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Christianity in Nupeland, Kwara State, Nigeria: Challenges and Coping Strategies of a Minority Religion

By

ABIONA, Lawrence Adekunle Ph.D.

Abstract

The purpose of this empirical study was to document the challenges facing Christianity as a minority proselytising religion in a predominantly Muslim Nupeland, Kwara State, Nigeria. The research adopted the historical method to gather the experiences of Christians in the land and the descriptive method was adopted to explain these experiences as they occurred in the real life situation of the study's social context. Data were collected through oral interviews, participant observation, and library consultations. Findings revealed that since 1902 when Christianity was introduced in Nupeland, it had spread widely throughout the land but its spread was not without some serious challenges. The foremost challenge facing Christians was getting converts in some Nupe towns and villages such as Shonga, Lafiagi, Tsaragi, and Patigi. The researcher observed that while inter-religious rivalry defined the relationship between Islam and Christianity in Nupeland, there was inter-denominational competition for members among some established churches and new churches. The study noted intra-ecclesial conflicts as a challenge facing Christianity in the land, and it concluded that the existing relative peace in Nupeland needs to be maintained for the progress of the land. It recommends an intensification of education, inter-religious and ecumenical dialogues in Nupeland to deepen and sustain the existing peace.

Keywords: Challenges, Christianity, Islam, Minority Religion, Nupeland, Kwara State, Nigeria

Introduction

This study assesses the challenges that Christians encounter as they respond to the mandate to make disciples for Christ (Matt. 28:19-20) among the Muslim-dominated Nupe society in Kwara State, Nigeria. Christianity is believed to have originated from Jesus Christ whom Christians believe is the Son of God (Lk. 1: 30-32; Jn. 5: 17-23). Relying on the Bible, one can submit that the religion began as a movement in Jerusalem after the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the Pentecostal experience of his disciples. The earliest believers in Jesus as the Son of God started preaching about salvation and forgiveness through his name (Acts 2: 38; 4:12; 5:31-32). The believers won many converts and thus incurred the wrath of the Jewish authority that ignited their persecution (Acts 5:17-42; 7:57-60). Due to such persecutions, many believers fled Jerusalem but they continued to spread the message of the resurrection everywhere they

went (Acts 11:19). Thus, Christianity spread from Jerusalem into other lands. However, historical, political, geographical, and cultural situations of these lands influenced the expression of its fundamental kerygma differently.

Nupeland is predominantly a Muslim dominated area. African Traditional Religion (ATR) is the indigenous religion of the people. With the arrival of Islam, most ATR adherents were converted to Islam and Islam became the dominant religion. Christianity came very late when Islam had been firmly rooted in the land. Yet, it has succeeded in making some converts, but it is still a minority religion in comparison with Islam in Nupeland. Both Islam and Christianity are proselytising religions and rivals anywhere they cohabit.

Writing about “Religious Competition”, Gary, Ling, and Pratt (n.d) submitted that religious groups are like commercial organisations, biological organisms and sports teams in the sense that they operate in given environments where they compete to survive, consolidate, and adapt to change. As rivals, proselytising religions compete for members and make concerted efforts to keep their members as business organisations try to keep their customers. They recruit members aggressively, they publicly criticise rival groups to prove that they are better, they set up schools, health centres, worship centres, and they interact with the government.

The theory of religious competition vividly describes and explains the relationship that exists between Islam and Christianity on one hand and among Christian denominations on the other hand within a social environment. This scenario is not different in Nupeland where Islam had dominated the religious market before the advent of Christianity. Since Christians as well as Muslims have the mandate to convert non-members into their folds, Christians face stiff oppositions as they exercise their religious freedom of making converts especially in Muslim dominated environment. In such circumstances, competition sets in and tension rises. Moreover,

apart from inter-religious competition between Christianity and Islam, there are also inter-denominational competition for members among Christian denominations and intra-ecclesial conflicts. These are also challenges that elicit questions whether the Jesus preached in one denomination is better than the Jesus preached in another denomination.

The research aimed to investigate the level of religious tolerance in Nupeland, Kwara State, Nigeria. It explored the advent and spread of Christianity and examined the challenges facing the religion in Nupeland. It investigated the coping strategies of Christians in the land with a view to assess the prospects of religious harmony in the religiously diversified Nigeria. The study submits that being a minority is not comfortable for Christians in Nupeland. Notwithstanding, the study is an attempt to sustain the existing harmonious religious co-existence in Nupeland, Kwara State, Nigeria as Muslims and Christians interact within the same religious space.

Research Methodology

The study is qualitative and it adopted historical method of research to investigate what happened in religious interactions between the adherents of Christianity and Islam in Nupeland, Kwara State, Nigeria. The descriptive method was adopted to explain and interpret the research findings.

The study population is Nupeland, Kwara State, Nigeria. It comprises two Local Government Areas: Edu and Patigi. The researcher covered ten towns and villages, five in Edu Local Government Area, and these are Shonga, Lafiagi, Kokonna, Patidzuru, Bokungi and five in Patigi Local Government Area including Patigi, Lade, Kanworo, Rifun, and Tankpafu. The study areas were selected through purposive sampling method because appreciable Christians were living in those places with a dominant Muslim population.

Data were gathered through oral interviews, participant observation and the use of written materials to gather what previous researchers had done on the matter under investigation. Eighty Interviewees were selected by purposive sampling method. They were the people who were willing and were able to provide responses to the research questions. They included Emirs, pastors, elders, youths of different Christian denominations, and Muslims. Interviews took place at the palace, homes, and work places. The researcher engaged research assistants (Michael Awofade and Peter Ogundile) who were living in the study population. They introduced him to participants that could supply necessary information, and the researcher participated and observed Christian religious activities in the churches. The internet and other written documents were consulted to gather information on Christianity in Nupeland, Kwara State. Findings were recorded thematically and analysed qualitatively through understanding the experiences of Christians living in Nupeland. The interviewees were told that their responses and photographs with their names could be published and they consented. Interpretation of findings was done based on the theory of religious competition.

The Advent and Spread of Christianity in Nupeland

House (2006) reported that slavery existed in Africa hundreds of years before the beginning of the African-European slave trade (p. 24). It was reported that some natives of Kpada used to raid slaves from Yagbaland in the present Kogi State, Nigeria and that his grandfather was a slave raider. Tankpa further informed the researcher that the buying and selling of slaves persisted until the Europeans came and stopped it (U. Tankpa, personal communication, August 12, 2019).

It is on record that a major part of the Berlin Treaty of 1884 that allocated Africa for the European powers was to end the slave trade (Adeniji, Abdullahi & Onuegbu, 2019, pp. 53-54).

Thus, Rev. J. F. Schon, a German missionary of the Church Missionary Society (C. M. S.), and a young African freed slave, Samuel Ajayi Crowther came to Egga in Nupeland with the 1841 British expedition (Crampton, 2004, p. 17). Records show that the death of most missionaries due to malaria made the 1841 expedition a sad experience for the missionaries but they were said to be determined to evangelise the interior of the Sudan (Josiah 2016, p. 6) for the purpose of converting the Nupe people to Christianity. This determination brought the missionaries of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) to Gbaradogi at Patigi in the present Kwara State in 1902. Among the missionaries who landed at Gbaradogi in 1902, only Rev. A. W. Banfield remained in the mission until he also left in 1904 due to sickness (Olatayo, 1993, pp. 6-7). Storms (1958) reported that when Banfield returned in 1905, he chose Shonga as a new mission field where he started the United Missionary Church of Africa (UMCA) (pp. 236-238). This account shows that Christianity spread from Patigi in 1902 to Shonga in 1905. It was reported that Banfield did not make any convert among the Nupe in Shonga throughout his stay there (H. Yahaya, personal communication, February 1, 2019). Therefore, Banfield and his wife made a missionary journey to Tsaragi in 1907 and in 1945; the UMCA was established at Tsaragi (Saba, n.d., p. 5).

(S. Audu, Personal Communication, December 17, 2019) said Christianity arrived at Share and Tsaragi through the White Missionary known as Miss Hood who came with Banfield in 1905 and that the worship centre was exactly where the Tsaragi Central Mosque is located. It was reported that in 1945, Tsaragi established its own worship centre when Kpotwa Saba, the grandfather of the incumbent Etsu Tsaragi Alhaji Aliu Ndakpotwo Saba was on the throne (S. Audu, Personal Communication, December 17, 2019). The mosque can be considered an historical monument to remember the site of the first joint Christian mission. The site was a

boundary for the two adjoining communities (Share and Tsaragi) before each community built its Yoruba (Share) and Nupe (Tsaragi) churches.

Gana (2014) gave a detailed explanation of the spread of Christianity to Tsaragi when he said,

Banfield got to Tsaragi in 1907 and wanted to open mission there. The chief later changed his mind after he had earlier given his nod. However, his successor permitted the mission in 1916. This was during the time of Kpotwa Saba (Etsu) and a piece of land was allocated to them at Kusokofu where there is Jumat Mosque at Tsaragi now because that is the boundary between Tsaragi and Share, where Nupes and Yoruba worshipped together. Though the mission was later separated into two in 1945, known as mission Oke Yoruba near the UMCA LGEA School Share and mission Tako Nupe at the extreme end of Tsaragi town (p. 82).

Gana (2014) further explained that the separation of the joint mission into Nupe and Yoruba was as a result of the Nupe Christians who sought for separation from the Yoruba due to language barrier (p. 82). Moreover, Bello (2014) reported that Sherk was the person who actually opened the Share/Tsaragi mission. He said that because Banfield was appointed as the West African Secretary of the Foreign Bible Society, he relinquished his position as the Superintendent of Field Missions and handed it over to Sherk in 1915. In 1916/17, the United Missionary Society (UMS) moved to Share/Tsaragi (pp. 32, 35, 44).

Although Owotunse (2014) opined that Share and Tsaragi stations were opened in 1917, which seems difficult since that was the year the UMS was said to have moved into the area, it looks tenable to accept the report that under the leadership of Sherk, the UMCA Share was opened in 1919 and Nupe Church, Tsaragi in 1919 (Bello, 2014, pp. 32, 35, 44). It was this joint mission of Share/Tsaragi of 1919 that separated into independent Share mission and Tsaragi mission in 1945 due to language differences.

Furthermore, the effort to spread Christianity led Rev. John Bontrager to establish the UMS Bible School in 1952 in Tsaragi to train missionaries (S. Audu, personal communication,

December 17, 2019). Owotunse (2014) gives 1951 as the date of establishment of the Bible School, and Bello (2014) corroborates Owotunse when he says, “A Nupe Bible School was opened at Tsaragi in the same 1951” (p. 39). From Tsaragi, missionaries spread Christianity through the UMCA to other Nupe towns and villages such as Patidzuru (1955) (N. Kolo, personal communication, January 31, 2019), Faigi (1956) (R. Ibrahim, personal communication, August 9, 2019), and Bokungi (1957). Meanwhile, as Christianity was spreading through the UMCA missionaries, it was also spreading through the SIM/ECWA from Patigi. The SIM/ECWA spread Christianity to Kpada (1909) (Yissa & Tsado, 2009, pp.8-9), Zambufu (P. Solomon, personal communication, August 10, 2019), Kanworo (1958) (P. Jiya, personal communication, January 29, 2019), and Lade (P. Gana, personal communication, August 10, 2019). In fact, the SIM/ECWA has established ECWA Theological College in Kpada since 1946 for the training of missionaries and the spread of Christianity (M. Jiya, personal communication and personal observation, January 29, 2019).

Moreover, from observation, UMCA and ECWA are the only two churches with wider spread in Nupeland. However, some other churches have been established and they are also growing. These include: Christ Cross Covenant Calvary Church (2001) (M. Gana & I. Silas, personal communication, August 11, 2019), Redeemer Anglican Church (2010) (C. Ofodile, personal communication, December 18, 2019), Deeper Life Bible Church (1985) (J. Adeoti, interviewed by Michael Awofade, December 18, 2019), The Apostolic Faith (2013) (D. Emmanuel, interviewed by Michael Awofade, December 18, 2019), The Apostolic Church Nigeria (1940) (J. Adams, interviewed by Michael Awofade, December 18, 2019), Cherubim and Seraphim Movement (70s) (Adedayo, personal communication, December 19, 2019), Roman Catholic Church (1975), et cetera.

Christianity and its Challenges in Nupeland

Christianity in Nupeland faces some challenges and these include inter-denominational and inter-religious competitions, finance, language barrier, and intra-denominational conflicts. In order to evangelise in Nupeland, missionaries must be able to speak Nupe language without the assistance of interpreters. Moreover, most Nupe towns and villages lack accessible road while social services in the land are in deplorable conditions. Therefore, missionaries must be ready to provide mostly free quality social services, yet the funds are not available. Nevertheless, the challenges of Christianity from the opinions of the respondents and personal observations of the researcher in the covered towns and villages are hereby presented thematically.

Inter-religious competitions

Islam and Christianity are proselytising religions. Both seek to make converts and hold onto their members. Therefore, competition for members affects the relationship existing among Muslims and Christians in Nupeland. Banfield was noted to have lived in Shonga where he set up his printing press at a place known as *Bareke* (D. Adams, personal communication, August 23, 2018). Fuller (2001) reported that Banfield closed the mission at Shonga in 1925 because it never developed a congregation after much labour (pp. 41-42, 64). Islam has been entrenched in Shonga through the Jihad for nearly one hundred years since the early 19th century before Christianity arrived at Shonga in the early 20th century. It was discovered that no indigene of Shonga has converted to Christianity and lives in Shonga since the time of Banfield until date.

Shonga was said to have rejected the Teachers' College, which the missionaries eventually sited in Mokwa (presently in Niger State) just to prevent the conversion of any Shonga indigene to Christianity (R. Ibrahim, personal communication, August 9, 2019). H. Yahaya (Personal Communication, February 1, 2019) said, "The missionary with his education

was not welcomed in Shonga.” The research believes that this may be to prevent the conversion of his people since education is a potent means of conversion by the missionaries.

The researcher was informed that only one Rev. Solomon was the indigene of Shonga who converted to UMCA. Although, no one could ascertain the date of his conversion, but the convert was reported to have suffered for his conversion because his wife was reportedly taken away from him. In order to further avoid persecution from his people in Shonga, Rev. Solomon was believed to have taken refuge at Tsaragi where the oral tradition said he eventually died of leprosy (G. Omokehinde, personal communication, November 28, 2019). Another challenge that Christians encountered was that Christian men were not permitted to marry Muslim women (G. Omokehinde, personal communication, February 1, 2019); whereas, as Husein (2018) noted, “In some circumstances, it is permissible for a Muslim man to marry a non-Muslim woman, specifically among Jews and Christians” (pp. 71-72).

J. Jiya (personal communication, February 1, 2019) revealed that he had been invited to the Emir’s palace several times over an accusation that he was praying for Muslims in his church with the aim of converting them. Therefore, he was asked to pray for Muslims at home rather than in the church. Jiya told the researcher that after the Muslims who patronised him might have received healing and solutions to their predicaments, they did not convert because of the fear of persecution. A respondent lamented, “Christians could not evangelise openly; and whenever they did, they were stoned and they had to run for their lives” (G. Adebowale, personal communication, November 28, 2019). Muslim respondents confirmed that the problem confronting Christianity in Shonga was about conversion and that a Christian could not marry a Muslim woman in Shonga (A. Idris and M. Dauda, personal communication, November 28, 2019). The challenges confirm the theory of religious competition as a dominant factor.

At Lafiagi, it was gathered that no Christian indigene lived in the town (P. Ogundile, personal communication, August 22, 2019). It was noted that Emi Etsudzan was the family that produced a Christian in Lafiagi when Mallam Baba, the son of a Chief Imam, married a Christian woman and converted to Christianity. Because of his conversion, he could not live in Lafiagi, but he was living at Okene in Kogi State. The respondents also mentioned Shaaba Emi Ndaba Takogabi who also converted to Christianity when he got police appointment through his Christian father in-law. The couple was said to be living in Niger State at the time of this fieldwork because of his conversion (S. Nasara and M. Mohammed, personal communication, November 29, 2019).

J. Issa (personal communication, August 22, 2018), I. Shaaba (personal communication, August 23, 2018), and Peter Ijatuyi (personal communication, August 22, 2019) asserted that there was no freedom for Muslims to convert to Christianity at Lafiagi even if they had the desire.

There was rivalry between Islam and Christianity in Patidzuru. This rivalry contributed to the disapproval of inter-religious marriage that was generating minor conflicts and hostilities (N. Kolo, personal communication, January 31, 2019). A Muslim elder in the village said that inter-faith marriage had stopped and even though the intending couple might agree to marry, their parents would disagree based on religious differences (M. Jiya, personal communication, November 29, 2019). The rivalry between Islam and Christianity prompted the Muslims to establish Arabic primary school when the daughter of the village head, who was a Christian, established Zion Nursery/Primary School in the village (P. Jiya, personal communication, March 6, 2018). Religious competition therefore underlies the religious interaction in Patidzuru.

Just like in most towns and villages in Nupeland, Muslims dominate Lade and there is no religious freedom in terms of conversion from Islam to Christianity. Also, Inter-marriage among Christians and Muslims is not permitted in the town. It was gathered that Muslims did not allow conversion to Christianity because Christians did not allow their members to convert to Islam (J. Ndasheshi, personal communication, December 17, 2019). Inter-religious dialogue seems to be a futile venture in Lade going by the submission of the pastor of Second ECWA, “The problem of domination by Islam made dialogue untenable since religious freedom was not respected” (T. Tsado, personal communication, August 14, 2019).

