They are mostly disyllabic 'names' which are both easy to pronounce and self-evident in meaning. People generally prefer what they can easily understand to what sounds difficult just as they prefer desirable to non-desirable names.[25] Compare the names 'Scholastica' and 'Happy.' 'Scholastica' is long and tongue-twisting, and its meaning is not easily known. Parents would need to make consultations before realising that the name has to do with 'scholar,' and although this meaning could be inferred from the name, it would probably require higher education to be able to do so. 'Happy,' on the other hand, has an obvious meaning and one

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[24] Barbara Bodenhorn & Gabriele Vom Bruck, 'Entangled histories: An Introduction to the Anthropology of Names and Naming.' In B. Bodenhorn & G. Vom Bruck (eds.), *The Anthropology of Names and Naming* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1-30 [4].

[25] Albert Mehrabian, 'Impressions Created by Given Names.' *Names*, Vol. 45, no. 1 (1997): 19-33 [20]. DOI: 10.1179/nam.1997.45.1.19

which seems to be everybody's quest. It is also simple to pronounce and easy to recall.

Furthermore, affective names are arguably not entirely new. They have been in use for centuries in both cultural and ecclesiastical traditions. Vernacular names which reflect a translation of the affective names given above can be found in various cultural traditions. They can also be found among canonised names. 'Clement,' for example, is a typical affective name in language and overall simplicity even without breaking it down to 'Mercy.' 'Rose' is another canonised name which is typically affective. 'Regina,' which means 'Queen,' would be a typical affective name if semantics is made the focus. Thus, the issue with affective names seems to be neither the meaning nor the linguistic form but rather the increasing occurrence; yet, that seems to be an unproblematic onomastic trend. Even at that, affective names need not be endorsed in a hurry. We can explore another way of going about it.

The increasing use of affective names has made some ministers of the sacraments to look out for those names. What seems to be a great cause for concern is the 'atraditional' or surrogate characteristic of affective names. That they cannot be identified with any local or known tradition makes it culturally backward. It could be suggested that the fact of affective names not being identified with a culture shows that they promote a sort of universal culture, but that would be limited to the English-speaking world in which case it is not truly universal. Moreover, the native speakers of English are not experiencing a similar trend in affective naming. Imagine a society in which affective names are used over generations such that somebody's forename, middle name and surname are written as Desire Precious Lucky.[26] One genuine observation which can be made is that Desire's (the human being who has the name) tribe or culture cannot be identified from any of the names. It gives the impression that something core to a particular cherished culture is lost, or sadly, that a culture is lost in a sense. The

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[26] I do not know how far such time is (in Nigeria) from the third decade of the 21st century, but it is worth imagining. This is not to say that affective naming is equally rampant in all the Christian regions of the country, though.

dark-complexioned bearer of the string of names (Desire Precious Lucky) would hardly fit into any race, colour, culture, or tradition.[27]

However, this situation can be remedied through using the vernacular versions of the affective names. That way, affective names become cultural names and regain the connection between persons, their names, and their culture. The adoption of translations of affective names drops the hesitancy observed among ministers during initiation as all features of affective names are non-existent. Globalisation and the internet work towards universal unity, but it is unity in diversity. The world is made into a global village but still with different continents, countries, and states. No aspect of the globalising world detests cultural identities and linguistic diversity as a condition for global inclusion. There is need for all entities to be identifiable; so, should human beings be identified with cultural and other distinguishing marks.

Thus far, it has been argued that affective names are meaningful and may even be found in virtually all epochs of history. However, they are wanting in clear marks of identification for which reason I have proposed the use of their vernacular versions. The case for identification can be taken further along liturgical lines. In what follows, we will illustrate this with the case of the anaphora of Addai and Mari.

4. Identification and the Anaphora of *Addai* and *Mari*

The main objective of this section is to establish a reference point for the link between tradition and identification. By referring to the reasons against the use of the anaphora of Addai and Mari in the Roman Catholic Church, we hope to demonstrate the importance of a tradition and what identifies it. Thereafter we can probably learn from the approach used in resolving what was a basic theological problem. We are aware of the seeming incongruence of referring to an issue bothering on the Eucharist while discussing a baptism-related problem,

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[27] More so, there is hardly any indication that the bearer of the name, 'Desire,' is a Christian. As a modern name, it can as well be borne by an agnostic or a pagan.

but both are sacraments of initiation. Moreover, the former is recalled simply as a reference point and not for comparative reasons. The anaphora of Addai and Mari is one of the oldest known Eucharistic prayers of the church. Before its approval by the Holy See, the anaphora was used in the East Syrian Church for their faithful as it belongs officially to the Nestorian See of Edessa.[28] The anaphora received great theological study in the twentieth century, and the social and pastoral situation of many Assyrian and Chaldean faithful might have contributed to this.[29] The studies and several agreements signed by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith led to the approval of the *Guidelines for Admission to the Eucharist between the Chaldean Church and the Assyrian Church of the East* by Pope John Paul II in 2001, a document described by Robert Taft (2003) as 'the most remarkable magisterial document since Vatican II.'[30] The document says that Catholics can receive the Body and Blood of Christ at an Assyrian Eucharist consecrated with the anaphora of Addai and Mari, as at any Catholic Eucharist. That is to say, the anaphora of Addai and Mari is valid for Eucharistic celebration.

