A Discourse on The Evangelical Motifs in S. N. A. Agoro's *The Catalyst* and *Another Chance*

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Abstract
This article examines the evangelical motifs in S. N. A. Agoro's The Catalyst and Another Chance, the first two parts of his Prison Plays, and asks how drama carries Christian evangelism in an African setting. Scholarship has said little about how Agoro's plays represent evangelism itself, and the article addresses that gap. Agoro's Ultimate Theatre Theory, which treats theatre as an instrument of moral instruction and spiritual witness, supplies the theoretical framework. The study follows the literary method: close textual analysis of dialogue, characterisation and plot, set against secondary scholarship on motif, evangelism and religious drama. It finds that evangelism in the plays is relational, gradual and experiential. Redemption, forgiveness, moral constancy under persecution, patient influence, emotional awakening and the offer of a second chance recur across both texts, and conversion follows ethical example more reliably than argument. Akpan, Dada, Aneze and Udensi mark distinct routes to transformation, while Bonta and Zema show that refusal remains possible. The article recommends authenticity, patience and emotionally attentive outreach to evangelists, and fuller use of drama by literary practitioners for moral and spiritual instruction.

Keywords: *evangelism; evangelical motifs; S. N. A. Agoro; Ultimate Theatre Theory; Nigerian drama*

Introduction

Evangelism is the spread of the Christian gospel with the aim of winning converts. Chelsea Kight defines it as "sharing Jesus Christ with people who do not know Him yet" (Kight), and its scriptural warrant is the command to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16.15). John Mark Terry sharpens the definition: evangelism presents Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit so that hearers may become his disciples (3). The practice has never escaped controversy. Critics have long warned that it can harden into the imposition

of one community's beliefs on another, and the more persuasive accounts therefore ask for sympathy, empathy and respect for cultural difference. That demand bears directly on drama, because a playwright who stages evangelism must decide whether the believer wins the sceptic by argument, by pressure or by something gentler. Literature has long served the evangelistic purpose, and drama most visibly. According to Oscar G. Brockett and Franklin J. Hildy, the medieval Church used theatre to teach largely illiterate audiences about sin, repentance and salvation (91). Modern evangelistic drama inherits both the method and the shape of those plots, which move from sin to salvation, from doubt to belief or from despair to hope. The recurring ideas and images that give such plots their meaning are what criticism calls motifs. Chris Baldick defines a motif as an element that recurs in a work in order to emphasise its themes (226), and M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham add that motifs matter especially in drama, where they bring out philosophical and moral dimensions (236). Evangelical motifs are accordingly the themes, images and plot patterns drawn from Christian evangelistic ideology: faith, repentance, conversion, forgiveness, sacrifice, grace and spiritual transformation. Saviour Nathan Anari Agoro, whose Ultimate Theatre Theory treats the stage as a Christian instrument, makes evangelism the subject as well as the purpose of *The Catalyst* and *Another Chance*, the first and second parts of *The Prison Plays*. Both are set in a prison cell, where a convert preaches to men who have little reason to listen. The plays therefore offer an exact test of what evangelism can do and of how a dramatist imagines it working.