At Tankpafu, the major challenge facing Christianity in the village was the disapproval of conversion from Islam to Christianity (M. Gana and I. Silas, personal communication August 11, 2019). This assertion was confirmed by a Muslim respondent who said any intending Christian suitor must be ready to convert to Islam. Her mother reiterated that if her daughter must marry a Christian, she would not attend church services (A. Mohammed, personal communication, December 18, 2019).

Rifun was predominantly an Islamic community at the time of this study. Christianity was allowed in Rifun around June, 2019 and a piece of land was released for the building of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (A. Mohammed, personal communication, August 14, 2019). However, the land was about five kilometres from the residential area and the likelihood of Rifun youths having any contact with Christianity in a short period is very slim.

Patigi is the Headquarters of Patigi Local Government Area, and it is the cradle of the ECWA worldwide. Christianity in Patigi was facing inter-religious competition with the dominant Islamic religion and Christians’ efforts had not yielded the desired results in comparison with the number of years that Christianity has spent in the land (B. Dadi, personal

communication, Patigi, January 31, 2019). Christians in Patigi and Nupeland were said to be politically marginalised in political appointments and in employment. It was reported that towards the expiration of the tenure of Governor Abdulfatah Ahmed, the Kwara State Government employed thirty-two teachers in Patigi and only two were Christians. It was believed that such marginalisation was a result of Islamic dominance in Kwara State and in Patigi (M. Awofade, personal communication, January 31, 2019).

Most of the churches in Patigi are in one section of the town. The Muslim authority was believed to have pushed churches to the outskirts of the town to make it difficult for Christians to reach the Muslims and preach to them (C. Ofodile, personal communication, December 18, 2019). Inter-religious marriage was difficult in Patigi and conversion from Islam to Christianity was difficult also due to the fear of persecution and death (B. Dadi, personal communication, January 31, 2019). A Christian indigene of Patigi and the overseer of The Apostolic Church Nigeria (TACN) in Patigi who claimed to be the child of one of the first converts of SIM in Patigi reported that his father was forced to revert to Islam due to persecution, and he later married other wives when he returned to Islam while the mother of Adams and her three children including Adams and his two sisters remained in Christianity. Adams told the researcher that he met with series of persecutions because of his being a Christian. He was denied his rights to land in the community and his family house. He also became a second-class citizen in the community (J. Adams. personal communication, August 23, 2018). It is the opinion of this researcher that the open hostility that Adams experienced is a discouragement for Muslims from converting to Christianity even when they so desire.

In Bokungi, Islam was seen as a challenge to Christianity because some Muslims who intended to convert to Christianity were not permitted (R. Joshua, personal communication,

August 10, 2019). J. Baba (personal communication, December 16, 2019), told the researcher that Muslims, especially women, could not easily convert to Christianity because of fear of persecution. The researcher observed some Muslim women who attended his Charismatic prayer sessions (personal observation, December 19, 2019).

Inter-denominational Competition

Historically speaking, Christianity came to Nupeland as denominations. Although these denominations confess their faith in Jesus as the Christ, they differ in their religious expressions. Therefore, each denomination considers itself as the surest path to salvation and makes efforts to make converts from other denominations which are often labelled derogatorily. This lack of unity among Christians leads to inter-denominational competition and a challenge for Christianity in Nupeland. M. Awofade (personal communication, December 31, 2019) noted that inter-denominational competition was a challenge facing Christianity in Patigi. The effects of this competition were seen in the lack of unity among Christians, lack of Christian commitment, and lack of charity, reduction in the numbers of worshipers.

S. Akanbi (personal communication, December 18, 2019) submitted that the lack of unity among Christians was an obstacle to breaking the challenge of preaching or converting Muslims. Buttressing his assertion, Akanbi recounted that The Apostolic Church Nigeria (TACN) sued ECWA in the law court on November 5, 2010 because some members of TACN broke away from the church in a village known as Dzwajiwo. This separation caused the establishment of ECWA in the village. Meanwhile, this case was withdrawn since 2017 through the mediation of CAN (M. Awofade, Personal Communication, August 24, 2018). It was opined that the foundation of the problem of Christianity was that church had become a business of moneymaking, and this has contributed to the rate in which churches now seek for members

rather than make disciples as Jesus commanded in the Bible (Mat. 28: 19) (S. Akanbi, personal communication, December 18, 2019).

ECWA was regarded as a challenge to Christianity in Patigi because ECWA wanted to dictate everything as the first and largest church in Nupeland (C. Ofodile, personal communication, December 18, 2019). The dominating influence of ECWA on the Christian religious space in Lade was seen as a disservice to Christianity (D. Sule, personal communication, December 17, 2019).

The challenge of inter-denominational competition was obvious to the researcher in the land. Inter-denominational competition was the source of acrimony among churches and a challenge to Christianity in Lade (P. Gana, personal communication, August 10, 2019). It was reported that a woman once defected from the First ECWA to the Deeper Life Bible Church in Lade, and this defection led to the persecution of the founders of Deeper Life Bible Church in the town, and the woman in question because the Deeper Life Bible Church was regarded as a ‘thief’ who came to steal the members of the existing churches (T. Adewara, personal communication, August 14, 2019). The responses of the interviewees confirm that the theory of religious competition is at play.

Intra-denominational conflicts

Conflicts are normal things in any human institution and the churches in Nupeland are not exempted. Conflicts within the different denominations in Nupeland have both positive and negative effects. Kokonna is a village in Edu Local Government Area at the Shonga Junction coming from Ilorin, the capital of Kwara State. At the time of this fieldwork, there were two churches in the village, namely, Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) and Faith Freedom Deliverance Ministry (FFDM). FFDM separated from CAC and became an independent church due to

conflicts within the CAC (J. Danjuma, personal communication, November 28, 2019). The conflicts produced a strained interaction among members of both churches at the time of this study.

At Patidzuru, the UMCA, St. Paul's Catholic Church, and Deeper Life Bible Church were the churches in existence at the time of this study. The Roman Catholic Church was established because of the conflict that Chief Paul Jiya, the village head of Patidzuru, had with the UMCA (P. Jiya, Personal Communication, March 6, 2018). Deeper Life Bible Church was established through some indigenes of the village namely, Julius Audu and Josiah Jacob who separated from the Roman Catholic Church and Emmanuel Audu who defected from the UMCA. Their separation was to satisfy their spiritual thirsts (A. Julius, personal communication, August 15, 2019).

Bokungi is a village in Edu Local Government Area. There were two churches in the village, namely, UMCA and St. Michael's Catholic Church. Grace Raphael Baba, the wife of late Catechist Raphael Baba, reported that the Roman Catholic Church spread to Bokungi due to an unresolved intra-denominational conflict within the UMCA in Bokungi that made some people to leave for the Roman Catholic Church (G. Baba, personal communication, November 28, 2019).

Kanworo is a village along the road to Patigi. ECWA was established in Kanworo in 1958 as the first church in the village. It is a predominantly Christian village with three churches namely: ECWA, Nupe Kalvari Church (NKC) and Christ Cross Covenant Calvary Church (CCCCC). The CCCCC was established in the village because of a conflict within ECWA that led Ndaji Nyakotsu and Wondi Tetengi to separate from ECWA (P. Jiya, personal communication, January 29, 2019). However, another conflict within CCCCC led Jeremiah

David Tsado to establish Nupe Karvari Church (NKC) in March 2007 (J. Job, personal communication, August 15, 2019).

Miscellaneous Challenges

J. Yakubu (personal communication, December 17, 2019), the pastor of The Apostolic Church Nigeria (TACN), Lade reported that some Muslim women who converted to Christianity were unable to get suitors since the TACN settled them in Jos, North Central Nigeria to escape persecution. The TACN was responsible for their welfare, but the financial challenge of supporting these converts was becoming unbearable for the church. Yakubu was disturbed that the inability of these female converts to get husbands was a discouragement to other intending female converts since the church was unable to provide husbands for the earlier female Muslim converts.

Christian Approaches to the Challenges

To cope with the challenges facing Christianity in Nupeland, Christians adopted some strategies that are noted in this study. ECWA adopted the strategy of hiding Muslim women who intended to marry Christian men until a marriage certificate could be obtained for them. Also, it relocated Muslims whose obstacle to conversion was the fear of persecution, and Christians were encouraged to cultivate cordial relationships with Muslims (B. Dadi, Personal Communication, January 31, 2019). Furthermore, D. Adams (personal communication, August 24, 2018) reported that the ECWA in Patigi was organising open-air crusade, sometimes in conjunction with the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) since Christians were not allowed to preach to Muslims in their houses, and that CAN had been a major source of support to Christians.

TACN had been supporting converts with housing, feeding, education, marriage, and protection outside Patigi. Converts were reportedly defended in Sharia Court and High Court in

Bida. TACN also established Nursery/Primary School and Secondary School in Patigi as a means of evangelisation (J. Adams, personal communication, August 24, 2018).

It was observed that the UMCA established Saji Schools (pre-Nursery/Nursery, Primary, Junior, and Senior Secondary Schools) in Tsaragi. Adesoba & Odeyemi (2012) noted that the Catholic Church established Ave-Maria Nursery/Primary School, Lafiagi (2001) and Ave-Maria College, Lafiagi (2004) (pp. 156-157). Also, Roman Catholic Church established Christ the King Nursery/Primary and College in Bacita and Holy Rosary Nursery/Primary School in Bokungi. In addition, the First Baptist Church had established Baptist Academy Nursery/Primary School Patigi since September 29, 2017 as a means of evangelisation rather than fighting over members with any church (S. Akanbi, personal communication, December 18, 2019).

Other Christian approaches include the establishment of ECWA dispensary and maternity in Patigi while the Roman Catholic Church operates St. Brendan Catholic Hospital in Bacita. In January 2020, the Roman Catholic Church established St. Brendan's College of Health Technology in Bacita to further its evangelisation mission. The ECWA also operates the ECWA Guest House Patigi to provide accommodation to visitors at a very affordable cost. The researcher believes that these approaches to the challenges of Christianity confirm the theory of religious competition earlier stated.

Furthermore, CAN had resolved that no member should cross to another church without any good reason such as conflict, which CAN had been settling among churches (M. Awofade, personal communication, August 11, 2019). Christians in Patidzuru adopted the attitude of patience and tolerance towards Muslims (P. Jiya, personal communication, August 22, 2018). Christians have not ceased to pray and rely on the grace of God (J. Gana, personal communication, December 16, 2019).

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the nature of religious tolerance that exists in Nupeland, Kwara State, Nigeria. The researcher wanted to find out the state of Christianity in the land, the challenges facing Christianity in Nupeland, the coping strategies of Christians in the land, and assess the prospects of religious harmony in Nigeria.

The study found out that Christianity had spread to most villages in Nupeland. However, Christianity exists in Nupeland as a minority religion when compared with Islam. The major challenges facing Christianity were inter-religious competition, inter-denominational competition, inter-denominational and intra-denominational conflicts. Other minor challenges were finances and forging a united Christian mission. Both Christianity and Islam, being missionary in nature, were struggling for converts in the same religious market. Islam, being the majority religious market shareholder, was guarding its shares jealously. Moreover, ECWA, UMCA, Roman Catholic Church, TACN, and CAC have been established in some Nupe villages and towns with membership consisting of Nupe and other Nigerian ethnic groups living in Nupeland. Therefore, since proselytising among Muslims is difficult, a new church entrant to Nupeland will have to lure and present itself as a better means of salvation than existing denominations to have some shares in the religious market. Sometimes, a minor conflict within a denomination can lead to a division that brings a new church to life. To reduce the tensions caused by the challenges, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) was providing leadership in the land. Some of the denominations established schools and health centres to offer services as means of evangelisation rather than engaged in direct conversion of Muslims.

As disciples of Christ, Christians cannot but preach about salvation in Jesus Christ and try to convert others into their folds. However, Christians must understand that if they define

their interaction with Muslims in Nupeland based on replacing Islam with Christianity, such interaction will bring about tensions, conflicts, domination, and persecution from Muslims. This is in line with the Social Dominance Theory as formulated by Sidanius and Pratto (1999). It is said that group-based social hierarchies such as religion, ethnicity, sex, age, and nationality can be used to dominate other groups or maintain group-based inequalities in intergroup relationships. Muslims are majority in Nupeland and they will always maintain social and political dominance over minority Christians. Even though religious freedom is a constitutional matter, politics is a game of numbers. Religion and Politics are intertwined. This reality is obvious in religious interaction in Nupeland.

Moreover, commerce is a potent driver for splitting and establishing churches in contemporary Nigeria, which is a deregulated religious market where new churches are springing up to proffer spiritual solutions to the economic challenges facing the nation. When people cannot afford hospital bills, they resort to prayer for healing. The higher the population of a church, the higher are the tithes and offerings. Therefore, inter-denominational rivalry is not likely to abate.

Conclusion

The theory of religious competition was found to succinctly explain the nature of religious interaction in Nupeland, Kwara State, Nigeria. Islam and Christianity compete for membership as missionary religions. Where Muslims are dominating, it will be difficult for Christians to make converts without serious tensions and or persecutions. In order to enhance the future of Christianity in Nupeland, Christian leaders in the land will need to intensify education that can help Christians to be gainfully employed to prevent them from being financially lured from their faith. They need to deepen their ecumenical relationships and inter-

religious dialogue with their Muslim neighbours for continuous harmonious coexistence. They will need to deepen their mechanisms of conflict resolutions and jointly make a pilgrim of unity in the spirit of Christ. Moreover, everyone will have to respect the religious freedom of others so that religious competitions may not degenerate into religious violence. The existing relative peace in Nupeland suggests that there is a prospect for religious harmony in Nigeria.

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Beyond the Shadows: Plato’s Two Worlds and the Limits of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Character Formation

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between Plato’s Allegory of the Cave and the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in character formation. The paper posits that there is danger in relying solely on AI for character formation because AI’s capabilities are confined to the World of Sensation, whereas character formation requires engagement with the eternal and unchanging World of Forms. Through a Platonic lens, the paper critiques the limitation of AI – driven approaches to character formation, and it highlights the need for human mentoring and guidance in order to connect the two worlds. Through a qualitative analysis, the paper suggests that technological advancements should be balanced with the timeless philosophical insights since character formation entails the cultivation of wisdom, truth and goodness. Ultimately, this paper argues that there are potential risks and limitations with relying solely on AI in character formation; it encourages a more comprehensive approach that integrates the best of both worlds.

Keywords: Plato, Character Formation, World of Forms, Artificial Intelligence (AI), philosophy, Truth

Introduction

The penetrating value and vitality of the influence of Plato’s epistemic enterprise cannot be taken for granted due to its enriching traits and characteristics from ancient to contemporary epoch of philosophical and historical development. Plato’s thought has sharpened and is still sharpening the value of human knowledge despite its ancient flavor that is classical, going through the Middle Ages, reverberating the Augustinian tradition and penetrating the modern era, at the same time reinvigorating the contemporary times.

Plato's interest in character formation is fundamental to his epistemological enterprise and valuable to his ethical principles.¹ His interest in whether virtue can be taught; what virtue is; what knowledge is; what the relation between knowledge of virtue and being virtuous is; what the relation between knowledge and teaching is; and how and whether teaching is possible² is central to the dividing tension that exists between his two worlds.

Plato's allegory of the cave and his theory of the Two Worlds cannot cease to fascinate scholars and thinkers. The notion that our perceived reality is but a shadow of a higher, eternal realm of abstract forms has profound implications for our understanding of reality itself and human nature.³ In recent years, the rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has raised important questions about the potential limits of machine learning and character formation. Can AI systems, trained on vast amount of data, truly grasp the essence of human virtues and values? Or are they forever bound to the shadowy realm of mere appearances? Is AI truly and really intelligent enough to help facilitate character formation? What really makes a thing intelligent? Is what is artificial considered real? To what extent can we rely on what is artificial? The philosophers of AI consider these questions as issues or problems in the emerging philosophy of Artificial Intelligence.

This paper is to unravel and expose the dangers of AI to character formation. In doing this, the paper delves into the intersection of Plato's timeless philosophy and the cutting-edge of AI technology. This will help to expose the limitation of AI in this regard and the needed solution. The paper adopts a qualitative approach in analyzing the suitability of AI in character formation based on the Plato's theory of the two worlds. It argues for the integration of the best in Plato's

¹ W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition (United Kingdom: Wadsworth Thomson Learning Publication, 2002) p. 46

² R. Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1999) p. 584

³ R. Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, p. 46

two worlds in using AI for the realization of authentic character formation towards an integral development of the human person.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

B.J Copeland defines AI as “the ability of a computer or computer – controlled robot to perform tasks that are commonly associated with the intellectual processes characteristics of humans, such as the ability to reason.”⁴ It is the act of machine⁵ doing what humans ought to do through the use of advanced technology or computerized technology. It performs the task of human beings and replaces the functionality of human beings; and, in the process have expected outcomes. Hence, it is expected that AI will do what human beings do. It therefore means that these computerized machines mimic what humans do; or rather mimic what human intelligence does.

