

# Doing Christian Drama with Paul's Evangelical Approach studying Mike Bamiloye's Characterization in *Esin Ajoji* and *Shackles* Movies

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**Abstract:** This study explores the characterization of Mike Bamiloye in his roles as King Oladunjoye in *Esin Ajoji* and Melandra Gashiky in *Shackles*, within the framework of Paul's evangelical approach. Utilizing a qualitative research methodology, the analysis focuses on key aspects of Bamiloye's performances, including physical appearance, behavior, dialogue, and symbolism. Grounded in the theoretical framework of narrative theology, as propounded by George Lindbeck in "The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age" (1984), the study examines how Bamiloye's portrayal of characters serves as narratives conveying theological messages to viewers. By analyzing the dramatic storytelling techniques employed by Bamiloye, the study aims to elucidate the role of Christian drama in evangelism and spiritual edification and through this exploration, the study also contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of dramatic evangelism in contemporary Christian discourse and its implications for faith, culture, and society.

**Keywords:** Characterization, Christian Drama, Paul's Evangelical Approach, Religious Themes, Mike Bamiloye, Narrative Theology.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Christian drama serves as a potent tool for evangelism, blending storytelling with the mission of spreading the Christian message. This expressive form of communication engages audiences through narratives, characters, and themes that resonate with spiritual truths (Segun-Okeowo, 2012). Christian drama encompasses various forms, including stage plays, films, television shows, and street performances, each tailored to reach different audiences and convey distinct messages (Adekusibe, 2011).

In the context of evangelism, Christian drama holds a unique position. It allows for the dissemination of biblical principles and values in a visually compelling and emotionally impactful manner (Guanah, 2023). By presenting narratives that mirror real-life struggles, triumphs, and dilemmas, Christian dramas offer audiences not only entertainment but also opportunities for reflection and introspection (Oki, 2024). This immersive experience can lead to deeper engagement with spiritual themes and ultimately, to personal transformation and faith commitment.

One notable aspect of Christian drama is its ability to appeal to both believers and non-believers alike. Through relatable characters and universal themes, it goes beyond cultural and religious barriers, making it accessible to diverse audiences (Bamiloye, 2023). This inclusivity is essential for evangelism, as it enables Christian messages to reach individuals from different backgrounds and worldviews.

Moreover, Christian drama often serves as a catalyst for community engagement and outreach. Churches and religious organizations frequently utilize dramas as part of their evangelistic efforts, staging productions in local communities, schools, and prisons (Agboola, 2002). These performances not only entertain but also spark conversations about salvation, redemption, restoration, revival, faith and spirituality, fostering connections and relationships that can lead to further exploration of Christian teachings.

Paul's evangelical approach, as articulated in 1 Corinthians 9:20-23, holds profound significance in Christian drama. This approach underscores the importance of contextualizing the Christian message to effectively communicate with diverse audiences, mirroring Paul's adaptability and sensitivity to the cultural, social, and religious backgrounds of those he sought to evangelize (Bamiloye, 2017).

In the context of Christian drama, Paul's approach serves as a guiding principle for storytellers, playwrights, directors, and actors (Oki, 2024). It emphasizes the need to craft narratives and characters that resonate with the lived experiences and perspectives of the audience, whether they are believers, seekers, or skeptics.

One key aspect of Paul's approach is his willingness to immerse himself in the cultural milieu of his audience without compromising the core tenets of the gospel (Gaventa, 2013). Similarly, Christian dramas often incorporate elements of contemporary culture, language, and social issues to engage with audiences in a meaningful way. According to Gaventa, by doing so, they create points of connection that facilitate dialogue, reflection, and ultimately, spiritual transformation (Gaventa, 2013).

Paul's approach also highlights the importance of empathy and compassion in evangelism. He demonstrates a deep understanding of the struggles and challenges faced by different groups of people and seeks to meet them where they are (Thurston, 2006). In Christian drama, this empathy is reflected in the portrayal of characters who grapple with issues such as fear, doubt, pain, loss, and redemption, allowing audiences to see themselves reflected on the stage or screen.

Moreover, Paul's approach emphasizes the overarching goal of evangelism: to save souls and share in the blessings of the gospel (Fee, 2014). Christian dramas, inspired by this ethos, aim not only to entertain but also to edify and inspire, inviting audiences into a deeper relationship with God and His Word.

This paper examines Mike Bamiloye's characterization techniques in the movies *Esin Ajoji* and *Shackles* through the lens of Paul's evangelical approach. By analyzing how Bamiloye's portrayal of characters aligns with Paul's method of contextualizing the gospel message to diverse audiences, this study seeks to uncover the effectiveness of employing biblical principles in contemporary Christian drama. Through a comparative analysis of the characters' physical appearance, behavior, dialogue, character arc, symbolism and metaphor, and alignment with Paul's approach, this research aims to shed light on the potential of Christian drama in engaging audiences and conveying timeless truths in innovative and impactful ways.

## II. BODY OF ARTICLE

### Understanding Paul's methods of evangelism

In 1 Corinthians 9:20-23, the apostle Paul provides insight into his approach to evangelism, highlighting his adaptability to different cultural contexts and his willingness to meet people where they are in order to effectively share the message of Christ. This will be discussed using four points, which I call The Four Points method of Pauline Evangelism.