Scholarship has not yet made that test. Little research addresses the representation of evangelism in African dramatic literature, and almost none addresses how Agoro's plays portray faith, salvation, spiritual struggle and redemption, although they treat religious and moral questions with considerable complexity. The plays thus lack a full account of how their drama conveys Christian ideals, moral lessons and spiritual renewal in an African setting. This article closes that gap. It analyses how *The Catalyst* and *Another Chance* reflect, interpret and redefine evangelistic ideas through characterisation, thematic treatment and dramatic conflict, and it argues that Agoro presents evangelism as relational, gradual and experiential rather than coercive. The study matters in two ways. It adds to African literary studies an account of evangelism in dramatic literature, a topic the field has left thin, and it offers those engaged in faith outreach a dramatised model whose terms can be examined and tested against the plays rather than assumed.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored in Agoro's Ultimate Theatre Theory, a Christian-centred poetics set out in *A Handbook of the Ultimate Theatre* and analysed in the volume edited by Stevenson Omoera Osakue, *Studies on the Ultimate Theatre Poetics of Saviour Nathan Anari Agoro*. The theory conceives theatre not as an aesthetic diversion but as a sacred instrument for communicating divine truths and prompting spiritual reflection. Its central principle is the poetics of anagogy, the interpretive movement from literal events to spiritual and moral insight. Agoro's *Odds Against God*, *Partners at Large* and *A Query for Professor Aburie* illustrate the principle by confronting secular ideologies, moral decay and existential dilemmas with biblically grounded resolutions. In such a theatre the play functions as an evangelical pulpit: characters, plots and conflicts are built to expose sin, display redemption and invite the audience to introspection, while visions, prophetic declarations and divine interventions confirm the evangelistic design. The framework supplies two working questions for the analysis that follows. How does each play move from literal event, here imprisonment, to spiritual meaning? And which dramaturgical devices signal that the movement is evangelistic: a vision, a prophetic utterance, an act of divine intervention? Reading the plays through Ultimate Theatre Theory also situates them within a wider theological and literary discourse,

so that their motifs can be judged against Agoro's own account of what theatre is for. It offers a structured lens for seeing how evangelical motifs are woven into narrative and how they shape character development, conflict and thematic resonance, and it allows the question of whether drama can serve as a transformative instrument of Christian evangelism to be answered from the plays themselves.

Literature Review

The Concept of Motif

Motif criticism descends from narratology. Seymour Chatman argues that narrative meaning emerges through repetitive structures that shape audience expectation and interpretation (80), and that recurring elements form "a system of parallels and patterns" extending meaning beyond any single instance (81). Peter Brooks separates motif from theme: the theme is the central idea, and motifs are the repeated elements that support it (42). Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan adds the condition that motifs must recur in patterned ways if they are to give a work structural unity (128), and Abrams and Harpham describe how motifs such as light and darkness, which signal knowledge and ignorance or good and evil, enhance narrative texture and reinforce thematic echoes across scenes (163). Like musical refrains, such motifs reintroduce a key idea in new contexts and bind seemingly unrelated episodes through repetition. A motif is therefore neither a theme nor a symbol. It is the patterned, repeated element through which a work makes its theme visible, and it can be traced scene by scene, which is how this article treats evangelism in Agoro.

The Concept of Evangelism

Jim Sutherland notes that the word derives from the Greek *euangelion*, "good news" or "gospel" (1). Michael Green, citing William Temple, defines evangelism as presenting Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit so that people come to faith, accept him as Saviour and serve him within the church (35). The mandate is scriptural: Jesus instructs his disciples to preach to all creation (Mark 16.15), and the Great Commission sends them to all nations (Matt. 28.18-20), which gives evangelism a universal scope and obliges believers to carry the message of salvation beyond their own community. Green's definition makes evangelism a matter of transformation and community, not of persuasion alone. Evangelism extends beyond conversion to the nurturing of faith, commitment and participation in the Christian community, and Green summarises it as "the Christian community sharing Jesus Christ" through both proclamation and lived example (35). He distinguishes it from mission, membership drives and mere instruction, and holds that it joins proclamation to a life that exemplifies the message (35-36). Ellen G. White gives the claim its urgency by calling evangelism "the very heart of Christianity" (6). The tradition thus supplies a standard against which a dramatist's portrayal can be judged: an evangelism that is only verbal falls short of its own definition.