AI is an emerging field of research in computer science that develops and studies methods and software that enable machines to perceive their environment and use learning and intelligence to take actions efficiently and effectively to arrive at an intended goal. AI tools can be deployed in various aspects of life and this includes the hospitality industry, education industry, healthcare and medicine, marketing and advertising, financial management and accounting, supply chain management, human resources and recruitment, transportation and logistics, creative industries (art, music, writing), language translation and interpretation, predictive maintenance and quality control, sales and sales forecasting, research and development, et cetera.

⁴ B.J Copeland “Artificial Intelligence” <https://www.britannica.com/technology/artificial-intelligence> retrieved online 5th July, 2024

⁵ J. R. Stuart & P. Norvig *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach* (Hoboken: Pearson Publication, 2021) p. 1

The contextual working definition of this paper is an attempt to define AI as a tool in processing human abilities in machine to help in character formation using educational learning tools and facilities for the purpose of developing the human mind in character and learning.

Character Formation

According to Ndubisi, character has to do with the aggregate of the features that distinguish an individual person. It points to the quality of individual's personality. Character is the sum total of those traits in a person that sets him/her apart from others. It is a unique mark of personal identity; in this sense, one can talk of good character and bad character. Character formation, therefore, is a kind of education that is focused on the behavioural and moral development of an individual. It is also called character education. Character formation has to do with all the environmental factors that are geared towards making an individual a moral agent.⁶

Character seems to be the same as personality, but they are not exactly the same. Character is a subset of human personality. Character deals with someone's moral values and principles such as honesty, truthfulness, compassion, etc. Deane mentions four principles upon which good character revolves and these are: "Loving for others what you love for yourself. Leaving alone what doesn't concern you (not meddling). Having self-control and self-discipline; speaking that which is beneficial and good or remaining silent (controlling your tongue)."⁷ Character therefore is the part of our personalities that is "presentable"; it is seen in an individual's values and moral actions and their ability to practice these values in their daily interactions with others. Human

⁶ E.J.O Ndubisi "Education as Character Formation" In *Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies* (SGOJAHDS), Vol. 2 No. 2 (December, 2019) p. 17

⁷ N. Dean. Character Compass – Moral Compass PDF. Concordia University. pp. 2- 3. Academia.com

character is what is judged because that is what is seen by others.⁸ That is the reason why Ndubisi says character is a unique mark of our personal identity.

The insight of Ndubisi on character shows that character formation in human beings is a complex and multi-faceted process that involves various factors and influences. It is a dynamic and ongoing process that continues throughout life, influenced by various experiences, choices, and circumstances. In education, the curriculum has an obligation to contribute to the social and moral development of young people.⁹ To this end, the goal of the National Policy on Education is the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the society. Therefore, the paper shall attempt to define character formation drawing strength from Ndubisi as the process of learning through an effective and affective quality education in transforming the human mind towards good attitude for the purpose of educating the whole person, including their feelings, attitudes, and relationships. Character formation should be seen as the process of acquisition of values. It is obvious that a human agency is necessary to acquire good attitudes. Therefore, character formation and education involve human agencies to facilitate the process of developing one's character. It requires human agencies because it is a complex issue that "deals with individual and the whole system of his thoughts, believes, habit, values and all those part of his personality which are reflected in his behaviour."¹⁰

Plato's Two World and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Plato's epistemic foundation rests on his belief in the existence of two realms: the physical realm and the spiritual realm. The physical realm is the material stuff we perceive, feel and sense. This

⁸ Ah. Raza. Character formation: as an object of education PDF. www.theallpapers.com

⁹ S. Adi "The Formation of Student Character through the Active Role of Physical Education Teachers as A Role Model". In *Advances in Health Science Research (AHSR)*, Vol. 7 2nd International Conference on Sports Sciences and Health (Atlantic Press, 2018) p. 77

¹⁰ Ah. Raza. Character formation: as an object of education. www.theallpapers.com

physical realm is changing, imperfect, and unreliable. However, the spiritual realm is the unchanging, perfect, and reliable world of forms that exists beyond the physical realm.¹¹ Plato opines that because the material world is changeable it is also unreliable. Meanwhile, he believes that behind this unreliable world of appearances is a world of permanence and reliability.¹² Plato considers the spiritual world as the world of permanence and reliability, real world, and he calls it the world of “forms” or “ideas”.¹³ Lawhead opines that

Plato frequently uses the term “ideas” (as in the “Idea of Justice,” the “Idea of Goodness”) to talk about the objects of knowledge. Hence, this whole discussion concerns what is sometimes called Plato’s “theory of Ideas”. This wording captures the sense that Plato is referring to nonphysical entities. The Idea of Humanity, for example, transcends the flesh-and-blood of the individuals that make up the human race. Unfortunately, however, the English term “idea” also refers to the subjective contents of one’s mind. In this sense of the term, your ideas no longer exist if you become unconscious... hence to be knowledge, it must be grounded in some sort of rational insight.¹⁴

The implication of Plato’s rejection of the senses as inadequate to give rational grounds and insights suggests that sense experience is an illusion and as such should not be relied on. This rational insights and grounds for objective knowledge cannot be visualized in the art due to the fact that artists themselves had no understanding of what they were representing, and thus inspired corrupt and destructive morals.¹⁵ Thus,

In the eyes of Plato, the artist or poet was typically not the ideal moral character in any society, and thus should not have been in charge of dictating moral grounds or developing cultural norms. A second complaint Plato had about the role of the artist was that even if they were generally a moral and civilized human being, they were

¹¹ J. Moss *Plato’s “Two Worlds” Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021) p.15

¹² Plato. *The Republic*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1894) Book VII, 514a-520a

¹³D. Macintosh *Plato: A Theory of Forms* https://philosophynow.org/issues/90/Plato_A_Theory_of_Forms retrieved online 5th July, 2024

¹⁴ W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition p. 48 & 49

¹⁵*Defending Plato’s Renunciation of Art* <https://sites.bu.edu/ombs/2012/11/12/defending-platos-renunciation-of-art/> retrieved online 8th July, 2024

falsely representing reality through their art, something which Plato very much opposed to and which undermined a central theory in Platonism.¹⁶ The basic import of Plato's thought is characterized in the "World of Ideas".¹⁷ In an article

Defending Plato's Renunciation of Art, the author argued that:

The Theory of Forms posits that beyond the world we see, touch and hear, there is a world of fundamental reality, of pure truth and form. In this school of thought, the form of a bed, for example, is not its color, material, bed sheets or mattress, but the essence of "bed" itself. Plato claims that the problem herein is that artists know nothing of form, especially painters. He claims that the painter only knows visual cues and expresses his ideas only through visual representation. Plato says that painters use tricks to inspire error in their weak viewers, making them think that there is a real world outside of the canvas, when there is really not.¹⁸

Therefore, in the eyes of Plato, the flutist has a much deeper understanding of the *form* of a flute than the artist who represents a flute in a painting.¹⁹ It was this discrepancy that worries Plato the most in his epistemic enterprise.²⁰

A modern approach in defending Plato's dislike of art and by extension AI has to do with cognitive biases and more specifically availability heuristic.²¹ This is a speculative analytical approach to Plato's philosophical perspective on knowledge, reality, and human nature that might lead one to be skeptical or critical of AI. The word "Artificial" comes from the word "Art". Hence, the

¹⁶*Defending Plato's Renunciation of Art*<https://sites.bu.edu/ombs/2012/11/12/defending-platos-renunciation-of-art> retrieved online 8th July, 2024

¹⁷*Defending Plato's Renunciation of Art*<https://sites.bu.edu/ombs/2012/11/12/defending-platos-renunciation-of-art> retrieved online 8th July, 2024

¹⁸*Defending Plato's Renunciation of Art*<https://sites.bu.edu/ombs/2012/11/12/defending-platos-renunciation-of-art> retrieved online 8th July, 2024

¹⁹*Defending Plato's Renunciation of Art*<https://sites.bu.edu/ombs/2012/11/12/defending-platos-renunciation-of-art> retrieved online 8th July, 2024

²⁰*Defending Plato's Renunciation of Art*<https://sites.bu.edu/ombs/2012/11/12/defending-platos-renunciation-of-art> retrieved online 8th July, 2024

²¹*Defending Plato's Renunciation of Art*<https://sites.bu.edu/ombs/2012/11/12/defending-platos-renunciation-of-art> retrieved online 8th July, 2024

etymological root of the word seems likely to make the word “Artificial” irritate Plato. Plato believes that true reality lies in eternal, unchanging essences or forms, rather than in the physical world. As such, Plato might argue that AI systems are mere physical entities that lack true essence and are therefore inferior to human intelligence. As such, drawing from the strength of Plato’s argument, it is obvious that mere imitation fails to capture the true essence of things. He might see AI systems as mere mimics of human intelligence, lacking the depth and richness of human experience. Plato argues that:

Education is not what it is said to be by some, who profess knowledge into a soul which does not possess it, as if they could put sight into blind eyes. On the contrary, our own account signifies that the soul of every man does possess the power of learning the truth and the organ to see it with; and that, just as one might have to turn the whole body round in order that the eye should see light instead of darkness, so the entire soul must be turned away from this changing world, until its eye can bear to contemplate reality and that supreme splendor which we have called the Good.²²

This flows from Plato’s Allegory of the Cave, which is one of the most striking stories in the history of Western literature (R7.514a-521b)²³ where Plato describes prisoners who mistake shadows for reality. Plato might see AI systems as similarly trapped in a world of shadows, lacking direct access to true knowledge and reality. In this regard, Lawhead believes that:

The lowest level of opinion could be called imagination or conjecture. This epistemological state corresponds to borderline “realities” such as shadows, images, reflections, optical illusions, dreams, and fantasies. Mistaking a desert mirage for water would be an obvious example of a person at this level of cognition and reality. Similarly, someone becoming emotionally involved in the lives of the soap opera characters on television, making them to be real people, would be another example²⁴.

Plato’s attempt to work out Socrates’ insights drove him to pursue their metaphysical foundations.²⁵ Plato believes that the human soul is the seat of wisdom, reason, and true

²² Plato *The Republic* R 7.518C

²³W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition p. 54

²⁴W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition p. 50

²⁵W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition p. 52

knowledge, yet he did not describe what the soul looks like or what form it took.²⁶ However, Plato argues that if the Forms are the true objects of knowledge, then knowledge must be something real.²⁷ In this sense, based on Plato's argument, the AI systems, lacking a soul, are incapable of genuine knowledge, wisdom and understanding to pursue character formation.

In his work 'Laws,' Plato discusses the thesis that technology learns from nature.²⁸ However, Plato also uses technological imagery in his work "Timaeus," where he describes the world as created by an Artisan, the Demiurge, and compares the details of creations to various technological arts like carpentry, weaving, ceramics, metallurgy, and agricultural technology.²⁹ Plato would have been uncomfortable with the dangers of unchecked technological progress devoid of values because it could lead to the dehumanization of the society. This means he could have viewed AI as a manifestation of this danger, threatening to replace human judgment and wisdom with mechanistic calculations.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Character Formation

In philosophical anthropology, human nature is a subject of great debate³⁰ and controversy; this is seen more in contemporary society. John Locke contends that "human nature is capable of self-introspection, and is a bundle of perceptions."³¹ Odiniya opined that "From the facts of philosophical anthropology, Christian anthropology and Christian theology man is mystery."³² He further said that man cannot be totally unraveled by scientific enquiry because man is a composite of body, soul, and spirit. Being a spiritual being, man can engage in activities that

²⁶ W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition p. 52

²⁷ W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition p. 52

²⁸ Plato, *Laws*, M. Schofield (ed.), T. Griffith (tr.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) p. 32

²⁹ Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, R. Waterfield (ed.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

³⁰ C.E. Odiniya, *The Catholic Priesthood and the Challenges of Goal Orientation in Nigeria* (Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2024) p. 129

³¹ J. Locke, *Treatise*, 1.4.6.1.4, 251 - 253

³² C.E. Odiniya, *The Catholic Priesthood and the Challenges of Goal Orientation in Nigeria* p. 76

transcend his materiality and the material medium.³³ Thus, empirical science does not have the final say about man and it does not have all answers to all the problems facing humanity. Any attempt for empirical science to claim being omniscience is false. This reveals the complexities of human nature and character formation.

Nevertheless, as AI becomes increasingly integrated into human lives, it can influence human character formation in both positive and negative ways especially in the process of educating and teaching towards the realization of character formation. This is because human being is believed to be a mystery unto himself and to others.³⁴ This offers a thesis on the insufficiency of AI in understanding the needs of the human person in addition to the unpredictability of human beings and their behaviours.³⁵ The function and purpose of education is to train the human mind to think rationally; and at the end it is to mould human beings with character and learning.

To this end, the passing of knowledge cannot be done using purely technology or else the purpose of educating the individual towards character formation will be defeated. That is the reason why there is an emphasis on psychomotor, which is the relationship between mental processes (psycho) and physical movements (motor). This involves the coordination of cognitive functions, such as attention, perception, and memory, with physical actions, like movement, gesture, and manipulation. AI cannot do this efficiently due to its limitations even though it has shown a positive impact on education or teaching process.

The implication of the submission above is that the human agency remains an important part in the process of educating towards the realization of character formation of learners. Human agency plays a vital role in character formation, enabling individuals to make

³³C.E. Odiniya, *The Catholic Priesthood and the Challenges of Goal Orientation in Nigeria* p. 76

³⁴C.E. Odiniya, *The Catholic Priesthood and the Challenges of Goal Orientation in Nigeria* p. 77

³⁵C.E. Odiniya, *The Catholic Priesthood and the Challenges of Goal Orientation in Nigeria* p. 77

conscious choices and decisions that shape their values, beliefs, and actions. In contrast, AI systems lack human agency and operate within predetermined parameters and algorithms³⁶ in addition to programming and data. In considering the dynamics of human beings and their nature, human beings act and possess self-awareness, enabling reflection and growth, whereas an AI system lacks self-awareness and personal growth to form the characters of others. As a machine, AI lacks the capacity of moral agency to be accountable as a moral responsibility. Furthermore, AI will impede on contextual understanding of the human condition and nuances due to its dependence on algorithm and data.³⁷ Children grow to emulate heroes in character and in their contributions to societal development. AI cannot be a role model for children in the society; it cannot take the place of parents and teachers in moral formation. This is apt because most challenges facing human beings are not universal; they depend on contexts and AI is not programmed contextually.

The Limits of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Character Formation

AI is confined to the World of Sensation. This means that AI systems are limited to processing and interacting with sensory data. It does not have access to higher realms or spiritual entities of human experiences such as abstract thought and reasoning, emotional and intuitive understanding, moral and ethical insight, spiritual or metaphysical awareness. AI operates within the realm of sensory inputs and outputs; it lacks the capacity for subjective experience, introspection, and conscious self-awareness. This confinement restricts AI's understanding of human experience and limits its ability to truly replicate human thought, creativity and decision making processes.

³⁶ A.I.Kanu, T.D. Adidi & C.C. Kanu "Artificial Intelligence and Cyber Crime in Nigeria: Towards and Ethical Framework". In *Dialogue and Universalism*, Vol 34 No. 1 2024 p. 210 <https://doi.org/10.5840/du202434115> retrieved online 8th July, 2024

³⁷ A.I.Kanu, T.D. Adidi & C.C. Kanu "Artificial Intelligence and Cyber Crime in Nigeria: Towards and Ethical Framework". In *Dialogue and Universalism*, Vol 34 No. 1 2024 p. 210 <https://doi.org/10.5840/du202434115> retrieved online 12th June, 2024

Plato's Allegory of the Cave comes to mind. In this cave, the prisoners perceive only shadows; they lack direct access to true reality.³⁸ Similarly, AI systems are bound to the "shadows" of sensory data, unable to grasp deeper, abstract aspects of human existence. Lawhead remarks,

Plato makes several applications for this allegory. First, with respect to metaphysics, the story represents Plato's theory of the levels of reality. The shadows are imperfect representations of the wooden puppets, but these in turn are themselves just copies of real animals, trees, flowers, and so on. Hence, the cave world represents the physical world, a world made up of different levels of copies and images. The land above represents the realm of the Forms, the realities that are only imperfectly represented down below. Finally, the sun represents the Good, that supreme Form that gives life and intelligibility to everything else. In terms of epistemology, the story shows that simply accumulating more and more knowledge of the shadows will not produce understanding. What is required is a new perspective, a higher vision of the genuine realities³⁹.

The need for human mentoring and guidance becomes more and more imperative because of the fact that human beings can provide context, nuance, and subtlety, which AI cannot provide. Human mentoring can provide emotional support, empathy, social skills, crucial for personal growth; and also, can provide valuable insights and guidance on complex moral and ethical issues. Through human mentoring and guidance, humans can serve as positive role models, inspiring and motivating individuals. More so, through personalized feedback, human beings can offer personalized, constructive feedback, helping individuals improve and grow.

Trust is a vital ingredient to mentoring and character formation. Humans can establish trust, a fundamental aspect of mentoring, which AI systems may struggle to replicate; and at the same time focus on the whole person, including character development, not just skill acquisition. To this end, while AI can provide some guidance, human mentoring and guidance are irreplaceable for character formation; offering a depth and richness that AI systems currently cannot match. The importance of human mentoring, guidance and character formation lies in their ability to provide

³⁸W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition p. 54

³⁹W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition p. 55

a personalized, holistic, and emotionally intelligent approach to human formation and integral development.