#### ● Cultural Adaptability

Paul begins by stating, "To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews." (v.20). Here, he emphasizes the importance of understanding and respecting the cultural background and beliefs of his audience. Paul, himself a Jew, was familiar with Jewish customs, laws, and traditions. When evangelizing to Jews, he would adapt his message and behavior to resonate with their cultural norms and values, establishing common ground to facilitate communication and understanding.

- **Contextual Flexibility**

Paul then states, "To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law." (v.20). Despite being a Christian freed from the constraints of the Mosaic Law, Paul was willing to adhere to certain aspects of Jewish law and customs when engaging with Jewish audiences. This flexibility allowed him to connect with them on their terms, demonstrating empathy and respect for their beliefs while still proclaiming the Gospel message.

- **Relational Sensitivity**

Paul continues, "To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law." (v.21). When evangelizing to Gentiles or those unfamiliar with Jewish customs and laws, Paul adapted his approach accordingly. He did not burden them with unnecessary religious requirements but focused on communicating the essence of the Gospel message in a way that was relevant and relatable to their cultural context.

- **Purposeful Communication**

Finally, Paul concludes, "To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some." (v.22). Paul's overarching goal in his evangelistic efforts was the salvation of souls. He was willing to set aside personal preferences, privileges, and even rights if it meant effectively reaching others with the message of Christ. His approach was marked by humility, empathy, and a genuine desire to connect with people where they were, in order to lead them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Paul's evangelical approach, as articulated in 1 Corinthians 9:20-23, underscores his remarkable adaptability and sensitivity to the cultural, social, and religious contexts of those he sought to evangelize. Central to Paul's methodology was his willingness to become "all things to all people" in order to effectively communicate the gospel message (1 Corinthians 9:22). This approach involved a deliberate and strategic effort to meet people where they were, engaging with them on their own terms and within their own cultural frameworks (Soegianto & Abigail 2023).

One key aspect of Paul's approach was his ability to contextualize the gospel message to different audiences. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul describes how he became "like a Jew to win the Jews" and "like one under the law to win those under the law" (1 Corinthians 9:20-21). This adaptability allowed Paul to bridge cultural and religious divides, making the gospel accessible and relevant to diverse groups of people.

### **Application of Paul's Approach in Christian Drama**

The application of Paul's approach in Christian drama involves embodying the principles of adaptability, empathy, and contextualization to effectively communicate the gospel message. Just as Paul became "all things to all people" in his evangelistic efforts (1 Corinthians 9:22), drama ministers can similarly adopt various personas and roles to engage with diverse audiences and convey timeless truths in compelling ways.

One of the key ways in which Paul's approach can be applied in Christian drama is through character portrayal. Drama ministers may take on the form of a wide range of characters, including those traditionally viewed as morally questionable or socially marginalized, such as a witch doctor, prostitute, or tout. By embodying these roles with authenticity, drama ministers can create opportunities for audiences to encounter the gospel message in unexpected and thought-provoking ways (Nicholls, 2007).

Moreover, drama ministers can draw inspiration from Paul's emphasis on contextualization in their dramatic presentations. Just as Paul adapted his message to resonate with the cultural and religious backgrounds of his audience, drama ministers can incorporate elements of local culture, language, and customs into their productions. This contextual approach ensures that the gospel message is communicated in a way that is relevant and relatable to the specific context in which it is being presented.

Additionally, Paul's approach to evangelism underscores the importance of empathy and compassion for those he sought to reach. Drama ministers can apply this principle by approaching their characters and stories with a deep understanding of the struggles and challenges faced by their audience members. By portraying characters with nuance and complexity, drama ministers can create opportunities for empathy and connection, inviting audiences to see themselves reflected in the stories being told.

Drama ministers can also embody Paul's willingness to step outside of conventional boundaries and embrace new ways of engaging with others. This may involve exploring creative and innovative approaches to storytelling, using drama as a means of sparking conversations and fostering community engagement.

### Introduction to Mike Bamiloye as a prominent figure in Christian drama

In Christian drama, few names resonate with as much significance and impact as Mike Bamiloye. As a prolific playwright, filmmaker, actor, and evangelist, Bamiloye has left an indelible mark on the landscape of Christian arts, inspiring and influencing countless individuals around the globe.

Born on April 13, 1960, in Ilesa, Nigeria, Mike Bamiloye's journey into the world of drama and ministry began at an early age. His passion for storytelling and his deep-rooted faith in Christianity converged to shape his remarkable career trajectory. With a keen eye for creative expression and a heart dedicated to spreading the Gospel message, Bamiloye embarked on a mission to use the medium of drama as a powerful tool for evangelism and spiritual transformation.

So far, Mike Bamiloye has authored numerous stage plays, television series, and movies that capture the essence of Christian faith and values. His productions often delve into themes of restoration, revival, redemption, faithfulness, spiritual warfare, and the triumph of good over evil, resonating deeply with audiences of all ages and backgrounds.

One of Bamiloye's most notable contributions to Christian drama is the establishment of Mount Zion Faith Ministries International alongside his wife, Gloria Bamiloye. Founded in 1985, Mount Zion has grown into a powerhouse of Christian Drama productions, producing an extensive catalog of films that have captivated audiences worldwide under Mount Zion Film Productions. Through Mount Zion, Bamiloye has provided a platform for aspiring actors, writers, and filmmakers to showcase their talents while spreading the message of Christ.

### Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This study utilizes a qualitative research approach to examine the characterization of Mike Bamiloye in his roles as King Oladunjoye in *Esin Ajoji* and Melandra Gashiky in *Shackles*. The qualitative method allows for an in-depth exploration of Bamiloye's performances, focusing on key aspects such as physical appearance, behavior, dialogue, and symbolism.

The primary data for this study consists of the films *Esin Ajoji* and *Shackles (part 1)*, which feature Mike Bamiloye in prominent roles. These films serve as the primary sources for analyzing Bamiloye's characterization, with specific scenes and dialogues examined in detail.

The analysis of Bamiloye's characterization is guided by the principles of narrative theology, which were propounded by George Lindbeck in the late 20th century. Narrative theology emphasizes the role of storytelling in conveying theological truths and shaping religious beliefs. Through close examination of Bamiloye's performances, the study seeks to identify patterns, themes, and symbolism that align with Paul's evangelical approach.

The study is grounded in the theoretical framework of narrative theology, which was introduced by George Lindbeck in his work "The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age" (1984). Narrative theology posits that narratives have the power to engage audiences emotionally and intellectually, leading to a deeper understanding of faith and spirituality.

Within the framework of narrative theology, Bamiloye's performances are analyzed as narratives that communicate theological messages to viewers. His portrayal of characters such as King Oladunjoye and Melandra Gashiky serves as vehicles for conveying themes of salvation, redemption, restoration, revival, faith and and spiritual warfare. By examining the narrative elements of Bamiloye's performances, the study aims to elucidate how dramatic storytelling can be utilized as a tool for evangelism and spiritual edification.

### Characterization Techniques in *Esin Ajoji* and *Shackles*

#### Synopsis of *Esin Ajoji*

*Esin Ajoji* translated as "The Strange Religion" in Yoruba, is a captivating epic film that delves into themes of faith and tradition. Set in the ancient Yoruba village of Agbayun, the narrative unfolds across centuries, focusing first on King Olorangbe, a staunch adherent to the ancestral religion of the village.

King Olasorangbe adamantly opposes the introduction of any religion other than that of his ancestors into Agbayun. He convenes a meeting with his chiefs, sternly reiterating his disinterest in alternative faiths and issuing dire consequences for those who dare to defy his decree.

The story takes a dramatic turn when Chief Ejemu permits a new religion to enter the village, believing they seek to promote peace. However, upon learning of this breach of tradition, King Olasorangbe becomes incensed and orders the expulsion of the newcomers.

The film contrasts the ancient deities of Agbayun, such as Orunmila, Ogun, Ogansusu, Sango, Oro, Osun, and Esu, with the arrival of Evangelist Ajigbotoluwa and his followers, who herald the message of Jesus Christ. The clash between traditional beliefs and the evangelist's teachings escalates when Ekukeku, a fearsome masquerade, interrupts their gathering, leading to violence and the arrest of the evangelist.

Despite facing persecution and imminent sacrifice, the unwavering faith of the evangelist and his followers reflects their convictions. Fast forward a century later, the descendants of Agbayun grapple with the same religious tensions, as Prince Olabosipo and his family navigate the demands of tradition and their newfound faith in Christianity.

The film explores themes of sacrifice, redemption, and the enduring power of faith, culminating in a revelation that challenges the deeply entrenched beliefs of Agbayun. As King Oladunjoye learns of the village's history and the legacy of those who dared to defy tradition in favor of serving the true God, a shift occurs within the community.

Ultimately, *Esin Ajoji* is a thought-provoking exploration of the complexities of faith and tradition, highlighting the eternal struggle between adherence to the past and the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment.

### Characterization of Mike Bamiloye in *Esin Ajoji*

#### • Physical Appearance

In the portrayal of King Oladunjoye by Mike Bamiloye in *Esin Ajoji*, his physical appearance is striking and befitting of his regal stature. As the ruler of the ancient Yoruba village of Agbayun, King Oladunjoye's attire reflects his position of authority and reverence in the community.



**Fig 1:** King Oladunjoye (Mike Bamiloye) warmly welcoming his son, Prince Olabopo, and family with joy.



**Fig 2:** King Oladunjoye (Mike Bamiloye) sternly resolved against making sacrifices to the deities after a divine revelation.

Draped in rich, ornate garments befitting a Yoruba king, Mike Bamiloye's portrayal captures the essence of regality. His attire is adorned with intricate patterns and vibrant colors, symbolizing the wealth and status of his royal lineage. The royal beads adorning his hands and neck shimmer under the light, emphasizing his prestige and connection to tradition.

In his hand, King Oladunjoye holds a horsetail, a symbol of authority and power in Yoruba culture. The horsetail and staff of office, often carried by Yoruba rulers, signifies his command over the affairs of the village and his role as a leader entrusted with maintaining order and justice.

Atop his head sits a magnificent crown, a symbol of his kingship and sovereignty. The crown, adorned with intricate designs and embellishments, signifies his right to rule and his lineage as a descendant of noble ancestors. As the crown rests upon his head, it serves as a visual reminder of his responsibility to govern with wisdom and integrity.