Drama and Evangelism

The alliance of drama and evangelism is old. Allardyce Nicoll traces medieval religious drama to short liturgical dialogues performed at Easter and Christmas (129), which grew into public spectacles at a time when widespread illiteracy made visual and performative teaching necessary. Mystery plays dramatised biblical history from Creation to the Last Judgment and were staged by craft guilds in York, Chester and Wakefield (Brockett and Hildy 191); miracle plays presented the lives and martyrdoms of saints (Nicoll 132); morality plays used allegorical figures to stage the contest between virtue and vice, as in *Everyman*, where a man faces spiritual reckoning before God (Davidson et al. 3). Martin Esslin observes that performance combines storytelling, spectacle and emotional appeal to shape audience understanding (15), and James

Emily carries the point into the present, arguing that drama enables communities to convey faith "in creative and engaging ways" (45).

The Significance of Drama in Evangelism

Drama serves evangelism first by engaging the emotions and the senses, which makes spiritual messages relatable and memorable. Ling Chen and Jing Wang report that emotional responses to dramatic performance strongly influence audience engagement with spiritual content (92). Because drama brings abstract ideas and religious stories to life on stage, it also aids understanding and retention, and Sarah Wong and Hannah Kim stress the effectiveness of visual presentation for teaching audiences of varied backgrounds (62). Miguel Garcia and Raj Patel hold that narrative structure largely determines a play's impact, and that drama can be contextualised to cultural values, which makes it a culturally sensitive medium (120).

The medium's social features matter as much as its sensory ones. Performance gathers a community around a shared purpose; it invites identification, since audiences recognise themselves in the dilemmas and recoveries of characters; and it can offer catharsis, allowing reflection on guilt, repentance and redemption. Each of these capacities has a counterpart in Agoro's cell. The inmates form a small congregation under pressure, Dada's hardened scepticism gives a sceptical audience a figure to recognise, and his late sorrow at the end of *The Catalyst* supplies a catharsis of regret. What this body of work leaves unexamined is any single playwright's representation of evangelism itself, the matter to which the present article turns.

Methodology

The study adopts the literary method. Primary data come from close textual analysis of Agoro's *The Catalyst* and *Another Chance*, examining dialogue, characterisation, plot structure and thematic development for the representation of evangelism. Secondary data come from the literature on African dramatic literature, evangelism in literature and Agoro's own work. Following Brooks and Rimmon-Kenan, a motif is treated here as an element that recurs in a patterned way and supports a theme, and Ultimate Theatre Theory governs the interpretation of what each motif signifies. The scope is deliberately narrow. The study is confined to the two plays, excludes the work of other playwrights and treats evangelism alone among the themes the plays contain, with attention to how it shapes character development, conflict and thematic design. The article proceeds in stages. The data presentation sets out each play's plot, characters and themes and then isolates its recurring motifs; the discussion relates those motifs to the theoretical framework and to the literature reviewed; and the conclusion and recommendations draw out what follows for scholarship and practice.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The Catalyst

The Catalyst is the first part of *The Prison Plays*. It consists of a single act in five scenes, all set in a prison cell, a restriction of space that stands for lost freedom and isolation. Two prisoners hold the stage at the outset. Akpan, sentenced to death for robbery and murder, expresses remorse; Dada, serving seven years for raping an elderly woman, shows none and regards his own sentence as light beside Akpan's. His bitterness has a particular source. During a prison labour session he met Matilda, his former girlfriend, who had embraced Christianity, ended their relationship and promised to pray for his conversion. Akpan, watching Dada's turmoil, advises him to abandon any hope of rekindling the relationship and warns of the psychological damage such hope can inflict; Dada, for his part, mocks Akpan while counting on rehabilitation and eventual freedom for himself, and he dismisses the gravity of his own