Plato's Vision for Character Formation

The importance of wisdom, truth, and goodness are essential concepts that have been revered across cultures and philosophies for centuries. These three qualities form the foundation for a life well-lived, enabling us to make informed decisions, act with integrity, and cultivate positive relationships with others. They are essential for character formation and human capacity development. These qualities are timeless and universal, transcending cultures and ideologies. They form the basis of a life that is rich in purpose, meaning and positive impact. This was exactly what Plato set out in his political philosophy as the concern of justice for the moral ordering of society.⁴⁰ To live a morally good life is synonymous to character formation. From his theory of Forms, it should be clear that the universe for Plato is not chaotic.⁴¹

The Universe according to Plato is purposive and it has a rational structure underlying it.⁴² According to Plato, we can understand anything in nature in terms of the Form that determines its functions.⁴³ To understand any type of thing, therefore, we must understand what constitutes its perfect end: what standard of excellence it is trying to fulfill.⁴⁴ Hence, it would not be too far off the mark to say that for Plato, we derive moral principles from a correct understanding of human psychology.⁴⁵ This is the essential core of Plato's concern about the "psyche" which is the soul; which is the self and not in terms of religious undertone.⁴⁶ In discussing about the soul, Plato says

⁴⁰W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition p. 57

⁴¹W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition p. 58

⁴²W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition p. 52

⁴³W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition p. 58

⁴⁴W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition p. 58

⁴⁵W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition p. 58

⁴⁶W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition p. 58

we will find that the soul is not completely unified.⁴⁷ We find inner conflicts and competing forces warring within us.⁴⁸ This suggests that several types of elements or faculties are at work within the soul.⁴⁹ They are the psychological drives, desires, or principles of action.⁵⁰ The first group of drives is the appetites or the appetitive part of the person. These are associated with our bodily needs and desires, such as the desire for food, drink, and sex. The appetites pull us in the direction of physical gratification and material acquisition.⁵¹

However, there is also the more reflective, rational part of the soul, which sometimes vetoes the urging of the appetites. This is the voice of reason within us.⁵² This element also has desires, but these are rational desires. It is the source of the love of truth and the desire to understand. It might seem as though the struggle between these two forces is enough to explain human behaviour.⁵³

The third part of the soul is called the “spirited.” The spirited part expresses itself in anger, righteous indignation, ambition, courage, pride, or assertiveness. It is the source of the desire of honour, respect, reputation, and self-esteem.⁵⁴ The spirit is associated with the passions or the emotions. It is distinct from the other two drives because we can be moved by anger or by moral fervor, when these are neither psychological drives nor the products of reflective reason.⁵⁵ The spirit is the motive force, but it receives its direction from the other two faculties. It can follow the commands of either the appetites or the reason.⁵⁶

⁴⁷W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition p. 58

⁴⁸W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition p. 58

⁴⁹W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition p. 58

⁵⁰W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition p. 58

⁵¹W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition p. 58

⁵²W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition p. 58

⁵³W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition p. 59

⁵⁴W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition p. 59

⁵⁵ See Plato, *Phaedo* 64c. All quotation from Plato’s work are from E. Hamilton and H Cairns eds., *The Complete Works of Plato Including the Letters*, Bollingen Series LXXI edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (New Jersey: Princeton Press, 1989).

⁵⁶W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition p. 59

Human reason is the balance in between the appetite and the spirited nature of the human person that brings about character formation. Reason has a basic implication for the conduct of man in the community or state. It is a basic fact of experience that he can discern what is good or evil. He can perceive that self-evident truth or universal injunction: “do good; avoid evil”.⁵⁷ Promoting human good is what Plato seeks in his philosophy of education in an emerging society of AI. AI powered educational tools that focus on moral and ethical development, such as virtual simulations for practicing virtues and justice; thereby, ensuring they operate with fairness, transparency, and accountability.

More so, developers would be encouraged to code AI systems with virtues like empathy, honesty, and wisdom, mirroring Plato’s emphasis on character development. As such, Plato would likely stress the importance of human – AI collaboration, where AI augments human decision - making while respecting human moral agency. Therefore, Plato’s concept of *paideia* (education)⁵⁸ would be extended to include digital environments, fostering character development and formation in both physical and virtual realms.

In Plato’s vision for character formation, Plato might see AI as a reflection of human character, highlighting both the benefits and flaws of human nature and encouraging self – reflection and improvement. Hence, Plato’s emphasis on wisdom would lead him to advocate for AI systems designed with wisdom and prudence, prioritizing human well-being and flourishing. The paper suggests that Plato’s philosophical ideas need to be integrated with the conceptual

⁵⁷See John Finnis *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, In F.O.C Njoku, *Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy* (Enugu, University of Nigeria Press, 2019) p. 39

⁵⁸ See Plato, *Phaedo* 64c. All quotation from Plato’s work are from E. Hamilton and H Cairns eds., *The Complete Works of Plato Including the Letters*, Bollingen Series LXXI edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (New Jersey: Princeton Press, 1989).

development of AI. By so doing, humanity can envision a future where technology supports the development of virtuous character aligning with Plato's vision of human flourishing.

Conclusion

Plato would have the temptation of resisting AI in a world fast embracing it. The paper made an attempt to ensure that despite Plato's fear of AI, there is a need to balance the divide in ensuring that as humans that we are not consumed by AI. Plato's rejection of the art signifies that he helps to understand the destruction that AI poses to human character and formation. AI can be destructive to human character and formation if it is the sole agent of formation. The central thesis of this work is to ensure that character formation is continuously the product of a human agency without relying solely on AI. AI has its advantages and its disadvantages, and solely relying on it will be a complete disaster in character formation. Character formation plays an important role in the flourishing of society, and Plato never took this for granted in ensuring that society brings out the best of human product towards the realization of the common good.

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16. See John Finnis *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, In F.O.C. Njoku, *Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy* (Enugu, University of Nigeria Press, 2019).
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ÒGÚN ÀYÈ AND ÒRÌ-ÒKÈ SPIRITUALITY IN SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA: A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF I KINGS 19: 1-8

By Prof. Afolunso Olalekan Dairo, Dr. Agnes Omotayo Adeyeye, Dr. Michael Oladele Olorunnimbe, and Tosin Success Abolaji

Abstract

The thesis of this paper is straightforward. The paper argues that cultural and psychological factors have led to the growth of *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality in South-West Nigeria. The proliferation of *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality in south-west Nigeria has grown out of cultural perspective such as following the legacy of a predecessor and the African worldview on the existential realities, which include the belief in malevolence forces, profit-making interest, response to unemployment, poverty and hunger amongst others have triggered psychological reactions such anxiety and fear and thus undoubtedly led to the growth of *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality in the region. What is *Ògún Àyè* and *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality? How is *Ògún Àyè* portrayed in Elijah's flight as seen in 1 Kings 19:1-8? How has *Ògún Àyè* led to the proliferation of *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality in South-West Nigeria? To answer these questions, the researchers adopted questionnaires, historical and textual analytical methods for the study. The researchers administered fifty (50) questionnaires to *Òrì-Òkè* attendees such as church leaders and mountain attendees who are vast in the practice and knowledge of *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality in south-west Nigeria. By using a simple percentage to analyze the questionnaire, it discovered that the proliferation of *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality was due to the belief in the existence of *Ògún Àyè*, which effects are seen in poverty, unemployment, famine, disappointment, barrenness, sudden death among several others and fear as a psychological factor. The study concluded by recommending that *Òrì-Òkè* attendees avoid limiting God's presence to the mountains and beware of commercializing it for gains.

Keywords: Elijah's flight, Jezebel's threat, *Ògún Àyè*, *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality

Introduction

Life among the Yoruba people of Nigeria is seen as a battlefield. Hence, the different appellations given to it, such as *ilè àyè*, *ilè ògún* (life is an abode of war), *ògún làyé* (life is war), and *ilè àyè àṣàṅ* (life is vanity). All these sayings summarize why mountain visits have become so important among the Yoruba. Life is viewed as an engagement in warfare. This war is domiciled in supernatural warfare rather than physical warfare. In order to combat and win this kind of warfare, which is said to be premised in the supernatural world, the aggressive interventions of Yoruba people were called for to further engage their realities through mountain mediums and processes, which have, over time, become their prayer culture.

Typically, in ancient Israel, mountains were connected to places of worship where God would show forth His might and reveal Himself. Nonetheless, the frequency with which many people visit *Òrì-Òkè* in modern-day Nigerian society requires considering the reason for prayer mountain visits.⁵⁹ The Yoruba belief in *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality has a long-existing tradition similar to the Israelites' Mountain engagements, starting with the Sinaitic episode in Exodus 19 down to several other mountain visits of the Israelites. Among the Yoruba, Omotoye cites Ojebode on the importance of mountain in the Old Testament that:

the Jewish people used to worship Yahweh on the mountain. For example, in Exodus 19 and Deuteronomy 12, the two passages emphasize the importance of mountains in the worship of God. Moses, one of the respected leaders and the appointed deliverer of Israel from Egyptian slavery, collected the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.⁶⁰

The city of Jerusalem is a mountainous city. Kayla opined that the mountain variety that surrounds Jerusalem is known as the Judaeen Mountains or Judean Hills. He further stated that “some mountaintops in or around the Old City of Jerusalem are Mount Zion, Mount of Olives, the Temple Mount, Mount Scopus, Mount Herzl, Mount of Rest, Mount Hotzvim, and Har Nof.”⁶¹ In Nigerian society, mountaintops include *Òrì-Òkè Baba Abiye* (Ede, Osun State), *Ase Irorun Prayer Mountain* (Ope-Ilu Agbado, Lagos), *Òrì-Òkè Erimo* (Erimo Ijesa, Oriade, Osun State), *Òrì-Òkè*

⁵⁹ Ogunkunle, C. O. “Ori- Oke in Old Testament Traditions and its Economic Benefits in Igbeti Community, Oyo State” in Yaovi, N.S. & Nwosu, U. et al., (eds.) *Ori-Oke Spirituality and Social Change in Africa*, African Books Collective, 2018, 143-144.

⁶⁰ Omotoye, R. W. “The Historical, Political and Phenomenological Importance of Ori-Oke (Hills and Mountains) in South-Western Nigeria” in Yaovi, N.S. & Nwosu, U. et al., (eds.) *Ori-Oke Spirituality and Social Change in Africa*, African Books Collective, 2018, 3.

⁶¹ Kayla, M. “As the Mountains Surround Jerusalem: A Biblical and Modern Look” <https://firmisrael.org/learn/as-the-mountains-surround-jerusalem/#:~:text=The%20mountain%20range%20that%20surrounds,Mount%20Hotzvim%2C%20and%20Har%20Nof>, accessed on March 4, 2024.

Erio (Erio, Ekiti State) among several others have received significant number of people who have come to pray on them.

The *Òrì-Òkè* practice has affected the Christian landscape in prayer and worship in different churches. For example, it is observed that African Indigenous Churches such as Christ Apostolic Church, Cherubim and Seraphim, and Celestial Church of Christ have special days of mountain prayer observance apart from individual visitations. Some churches have their locations on the mountaintops or very close to the mountains, where attendees are encouraged to visit, render prayers, and observe retreats. Furthermore, African Catholicism's incorporation of *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality demonstrates how the church has adjusted to local beliefs and cultural situations.

The study adopted the historical, questionnaire and textual analysis methods. The historical method finds expression in the consultation of books, journals, online materials, websites and biblical narratives, which helps to confirm the narrative of Jezebel's threat and Elijah's flight. The questionnaire reflects the concept of *Ògún Àyè* and *Òrì-Òkè* among the Yoruba People of Nigeria. Fifty (50) respondents were selected randomly from south-west Nigeria, and the responses were analyzed using the simple percentage method. The textual analysis of the passage was done using James-Lange's theory of emotion and Karl Marx's theory of religion. By James-Lange's theory of emotion, Rollins affirmed the psychological reading of the Bible. To Rollins, "the Bible is to be seen as part and product not only of ahistorical, literary, and socio-anthropological process, but also a psychological process."⁶²

This paper claims that the flight of Elijah to Mount Sinai in this narrative was not accidental. Instead, it stemmed from both cultural and psychological reasons. The cultural reasons

⁶² Rollins, W.G. *Soul and psyche: The Bible in psychological perspective*. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 92.

are mountain visit as a long traditional practice among the ancient Israelites where mountains served as places of refuge in times of war and fortification in times of laxity and human reactions, and psychological factors such as anxiety and fear of existential realities such as the threat to life, barrenness, and other activities of the malevolence forces had led many people to become mountain attendees. Therefore, by examining Elijah's flight to the growth and proliferation of *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality, the study exposed that being called by God to be His prophet, minister, or representative does not overrule the tendency of human reactions to circumstances in life as seen in the life of Elijah.

The study justifies the undeniable reasons for the growth of *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality in southwest Nigeria but cautions against its abuses, which may jeopardize the fundamental beliefs and practices of faith in African Christianity. The study is divided into a brief historical background on 1Kings 19, theoretical framework, the concept of *Ògún Àyè* and *Òrì-Òkè* among the Yoruba people, textual analysis of the passage, Yoruba *Ògún Àyè* and Jezebel's threat to Elijah: a reflection, and conclusion and recommendations.

Brief Historical Background on 1King 19

The story of Elijah is one of a unique collection of tales that have been added to the books of Kings concerning this prophet and his successor, Elisha. On the other hand, the history of the ancient Israelite monarchy, beginning with Solomon's accession, is recorded in the books of the Kings and Chronicles. Elijah's ministry takes place during the reign of King Ahab in the 9th century BC.⁶³

⁶³Pekkah Pitkanen, "Religion and Political Dissidence: The Politics of 1 Kings 19:1-18", (2013). <https://politicaltheology.com/religion-and-political-dissidence-the-politics-of-1-kings-191-8/>, accessed on April 20, 2024.

Chapter 19 of The First Kings follows a dramatic event of the Mount Carmel contest in the previous chapter (1 King 18), which depicts the contest between Yahwism and Baalism –Elijah for Yahwism and Jezebel for Baalism. As stated by Russell, Elijah is the only prophet of God on Mount Carmel, and he acts jealously against the people because all the other prophets of Baal are associated with the people. At the same time, he is the only one who is obedient to God.⁶⁴ Epp-Tiessen corroborated as he writes:

The narrative begins with a reference to the events of the preceding chapter, in which Elijah defeated and killed the prophets of Baal during the epic struggle atop Mount Carmel. Elijah is told by Jezebel, the royal patroness of the Baal prophets, that she will have his life when she receives word of his deeds (19:2). Elijah is punished because of his loyalty and his demand for complete submission to a single God, which undermines the established order, which has its own beliefs about what or whom people should worship.⁶⁵

Ahab's conscience would not let him persecute Elijah instead he told Jezebel all that Elijah had done (v. 1), not to convince, but to exasperate her.⁶⁶ Informing Jezebel about Elijah's action at the contest and the eventual death of Baal's prophet makes the reader aware that Ahab had a foreknowledge of what Jezebel's reaction would be. The consequence of Elijah's action led to the decree of Jezebel with a sincere promise to exterminate Elijah. Ogden further confirms that Jezebel is portrayed as a powerful lady. She and Elijah are engaged in a fierce ideological conflict about whose faith will win. For both, there is no room for reciprocal tolerance. They both intend to fight

⁶⁴ Russell, G. "From Carmel to Horeb," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament - Supplement Series* 85 (1990), 145.

⁶⁵Epp-Tiessen, D. "1 Kings 19: The Renewal of Elijah", *Spring* 2006 · Vol. 35 No. 1, 34.

⁶⁶ Henry, M. Commentary on 1 Kings 19, https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mhc/1Ki/1Ki_019.cfm, accessed on March 5, 2024.

until the very end. Jezebel and Elijah employ the same strategies to achieve their exact goals, even though we might prefer Elijah's God in retrospect. Each wants the other's religion exterminated.⁶⁷

The dramatic episode ends in the renewal of assignment after the long expedition of Elijah to Mount Horeb (v.8). At Horeb, God instructed Elijah to anoint Hazael, Jehu and Elisha for specific tasks. Epp-Tiessen further writes: "A key function of this last section is to provide a contrast to Elijah's state at the story's beginning and to demonstrate that Elijah's renewal and return to prophetic ministry are now complete."⁶⁸ Hence, it is expedient to say that Elijah's narrative can be summarized in three sentences: Elijah is the threat, Elijah is being threatened, and Elijah creates more threats.

Theoretical Framework

The study is situated within two theoretical frameworks, James-Lange and Karl Marx. James-Lange are two authors known by the names William James and Carl Lange. Cherry asserts that this "theory is one of the earliest efforts to describe what causes emotions and was proposed by psychologist William James and physiologist Carl Lange."⁶⁹ The James-Lange's "theory of emotion suggests that emotions occur because of physiological reactions to events."⁷⁰ According to the James-Lange Theory, emotions are our bodies' physical responses to triggering events. Furthermore, we utilize emotion labels—such as fear, disgust, or anger—to characterize the physical changes that follow the triggering event. James-Lange suggests that we identify our

⁶⁷ Ogden, A. B. *Helpmates, Harlots and Heroes Women in the Hebrew Bible* (2nd) edition. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press), 2007.