In his portrayal of King Oladunjoye in *Esin Ajoji*, Mike Bamiloye delivers a characterization that resonates with regal authority and depth. Through his performance, Bamiloye embodies the essence of a traditional Yoruba king, commanding respect and reverence from his subjects and viewers alike.

Bamiloye's portrayal of King Oladunjoye is characterized by a regal bearing and dignified presence. From the moment he appears on screen, adorned in lavish Yoruba royal attire, Bamiloye exudes an aura of authority and nobility. His carriage and demeanor convey a sense of confidence and poise, reflective of a ruler who is deeply connected to his cultural heritage and responsibilities.

#### ● Behaviour and Actions

Initially, Bamiloye's characterization of King Oladunjoye exudes a sense of cool and calm demeanor, particularly evident during the scene where he welcomes his son, Prince Olabosipo, and his wife, Dedunke, along with their children, to the palace. As the patriarch of the royal family, King Oladunjoye's demeanor is warm and welcoming, embodying the essence of familial love and unity. His interactions with his grandchildren are tender and affectionate, showcasing a softer side to his authoritative persona.

However, the characterization takes a dramatic turn when Prince Olabosipo begins to pray to the Lord, causing a disruption in the traditional rituals and sacrifices of the village. In this moment, Bamiloye's portrayal of King Oladunjoye reveals a subtle shift in behavior, marked by uneasiness, worry, and a simmering anger. The king's reaction reflects his deep-seated attachment to the customs and beliefs of the village, as well as his concern for the repercussions of his son's actions on the stability of their community.



**Fig 3:** King Oladunjoye (Mike Bamiloye) reacting to the news of gods' rejection of sacrifices.



**Fig 4:** King Oladunjoye (Mike Bamiloye) discussing the peril resulting from the prayers.

As the narrative unfolds, King Oladunjoye's characterization undergoes another transformation following a revelation from Jesus, referred to as Okunrin Naa in the film. Upon receiving this revelation, Bamiloye's portrayal of the king is infused with a newfound sense of boldness and conviction. The character's behavior and actions reflect a profound shift in worldview, as he comes to realize the limitations of the gods of the land and embraces the power of Jesus Christ. With this revelation, King Oladunjoye's character is filled with the joy of the Lord, his demeanor radiating confidence and assurance. Bamiloye's portrayal captures the transformation of a once-doubtful and conflicted ruler into a steadfast believer, unshaken by the threats of the gods and empowered by his newfound faith.

#### ● Dialogue and Speech

Initially, Bamiloye's characterization of King Oladunjoye manifests through dialogues that convey a sense of desperation and apprehension. As the king grapples with the repercussions of his son's actions and the potential wrath of the gods, his words are marked by pleading and supplication. He beseeches the gods of the land:

"My head, please stop" (*Esin Ajoji*, 2003, 1:23:26)

"You gods of the land, leave me alone" (*Esin Ajoji*, 2003, 1:23:17)

"Why can't you leave me along and go and attack the man who refuse to appease the gods. Leave me along and let me live" (*Esin Ajoji*, 2003, 1:28:55)

This reflects his fear of divine retribution and his desire for mercy.



**Fig 5:** King Oladunjoye (Mike Bamiloye) pleading for mercy from the gods in the palace.



**Fig 6:** King Oladunjoye (Mike Bamiloye) pleading for mercy from the gods in his son's house.

However, following his acceptance of Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and savior, King Oladunjoye's dialogue undergoes a dramatic shift, embodying a newfound confidence and authority rooted in his faith. His speech is characterized by declarations of assurance and conviction, as he boldly proclaims his encounter with the "King of kings" and the divine protection he has received.

Instead of supplicating to the gods, he confidently asserts:

"I have met with the King of kings and He has assured me that I cannot die."

(*Esin Ajoji*, 2003, 1:38:12)



**Fig 7:** King Oladunjoye (Mike Bamiloye) speaking with authority in the palace.



**Fig 8:** King Oladunjoye (Mike Bamiloye) stripping the land's priest of his robes and declaring a decree to cease serving any deities.

This transformation is further exemplified in a confrontational dialogue with the village priest, who urges King Oladunjoye to appease the gods of the land. In response, the king's words are laced with mockery and disdain towards the former gods he once feared.

"You mean those two wretched lifeless, aged woman? They were unclean spirits. In fact, they were both destroyed yesterday night by thunder."

(*Esin Ajoji*, 2003,1:38:52).

With boldness and authority, he dismisses the priest's demands, declaring the gods as "wretched" and "unclean spirits" who have been vanquished by divine intervention.

Through Mike Bamiloye's portrayal, the evolution of King Oladunjoye's dialogue and speech serves as a powerful reflection of his character's journey from fear to faith, from submission to sovereignty. With each word spoken, Bamiloye masterfully captures the essence of a king transformed by the power of his newfound belief in Jesus Christ, leaving an indelible impression on both his fellow characters and the audience alike.

### ● Character Arc

At the outset of the film, King Oladunjoye is depicted as a staunch adherent to the traditional beliefs and customs of the ancient Yoruba village of Agbayun. He rules with authority and reverence for the gods of the land, fearing their wrath and seeking to maintain the status quo at any cost. His character is marked by a deep-seated attachment to tradition and a reluctance to challenge the established order.