crimes. The arrival of Aneze, a born-again Christian jailed under Decree 56 for preaching the gospel in public, changes the cell. Akpan and Dada first take him for a criminal, then accuse him of hypocrisy and of disgracing Christianity. Aneze answers hostility with persistence, preaching heaven, hell and the need for repentance, and Akpan eventually repents and accepts Christ. Dada hardens. At the climax General Samfara's government is overthrown, and Aneze and Akpan are pardoned. Dada, left behind, is overcome by regret and seeks mercy, but too late. Five characters carry the allegory. Akpan, a nihilist who regards himself as insignificant, is redeemed through Aneze's witness, and his pardon figures the redemptive power of salvation. Dada, who takes pleasure in immoral acts and dismisses Aneze's sermons as fabrications meant to manipulate him, personifies hardened disbelief and its cost. Aneze, who prefers heavenly treasure to earthly possessions, recalls the biblical Daniel, whose faith was rewarded with deliverance. Udensi, the prison warder, mistreats Aneze on the orders of his superior and so embodies opposition to the gospel; his cruelty provokes Dada and Akpan to assault him. Major Jaja, a young army officer who appears in a single scene to announce the release of Akpan and Aneze, functions as a divine messenger, comparable to the angel who freed Paul and Silas from prison. Agoro's themes in *The Catalyst* frame the motifs that follow. The main theme is evangelism itself, introduced as a divine will that Christians must fulfil despite persecution and suppression; through Aneze the play presses the urgency of the gospel in a corrupt world where souls are dying. Salvation is the outcome of evangelism, and the play holds that no one is beyond redemption whatever their sins, as Akpan's change shows. Repentance is the condition of salvation, so that the contrast between Akpan's readiness and Dada's refusal makes Dada's late repentance a warning about the cost of delay. Redemption has a spiritual and a physical side: Akpan's release signals divine mercy, and Dada's continued imprisonment the price of unbelief. The play also tests moral responsibility, judging the characters by their crimes and by how they answer guilt, punishment and the chance of change. Confinement and freedom are understood literally and metaphorically alike, for true freedom is spiritual and Dada is imprisoned in a deeper sense than the cell. Faith and unbelief diverge in the same way, since Aneze and then Akpan find hope and strength where Dada finds isolation and despair, and Akpan's movement from despondency to renewal is the play's clearest image of spiritual transformation. Redemption and conversion form the central motif. Akpan begins in a despair that makes warnings of punishment useless: "Assuming hell exists and I go there, then I would face the conditions there" (Agoro, *Catalyst* 6). Because he believes the worst has already happened, fear cannot move him, and his later prayer, "Oh God . . . forgive me my many sins. Take away my past from me . . . I now invite you Lord Jesus Christ into my life" (31), arrives as a personal and reflective act rather than a coerced one. Witness through example is the second motif. Aneze persuades by conduct instead of force. "Even if he doesn't deliver me, my resolve to continue in my love for him would not change" (20), he says, and when a cellmate's concern for his ill-treatment turns toward retaliation against Udensi he refuses it: "I had rather that God avenges himself on Udensi" (25). These examples show evangelism to be relational and observational: it works on others indirectly, through the consistent demonstration of Christlike virtue, and Agoro suggests that witness through life is often more compelling than verbal proclamation. Forgiveness operates as a recurring motif in its own right, showing how Christian ethics can transform relationships. Aneze's refusal to retaliate against Warder Udensi, despite unjust treatment, displays the radical moral consistency that underlies his influence, and it sets vengeance against grace in a contrast that works on Akpan, who begins to internalise the principle that faith involves moral choice and emotional discipline. Dada, though resistant, also sees the power of forgiveness, and his philosophical scepticism is quietly challenged. The motif shows that evangelism often works through the demonstration of virtue, and that moral example can catalyse spiritual reflection