⁶⁸ Epp-Tiessen, D. "1 Kings 19: The Renewal of Elijah", 35.

⁶⁹ Cherry, K. "The James-Lange Theory of Emotion". <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-the-james-lange-theory-of-emotion-2795305#:~:text=The%20James%2DLange%20theory%20of%20emotion%20suggests%20that%20physical%20changes,realize%20that%20you%20are%20afraid>, accessed on March 4, 2024.

⁷⁰ Cherry, K. "The James-Lange Theory of Emotion". <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-the-james-lange-theory-of-emotion-2795305#:~:text=The%20James%2DLange%20theory%20of%20emotion%20suggests%20that%20physical%20changes,realize%20that%20you%20are%20afraid>, accessed on March 4, 2024.

emotions by observing behaviour and physiological changes. James-Lange contends that our subjective perceptions of the body's activity and physiological changes are represented by our feelings rather than our cognitive assessments.⁷¹ This can apply to Elijah's flight. The diagram below explains Elijah's situation in line with James-Lange theory

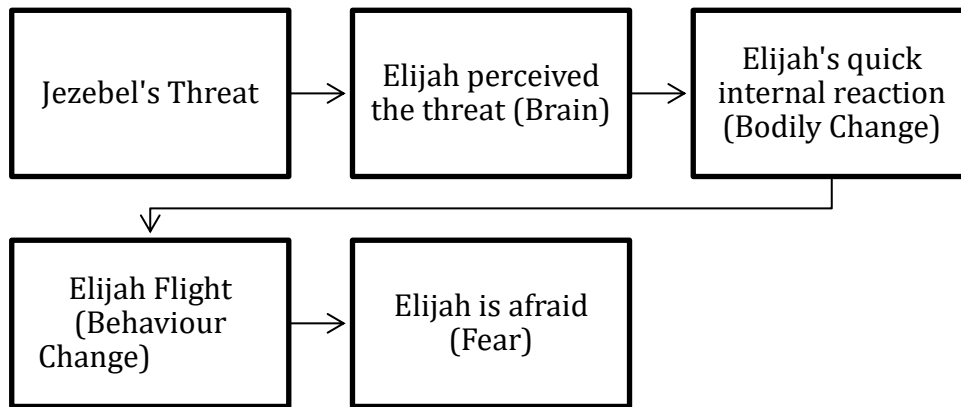


Fig. 1: A chart representation of Elijah's flight in relation to James-Lange theory

The above chart starts with Jezebel's threat as the cause of bodily and behavioural changes. However, this issued threat passes through the quick cognitive appraisal stage, leading to his bodily and behaviour changes. The outcome of his behavioural changes resonates with James-Lange's view on emotion. James-Lange claims that the label of emotion is brought about by how a person perceives their body's physiological and behavioral reactions to the incident. This theory's central claim is that emotions are categorizations for the physiological and behavioral responses of the body to external stimuli.⁷² Therefore, Elijah's flight, which can be interpreted as bodily and behavioural changes, can be categorized under the emotional label "fear."

⁷¹ Penn State, "James-Lange Theory", <https://psu.pb.unizin.org/psych425/chapter/james-lange-theory/> accessed on March 4, 2024.

⁷² Penn State, "James-Lange Theory", <https://psu.pb.unizin.org/psych425/chapter/james-lange-theory/> accessed on March 4, 2024.

Elijah's flight shows his emotional state (fear), which led him to the mountaintop to encounter Yahweh (1 Kg. 19:3-4). Yahweh's instructed Elijah to anoint Hazael king over Aram, anoint Jehu, son of Nimshi, king over Israel, and anoint Elisha, son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed him as prophet (v. 15-16 NIV). Yahweh further affirmed that there are "seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him" (1 Kg. 19:18 NIV). Thus, instilling courage rather than fear in Elijah.

Ayantayo cited Marx that religion is the "soul of the soulless condition."⁷³ Religion is a tool in the hands of the weak to receive strength and purpose to keep living despite the challenges of life. Here again, Papke explains Marx's view on religion as "the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of our soulless conditions."⁷⁴ At that particular moment when Elijah has lost hope in living (v. 4), his hope to live was revitalized in the apparent instructions and information from God about the destruction of the house of Ahab (2 King 9:34). Similarly, Epp-Tiessen writes, "Elijah is lifted from his depressed and lethargic state in 1 Kings 19 by two factors. Elijah's personal achievement or lack thereof is not the sole factor determining God's plan for the world; another is a fresh commission from God."⁷⁵ Epp-Tiessen's use of the words "depressed and lethargic" and "the divine turnaround" by God explains the theory of Karl Marx on religion as the soul of the soulless condition, hope for the hopeless mind, courage for the

⁷³ Jacob, K. *Ayantayo Sociology of Religion in African Context: A Pragmatic Approach*, Ibadan: Hope Publications, 8.

⁷⁴David, R. Papke "Karl Marx on Religion" <https://law.marquette.edu/facultyblog/2015/01/karl-marx-on-religion/comment-page-1/>, accessed on March 4, 2024.

⁷⁵Dan Epp-Tiessen, "1 Kings 19: The Renewal of Elijah", Spring 2006 · Vol. 35 No. 1. <https://directionjournal.org/35/1/1-kings-19-renewal-of-elijah.html>, accessed on March 5, 2024.

feeble and voice of the voiceless in a society that is being dominated and ruled by the wicked. The diagram below depicts the flow of this theory to Elijah's narrative:

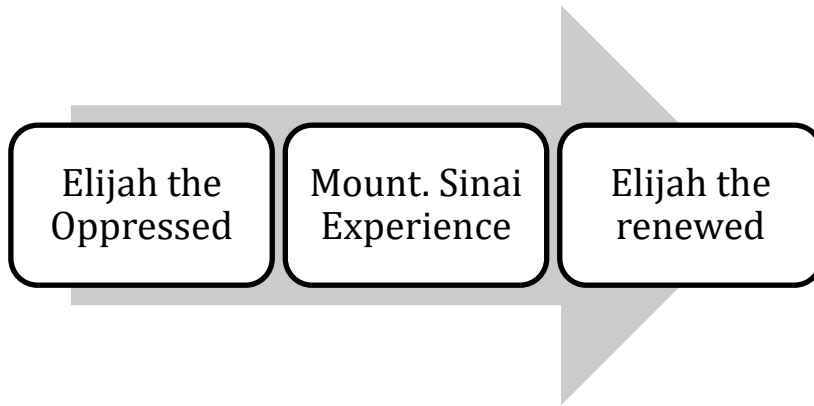


Fig. 2: A chart representation of Elijah's condition in relation to Karl Marx Theory on Religion

The Concept of *Ògún Àyè* and *Òrì-Òkè* among the Yoruba People

There is an undeniable perspective on the concept of *Ògún Àyè* and *Òrì-Òkè* in South-West Nigeria, which has necessitated the proliferation of *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality in the region. The phraseology *Ògún Àyè* is a common phenomenon among the Yoruba people of Nigeria, which depicts, above all, the battle of life, terrestrial war, works of the evil ones, and the inflictions of the malevolent forces. The term can be derived from two Yoruba words, “*Ògún*” and “*Àyè*” *Ògún* here means battle or war, and *Àyè* means world, evil forces, witches and wizards. The adoption of the term in this study is to identify the Yoruba usage of the term to mean the presence and works of the evil ones in a person's life. The term further exposes the African Yoruba belief in the terrestrial forces to be responsible for virtually all misfortunes that can befall a person.

The belief in the *Ògún Àyè* revolves around the consistent havoc caused by the malevolent forces such as witches and wizards who are capable of truncating man's destiny and perpetuating several evils which are beyond man's physical power and thus seek the face of the ultimate Being (God). These evils include prolonged sickness, untimely death, misfortunes, prolonged pregnancy,

death during pregnancy or child labour, unemployment, disappointment, and fear of death or disaster,⁷⁶ among several others, influenced Africans' belief about the existence and works of the malevolent forces. It is, therefore, safe to say that man's suffering can be attributed to the various activities of the malevolent forces, which can be put as *Ògún Àyè*. Based on observation from different prayer mountains' meetings, the quest to battle with the powers that be (the spiritual world) who are always in opposition to a person's destiny and its fulfilment results in the proliferation of prayer mountains with the belief that God is found on the mountains through manifestations in deliverance, healings and breakthroughs.

Òrì-Òkè is a Yoruba colloquial literally translated as "mountain top". It has, over time, received persuasion from the Africans, especially among the south-west people of Nigeria, because it answers Africa's mystic questions on its core problems such as sudden death, prolonged pregnancy, unemployment, failure, and ill luck, among others, which have characterized a person's existence in life. By answering African core problems about life, various testimonies from attendees confirmed that a person who is battling with a long-time sickness which have been medically proven uncured receives miracles, a person who has setback in business received deliverance because of attending an *Òrì-Òkè* prayer programme, barren testifies that God answered their prayers on *Òrì-Òkè* among several others attested to the claim that *Òrì-Òkè* has provided solutions to some of the core African problems. In describing the nature of *Òrì-Òkè* in Nigeria, Opeyemi noted that "mountains are natural hilltops above the sea and the ground levels. Several activities, therefore, exist on the mountain so far as man's habitation has been shifted to the natural

⁷⁶ Aina, A. (2011). *An Integrative Notion of Punishment in Traditional Yoruba culture*, PhD dissertation, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, 46-46.

fortress.”⁷⁷ To the *Òrì-Òkè* attendees, mountains do not serve as natural fortresses alone. Instead, they provide spiritual fortification and refuge.

Òrì-Òkè has both literary and metaphorical interpretations. Literarily, *Òrì* is a Yoruba term that means head, apex, and/or zenith. *Òrì* is both biologically and spiritually inclined. Biologically, it means the head of a person and spiritually, it means person’s destiny or god. *Òkè* can be translated as mountain, hill, or highland. Any place higher than the ground level is often called *Òkè* among the Yoruba people of Nigeria. Therefore, *Òrì-Òkè* means head of the mountain or mountain head, apex of a mountain and hilltop. This view was further aligned with Aluko when he noted that:

Òrì-Òkè is a new concept in the academic circuit, but it is a regular nomenclature in the circle of prayers and spiritualities. *Òrì-Òkè* is a Yoruba term that implies ‘head of the mountain,’ ‘mountain head,’ ‘mountain top,’ and more religiously, ‘mountain prayer.’ Mountain prayer might mean other things in other languages across Africa and the world. It will be novel to perceive *Òrì-Òkè* from both phenomenon and feature perspectives. *Òrì-Òkè* is a phenomenon whereby the creature meets the creator for divine encounters on rugged land higher than the regular plain lands, usually secluded for spiritualities.⁷⁸

The above excerpt shows the meaning of *Òrì-Òkè* as a mountaintop and further clarifies the emergence as a meeting point between the creator and his creatures. Metaphorically, Ajose noted that when a man is fasting or observing spiritual activities like fasting and prayer, and you offer such a person food or something to eat, such a person will reply that he is on a mountain. Hence, in this case, the term *Òrì-Òkè* can also be used metaphorically to mean an action or act of

⁷⁷ Aluko Opeyemi, I. *Òrì-Òkè and National Development in Nigeria: A Geo-Political Analysis*”, in Yaovi, N.S. & Nwosu, U. et al., (eds.) *Òrì-Òkè Spirituality and Social Change in Africa*, African Books Collective, 2018, 75.

⁷⁸ Aluko Opeyemi, I. “*Òrì-Òkè and National Development in Nigeria: A Geo-Political Analysis*”...78.

abstinence from food or a period of spiritual connectivity.⁷⁹ *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality in Nigeria is not strange, especially among the indigenous Yoruba people. Over time, *Òrì-Òkè* has served as a place of protection during wars and has also been used as a source of economic boost since they also serve as tourist attractions. *Òrì-Òkè* attendees receive blessing from God and answers to their prayers. Ojetayo affirmed that when people pray on these mountains, they receive spiritual blessings. Children born to infertile women are named after mountains, such as *Okebunmi*, *Okedare*, and so on, as a result of their prayers being answered on mountains. In both African Traditional Religion and Christianity, mountains and hills are considered sacred and useful natural features.⁸⁰ In this study, mountain prayers, which are mountain tops or heads, are adopted to mean *Òrì-Òkè*. Mountains visit formed a new perspective of Yoruba Christianity where worship activities such as prayers, singing and dancing occur and a combat ground against the force *Ògún Àyè*

⁷⁹ Samuel, Ajose “Performance, Space and Spirituality: Music and Ori-Oke Christianity in Nigeria”. A Presentation at SOAS University of London, organised by the SOAS Centre of African Studies, 2022.

⁸⁰ Ojetayo, G. B. “The Economic Benefits of *Òrì-Òkè* and Tourist Centres in Ondo State,” in Yaovi, N.S. & Nwosu, U. et al., (eds.) *Òrì-Òkè Spirituality and Social Change in Africa*, African Books Collective, 2018, 472.



Fig. 3. Anago-Osho's tour to Òrì-Òkè Erio, Ekiti State, Nigeria⁸¹

The researchers explore the concept of *Ògún Àyè* and *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality in south-west Nigeria through the responses obtained from fifty (50) respondents who responded to the questionnaires. The respondents' age range is 20-30 years, with 48%, while 31-45 years, with 28%, and 46-60 years, which were revealed to be 24%. The implication of this is that most respondents are still in their prime, thus attesting to the awareness of the respondents about *Ògún Àyè* and *Òrì-Òkè* Spirituality as a phenomenon among the African Yoruba people of South-West Nigeria.

The study captured the views on *Ògún Àyè* from both the male and female genders. The result revealed that the majority of the respondents were male, with 78%, while 22% were revealed to be female. This implies that there were more males available to participate in the fieldwork compared to the number of female respondents. Additionally, the study observed that 24 (48%) of the respondents are married, while 26 (52%) are single. The rationale behind the inclusion of this

⁸¹ Anago-Osho, J. A. *Òrì-Òkè* Erio of Ayo Babalola, A Religious tour of Erio Ekiti Nigeria <https://anagoadventures.blogspot.com/2016/05/tour-guide-training-by-anago-james.html>, accessed December 1, 2024.

is that it helps substantiate the view of *Ògún Àyè* as a continuous perspective which transcends singlehood.

The concept of *Ògún Àyè* among the Yoruba is considered a real phenomenon rather than abstract. It was observed that 68% of the respondents see the assertion as accurate to a Very High Extent (VHE), 26% High Extent (HE), 6% see it as a Low Extent, none sees it as a Very Low Extent (VLE). This implies that most of the respondents combining the VHE and HE responses indicate a strong assertion that *Ògún Àyè* should be conceived as real rather than abstract. 40% of the respondents (VLE) and 28% (LE) agreed that *Ògún Àyè* is not peculiar to the south-west alone. Instead, it is a common perspective that is expressed in different cultures in Nigeria. In addition, 44% (VHE) and 46% (HE) related *Ògún Àyè* to terrestrial influence, such as evil from a person's household, friends and society existence.

S/N	Items	VHE		HE		LE		VLE	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	<i>Ògún Àyè</i> is a real phenomenon and not an imagination of the mind.	34	68	13	26	3	6	0	0
2.	<i>Ògún Àyè</i> is only peculiar to the people of the South-Western Nigeria and not to all sundries.	6	12	10	20	14	28	20	40
3.	<i>Ògún Àyè</i> is a terrestrial influence upon the life of a man from his household, friend or society.	22	44	23	46	4	8	1	2

Table 1: The Concept of *Ògún Àyè* among the South-Western People of Nigeria

Jezebel's threat to Elijah's life corroborates with the Yoruba colloquial – *Ògún Àyè*. 44% (VHE) and 46% (HE) suggested that Jezebel's threat was not a mere saying. Perhaps this response was influenced because of Jezebel's past action –the killing of the other prophets (1 Kings 19:10).

The initial responses influenced the following question of the questionnaire as 68% (VHE) and 26% (HE) agreed that Elijah was aware of the potential doom if he had waited in the city. 52% (VHE) and 40 (HE) identified fear, refuge and unsatisfied situation as the reason for Elijah’s elopement. Elijah ran for his dear life to keep it away from a force capable of truncating his life with 52% (VHE) and 34% (HE), which indicated a positive response.

S/N	Items	VHE		HE		LE		VLE	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Jezebel’s threat was not a mere pronouncement rather it is a affirmative words in 1 Kings 19:1-8.	22	44	23	46	4	8	1	2
2.	Elijah was aware of the potential doom that awaits him if he had waited in the city.	34	68	13	26	3	6	0	0
3.	Fear, refuge, unsatisfied situation were reasons for Elijah’s flight as seen in 1 Kings 19:1-8.	26	52	20	40	3	6	1	2
4.	Elijah as a Prophet of fire ran for his dear life from a force capable of truncating his life.	26	52	17	34	5	10	2	4

Table 2: Jezebel’s Threat to Elijah an insight to *Ògún Àyè*

Cultural and psychological factors are the reasons that led to the growth of *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality in southwest Nigeria. 54% (VHE) and 36% (HE) affirmed that among these several reasons, cultural and psychological factors led to the growth of *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality. 34% (VHE) and 34% (HE) agreed that prolonged pregnancy and illness, unemployment, and failure in life are the causes of the growth, while 22% (LE) and 10% (VLE) did not agree with it. However, 68% of the respondents confirmed it. 50% (VHE) and 38% (HE) agreed that miracles, healings, breakthroughs and fortification were reasons for the emergence and growth of *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality.

