

Should Humanity avenge Divinity? Discuss using Achebe's Deadmen's Path and Onyishi's Clash of Divinity.

There is always a contention between the traditional religion and the Christian religion especially in time past, when the 'wailing piano' of Christianity clashes with the already existing one. Before we continue, let me pose this question. Who are we to avenge for Divinity? Let us start from the traditional point of view in regards to gods, goddesses (deities) before coming to the Almighty God as regards Christianity.

From Chinua Achebe's Deadmen's Path, we encounter an over zealous young man, Michael Obi who is appointed as the new headmaster of Ndume Central School. He is sincerely ready to improve the school alongside his wife, Nancy. He endeavors to see the school attain an high standard of teaching with hardworking teachers, and his wife desires the improvement of the school compound. Sooner the school becomes an embodiment of beauty. Nevertheless, Michael in his unguided ambition decides to block a part that passes through the school to the village shrine.

This part is believed to be a path of ancestors and unborn babies that bridges the world of the dead to the world of the living. The priest of Ani comes and warns him but he still goes ahead and blocks it. This is actually an insult on the gods. Some days later, a woman dies giving birth and the cause is traced down to Michael. The following day, the people angrily pull down the beautiful edges of the school and one of her buildings is brought down. We can say that the people do not avenge for the gods but their reaction only come in as a result of the hand of the god that strikes the dead woman.

Coming down to Reuben Onyishi's Clash of Divinity, it is expedient for us to start from Eliza (still on the traditional point of view). She is the wife of Asogwa Ugwu and also a primary school teacher. Eliza does not like her husband, she is only forced into the marriage by her parents-into the hands of a dirty, doddering old fellow. This makes her to keep her body from him. Something too shameful to be heard in the place is about to break loose. To satisfy her sexual urge, Eliza engages in adulterous living with her husband's nephew, Cosmas. The land goddess punishes any woman who is maritally unfaithful through madness or death because it is a defilement of the land.

No one ever suspects Eliza not even her husband. The land goddess lifts up her eyebrows and she falls sick and eventually dies. The reason of her death is later known and so she is buried in hinterland with all her properties thrown into the evil forest. Thus, the burial of an adulterous woman as regards to the custom of Imobi. In so doing, divinity has avenged itself.

When the women of Assemblies Divine come out during the omaba masquerade day, the people are provoked. It is an insult for a woman to come out on such days

let alone to see the nakedness of the omaba spirit. The youth of Ezenagu become angry and decide to confront the women. Ozo Elihe Ezeja tries to stop them. This man is one of the senior men in the cult of the nine. We can see how wise he is for he can see very far. He warns "Wait! Wait! Wait! These women have seen what they should not have seen. It is not our duty to avenge the spirit of Omaha; the spirit will avenge itself..." (Page 126). The young men, lead by Seventeen-Seventeen ignore advice and go ahead and carry out their acts. They storm into the church this time, not mainly after the women and the members, but the pastor. Reverend Dinma is stripped and seriously beaten while his wife is raped in turns by some of the men. They want to kill them in Eluama but their Onyishi repeats the words of Ozo Elite as if planned "Is it that omaba could not avenge himself or what? Why do you young men of Ezenagu want to bring a curse...does it mean omaba can no longer fight for himself? (Page 133). The youth stubbornly carry them back to the church to burn them there along the building but the pastor and his wife are rescued through the back window by one Michael. In fighting for Omaba, they have unknowingly fallen into the hand of another Divinity who stands behind Dinma despite his shortcomings as a pastor. There is a saying "power pass power" in our world. We are going to see if there is equality between divinities and the outcome of those who try to avenge for divinity. This will now lead us to the Christianity point of view.

"...Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord...It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb 10:30,31). This allusion is deliberately drawn from the Bible to create an awareness that even in Christianity, vengeance is solely God's responsibility and not man's. He may delegate some works to man to execute for Him but not vengeance. God is actually provoked to see His anointed molested of which we are going to discover. Mean while, Reverend Chikelu, the General Superintendent of the church along with Reverend Okoro get a twenty-men team armed plainclothes policemen who arrest 50 men from Imobi over Dinma's issue. Some of the culprits are not among the arrested men and one like Seventeen runs away but his 5 beloved are killed. Through the advice of both Reverends Ogidu and Udoh, the men are later released as they leave this in the hands of God. It is towards the end of the story that the full vengeance of the divinity of God is made manifest in light of Reverend Dinma and wife's assault.