and eventual change. Moral constancy under persecution is a fourth motif. Decree 56 criminalises public preaching, so Aneze's imprisonment makes evangelism a countercultural act and his steadfastness a demonstration that faith is most authentically tested under adversity. His release is announced by Jaja: "You have been released from prison today. The government of General Samfara was over-thrown seven hours ago" (34). The release reads as political vindication and spiritual validation at once, and it frames faithful witness as resistance to unjust structures. The remaining motifs concern the pace and means of influence. Dada's response is slow, which shows conversion to be cumulative: unlike Akpan, he engages with faith through observation, relationship and reflection rather than by immediate acceptance. He objects to the volume and frequency of the prayer meetings (33), yet his mocking suggestion, "Why not take an insurance policy against hell?" (31), shows the idea lodging in him. Persistent but gentle witness plants curiosity and introspection, and Agoro presents evangelism as much a matter of nurturing understanding and moral questioning as of securing instant results. Peers carry the gospel as well as preachers: the newly converted Akpan urges Dada, "Repent from your sins. Accept Christ into your life. Don't waste any time again" (29), and Dada's answer, "Let God prove himself to us in this cell" (29), is a challenge rather than a refusal. Emotion opens the way earlier still. Dada recalls Matilda's farewell: "Matilda said she would be praying for me throughout her life. Seeing her weep made me realise that at least someone still cared for me" (16). Care, not argument, makes the first crack in his resistance. Taken together, the seven motifs present evangelism as relational, gradual and rooted in consistent moral practice. Transformation arises not from fear, coercion or argument alone but from patient demonstration, relational influence and emotional engagement.

Another Chance

Another Chance continues the story in a single act of six scenes set in the same cell. Dada, now a convert, shares it with Bonta and Zema, and Udensi, once the warder, has become a prisoner himself. Bonta, jailed for raping a ten-year-old girl, remains unrepentant and vows to offend again; Bonta's pessimism springs from lost hope and shattered aspirations. Zema narrates robbery and murder without remorse and accuses the D.P.O. of betrayal, since the officer was complicit in their crimes and shared in the loot. Both mock Dada, whom they nickname "Pastor", yet Dada takes up Aneze's role and preaches to them and to Udensi, who now doubts God's existence because he was jailed unjustly; Dada advises him to accept the injustice with faith rather than blame God, and keeps encouraging him with the gospel. Bonta and Zema dismiss the gospel as folly. Udensi, after a dream in which a divine voice speaks to him, becomes a born-again Christian, and Dada and Udensi are released, with Akpan, the condemned man of *The Catalyst*, serving as the instrument of their freedom. Bonta and Zema remain behind. The play again relies on allegorical figures: Dada, Udensi, Bonta, Zema and the warder Manda, together with the voice that comes to Udensi in sleep and may be read as that of angels or of God himself. Dada, who tells Udensi that "since that day I told God to forgive me too, it has been a lot different with me" (Agoro, *Another Chance* 50), assumes Aneze's role, and his persistence secures his own release and Udensi's. Udensi, stripped of his rights and ridiculed by inmates, becomes submissive to the Holy Spirit's guidance. Bonta, hopeless and resolved to die for his sins, and Zema, an armed robber who feels betrayed by the police with whom he collaborated, both reject the word of God and are left to their sentences. Manda, polite and fair in his duties, is the foil to the Udensi of the earlier play. Beyond the themes of evangelism and the need for salvation, which carry over from the first part, *Another Chance* emphasises God's deliverance power through evangelism. Agoro perceives society as corrupt and decadent, marked by criminal activity and violations of human rights, and the play proposes that the word of God alone can answer that deterioration. It warns the Christian

ministry of the consequences of complacency, urges believers to set aside earthly wisdom and let God work in situations that appear to threaten their faith, and presents evangelism as a duty and a priority for every Christian. The dominant motif is the second chance, expressed in the play's title and in Dada's declaration to Udensi: "God is giving you Another Chance to make up your mind for him" (51). Agoro frames evangelism as an extension of divine patience rather than judgment. Because the message is delivered in a prison, among people whom society has rejected, its claim that no one is permanently condemned by past actions gains force. Evangelism becomes an announcement of hope in a space dominated by guilt, regret and finality, and the title's phrase stands for God's enduring mercy. Closely tied to it is evangelism as burden. Dada's concern for the spiritual wellbeing of his fellow inmates reflects a deep inner transformation following his own encounter with faith, and the concern for his fellow inmates is marked by emotional investment and personal sacrifice, and he assumes a pastoral posture, persistently interceding for others and absorbing their resistance. Authentic evangelism, the play suggests, is a vocation that demands patience and a willingness to endure exhaustion.