However, as the narrative unfolds and King Oladunjoye's son, Prince Olabosipo, introduces Christianity to the village, the king's world is shaken to its core. Initially, King Oladunjoye responds with fear and desperation, pleading with the gods to spare him from their judgment and restore order to his kingdom. His character arc at this stage is defined by uncertainty and vulnerability as he grapples with the conflicting forces of tradition and change.

Yet, it is through adversity that King Oladunjoye's character begins to evolve. After accepting Jesus Christ as his personal savior, the king undergoes a profound spiritual awakening that empowers him to confront his fears and embrace a newfound sense of purpose. His journey from fear to faith is marked by moments of courage and conviction, as he boldly proclaims his allegiance to the "King of kings" and renounces the gods of the land.

As the film reaches its climax, King Oladunjoye's character arc culminates in a moment of triumphant revelation. Armed with the truth of Jesus Christ, the king stands tall and unyielding, his character transformed from a fearful ruler to a beacon of hope and inspiration for his people. His arc embodies the timeless journey of self-discovery and enlightenment, reminding audiences of the power in Jesus Christ.

### ● Symbolism and Metaphor

One of the key symbols associated with King Oladunjoye is his transition from a figure of fear and submission to one of bold authority and unwavering faith. At the beginning of the film, King Oladunjoye represents the entrenched power structures of the traditional Yoruba society, bound by the rituals and beliefs of the ancestral religion. His character serves as a metaphor for the inertia of tradition, resistant to change and fearful of the unknown.

However, as the narrative unfolds, King Oladunjoye undergoes a profound spiritual transformation that symbolizes the triumph of faith over fear. His acceptance of Jesus Christ as his personal savior serves as a metaphorical journey from darkness to light, from bondage to liberation. Through his character arc, King Oladunjoye becomes a symbol of hope and enlightenment, challenging the status quo and inspiring others to embrace a new way of thinking.

Another powerful symbol associated with King Oladunjoye is his role as a bridge between the old and the new, tradition and modernity, darkness and light. As the ruler of Agbayun, King Oladunjoye embodies the cultural heritage and ancestral wisdom of the village, symbolized by his adherence to the rituals and customs of the land. Yet, his willingness to also embrace Christianity symbolizes a willingness to adapt and evolve, to transcend the limitations of tradition and embrace a more inclusive and progressive worldview.

Additionally, King Oladunjoye's character serves as a metaphorical representation of the power of leadership and influence. His journey from a fearful and submissive ruler to a bold and empowered leader symbolizes the potential of visionary leadership, capable of inspiring change and shaping the destiny of a community and the society at large.

### **Synopsis of *Shackles I***

In the intimate setting of a family's home, a baby dedication ceremony unfolds with mixed emotions. Mr. Edwards, elated by the prayers of their pastor as their newborn, Goodness, is named, contrasts sharply with his wife Evelyn's somber demeanor. Her sudden departure and subsequent tears raise concerns for Edwards, who, despite the joy of their long-awaited child, finds himself puzzled by her distress. Evelyn's refusal to address her apparent discomfort, even as she claims to experience post-delivery abdominal pains, exacerbates Edwards' confusion.

As the night unfolds, both spouses are visited by vivid dreams. Evelyn encounters a spectral figure who challenges her motherhood, while Edwards is confronted by a man claiming paternal rights over their child, challenging the infant's name. Struggling to interpret these visions, Edwards seeks understanding from Evelyn, who dismisses them, deepening his unrest.

Alone with the baby, Evelyn faces another visitation, this time from a figure named Melandra Gashiky, who asserts his fatherhood over Goodness, further unsettling Evelyn with accusations of betrayal. Haunted by doubts and regrets, Evelyn

reflects on her desperation to conceive, which led her to seek guidance from Prophetess Mellion Umbanisi. Despite her husband's reservations, Evelyn secretly journeyed to Calabar, where a pact with Melandra Gashiky was sealed in exchange for fertility. Bound by silence and secrecy, Evelyn's anguish grows as Gashiky's demands escalate, threatening her and her child's well-being.

Tensions escalate when Evelyn's refusal to share her testimony at a women's conference leads to discord between the couple, exacerbated by divine intervention at the hands of their church's leadership. Edwards, confronted once more by Gashiky, pleads for answers from Evelyn, leading to a climactic revelation of her infidelity and their subsequent spiritual battle to rid themselves of Gashiky's influence.

Despite their victory over malevolent forces, tragedy strikes as their child succumbs, but through reconciliation and divine reassurance, they find solace and renewed hope for the future. Ultimately, they emerge strengthened, free from the grip of spiritual manipulation, and blessed with the promise of new life.

### Characterization of Mike Bamiloye in *Shackles*

#### ● Physical Appearance

In the movie *Shackles*, Mike Bamiloye's portrayal of Melandra Gashiky is characterized by a commanding physical appearance that reflects his role as the Prince of the Kingdom of Mazobe of the Marine Kingdom and the commander of its warriors.

Draped in a short arm sleeve flowing patterned gown, Bamiloye's attire exudes regality and authority. The striking colors of his gown symbolize his elevated status within the kingdom and command attention wherever he goes. Adorning his hands and neck are royal beads, shimmering under the light and serving as a visual representation of his noble lineage and power.