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[28] Stelios S. Muksuris, 'A brief overview of the structure and theology of the liturgy of the Apostles Addai and Mari,' *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review,* Vol. 43, nos. 1-4 (1998): 59-84 [61]. There are two main liturgical families in the East, one connected with Alexandria and the other with Antioch. The Alexandrian family comprises Coptic and Egyptian rites, while the Antiochene is made up of West Syrian and East Syrian types of liturgy. It is to the East Syrian type that the anaphora of Addai and Mari belongs.

[29] Guidelines for Admission to the Eucharist between the Chaldean Church and the Assyrian Church of the East, no. 1. Guidelines for the Admission to the Eucharist Between the Chaldean Church and the Assyrian Church of the East (christianunity.va) [Accessed on 8th November 2023]. This document was approved on July 20, 2001, and promulgated on October 26, 2001.

[30] Robert B. Taft, 'Mass without consecration? The historic agreement on the Eucharist between the Catholic church and the Assyrian church of the East promulgated October 26, 2001,' American Catholic Press, 2003. https://www.americancatholicpress.org/Father_Taft_Mass_Without_the_Consecration .html#Top [Accessed on 8th November 2023]

A great deal of discussion preceded the approval because the anaphora of Addai and Mari lacks the *narratio institutionis* which is a key element for identifying the anaphoras of the Roman rite. That, of course, was the major problem[31] since it is believed by the faithful of the Roman rite that the institution narrative (the words of Christ) is a necessary part of Eucharistic consecration. Two aspects of this discussion concern us: first, the point of the identity of the Roman rite which should not have accommodated the anaphora of Addai and Mari; second, a possible lesson from the manner in which the identity issue was handled. The first having been indicated, we will now say a word about the second. The Church saw elements and references in the anaphora of Addai and Mari which either mention aspects of the institution narrative as indicating belief in it, or rely on basic elements of the Last Supper. Thus, the church says in the *Guidelines*: 'The words of Eucharistic Institution are indeed present in the Anaphora of Addai and Mari, not in a coherent narrative way and *ad litteram*, but rather in a dispersed euchological way, that is, integrated in successive prayers of thanksgiving, praise and intercession.'[32] Thus, the institution narrative is present in various parts of the anaphora. More so, the ancient nature of the anaphora could account for the absence of the institution narrative just as the timing of the redaction of the Roman canon (that is, before the pneumatological issues of the 4th century) could account for the absence of an explicit epiclesis in it.[33] Given the Semitic and ancient origin of the anaphora, therefore, the non-collectivity of the institution narrative in Addai and Mari which was doubtless composed and used for the Holy Eucharist from its beginnings, can be understood.

To return to our discussion of names and identification, it seems that the view that affective names lack articulate theology for which reason they should be discouraged from use may not go far enough since the

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[31] Another problem being the address of the prayers of the anaphora to the Son whereas the prayers are usually addressed to the Father in the Roman rite.

[32] Guidelines for Admission, no. 3.

[33] Mateusz Rafal Potoczny, 'The Anaphora of the Apostles Addai and Mari and its Christological Character,' *Parole de l'Orient,* Vol. 45 (2019): 309-324 [313].

names are generally more attractive than some of the names that people bear freely. If people could bear names like Clement, Irenaeus (Peace), and Agatha (Good) without theological controversies, then affective names or most of them need not pose any theological problems. A careful look at popular affective names suggests a possible leaning on Christian faith and teaching and the theology which is thought to be lacking - assuming it really is - may actually be found here and there in the name or its background. It should also not be forgotten that every name giver selects a name that has a background of meaningfulness in their experience or their expectation. As I have indicated, the issue with affective names that needs attention has to do with the impossibility of identifying the name-bearer with a certain tradition, and the use of vernacular names, even if they are translations of affective names, seems to be one of the promising solutions to this identification problem. Each person has an identity which can be located in time and space,[34] and which remains a core aspect of who and what we are. The seeming differences in the types of names do not therefore need to be taken too far. In that case, however, there would be need to redefine 'Christian names.'

5. Redefining Christian Names

The redefinition I propose here would not be new to some cultures where vernacular names are already being used during Christian initiation rites. While that is the case in many parts of Igbo land, for example, many ministers[35] in some other parts of Nigeria still insist on the use of canonised names. We had distinguished, in section 1, between cultural names, canonised names, and affective names. We had remarked that Christian names are understood as mostly coinciding with canonised names. Having argued, in sections 2 and 3, that affective names may equally be used as canonised names for initiation, it has

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[34] Aristotle, for example, is a Greek philosopher (space) of the ancient period (time). When it comes to names, it is even more precise; thus, Oluwafemi is a Yoruba name and a bearer of this name is expected to have connection with Nigeria, Benin Republic, Togo, Sierra Leone, or any other country where Yoruba is spoken today.