Resistance and hope are staged together. Zema ridicules Dada's decision to prepare for the JAMB examinations while imprisoned: "Even if he finishes from this prison, how would he get the money to further his education?" (52), and again, "Reading JAMB in prison? Na you go pass!" (52). Dada's reply never changes: "With God, all things are possible" (52). The remark trivialises Dada's faith and undermines the possibility of divine intervention. The mockery grows from hardship, since faith is derided because it challenges the belief that destiny is wholly fixed by circumstance, and Dada's persistence turns his daily study into evangelism by conduct, a visible proof that spiritual freedom can exist independently of physical conditions. His hope becomes an act of resistance against despair, asserting that divine agency can redefine human futures even within oppressive systems, and his perseverance challenges the prison culture of hopelessness by showing that faith must be lived visibly to be credible. For Zema, cynicism is a defence against hope, which is why evangelism reads in the cell as a disruptive and uncomfortable force. Udensi's case introduces trauma as a barrier to faith. His resistance springs from injury, not rebellion: "Why should I want God in my life . . . who couldn't protect me from being jailed for an offence I didn't commit?" (50). Dada neither argues nor condemns. He accompanies Udensi through the suffering, an approach that treats healing as a precondition of belief. The moment humanises resistance, since it reveals that doubt may arise from suffering rather than rebellion, and it implies that effective evangelism must engage emotional wounds and not theological questions alone. The play then adds a supernatural dimension. Dada instructs Udensi, "When next you hear the voice just say, 'Speak Lord, your servant is listening'" (55), and the dream that follows delivers the message "You must be born again. You must learn to forgive your enemies" (60). Transformation here is not wholly a product of human persuasion; the human evangelist prepares the ground and the divine voice completes the work. By incorporating revelation, Agoro places evangelism within a theological framework in which God intervenes directly in human lives, and he marks the limits of what any evangelist can achieve unaided. Forgiveness appears finally as evidence of genuine conversion. Udensi's confession, "I believe now that Jesus is my Lord" (60), opens his transformation, but his willingness to forgive those who wronged him is the real test, because it shows salvation issuing in renewed relationships. Forgiveness is presented not merely as a moral virtue but as tangible evidence of spiritual rebirth, and the play affirms the Christian belief that salvation manifests in renewed relationships and moral responsibility. The prison itself becomes a site of formation. Dada calls it "my school of the spirit" (51), and Agoro reframes incarceration as an environment that strips away social pretence, forces confrontation with guilt and fear, and so leaves the soul open to change. Although Zema and Bonta resist to

the end, their presence confirms that evangelism does not always yield immediate results, and the seeds of transformation are planted nonetheless.