Zeus, now anointed man of God senses His coming wrath so he tries to avert it by making sure that Dinma (now old) comes over to pray for the forgiveness of the people especially for the culprits. Some like Seventeen takes it for granted and refuses to come to the church that day. He is later killed by an angry mob as they discover that he steals a woman's breasts. This only induces that he is a ritualist. Another unrepentant culprit of the assault of 20 years ago, Ogbuagidi Alphonsus is also killed mysteriously by "thieves" Thus, God's anointed avenged by Himself and not by man.

When Reverend Udo was pastoring the church at Imobi, he is faced with persecutions, not from the people but from his then spiritual leaders. He

understands that many of his members are so much used to pagan living, in wisdom, he allows them be themselves. Through this, he maintains his relationship with them in order to inculcate the life of Jesus into them gradually (this is where Dinma fails which attracts unnecessary dagger on him). Reverend Okoro, the then district superintendent of Ugwuasho forcefully ejects him out from there and is replaced by Reverend Dinma. This delays his promotion after serving the church for seven years. Not only that, Pastor Udoh is accused of promoting paganism and sleeping around with women. To all these, he pleads innocent but it seems all are deaf to him. He counts this all joy to suffer reproach for righteousness sake, leaving everything into the hands of God. Reverend Ogidu also receives ill treatment from the district superintendent but not as much as Odo. What happens to Reverend Dinma is a kind of vindication for both though they are moved with sympathy for him and his wife. In later years, Pastor Udo later becomes the district secretary while Reverend Ogidu becomes the district superintendent, all to the surprise of Reverend Okoro, now retired.

As for Zeus, after finishing his medical course in Leeds, he returns home and is celebrated. His blossom friend, Mathew also jubilates with him. Mathew reads law from the United Kingdom and later returns and become the sole-administrator of Ugwuasho local government. It is through him that Zeus secures schorlaship to study abroad. Unlike Mathew who goes into politics and "Wilde" living, Zeus joins the Assemblies of Divine and so he is considered "dead" by his people. In thier recent custom, anyone who joins the church is considered dead and a funeral is conducted to mourn him or her departure. In terms of life style, the two friends are completely in contrast one to another. Mathew is one of those that come to condole the parents of Zeus over his "death" .This is just a mockery in disguise. On his way home, he dies in an arranged motor accident with his driver which actually is a murder. Divinity still at work in revenge without man's corporation. Zeus weeps bitterly because he knows why he dies, and where he is heading to.

In order to answer God's call, Zeus enrolls into the church's seminary. His parents are not pleased but later remembers that he is born a Nazarene unto his creator. But the likes of Okoro even after his retirement, still fights him. If only Reverend Okoro stops his atrocities then during the time of Ogidu and Udo, what is about to come his way now could have been averted. But he does not know. He wants Reverend Shedrach to become the General Superintendent (GS) and not Zeus. 70 district superintendents join them in the fight but the hand of God still rests on him. Elections are being rigged at different levels by these "Men of God". This political struggles in the church push them to hire about 70 armed men to make an history of Zeus. The police intervenes and 50 are caught while 3 others die in the hospital. Through bails, the men are released.

Seeing that the coup is a failed one, they proceed from one court to another until the supreme court orders Zeus and his General Council (GC) to vacate their offices with an immediate effect. Before now, Zeus is the GS and have his own GC which

also Shedrach is the GS and have his own GC, all in the same church! What a confusion? Reverend Okoro, Reverend Shedrach and the other 70 ministers joyfully board a plane, feeling relaxed that they have won. Between Uguenu and Giko states, the plane crashed and they are all burnt beyond recognition.

In conclusion, we humans do not know all secrets, we are not stronger than divinity to avenge for them. Also, though the gods are also powerful, from the story line we notice that they are no match to the Almighty God. Ozo Elihe notices this and airs it out also. It is just a pity that due to man's stubbornness of heart, "clash of divinity" become the order of the day. Biblically speaking, he who sows in corruption shall reap corruption and whosoever that live by the sword shall also die by the sword so it is even today. We see what happened to the likes of Seventeen, Okoro, Shedrach and many others. It is an error, an unparalleled proportion for man to avenge for Divinity.