[35] This appelation is used in this article in the sense of minister of the sacrament being celebrated.

become expedient to reconsider what implications that might have on the stated understanding of Christian names.

Canonised names qualified to be called Christian names because they were used for Christian initiation ceremonies. According to that understanding, cultural names by dint of whatever liturgical or theological current that prevailed (and which has also persisted to date in many parts of the country) did not qualify as Christian names in a strict sense. Now, however, the suggestion that not only cultural names but also affective names in their vernacular version may be used for the same purposes as canonised names presupposes the qualification of these names for Christian initiation as well as their appropriateness for use as Christian names. In other words, Christian names are not just names of saints and good biblical figures but also cultural and affective names that are chosen for initiation rites.

The use of cultural names enhances our role in the Church and registers our cultural identity as a people of God. On the basis of that identity, we can become poised to defend a tradition that is attuned to our culture or an image of the church or Gospel that seems congruent with our cultural understanding. For example, Vietnamese bishop, Simon Hoa Nguyen-Van Hien, bishop of Dalat, stated at the 37th, 38th, and 39th sessions of the Second Vatican Council that the proposed image of the church as 'Body of Christ' was too Western and would not be understood by the faithful of his culture. In place of Body of Christ, he put forward 'Family of God' as an image more in tune with God's plan of salvation and one that would be more easily understood by non-Western peoples. The concept of the church as 'family of God' was accepted after debates at the mentioned sessions and entered into the acts of the Council.[36] Furthermore, the use of our cultural names is the guarantee that we can have saints canonised with our cultural names and as far as the official canon is concerned be numbered among the

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[36] Appiah-Kubi, Francis. 'The church, family of God: Relevance and pastoral challenges of a metaphor from an African perspective.' In T. Port-le Roi, G. Mannion, & P. De Mey (eds.), *The household of God and local households: Revisiting the domestic church*. Leuven: Peeters, 2013, 67-80.

cultures that have shaped the church's beatification process. This is certainly an opportunity no culture should miss even as we may not want to insist on the church's official recognition provided God's recognition would be assured. Included in this urge for maximal employment of cultural names is the encouragement of the vernacular forms of affective names. Affective names as such are not condemned, if anything, their validity as names has been suggested; but they may be found wanting from the angle of identification. Using their vernacular forms would, therefore, put them on the same rating with cultural names. It would also be a way of recapturing our local languages which have been experiencing a diminished usage and a handful of which are truly endangered. Addressing African intellectuals, Ngugi Wa Thiongo has warned that Africans need to make their languages 'a fact of [their] being' so as to avoid becoming 'intellectual outsiders in [their] own land.'[37] Africans need not hide under cover of the changes in the world to excuse their neglect of their languages. The changes impose no regulations directly affecting African lands, colour, or other specific components of African identity, thus they do not constitute sufficient grounds for shying away from complete and continuous use of African languages.

This call is important not only for the church in Nigeria but for all of Africa, especially where affective names may be gaining prominence. Yet, a Christian should always be one not just in name but also in deed. The world needs love and solidarity irrespective of names, but since names are necessary, they should also portray identifiable characteristics.

6. Conclusion
We identify people through the names they bear, where they come from, and their bodily features among others. From a typical Nigerian colonial and post-colonial perspective, names can be categorized as

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[37] Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, 'Europhone or African memory: The challenge of the Pan-Africanist in the era of globalization.' In T. Mkandawire (ed.), *African intellectuals: Rethinking politics, language, gender and development* (London: Zed Books, 2005), 155-164 [163f].

cultural, canonised, and affective. Cultural names are peculiar to a specific culture or language group but generally have the widest expanse of use from names of humans to those of animals, plants, deities, ancestors, and non-personal proper names, among others. Canonised names comprise names of prominent biblical figures and of canonised saints. The scope of these names is expectedly restricted. Equally restricted and probably fewer than the previous types are affective names. Affective names may have been in use for centuries but awareness of them came to the fore in parts of Nigeria only recently. They exhibit some leaning on certain new religious movements and are constituted by names which are emotion-packed or fortune-embedded but which generally express desire for God's blessing or social progress. Affective names seem to lack nothing expected of a good name, but they may have as a setback, the incapability of being tied to an identifiable culture. In other words, something of one's identity as a Nigerian is eclipsed by the cultural strangeness or 'surrogacy' of affective names. Yet, the culture need not be thrown into the abyss for it is possible to recover the value and wealth of an affective name through encouraging its vernacular version. Where this is done, affective names attain the same pedestal as cultural names, or one might even say that their 'affectiveness' does not explicitly come to the fore. It has also been proposed that cultural names themselves should be brought to life at Christian initiation ceremonies so that not only the standard canonised names but also the translations of affective names and select cultural names may without discrimination be made to converge at the fonts of baptism and other sacraments of initiation. This new understanding of Christian names has been indicated to have implications for the church and her canonization processes as well as the larger society and her cultural and language preservation strategies.