Discussion

The analysis shows that Agoro constructs evangelism through a stable set of motifs that recur, with variation, across both plays. Redemption and conversion, forgiveness, moral constancy under persecution, patient influence, peer witness and emotional awakening organise *The Catalyst*; *Another Chance* adds the second chance, the burden of the evangelist, trauma as a barrier to faith, divine revelation and the prison as a school of the spirit. Across them evangelism proves relational, gradual and experiential. Transformation follows from ethical modelling and emotional engagement far more often than from argument, and the one route that fear might have opened is closed in advance by Akpan's despair, which leaves him indifferent to the threat of hell (Agoro, *Catalyst* 6). The relational character of the evangelism emerges most clearly when the plays are read as a single sequence. Matilda's tears and her promise of prayer open the first crack in Dada's hardness (Agoro, *Catalyst* 16), which bears out Chen and Wang's finding that emotional response shapes engagement with spiritual content (92). Aneze's conduct converts Akpan; Akpan's appeal to Dada (29) carries the witness a step further; and Dada, converted by the time the sequel opens, takes over Aneze's role and brings Udensi to faith. Each convert becomes a witness, so that the gospel moves through a chain of persons instead of resting on one preacher. The sequel completes the chain by making Akpan, the condemned man of the first play, the instrument of Dada's and Udensi's release, so that the witness he received returns to others as deliverance. Forgiveness circulates in the same way. In *the Catalyst* Aneze forgives Udensi the warder; in *Another Chance* Udensi, now a prisoner, learns from the voice in his dream that he must forgive his own enemies (Agoro, *Another Chance* 60). The persecutor of the first play becomes the pupil of the second, and the motif returns to test whether his conversion is real. A shift of emphasis between the plays deserves notice. In *the Catalyst* the obstacle to evangelism is external: the state criminalises preaching, and Udensi's cruelty enforces the ban. In *Another Chance* the obstacle is internal, made up of ridicule, cynicism and wounded trust, and the evangelist is himself a former offender whose credibility rests on his own change. The movement from persecution to persuasion suggests that Agoro regards the harder test of evangelism not as the hostility of power but as the resistance of the damaged heart. Udensi's trajectory is the most telling in the sequence. In *The Catalyst* he is the warder who mistreats Aneze on orders and is assaulted by the cellmates he provokes; in *Another Chance* he is a prisoner jailed for an offence he did not commit, ridiculed by inmates and doubtful of God. Agoro thus gives the antagonist of the first play the very grievance that the first play's victims carried, and the reversal tests the evangelism of the earlier play on the man who opposed it. His conversion is accordingly the strongest evidence the plays offer that the gospel can reach its opponents, and Dada's patient accompaniment, rather than any argument, is what makes the message of the dream audible (Agoro, *Another Chance* 50-60). The thematic structure reinforces the motif pattern. Salvation and repentance, which the plays treat as the outcome and the condition of evangelism, are exactly what the motifs of conversion, forgiveness and the second chance dramatise, and confinement and freedom supply the spatial image through which those motifs register. The theme of deliverance through evangelism in *Another Chance* extends the pattern from the individual to society: the prison, a figure for a corrupt and decadent world, is where the word of God is made to answer social decay. That extension explains why the motifs matter beyond the cell, and why the playwright's warning to a complacent ministry is built into the form of the play. Ultimate Theatre Theory predicts the mechanisms by which these motifs operate, and the plays largely confirm it. The cell is the literal event; its anagogical sense is the world, broken and resistant to renewal, and