The responses were high as 82% (VHE) and 16% (HE) of the respondents affirmed the emergence and the growth of *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality to some prophets such as Apostle Joseph Babalola, Baba Abiye, Prophet Orimolade and Prophet Hezekiah Oladeji.

S/N	Items	VHE		HE		LE		VLE	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	The default believes in the existence of malevolent forces capable of truncating man's destiny.	27	54	18	36	5	10	0	0
2.	Prolonged pregnancy and illness, unemployment, failure and several mishaps are most times the works of the enemies.	17	34	17	34	11	22	5	10
3.	People go to <i>Òrì-Òkè</i> for miracle and healing, breakthrough, fortification, refuge and liberation from household enemies.	25	50	19	38	4	8	2	4
4.	<i>Òrì-Òkè</i> was popular among the patriarchs of faith such as Apostle Joseph Babalola, Baba Abiye, Prophet Hezekiah, Prophet Moses Orimolade among others.	41	82	8	16	1	2	0	0

Table 3: Factors for the emergence and growth of *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality among the South-Western Nigeria

Textual Analysis of the Passage

Hebrew Passage 1 Kings 19:1-7⁸²

בְּחָרֵב הַנְּבִיאִים כָּל־אֵת הַרְגַּ אֲשֶׁר כָּל־וְאֵת אֵלֵיהֶו עָשָׂה אֲשֶׁר כָּל־אֵת לְאִיזָבֵל אַחְאָב וַיִּגַּד¹
 נַפְשׁוֹ אֵת אֲשֵׁים מִחַר כְּעַת כִּי יוֹסֵפוֹן וְכֵה אֵלֵהִים יַעֲשׂוֹן כֵּה־לֵאמֹר אֵלֵהוּ אֵל־מִלְאָךְ אִיזָבֵל וַתִּשְׁלַח²
 מַהִם: אַתָּה כְּנַפֵּשׁ
 שָׁם: נִעְרָו אֵת חוֹנֵי הַלִּיהוֹךְ אֲרֻשׁ שָׁבַע בָּאָר וַיָּבֵא נַפְשׁוֹ אֵל וַיִּלְךָ וַיִּקָּם אַנְוִי³
 נַפְשׁוֹ אֵת־לוֹיִשָּׂא דַאֲת אַחַת רָתֵם תַּחַת וַיִּשָּׁב וַיָּבֵא יוֹם גִּרְדָּ בַמִּדְבָּר הַהוּא וַיְהִי־וּא⁴
 מֵאַבְתָּי יֵאָנֹךְ טוֹב לֹא־כִי יִנְפֹשׁ תָּקוּ יְהוָה עֲתָה רֹב רוֹנֵי־לְמוֹת

⁸² Open Bible, "1 Kings 19", https://openbible.com/text/1_kings/19, accessed on March 5, 2024.

אָבול סקו לֹו וַיֵּאמֶר בּוֹ נִגַע מִלֶּאֱלֹהִים הֵן וְהִנֵּה אֶחָד מֵרֵת תַּחַת וַיִּישָׁן וַיִּשְׁכַּב⁵

וַיִּשְׁכַּב וַיִּשָּׁב וַיִּשְׁתָּה לִּנְיָאֵכ מַמִּי תוֹצֵפֶס רְצָפִים עֲגַת מְרֹאֲשֵׁתָיו וְהִנֵּה טוֹיֵב⁶

הַדָּרֶד: מִמֶּה רַב כִּי אָכַל סקו רִנְיָאֵמ בּוֹ וַיִּגַע- שְׁנִית יְהוָה מִלֶּאֱלֹהִים וַיִּשְׁבֹּ⁷

חֶרֶב הָאֱלֹהִים הֵרַע עַד לְיִלְהָ וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם סֶאֱרָבָעִי הֵלִיא הָאֱכִילָה בְּכַחַס וַיִּלְהָ וַיִּשְׁתָּה לִּנְיָאֵכ מוֹנֵק⁸

English Translation

Translation of the passage is the Revised Standard Version⁸³

¹Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. ² Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.” ³ Then he was afraid, and he arose and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. ⁴ But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree; and he asked that he might die, saying, “It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am no better than my fathers.” ⁵ And he lay down and slept under a broom tree; and behold, an angel touched him, and said to him, “Arise and eat.” ⁶ And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again. ⁷ And the angel of the Lord came again a second time, and touched him, and said, “Arise and eat, else the journey will be too great for you.” ⁸ And he arose, and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God.

The passage in v. 3 uses the word **וַיִּלְהָ וַיִּקָּם אֲוִיָּר** which is translated as “and when he saw that, he arose”. This translation was used in one of the Hebrew manuscripts. However, Jezebel’s design and resolution were to take away his life; the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and Syriac versions read, “and he was afraid” or frightened.⁸⁴ The Hebrew verb **יָרָא** *yārē*, pronounced *yareh*, means “to fear” or “to be afraid.” For example, when Adam explains why he hid from the Lord in Genesis 3:10, he states, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid (**וַאֲיָרָא**) because I was

⁸³ 1 Kings 19:1-8 Revised Standard Version (RSV)

⁸⁴ Gill, John. John Gill’s Exposition of the Bible “1 Kings 19”,

https://biblehub.com/commentaries/gill/1_kings/19.htm, accessed March 5, 2024.

naked.”⁸⁵ One cannot necessarily say that Elijah was not afraid of Jezebel, as some scholars like Coffman used the word “discouragement” instead of fear to portray the situation.⁸⁶ Elijah is not a divine being. That is, it is human to fear. Anxiety is linked to fear, which is an emotional reaction to potential harm. Fear and a few other fundamental emotions (such as joy and anger) are innate traits of higher-functioning species, according to behavioural theorists like Suresh.⁸⁷ The natural reaction to unpleasant stimuli is fear, which is a survival mechanism.⁸⁸ It is pertinent to say that Elijah, as a man, responded to the potential danger, hence his emotional state of fear. Grant opined that “Elijah’s faith faltered. He could stand before Ahab with no fear, but now he was frightened by a woman! He fled from Jezreel to Beersheba (v.3).”⁸⁹ Therefore, a closer observation of the growth of *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality suggests that fear of the unknown future and malevolence forces construed as *ota ile* (household enemies) have led many to seek refuge in *Òrì-Òkè* hence its growth.

And he arose and went for his life וַיָּלֶךְ וַיִּקָּם נִפְשׁוֹ אֵלַי –wayyāqām wayyēlek ‘el napšōw.⁹⁰

The words depicted the behavioural change in Elijah as shown in the James-Lange theory. The word *wayyelek* can be translated as “and ran.”⁹¹ Barnes noted that Elijah’s “fear and flight are very

⁸⁵ Bible and Archaeology, RTL Words: YARE (אָרַע)

[https://bam.sites.uiowa.edu/RTL/yare#:~:text=The%20Hebrew%20verb%20D7%99%D7%A8%D7%90%20\(y%C4%81r%C4%93%CA%BE,is%20its%20application%20as%20a](https://bam.sites.uiowa.edu/RTL/yare#:~:text=The%20Hebrew%20verb%20D7%99%D7%A8%D7%90%20(y%C4%81r%C4%93%CA%BE,is%20its%20application%20as%20a), accessed on March 5, 2024.

⁸⁶ Coffman, James Burton. "Commentary on 1 Kings 19:3". "Coffman's Commentaries on the Bible". <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/1-kings-19.html>. Abilene Christian University Press, Abilene, Texas, USA. 1983-1999.

⁸⁷ Suresh, A., et al. “Prediction of Fight or Flight Response Using Artificial Neural Networks” *American Journal of Applied Sciences*, Apr. 2014, 912.

⁸⁸ Suresh, A., et al. “Prediction of Fight or Flight Response Using Artificial Neural Networks”, 913.

⁸⁹ Grant’s Commentary on the Bible https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/lmg/1-kings-19.html#google_vignette, accessed on March 5, 2024.

⁹⁰ Open Bible, “1 Kings 19”, https://openbible.com/text/1_kings/19, accessed on March 5, 2024.

⁹¹ Bible Hub, “1 Kings 19:3”, https://biblehub.com/text/1_kings/19-3.htm, accessed on March 5, 2024.

remarkable. Jezebel's threat alone had not, in all probability, produced the extraordinary change but, partly, physical reaction from the over-excitement of the preceding day and partly, internal anxiety and doubt as to the wisdom of the course he had adopted."⁹² It is right to say that Elijah's action to the perceived danger was to save his life. Benson cited St. James that:

He was a man subject to like passions as we are; and probably it was with a view to this part of his behaviour, that the apostle made that reflection. Elijah knew Jezebel, that she was fierce, cruel, vindictive, and implacable; that in slaying the priests of Baal he had incurred her displeasure; and that to revenge herself she had all the power of the kingdom under her command.⁹³

The foreknowledge of Jezebel as a gruesome queen can be seen in Elijah's affirmation "...and slain your prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away" (1 Kgs. 19:10 RSV). Jezebel's action in taking the lives of the Israelites' prophet was not the first attempt at her threat to Elijah. Also, the situation depicts life and death –the life Elijah protected by fleeing from the sight of danger. The intensity of Elijah's to save his life is further seen at the length to which he goes to keep himself out of danger. His first place of contact during the flight was Beer-sheba. According to *Institute Creation Research* "Elijah had been at Carmel and Jezreel, far to the north in the kingdom of Israel, then fled 150 miles to the southernmost part of the kingdom of Judah, and Beersheba."⁹⁴ The roughly 150 miles traveled demonstrate both the geographic scope of his escape and the gravity of his predicament as he makes his way from the northern kingdom of Israel to the southern kingdom of Judah.⁹⁵

⁹² Barnes, A. "Barnes Notes on the Whole Bible" (Barnes Notes: 1 Kings 19)

https://biblehub.com/commentaries/barnes/1_kings/19.htm, accessed on March 6, 2024.

⁹³ Benson, J. "Commentary on the Old and New Testament" (Benson Commentary: 1 Kings 19)

https://biblehub.com/commentaries/benson/1_kings/19.htm, accessed on March 6, 2024.

⁹⁴ Institute Creation Research, "Came to Beer-Sheba 1 Kings 19:3",

<https://www.icr.org/books/defenders/1832>, accessed on March 6, 2024.

⁹⁵ Huka, E. C. "Suara Dalam Keheningan: Membaca Ulang Kisah Elia Dalam 1 Raja-Raja 19:1-18 Sebagai Dampak Dari Trauma Psikologis." *Jurnal Teologi Dan Pelayanan Kerusso*, Sept.

2024, <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/dd0cbdd22ad5ed1dc82e850139d750718911ba76>.

The Hebrew expression **הַרְבֵּה** can be translated as Horeb. Its full expression, *har horebh*. Mountain Horeb, also known as Mount Sinai, is usually used interchangeably in the Old Testament. The Mountain is known with the description “the Mountain of God” (1 Kings 19: 8), which has a long-existing tradition in the Mosaic encounter on Mount Sinai (Exodus 3) and followed by the Moses and Israelites encounter (Exo. 19). In verse 8, the journey from Beer-Sheba to Horeb took Elijah forty (40) days and forty (40) nights through the strength of the food he had earlier consumed from the angel. Benson commented on the phrase “...to Horeb, the mountain of God” while describing the distance between Beer-Sheba and Horeb, that the journey was not above four or five days on the direct road. However, Elijah wandered hither and thither in the wilderness till the Spirit of God led him to the mountain to communion with God and hence his revival.⁹⁶

The Yoruba *Ògún Àyè* and Jezebel’s Threat to Elijah: A Reflection

Through the relevant results, the study reflected on *Ògún Àyè* in the action of Jezebel and Elijah’s flight to the Mountain in 1 Kings 19 account as a factor situated within the cultural and psychological perspectives of the Yoruba South-West, Nigeria. Jezebel was perceived as a significant threat to the Prophet of Yahweh in Israel since the introduction of Baalism and its recognition as an acceptable religion during the reign of Ahab. Jezebel was the power behind the Ahab administration; in fact, Ahab sometimes made a report to Jezebel, who in turn took action as though a King, yet a Queen (1 Kings 19:1; 21:6 RSV). *Ògún Àyè* is a representation of malevolent forces, wicked ones, and evildoers in the Yoruba society who are capable of doing evil to anyone. Jezebel is more or less an evil force who fits into the Yoruba colloquial due to her evil deeds.

⁹⁶ Joseph Benson, Joseph Benson’s Commentary on the Old and New Testament” (Benson Commentary: 1 Kings 19) https://biblehub.com/commentaries/benson/1_kings/19.htm, accessed on March 6, 2024.

Elijah ran for his life. This is a common reaction to danger. James-Lange's theory of emotion proved that bodily and behavioural changes in man cause the emotional label. Elijah is a prophet of Yahweh. Nevertheless, he is a man with emotion. He could perceive a threat and decided to run away from it. Elijah reacts to Jezebel's threat by exhibiting several depressive symptoms. Howell affirmed that in Elijah's quest for seclusion, Elijah runs away from everyone, including his servant. Isolation is not only a sign of depression. However, it can also prolong it as the person concentrates on a flawed version of events and distances themselves from people who could challenge such unhelpful thought patterns.⁹⁷ This is about people, especially those in south-west Nigeria, who believed in the existence of the malevolent forces capable of truncating destiny. This belief further extends to the "Life is a War" terminology, which finds its existence in the minds of the Yoruba. Due to this perceived threat, the need to take action includes escaping to a more reassuring and secure place like the mountaintop.

Elijah departs as soon as he is introduced in the narrative and travels to the Brook at Cherith, where God supplies food and water. When God gives Elijah bread and water in the wilderness in 1 Kings 19:5b-9a, the role of God as a provider in times of need is demonstrated once more.⁹⁸ In addition, God's reaction to Elijah reflects the cognitive viewpoint. Homework assignments are a tool used in cognitive therapy to help the depressed person examine the truth of their ideas, practice new actions, create new thought patterns, and increase emotions of self-efficacy.⁹⁹ This is when religion becomes the "soul of the soulless condition" in the understanding

⁹⁷ Howell, J. D. and Howell, S. H. "Journey to Mount Horeb: Cognitive Theory and 1 Kings 19:1-18." *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 11 (7), 2008:658.

⁹⁸ Howell, J. D. and Howell, S. H. "Journey to Mount Horeb: Cognitive Theory and 1 Kings 19:1-18." 656.

⁹⁹ Howell, J. D. and Howell, S. H. "Journey to Mount Horeb: Cognitive Theory and 1 Kings 19:1-18." 659.

of Marx's theory of religion. At this point, the only Being that can stand against Jezebel (*Ògún Àyè*) and, thus, provide assurance and confidence to the dying soul is Yahweh and not Elijah himself.

Mountains as Yahweh's place of meeting is a reoccurring event in the Biblical narrative, as indicated in the Israelites' wandering (Exodus 3 and 19) and Elijah's elopement to the Mountain (1 Kings 19), thereby bringing hope, confidence, and promises to Elijah. Most *Òrì-Òkè* attendees have attested that refuge, blessing, miracle, healing, and fortifications are part of the reasons for the growth of *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality in South-West Nigeria. Some of the *Òrì-Òkè* (mountain tops) identified by the respondents include *Òrì-Òkè Baba Abiye*, *Òrì-Òkè Babalola*, *Òrì-Òkè Anu*, *Òrì-Òkè Erio*, *Òrì-Òkè Majemu*, *Ògún Àyè* and *Òrì-Òkè Ikoyi*, *Òrì-Òkè Gbogunmi* among several others can be summed up in the voyage of Elijah to Mountain Horeb where all hope and strength lost were regained through Yahweh's intervention.

Conclusion

Elijah's emotion of fear is uncertain and indeed expected. It is uncertain because many biblical readers expected the bold, courageous prophets who slain four hundred fifty (450) prophets of Baal to confront Jezebel –a woman. However, it is inevitable because Elijah has only proven to his reader that he is a man who relies on God's confidence and assurance. However, Elijah's reaction to Jezebel's threat led to another important site, the Mountain of Horeb (Sinai), a prominent place where God revealed himself to Moses (Israelites) during the Israelites' escape from Egypt. Elijah received the strength to carry out God's task once more, signifying a place of fortitude and renewal of hope, strength and covenant.