**Fig 9:** Prince Melandra Gashiky (Mike Bamiloye) speaking with Edward.



**Fig 10:** Prince Melandra Gashiky (Mike Bamiloye) fighting in the spirit realm.

Accompanying his attire is a walking stick and a sword, both of which serve as potent symbols of his authority and command over the warriors of the kingdom. The walking stick signifies his role as a leader, guiding and directing his subjects, while the sword embodies his prowess as a warrior and defender of the kingdom's interests.

Atop his head rests a cap that reflects the royalty of his kingdom, indicating his princely status and lineage. As a prince from the underworld, his cap serves as a tangible reminder of his connection to the realm of spirits and his authority within it.

In addition to his attire, Bamiloye's carriage exudes confidence and authority, with each movement marked by a sense of purpose and determination. He moves with the poise and grace befitting of a commander, commanding respect and obedience from those around him.

Furthermore, Bamiloye's voice resonates with authority, commanding attention and respect with each word spoken. His deep timbre and commanding tone further reinforce his status as a leader and commander within the kingdom.

#### ● Behaviour and Actions

Mike Bamiloye's portrayal of Melandra Gashiky is characterized by a range of behaviors and actions that reflect the complexity of his character, from calm and calculated to fierce and vengeful.

Initially, when Melandra Gashiky first meets Edward, the husband of Evelyn, he exudes a cool and calm demeanor, masking the underlying intensity of his intentions. Despite the gravity of the situation - that Evelyn is carrying his child as a result of their covenant - Melandra maintains a composed facade, alternating between a charming smile and a firm expression to assert his claim. This behavior showcases his ability to manipulate and assert his dominance without overt aggression.



**Fig 11:** Prince Melandra Gashiky (Mike Bamiloye) speaking with Edward - smiling.



**Fig 12:** Prince Melandra Gashiky (Mike Bamiloye) speaking with Edward - firm expression.

In contrast, there are moments when Melandra's characterization shifts to reveal a more joyful and carefree side of his personality. This is evident in the scene where he sings and dances with Evelyn during the night of their consummation. In this moment, Melandra's demeanor is light-hearted and jovial, seemingly devoid of the stern authority he typically exudes as the commander of 21 provinces. This change in behavior adds depth to his character, demonstrating his capacity for joy and enjoyment amidst his duties as a prince of the marine kingdom.



**Fig 13:** Prince Melandra Gashiky (Mike Bamiloye) dancing with Evelyn.



**Fig 14:** Prince Melandra Gashiky (Mike Bamiloye) dancing with Evelyn.

However, as the story unfolds and Evelyn refuses to acknowledge Melandra's role in the conception of their child, his behavior takes a dark and vengeful turn. Faced with Evelyn's defiance and the threat of her revealing their covenant, Melandra's calm demeanor gives way to anger and aggression. His actions become increasingly forceful and confrontational, culminating in a powerful spiritual battle with Evelyn. This scene highlights Melandra's capacity for wrath and his willingness to fight for what he believes is rightfully his, even if it means engaging in spiritual warfare.



**Fig 15:** Prince Melandra Gashiky (Mike Bamiloye) spiritual battle with Evelyn.



**Fig 16:** Prince Melandra Gashiky (Mike Bamiloye) defeated by Evelyn with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Ultimately, it is through divine intervention that Evelyn is able to conquer Melandra Gashiky. As God's power overwhelms him, Melandra is forced to retreat back into the marine world from whence he came. This final confrontation underscores Melandra's vulnerability in the face of divine authority, highlighting the ultimate triumph of good over evil.

### ● Dialogue and Speech

In *Shackles*, Mike Bamiloye's characterization of Melandra Gashiky through dialogue and speech is multifaceted, ranging from calm empathy to fierce determination, and even moments of love and threat.

Initially, when Melandra meets Edward, the husband of Evelyn, he maintains a cool and calm demeanor, delivering lines that establish both empathy and mission. His dialogue reflects understanding and shared experience, as he empathizes with Edward's ten years of waiting and sorrow, stating:

"I know how you felt." (*Shackles 1*, 2019, 10:15).

Yet, he is also firm in making his intentions known, asserting:

"I have only come to let you know that you are carrying a child that belongs to both of us."

(*Shackles 1*, 2019, 11:29).

This blend of empathy and clarity characterizes Melandra's approach, revealing his complex motivations and unwavering resolve. Throughout the film, Melandra consistently makes his intentions known, seizing every opportunity to assert his claim over Evelyn and their child. His dialogue is intentional and firm, leaving no room for doubt or negotiation.

When addressing Evelyn directly, he reinforces his ownership and authority as he declares:

"Or rather, our child, our son, for you know he is part of me," (*Shackles 1*, 2019, 21:58)

Despite his commanding presence, Melandra also exhibits moments of lovability and charm through his dialogue. He transforms his words into a song, serenading Evelyn with affectionate lines like:

"Come to me my love, how are you my dear, Evelyn, my dear. Dance with me my love. Evelyn my dear. Dance with me my love. Evelyn me dear" (*Shackles 1*, 2019, 54:27).

He even presents her with a gift from his kingdom, showcasing a softer side to his character amidst his role as a powerful commander.