Dada's phrase "school of the spirit" (Agoro, *Another Chance* 51) makes the transfer explicit. The devices that Agoro's poetics names appear in recognisable form. The coup that frees Aneze and Akpan, and Major Jaja's announcement of it, are divine intervention; Udensi's dream and the voice that instructs him are vision; Dada's direction to him, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening" (55), carries the prophetic register of the pulpit. The comparison with the medieval tradition is also instructive. Like the morality plays, Agoro's drama assigns figures to positions in a spiritual contest, and like *Everyman* it ends in reckoning (Davidson et al. 3). The difference is that Agoro's characters are individuated by crime, history and speech, and their conversions are dramatised as processes rather than announced as states. The plays also exemplify the capacities of the medium reviewed earlier. Esslin's view that performance joins storytelling, spectacle and emotional appeal (15) meets a demanding test in a drama confined to a single set, where whatever persuasion occurs must come from speech, gesture and the changing relations among a handful of men. The bareness is itself evangelistic, since it leaves the audience nothing to attend to but conversion and refusal. Emily's claim that drama can convey faith in creative and engaging ways (45) is borne out by Agoro's decision to dramatise the reception of the gospel through its effect on particular listeners, so that the audience watches belief form, stall and fail instead of merely hearing it commended. Biblical analogues give the motifs their authority and show how Agoro's anagogy works. Aneze's steadfastness recalls Daniel, whose faith was rewarded with deliverance; Major Jaja, who announces the release, recalls the angel who freed Paul and Silas; and Dada's instruction to Udensi on answering the voice in his dream echoes the instruction that Samuel receives when he is called in the night (1 Sam. 3.9). In each case a literal event, a release or a dream, is read as a sign of providence, and the audience is invited to make the same reading of the world beyond the cell. The analogues also place Agoro's characters in continuity with scriptural witnesses, which lends the plays the pulpit's authority that the framework describes. Two features of the plays complicate any simple celebration of evangelistic success. The first is the fate of those who refuse. Dada's repentance at the close of *The Catalyst* comes too late to free him with Akpan and Aneze, yet the sequel does not treat that lateness as final: Dada is determined to seize the second chance God has given him, and he uses it to preach. Zema remains unrepentant even after witnessing the release of Dada and Udensi, and Bonta stays equally resolute. Agoro therefore leaves refusal both possible and costly. Grace is offered repeatedly but never imposed. That answers directly the objection raised in the introduction, that evangelism risks imposing belief, for in these plays the gospel wins only the willing, and the unwilling remain free to stay as they are. The second feature is the pairing of conversion with release. Akpan, Aneze, Dada and Udensi walk free, and a reader may ask whether faith is being rewarded in the coin of liberty. The plays guard against that reading by presenting release as the visible sign of an inner freedom already achieved, as when Dada keeps his hope and prepares for examinations while still confined (52), but the pairing remains the point at which dramatic need for vindication and theological restraint pull hardest against one another.

Conclusion

This article set out to establish how Agoro's *The Catalyst* and *Another Chance* convey Christian evangelism, and the answer is that they do so through patterned motifs that make witness a matter of persons and time rather than of proclamation alone. Akpan, Dada, Aneze and Udensi mark four routes from despair or hostility to faith, and the prison setting turns each route into a test of the gospel under the harshest conditions the playwright could devise. The finding fills the gap identified at the outset: Agoro's drama, read through his own Ultimate Theatre Theory, is an evangelism of example, patience and emotional attention, and it locates the credibility of faith in conduct rather than profession.

The finding carries a qualification. Both plays confine their action to a cell, where the listener has no alternative audience and no escape from the preacher. Whether the same patience persuades where listeners are free to leave is a question the plays can pose only through Bonta and Zema, who refuse the gospel and remain unchanged. The plays' candour about that refusal is what keeps them from becoming propaganda. A reading that took only the conversions would find a triumphant evangelism; a reading that includes the men left in the cell finds a theatre that records the limits of persuasion as faithfully as its successes. That double record makes Agoro's contribution to African dramatic literature more than an illustration of doctrine, and it gives the critics of evangelism cited at the outset a reply drawn from the stage itself.

Recommendations

The analysis yields recommendations for two groups of practitioners. Evangelists should treat an authentic and consistent life of forgiveness and moral discipline as the foundation of their message, as Aneze does in *The Catalyst*, since credibility precedes persuasion. They should regard evangelism as an ongoing process that allows hearers time for reflection, as Dada's slow response to Akpan and Aneze shows, and they should build trust through real human relationships, for Matilda's care and Akpan's appeal to Dada show such relationships to be receptive ground. Because resistance may spring from trauma and injustice, as Udensi's question demonstrates, an emotionally attentive approach will serve better than argument.

Literary practitioners and church drama groups should use dramatic presentation and storytelling to carry faith, since engagement of the emotions strengthens the message. Playwrights might also follow Agoro in letting resistance remain on stage, so that outreach is not misrepresented as invariably successful. Church drama groups, in particular, can draw on the structure of the two plays: a witness who lives the message before speaking it, a sceptic given time to answer, and a refusal that is respected rather than punished. Authenticity does not mean silence about doctrine, since Aneze preaches heaven, hell and repentance even as he lives the message, and patience does not mean passivity, since Dada keeps preaching to Bonta and Zema though they mock him.

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