The growth of *Òrì-Òkè* in south-west Nigeria has been due to cultural and psychological reasons. These reasons find expression in the legacy of a predecessor and the African worldview

on the existential realities, which include the belief in malevolence forces, profit-making interest, and response to unemployment, poverty and hunger, amongst others, have triggered psychological reactions such as anxiety and fear, and thus undoubtedly led to the growth of *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality in the region. The gradual change in worship experience begins to take its form in the *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality. This implies that the belief and motivation of faith seen in the *Òrì-Òkè* attendees are different from the typical church worship experience. The vigorous faith through a concentrated heart best describes the state and condition of most *Òrì-Òkè* attendees. Therefore, the study recommended that:

1. Amid the emerging realities within the African worldview, Christians and mountain attendees should not limit God's presence to the mountains. Limiting God's presence to the Mountain may lead to idolatry, hence jeopardizing the monotheistic tenet of Christians' faith and the importance of *Òrì-Òkè* spirituality.
2. There should be caution regarding commercializing *Òrì-Òkè* for gains or profit-making by profit-minded people. Mountain attendees and church leaders should not by any means commercialize *Òrì-Òkè* by leveraging on the need to be free from *Ògún Àyè*.
3. Holiness and righteousness should be upheld by attendees whenever they are on the Mountain. This holiness and righteousness should not be seen in the garment alone but in the acts and deeds of attendees.
4. The Catholic Church in south-west Nigeria can establish a deeper connection with the communities it serves by acknowledging and embracing indigenous spiritual practices. The church can make faith more relevant and approachable to the public by addressing regional issues like spiritual rejuvenation and warfare.

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Faith and Commerce: The Interplay of Catholicism, Islam, and the Trade in Second-Hand Household Commodities in Ilorin, Nigeria

By ADESHINA, Lukman

Abstract

The emergence of used commodities market gained momentum in Nigeria during the years 1980-1985. This rise coincided with a down turn in the country's economy, primarily attributed to a sharp decline in oil prices. Consequently, there was a detrimental impact on both the living standards of the populace and the overall national economy. This study explores the inadvertent role of religious offerings and injunctions in promoting the trade in used commodities in Ilorin between 1980 and 2020. Insights gathered from oral interviews with Islamic clerics and members of different Christian denominations in Ilorin show that all religions emphasize the importance of almsgiving but Islam and Christianity (Catholicism) are often considered the leading figures. Almsgiving and inheritance play a significant role in promoting the trade in used household commodities in Ilorin, with beggars and the poor who were given used properties on religious considerations constituting significant source of the article of the trade of used commodities in Ilorin. The study contributes to our understanding of the complex intersection between religion, economy and trade in used commodities in Ilorin.

Keywords: Catholicism, Islam, Fairly-used commodities, Ilorin, Nigeria

Introduction

In Ilorin, Nigeria, trade in used commodities has long been a vital aspect of the local economy. From second-hand clothing and household items to the discarded items, the market for used items which is regarded as being meant for the less privilege people in the society has contributed immensely to the socio-economic growth of Ilorin and Kwara State through provision of employment opportunities for thousands of people and also generated to the government. However, beneath the surface of this thriving business lies a complex web of beliefs and practices. This paper explores the role of religious offerings and injunctions in promoting the trade in used commodities in Ilorin, Nigeria between 1980 and 2020.

Ilorin, being an Islamic city with a significant Christian population, religious offerings and injunctions by the way of *sadagah*-almsgiving and charity in Christendom, as well as properties inheritance remain its ubiquitous features. These offerings which take many forms- from prayers

and supplications to sacrifices and donations are believed to have contributed to regular supply of articles of the trade in used household commodities in Ilorin. Yet, despite their contributions to the growth of the trade in used household commodities, the role of the religious offerings and injunctions have received scant attention in the study of the trade in second-hand goods in Ilorin, Nigeria.

This paper seeks to fill this gap by examining the interplay of religious offerings and injunctions in the promotion of the trade in second-hand household items in Ilorin. The paper using primary and secondary sources aims to uncover the way in which religious offerings and injunctions have contributed to the regular supply of the articles of the trade in used household items in Ilorin. The paper is divided into five sections apart from introduction and conclusion. Section one examines religious offerings Ilorin: Islam and Christianity (Catholicism) tradition. Section two analyzes the origin and development of the trade in used household commodities in Ilorin while section three discusses articles of the trade in used household commodities in Ilorin. Section four examines the intersection between religious offerings/injunctions and second-hand goods in Ilorin while the last section will analyze the impacts and challenges of the trade in used household commodities in Ilorin.

Religious Offerings in Ilorin: Islam and Christianity (Catholicism) Tradition Charity in Islam (Sadaqah)

Religious offerings have an integral part of human expression and devotion across cultures and faiths, serving as means connecting with the divine, expressing gratitude, and seeking blessings. These offerings can take many forms, each carrying its own significance and symbolism.

In Ilorin where Islam is the predominant religion, five times daily prayer, *Zakat*, fasting during the month of Ramadan, animal sacrifice during *Eid al-adha* and *Sadaqah* are the common types of Islamic offerings¹. The focus of this study is on the *Sadaqah* (voluntary charity). Giving

money or other assistance voluntarily to people in need is known as charity, sometimes referred to as alms. It is inspired by people's faith convictionsⁱⁱ. Thus, sadaqah in Islam is not limited to material gift alone, it can be given to anyone in many forms such as a smile, wise advice and helping to build a home or mosqueⁱⁱⁱ.

Sadaqah comes from the Arabic word *sidq* which means truthfulness in realizing declared belief by action^{iv}. It serves as a sign of sincerity of faith as the Islamic law sees sadaqah as giving goods and funds for the sake of God in expression of faithfulness and realization of the belief in resurrection and afterlife^v. In Islam, *sadaqah* (almsgiving), is highly recommended as a way to cleanse wealth and lessen suffering and poverty^{vi}. This importance of almsgiving was repeatedly underlined by the Prophet Muhammad, who is reported to have said: “There is no person who does not have the obligation of doing charity every day that the sun rises”^{vii}. Hence, giving to the poor in order to receive a reward and become closer to God is what almsgiving is all about in Islam^{viii}. Sadaqah is governed by a set of codified rules and as enshrined in the Quran, must be done sincerely to please Allah (God) only and not out of gaining praise or recognition from other^{ix}. In Islam, everyone can participate in sadaqah regardless of one’s financial status^x. It is further required that the person giving out sadaqah must be mature and the owner of the items being given, although the recipients’ maturity is not necessary^{xi}.

It may interest you to know that the current socio-economic realities in Nigeria and the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic which affected Nigeria’s economy contributed to begging in Ilorin. The economy which was expected to grow by 2.1 percent in 2020 was affected by Covid-19 and led to a reduction in growth by more than 5 percent points as against the World Bank’s 3.2 percent projection for 2020^{xii}. The World Bank report showed that apart from the loss of life, the Covid-19 shock alone was projected to have pushed about 5 million more Nigerians into poverty

in 2020. The number of poor Nigerians which was already expected to increase by about 2 million largely due to population growth, increased by 7 million with a poverty rate projected to rise from 40.1 percent in 2019 to 42.5 percent in 2020^{xiii}. In order to meet their basic needs, some of the poverty stricken people resorted into begging as a means of livelihood. Thus, street begging flourished in Nigeria for multiple reasons and in multiple ways^{xiv}.

Begging in Ilorin is generally referred to as *bara* while the street beggars are called *onibara* or *alumangiri*. Some of these beggars, usually Hausa people move round Ilorin while some use to position themselves in places like markets, busy streets and roads, asking for alms and people offer money and other personal belongings to them of piety^{xv}. So begging has religious and cultural support and is not despised in Ilorin and many other places in Northern Nigerian. Charity giving became a widely accepted practice that transcended all cultural and religious boundaries and served as a vital social safety net for the underprivileged^{xvi}.

Charity in Catholic Tradition

The formation of Emirate in Ilorin in 1823 paved the way for the establishment of Ilorin as a Muslim strong hold^{xvii}. However, it has a significant Christian population and a host of ancient and modern Churches with moderate congregations. These include the Holy Order of Cherubim and Seraphim, Anglican Church, Methodist Church, Celestial Church of Christ, Evangelical Church of Winning All (ECWA), the Holy Trinity Gospel Church International, United Missionary Church of Africa (UMCA), Catholic Church and Christ Apostolic Church, amongst others^{xviii}.

Giving alms to the poor is enshrined in some chapters of the Bible such as Luke 12:32 where Jesus tells a rich young ruler to sell everything, give alms to the poor and follow him. Proverbs 14:31 also says “whoever is kind to the needy honours God”. There is no gainsaying that

all the Christian denominations in Ilorin place a strong emphasis on charity but Catholic Church has a long tradition of emphasizing the importance of almsgiving and charitable work and is often considered as a leader in the area of almsgiving among Christian denominations^{xi}. Thus, the Catholic Church's historical and doctrinal commitment to almsgiving is particularly notable. Roman Catholic Church was established in Ilorin on January 20, 1960 as Apostolic Prefecture of Ilorin from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Ondo, and it was promoted to the Diocese of Ilorin on May 29, 1969 as Saint Joseph Cathedral^{xx}.

The Catholic Church's teaching on almsgiving is rooted in scripture and the teachings of the early Church Fathers, and is reflected in its doctrine and practices such as the establishment of charitable institutions and organizations like Catholic Charities and the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul^{xxi}. The importance of almsgiving among the Catholic Christians is also shown in the work of Mike Aquilina (2012) where it is stated that "Prayer and fasting are good, but better than either is almsgiving accompanied by righteousness.... It is better to give alms than to store gold; for almsgiving saves one from death and expiates every sin. Those who regularly give alms shall enjoy a full life (Tob12:8-9)"^{xxii}.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul was founded in 1833 by Frederic Ozanam and Emmanuel Bailly for the sanctification of its members through service of the poor, and this international organization is part of the global Vincentian Family of Catholic organizations^{xxiii}. One of the Roman Catholic Churches in Ilorin is Saint Thomas Aquinas (Aquinas) Catholic Chaplaincy, which is located at University of Ilorin Main Campus where the researcher works. The leader of the St. Vincent de Paul Society at the Church use to announce and encourage the congregation to part with their old clothes and other used household items and donate to the charity

drive. The Society use to visit the poor, the prison inmates, the sick people and the orphans on the last Sunday of the month where they distribute the donated items^{xxiv}.

It is clear from the aforementioned explanations of charity from both the Islamic and Catholic traditions that there are certain parallels between Islam and Catholicism on the idea of charity. First of all, both traditions stressed the value of helping people in need. Additionally, they promoted anonymous giving without anticipating reward and not out of gaining praise or recognition from other as reflected by Matthew 6:3–4 and Quran 2:264. But, the major distinction is that, while charitable giving in Catholicism is typically planned and facilitated through a sophisticated system of charitable organizations like Catholic Relief Services and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, these organizations provided a structured framework for Catholics to engage giving and volunteer work while in Islam, charity giving can be made directly to individuals and families in need by individuals, mosques, or Islamic centers.

It is noteworthy that notwithstanding their socio-political and theological beliefs, the typical Nigerian turns to spiritualists in order to achieve spiritual emancipation, protection, or fulfilment of personal desires. More often than not, the procedure entails giving alms to beggars^{xxv}.

Origin and Development of Trade in Used Household Commodities in Ilorin

The growth and development of the trade in used items was a negative effect of the decline in the economic fortune of Nigeria which was caused by a drastic fall in oil prices between 1980 and 1985^{xxvi}. It also exhibited the poverty level of the populace. However, some Nigerians believe that what further worsened the living condition of the people to the point that the trade in used household items gained prominence was the impacts of the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) between 1986 and 1988 on the Nigerian economy^{xxvii}. One of the objectives of the SAP was restructuring and diversification of the productive base of the economy in order to reduce its dependence on the oil sector or on imports^{xxviii}. One of the main instruments

used to achieve the SAP objectives was exchange rate adjustment, which led to a drastic devaluation of the Naira vis-à-vis major trading currencies. The exchange rate became the benchmark and was adopted to redress the imbalance in external sector and especially to reduce the demand for imported goods, amongst others^{xxix}.

Trade in Used Household Commodities in Ilorin

The beginning of the trading in used household items in Ilorin is traceable to the parts of the activities at the Ilorin traditional markets^{xxx}. It started as “*Dilali*” (broker) and has now transformed to become “*Basiri*” as the trade is being referred to^{xxxi}. *Basiri* in Yoruba means standing with somebody at the time of need. This can be further explained to mean that the act of buying peoples’ properties like clothing materials and other usable items from a person in financial need is tantamount to standing with that person in time of difficulties and financial need, hence, the word “*Basiri*”^{xxxii}. The trade is different from the popular or common selling and buying of fairly used items because of the unique nature of the medium of trade as well as the assorted articles of the trade.

The trading of used household items in Ilorin is directly linked to the progenitors of Akaje compound in Agbaji quarters and Ile Omo compound in Eruda, Ilorin^{xxxiii}. It all began when their forefathers used to purchase used clothing materials from the people in their neighbourhoods^{xxxiv}. The buyers, known as “the Akajes or Ile Omos”, who initiated the business were referred to as “*oni dilali*”, meaning brokers. After acquiring and refurbishing used clothes, they would sell them at a place called *Idiseke* or *Idigbedu*, which is now the present location of the Ilorin Central Mosque, where they also conducted brokerage activities^{xxxv}. The Akaje used clothes buyers often converted men dresses, usually, flowing gown (*Agbada*) into women’s dresses and under wears called “*tobi*” with the use of needle, which they used to sell at *toro* (3 kobo) at the Idiseke. This

however explains why the Akaje family has this epithet: “*Akaje omo ata akisa soro*”. Meaning that the Akaje’s offspring become wealthy from the sale of used cloths^{xxxvi}.

Idiseke or Idigbedu at Oja-Oba market, Ilorin was one of the many traditional markets in Ilorin, some of the markets in Ilorin were established along ethnic lines and this accounted for the reason why each ward therefore had markets that served its immediate people^{xxxvii}. Other traditional markets in Ilorin and their wards included Oloje, Omoda, and Oju-ekun markets in Ajikobi Ward. Adeta, Bode, and Pakata markets in Alanamu Ward. Asunnara and Gada Markets under Fulani Ward. Idiape, Awodi, Gambari, Ondoko, Sango (Pake) and Kankatu markets in Gambari Ward. Oja-Gboro, Alapa, Eruda, Ita-Kure, Ita-Onitangaran, Oja-Iya and Oja-Oba under Magaji-Ngeri Ward^{xxxviii}. As stated above, the establishers of trade in used household items started as *Dilali* (broker) at Idiseke or Idigbedu which fell under Oja Oba which was one of the Ilorin traditional markets and there too, just as in other places, each price quotation could be inflated by the middleman but the buyers would negotiate to normalize price. The middlemen who they often referred to as *Alarobo* or *Alajapa* used to approach owners at the markets to buy in bulk, broke it down to retail in their respective ward markets to sell to final consumers^{xxxix}.

Articles of the Trade in Used Household Commodities

During the course of this research, the researcher observed a distinct pattern in the trade of used household items within the designated area of commerce. Unlike the conventional practice of being specialized in the sale of specific used items, such as imported clothes, bags, or shoes, as seen in certain sections of the Baboko market, Ilorin, Nigeria the focus of this study's trade encompassed a wide array of usable household goods. Traders in this domain did not confine themselves to particular categories but rather engaged in the buying and selling of various household items. The range of goods involved in this trade was extensive and diverse. These items

included clothes, plates, spoons, mats, beads, shoes, trays, cooking pots, mattresses, cupboards, flasks, as well as electronic and electrical appliances such as televisions, radios, fans and electric irons, among others. This inclusive approach to trade differed significantly from the more specialized practices observed elsewhere in the market. Moreover, the trading dynamics were notable for their integration of various household items within a single marketplace section. Unlike traders in other sections who segregated their wares, those involved in this study's trade intermingled different types of items, creating a bustling and multifaceted trading environment. This observation underscored the unique nature of the trade in used household items within the research area. Figure 1 shows a display of assorted used household items for sale at Idiape market, Ilorin, Nigeria while figure 2 captures a closer glimpse of the *Basiri* section at the Baboko market, Ilorin, Nigeria.

Fig. 1



Fig. 2



(Pictures taken by the author in 2023)
No one among the traders specialized in buying and selling of a particular item as they bought and sold whatever usable household item(s) brought to the market^{x1}. Furthermore, brand new items could at times be seen for sale in the market. The reason for this hinges on their name, *Egbe Basiri*, thus, anyone who buys a new item today and he/she is in need of money the following day could easily go to the traders in the market or at home and sell up such newly bought property and this is the reason why one could come across brand new item(s) in the market.

Intersection between Religious Offerings/Injunctions and the Trade Second-hand Goods in Ilorin

Trade in second-hand goods in Ilorin is closely linked to religious offerings and Injunctions because most of the offerings such as clothing, kitchen utensils, and other household items that were given to the poor on religious grounds ended up being sold to the traders in household items either at Baboko or Idiape market in Ilorin^{xli}. Charity organizations and individuals frequently give these items to the poor with the belief that they needed them but the seemingly needy often sell the donated items to traders so as to be able get cash for their other financial obligations. It may interest you to know that many of the beggars, especially Hausa tribe preferred giving money as a form of charity than other materials and this is the reason most of them that were given charity especially clothes often sell them to the traders^{xlii}. Beggars with clothing to sell typically bring their items to the market for traders to buy. Some traders, having built relationship with these beggars, also seek them out in their in their usual haunts or locations to buy clothing from them^{xliii}. As a result, traders in used household items in Ilorin have identified purchases from beggars as a significant source of their merchandise^{xliv}. Thus, apart from the gift of money and food, beggars, mostly, Hausas are also given clothes and other items. Most of these items that are given to the beggars and the poor on charity grounds ended up being sold to the traders in used household items and this is identified as an important source of articles of the trade in Ilorin

Apart from the willful sale of used items by beggars to the traders amongst other sources of the articles of the trade in used household items in Ilorin, one of the major sources of the articles of the trade is the inheritance. The fact that Ilorin being an Islamic city where the Islamic law of inheritance is being practiced, when properties of a deceased are shared among the heirs, those among them who either needed money or did not need such properties have on many occasions sold such shared properties to the traders and this serves as a source of articles of the trade^{xlv}.