However, as Evelyn refuses to acknowledge him as part of the child's conception, Melandra's dialogue takes a darker turn. He becomes more forceful and threatening, warning Evelyn of the consequences of breaking their agreement. His words are filled with anger and determination as he vows to make her life miserable, demonstrating the extent of his power and resolve.

Ultimately, it is through the Word of God that Evelyn received strength and conviction, bolstered by powerful scriptural dialogues in the spirit, she is able to conquer Melandra Gashiky. As she declares:

"Gashiky is down... The wall of Jericho has fallen," (*Shackles 1*, 2019, 1:36:25)

She triumphs over his influence, highlighting the power of redemption, consecration, faith and perseverance in the face of darkness.

### ● Character Arc

At the outset of the film, Melandra Gashiky emerges as a formidable and enigmatic figure, exuding an aura of authority and power. As the Prince of the Kingdom of Mazobe of the Marine Kingdom, his character embodies the darkness and malevolence of the underworld. Initially, Melandra's arc is characterized by manipulation and control, as he seeks to assert his claim over Evelyn and their unborn child. His dialogue and actions are calculated and deliberate, showcasing his cunning and determination to fulfill his mission.

However, as the story unfolds and Evelyn refuses to acknowledge him as part of the child's conception, Melandra's character arc takes a darker turn. Faced with defiance and resistance, he becomes increasingly aggressive and vengeful, resorting to threats and coercion to maintain his hold over Evelyn. This phase of his arc is marked by a descent into darkness, as his lust for power and control consumes him, driving him to desperate measures.

Yet, it is through Evelyn's unwavering faith and determination that Melandra's character arc reaches its climax. As she confronts him in the spiritual realm and declares victory over his influence through the help of God, Melandra's hold begins to crumble. His defeat serves as a turning point in his arc, as he is forced to confront the consequences of his actions and the limitations of his power. In the end, Melandra's character arc concludes with a moment of redemption and transformation. As he is vanquished by divine intervention and returns to the marine world.

#### ● Symbolism and Metaphor

One of the key symbols associated with Melandra Gashiky is his role as the Prince of the Kingdom of Mazobe of the Marine Kingdom. This title serves as a metaphor for his dominion over darkness and the underworld, representing the spiritual forces of evil that seek to exert control over the lives of mortals. As the prince of this realm, Melandra embodies the malevolent forces that oppose the light and goodness represented by the protagonists.

Additionally, Melandra's attire and accessories serve as symbolic representations of his authority and power. His short arm sleeve flowing patterned gown, adorned with striking colors, reflects his regal status and dominance. The royal beads on his hand and neck, alongside his walking stick and sword, signify his command over the warriors of the kingdom and his readiness to wield force when necessary. These symbols contribute to Melandra's intimidating presence and serve as visual reminders of his malevolent nature.

Furthermore, Melandra's actions and dialogue are laden with metaphorical significance, conveying deeper themes of temptation, manipulation, and spiritual warfare. His calm and calculated demeanor when first meeting Edward and Evelyn masks his true intentions, symbolizing the deceptive nature of evil and its ability to ensnare unsuspecting victims. Through his dialogue, Melandra employs persuasive language and veiled threats to exert control over Evelyn and assert his claim over their unborn child, serving as a metaphor for the insidious influence of darkness in the lives of believers.

As the narrative unfolds and Evelyn confronts Melandra in the spiritual realm, his defeat becomes a metaphor for the triumph of light over darkness and the power of faith to fear. Through divine intervention, Melandra's hold over Evelyn is broken, symbolizing the victory of good over evil and the restoration of spiritual harmony.

#### Comparison of Mike Bamiloye's Characterization in *Esin Ajoji* and *Shackles*

The characters portrayed by Mike Bamiloye in *Esin Ajoji* and *Shackles* offer fascinating comparisons in terms of characterization, highlighting Bamiloye's versatility and depth as an actor.

In *Esin Ajoji* Bamiloye portrays King Oladunjoye, a figure steeped in tradition and authority within the ancient Yoruba village of Agbayun. As King Oladunjoye, Bamiloye embodies a sense of regality and solemnity, portraying a ruler deeply rooted in his ancestral beliefs and customs. His characterization is defined by a steadfast adherence to tradition, as he vehemently opposes the introduction of Christianity into the village. Bamiloye's portrayal of King Oladunjoye is marked by a sense of gravitas and dignity, as he navigates the complexities of faith and tradition in the face of external influences.

On the other hand, in *Shackles*, Bamiloye takes on the role of Melandra Gashiky, the Prince of the Kingdom of Mazobe of the Marine Kingdom. Unlike King Oladunjoye, Melandra Gashiky represents the darker forces at play, embodying the malevolent and manipulative nature of evil. Bamiloye's characterization of Melandra Gashiky is characterized by a sense of cunning and deceit, as he seeks to assert his control over the protagonist, Evelyn, and their unborn child. His portrayal is marked by a subtle yet chilling intensity, as he manipulates and intimidates those around him to achieve his nefarious goals.

In terms of comparison, both characters portrayed by Bamiloye exhibit elements of authority and power, albeit in vastly different contexts. While King Oladunjoye wields authority as a traditional ruler within the confines of his village, Melandra Gashiky exerts control as a supernatural being from the underworld. Additionally, both characters undergo significant arcs throughout their respective narratives, with King Oladunjoye experiencing a transformation of faith and Melandra Gashiky facing defeat in the face of divine intervention.

In terms of thematic exploration, both films offer poignant reflections on the nature of salvation, redemption, restoration, revival, faith and spiritual warfare. *Esin Ajoji* delves into the clash between tradition and spirituality, highlighting the power of God in the face of cultural resistance. In contrast, *Shackles* explores the eternal struggle between good and evil, emphasizing the importance of perseverance and divine intervention in overcoming darkness.

### Alignment with Paul's Policy of Evangelism

Mike Bamiloye's characterization in his roles as King Oladunjoye in *Esin Ajoji* and Melandra Gashiky in *Shackles* demonstrates a remarkable alignment with Paul's evangelical approach, as outlined in 1 Corinthians 9:22. Paul's approach emphasizes the importance of adaptability and relatability in effectively communicating the gospel message to diverse audiences. Similarly, Bamiloye embodies these principles by immersing himself in his roles, becoming "all things to all people" in his efforts to evangelize through the medium of film.

In *Esin Ajoji*, Bamiloye takes on the persona of King Oladunjoye, a character deeply entrenched in tradition and resistant to change. By fully inhabiting this role, Bamiloye effectively communicates the struggles and challenges faced by those grappling with faith and tradition. His portrayal resonates with audiences who may identify with similar cultural and religious contexts, allowing the gospel message to be communicated in a relatable and accessible manner.

Similarly, in *Shackles*, Bamiloye transforms into the menacing figure of Melandra Gashiky, representing the forces of darkness and spiritual warfare. Through his immersive portrayal, Bamiloye invites audiences to confront the reality of evil and the need for spiritual vigilance. By embodying this role with conviction and authenticity, Bamiloye effectively communicates the timeless truths of the gospel in a way that engages viewers on a deep emotional and spiritual level.

Mike Bamiloye's commitment to his roles extends beyond mere acting; it embodies a deeper dedication to ministry and evangelism. By putting off his normal self as Mike Bamiloye and fully immersing himself in the characters of King Oladunjoye and Melandra Gashiky, he goes beyond the boundaries of conventional performance to minister to viewers through the medium of film.

In embodying characters like King Oladunjoye and Melandra Gashiky, Bamiloye steps into the shoes of individuals grappling with profound spiritual struggles and dilemmas. By shedding his own identity and adopting theirs, he enters into their world, experiencing their joys, fears, and conflicts firsthand. This immersive approach allows him to authentically portray the complexities of faith, tradition, and spiritual warfare, creating a compelling narrative that resonates with audiences on a deeply personal level.

By relinquishing his own persona to become these characters, Bamiloye demonstrates a profound willingness to humble himself for the sake of ministry. He recognizes that the message of the gospel is beyond individual identity and ego, and thus he willingly sets aside his own self-interest to serve a higher purpose. In doing so, he exemplifies the sacrificial love and selflessness that lies at the heart of Paul's evangelical approach.

Moreover, Bamiloye's decision to take on these roles reflects a deep sense of calling and conviction. He understands the power of storytelling as a means of conveying spiritual truths and reaching hearts and minds with the message of salvation (Segun-Okeowo, 2012). By embodying characters like King Oladunjoye and Melandra Gashiky, he leverages the medium of film to engage viewers in a profound exploration of faith, redemption, and the eternal battle between good and evil.

Ultimately, by putting off his normal self as Mike Bamiloye to take on these roles, Bamiloye demonstrates a remarkable alignment with Paul's evangelical approach. Through his dedication to ministry and his willingness to immerse himself in the lives of his characters, he effectively communicates the gospel message to audiences in a way that is compelling. In doing so, he exemplifies the timeless principle of becoming "all things to all people" in order to win them to Christ.

### III. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Mike Bamiloye's portrayal of characters such as King Oladunjoye in *Esin Ajoji* and Melandra Gashiky in *Shackles* not only captivates audiences but also exemplifies a profound alignment with Paul's policy of evangelism. Through his immersive approach to acting, Bamiloye embodies the essence of relatability and adaptability, essential qualities in effectively conveying the gospel message to diverse audiences.

In both films, Bamiloye's characters serve as conduits for exploring themes of salvation, redemption, restoration, revival, faith, and spiritual warfare. Whether depicting the struggles of a traditional ruler confronted with the introduction of Christianity or embodying the malevolent forces of darkness, Bamiloye brings authenticity and depth to his roles, engaging viewers on an emotional and spiritual level.

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Bamiloye's commitment to ministry is beyond the boundaries of conventional performance, reflecting a profound dedication to sharing the message of salvation. By humbling himself and immersing himself fully in the lives of his characters, he demonstrates a sacrificial love and selflessness reminiscent of Paul's evangelical approach.

Through storytelling and dramatic artistry, Bamiloye leverages the medium of film to communicate profound spiritual truths, reaching hearts and minds with the power of the gospel. His work reflects the enduring relevance of Paul's principles of evangelism, reminding us of the importance of becoming "all things to all people" in order to effectively share the message of Christ and also showing us the role of Christian drama in evangelism and spiritual edification.

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