Figure 3 below shows street beggars at Kuntu area of Ilorin, sorting out clothes that were given to them on charity ground.

Fig. 3: Beggars Sorting out Clothes Given to them as Charity



Picture taken by the author in 2024

It is further observed that, the reasons behind the beggars and some of the poor people that are given used clothes and other household commodities selling such items is because most of them need money more than the items that are given to them and since there is a market where such commodities could be sold and earn money instantly, they will then collect the charity which is not money and have them sold up for the realization of instant money^{xlvi}.

Impact and Challenges of the trade in Used Household Commodities in Ilorin

The trade according to the traders had significantly contributed to the improvement of the social status of the lowest-income earners within the local community by providing them with the opportunity to purchase and enjoy desired goods within their means, albeit not new ones^{xlvii}. This

has greatly fostered a sense of belonging among the populace. Economically, the trade provided employment opportunity for many people in the local community. Apart from the traders themselves, they have also introduced their children especially daughters to the business thereby reducing the burden of unemployment problem on the government, thus, the trade involved hundreds of people. It has contributed its own quota to the economic development in Ilorin and Kwara State as a whole in term of employment generation^{xlvi}.

However, the growth of the trade in Ilorin has negatively affected the communal settings that existed in Ilorin families and compounds. Exposure of people to the trade has eroded the usual practice of giving out used household items such as clothes that were no longer needed to the needy members of the family or people in the neighbourhood. People now preferred to sell their unwanted useable commodities rather than the usual practice of giving them out to the needy within the family compound and neighbourhood in Ilorin^{xli}.

There are certain problems or challenges that are attached the trade in used household commodities in Ilorin on the part of both traders and customers. The traders explained to the author during the oral interviews conducted with them that, they often experienced ill feeling from members of the public in the course of their legitimate business due to unscrupulous conducts of some of them^l. By this, the traders often expressed their displeasures over the way some members of the public always viewed them as buyers of stolen goods because some stolen goods such as clothes have been found within the custody of few of the traders in the markets^{li}. Thus, problem of mistrust from the public towards the traders is identified by the traders as one of the problems that are attached to the trade in used household items in Ilorin as the traders' market leader said in Yoruba language that "*inu wa odun bi awon ara ilu nse nmafi oju eniti nra oja ole wowa*" meaning that we are not happy as some members of the public often look at us as buyers of stolen goods^{lii}.

Another problem facing the trade is on the part of the customers i.e. sellers of used commodities to the traders is stigma. Some intending sellers of properties often felt ashamed to come out openly or boldly to sale their properties^{liii}. This is perhaps one of the reasons why many aspiring sellers often kept the properties to be sold up especially clothes under their garments^{liv}. This stigma is not unconnected with the societal tradition of seeing someone who sold his/her properties as miserable^{lv}. Lack of a standard or unit of measurement to determine the worth of property to be bought is also identified as a challenge of the trade because an informant who is one the traders who has witnessed such a disagreement or friction between sellers and buyers over this lacuna explained that it had often led to exchange of abusive words between the traders and the sellers most especially when the sellers felt that the buyers were cheaters. The utterances that ensue from such bargaining like *ole* (thief), *ewa gbe ni* (come and take it by force) and the likes are usually the causes of problem between them^{lvi}.

Conclusion

This paper examined the role of almsgiving in the promotion of the trade in used household commodities in Ilorin, 1980-2020. The research found out that the clothes and other personal belongings offered by reason of charity to the poor and street beggars and those inherited properties are part of the major sources of the articles of the trade in used household items in Ilorin, Nigeria. Charity which is otherwise known as alms is generally defined as a voluntary giving of money or other help to those in need. It is motivated by people's religious beliefs. Virtually all religions emphasize the importance of almsgiving but Islam and Christianity (Catholic) are often considered the leading figures. People give money and other personal belongings to the poor and street beggars out of piety but most of these personal belongings such as clothes ended being sold up to the traders in used household items. The current socio-economic realities in Nigeria and the outbreak of

Covid-19 pandemic which affected Nigeria's economy contributed to begging in Ilorin. The number of poor Nigerians which was already expected to increase by about 2 million largely due to population growth, the number then increased by 7 million with a poverty rate projected to rise from 40.1 percent in 2019 to 42.5 percent in 2020. In order to meet their basic needs, some of the poverty stricken people resorted into begging as a means of livelihood. Thus, for more than one reason and in more than one way, street begging thrived in Nigeria.

Religious offering such as *sadaqah* in Islam and charity giving in Christendom whereby giving out personal belongings such as clothes to the poor and street beggars have helped to provide a steady supply of goods to the traders of the used items in Ilorin because most of these items that are given to the beggars are often sold up to the traders.

This paper will get the readers acquainted with the origin and growth of the trade in used household items in Ilorin, Nigeria, types of religious offerings in Ilorin, and the reasons for begging and almsgiving in Ilorin. Lastly, the examination of articles of the trade in used household commodities and their sources will enhance our understanding of the complex intersection between religion, economy and culture and trade in used commodities in Ilorin, Nigeria.

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**SYNOD ON SYNODALITY AND THE IMPERATIVE OF CONTEXTUAL
LITURGICAL SCHOLARSHIP IN NIGERIA/AFRICA**

By Victor Jamahh Usman

Abstract

This paper seeks to emphasize the importance of contextual liturgical scholarship and interpretation and posits that African scholars and liturgiologists must begin to investigate and interpret the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council in African terms, on the concrete example of the Theology of Blessing and the Rite of Blessing Holy Water outside Mass. Using historical, analytical and systematic methods, together with the multilineal cultural evolutionary theory, the paper challenges African liturgical scholars and theologians alike to assertively set their own agenda from the contextual perspective, especially in the light of the present discussions on “Synodality”. It argues that prayer forms that fit the religio-cultural history of Africans, like the pre Vatican II Prayer for Blessing holy water outside Mass, which are found in the liturgical patrimony of the Church, should be studied, possibly adapted and adopted. It concludes that revisiting some of these reforms and addressing liturgical practice in Africa in context is an imperative if the church must keep up pace with the spread of the AICs and Pentecostalism.

Introduction

The issue of liturgical adaptation to the nature and character of peoples is explicitly dealt with in the Liturgy Constitution of the Second Vatican Council *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, (Hereafter SC), especially the section on adaptation of the liturgy, namely, numbers 37-40, 63, 79 and others. Since then, the interpretation of this section for the Church universal as well as the particular churches has been ongoing. This is even more expedient at this time with the Synod on Synodality called by Pope Francis where each particular church is to articulate the universal faith in its particular nuance. Synodality, from the word “synod” which literarily refers to a meeting or assembly but specifically to a gathering of bishops,¹⁰⁰ refers to a deliberative process convened by the pope whereby bishops as representatives of local churches from the whole world gather to discuss serious Church matters, demonstrating the communion of bishops as they share in the

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Jovian P. Lang, *Dictionary of the Liturgy* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Company 1989), 606.

responsibility of the Universal Church.¹⁰¹ The Preparatory document of the “Synod on Synodality” actually sees synodality in the light of deliberation about the *sensus fidei* of the entire People of God that takes place at all levels of the Church—local, provincial, universal,¹⁰² such that each local church has something to contribute.

It is in the light of this that this paper will address the meaning of adaptation and the necessity of interpreting it more vigorously in terms of the various local churches, particularly in Nigeria and extensively for local churches in Africa. In order to achieve this, the paper first of all, addresses the need for adaptation and the nature of liturgical adaptation that the local church of Nigeria, and extensively the local churches of similar African countries should pursue. This is done by going through the historical development of the discussions regarding liturgical adaptation before, during and after the Vatican II. The work shall demonstrate with some examples, particularly the intervention of Dominic Cardinal Ekandem on adaptation at the council, what type of adaptation may have been on the minds of the native African Fathers at the Council. It then proceeds, on the example of the Theology of Blessings and the Rite of Blessing Holy Water outside Mass, to show that the adaptation needed for the local church of Nigeria and local churches of similar African countries, is the one that adopts forms that reflect the religious mentality of the people, regardless of the state of cultural evolution of the people, as long as these are not bound up with error. It concludes, by using the anthropological theory of multilineal cultural evolution, rather than the unilinear, that liturgical reform and adaptation to “the times” cannot be interpreted

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Preparatory Document for the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission”, <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2021/09/07/0541.pdf>

unilaterally but multilaterally since what constitutes “the times” for the global north does not constitute same for the global south.

Basis for the Post Vatican II reforms: Provisions of SC

The basis for the reforms of the Post Vatican II liturgies is to be found in the Liturgy Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* of 3rd December 1963. They are found all through the document but particularly in articles 21-40.¹⁰³ Since the analysis of these focus upon vast areas and subthemes, we will delve into the provisions of articles 21, 23-25 which directly speak to the nature of the reforms and revisions envisioned.

The reason for the entire reform as stated in article 21 is, “in order that the Christian people may more surely derive an abundance of graces from the liturgy...”. For this reason, it was mandated that “...both texts and rites should be so drawn up that they express more clearly the holy things they signify and that the Christian people, as far as possible, are able to understand them with ease and to take part in the rites fully, actively and as befits a community”. This was a noble intention. Article 23 goes on to elaborate, stating that in the reform of rites, “Sound tradition may be retained and yet the way remain open to legitimate progress;” that theological, historical and pastoral investigations should be made into the parts of the liturgical rites to be revised and that “there must be no innovation unless the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires them.”

¹⁰³ Hereafter “SC”. All quotations are taken from, “Constitution on the Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 4 December 1963: AAS 56 (1964) 97-138 in: *Documents on the Liturgy* (DOL 1), Collegetown Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 4-27. Latin Texts from Josef Andreas Jungmann, „Konstitution über die Heilige Liturgie, Einleitung und Kommentar“ in Herbert Vorgrimler et al, *Das zweite vatikanische Konzil; Dokumente und Kommentare*. LThK band 1 (Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder 1966), 9-107.

In the light of these provisions of SC, the *Council for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* released a document called *Recognitione Ritualis Romani*,¹⁰⁴ in which the principles guiding the production of the *editiones typicae* of the various rites in the spirit of reform were articulated. The document articulated, on the basis of SC 23, 27, 30, 32, 34 and 35, seven principles for the revision of the *editiones typicae* of various rites, which could be summarised with the following points: preference for communal celebrations, active participation, elimination of special honours to private persons in the liturgies, simplicity of the rites with no encumbrance of useless repetitions, more reading from Sacred Scripture, prominence and importance of the ministry of preaching, provision of place for comments as the rites unfold.¹⁰⁵ For a guideline, this was still within the initial rationales or reasons for liturgical reform expressed in the *Memoria Sulla Riforma Liturgica* of 1946, which essentially set the stage for a general liturgical reform,¹⁰⁶ and also, the intentions of SC.

Looking, however, at the scheme of things in hindsight, and all the reference in various studies to “The missions” in the build-up to the start of Vatican II,¹⁰⁷ it is surprising that an explicit consideration was not inserted as a criterion regarding the state of liturgical realities in the missions. Specifically, is the Lugano conference in 1953, where, both Johannes Hoffinger and Bernard Botte intervened to the point that the direction of the planned reform seemed to be Eurocentric.¹⁰⁸ Bernard Botte describes a situation where Johannes Hoffinger with his experience

¹⁰⁴ Cf. B. Fischer; P. P. Gy, *De recognitione Ritualis Romani*, in *Notitiae* 19-20 (1966) 220-230.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 223. References made here to SC are, 27, 30, 31, 32, 34, and 35.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Carlo Braga, *La Riforma Liturgica di Pio XII. Documenti. 1. La Memoria sulla Riforma Liturgica..* (Roma: Libretici Editrice Vaticana 2003). Here 9-13.

¹⁰⁷ The various International Study Meetings on the liturgy held in the build-up to Vatican II by members of the Liturgical Movement comes to mind here. Many of those who attended these meetings became the *periti*, consultants and otherwise at the Council, and after the Council, members of the *Consilium*.

¹⁰⁸ Schmitt, *Die Internationale liturgischen Studientreffen*, 136.

in the missions had to resist a proposition by a scholar to eliminate exorcisms from Adult Baptisms. Hoffinger termed exorcisms as “indispensable for mission counties.”¹⁰⁹ According to Botte, this intervention was for him “a flash of light” where he had to ask the question of himself, “Are we working for Europe or for the universal Church”? He concluded that, “It was somewhat dangerous to think of a liturgical reform with only Europe in mind, especially when pastoral experience was being stressed.”¹¹⁰

On the backdrop of this intervention by Hoffinger, an International Study Week on Mission and Liturgy was held at Nijmegen and Uden in Holland from September 12th -19th of 1959. Although his eminence, Valerian Cardinal Garcias, Archbishop of Bombay at the time, who was president of the assembly spoke of participants from “mission countries” like “Africa, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Korea, China, Japan, Cylon, Malaya, etc...,” there was actually no single African among the 28 contributors of papers.¹¹¹ At this time, however, the Nigerian Dominic Ekandem was already Auxiliary Bishop of Calabar from 1953/1954,¹¹² and there was a formidable African clergy led by Bishop Joseph Kiwanuka of Masaka Uganda, who had become bishop since 1939, and was consecrated by Pope Pius XII in Rome.¹¹³ It is said that Kiwanuka had up to 56 “well-trained” African priests by at least 1940.¹¹⁴ There was also Bishop Laurean Rugambwa of Dar es Salaam, who later attended Vatican II as cardinal, ordained in 1952; Bishop Dlamini of

¹⁰⁹ Bernard Botte, *From Silence to Participation: An Insider's View of Liturgical Renewal*. Translated by John Sullivan. (Washington D. C : The Pastoral Press 1988), 82.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹¹¹ Cf. Johannes Hoffinger, ed., *Liturgy and the Missions* (Collegeville Minnesota: Liturgical Press 1962), ix-xii.

¹¹² https://www.catholic-church.org/~mspnigeria/public_html/founder.htm. Retrieved 29.02.24.

¹¹³ Cf. Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa, 1450-1950* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1996), 565.

¹¹⁴ <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/joseph-kiwanuka>. Retrieved 29.02.24.

Umzimkulu diocese in South Africa with a formidable local clergy, consecrated in 1954.¹¹⁵ In fact, at this time, there was certainly a good number of African Bishops and clergy. In Tanganyika, two bishops had been consecrated—the first in 1951 and the second in 1956; a bishop was consecrated in Ruanda in 1952 (present-day Rwanda) and one in Basutoland (present-day Lesotho). Consecrations also took place in Nyasaland and Kenya in 1956, where each received a bishop.¹¹⁶ There was also Bishop Dieudonné Yougbaré, the first native Bishop of French-speaking West Africa consecrated in 1956 in Burkina Faso.¹¹⁷

Furthermore, despite the fact, that the very heart of the liturgical renewal, going back to the time of Pius X, but especially with the initiatives during the pontificate of Pius XII,¹¹⁸ was to be pastoral in nature, with special considerations for the missions, only Bishop Joseph Malula, the then Auxiliary of the diocese of Leopoldville (Later Kinshasa), was a member of the preparatory liturgical commission from a total number of sixty-five.¹¹⁹ It is important to underscore this, because essentially, in Council situations or Synod situations, the Synod Fathers only get to discuss the *schemata* presented to them, they do not develop the *schemata* during the synod. One could make observations (*animadversiones*), corrections (*emendationes*) or vote (*suffragia*); the

¹¹⁵ George S. Mukuka, “First Indigenous Catholic Bishop in South Africa Bonaventure Dlamini”, in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 124 (2006), 70-81. Here, 74.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 71.

¹¹⁷ Magloire Somé, “Christian Base Communities in Burkina Faso: Between Church and Politics” translated by Cecily Bennett, in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 31:3 (2001), 275-304. Here, 281.

¹¹⁸ Apart from the *Memoria sulla riforma liturgica* already mentioned were several initiatives that had pastoral and missionary implication carried out by Pius XII. Cf. Victor Usman Jamahh, *A New Look at Liturgy and the Principle of Active Participation* (Abuja: Paulines Publication Africa 2017), 56-71. Hereafter, Jamahh, *A New Look at Liturgy*. Cf. also, Nicola Giampietro, *The Development of the liturgical Reform as seen by Cardinal Ferdinando Antonelli from 1948-1970*. (Fort Collins Colorado: Roman Catholic Books 2009),

¹¹⁹ See list in, Anibale Bugnini, *The Liturgical Reform 1948-1975*, translated by Matthew J. O’Connell. (Collegeville Minnesota: Liturgical Press), 14-16.

agenda to be discussed, however, is set by the *schemata*, which is drawn by the preparatory commissions.¹²⁰

The input of African Bishops (Or Possibility of input) on the provisions of SC

During Vatican II, of the one hundred and twenty members of the central commission from all around the world and various confessions, there were three Africans, representing 2.5 percent: Archbishops Eugene Dionysius Hurley of Durban, Bernad Yago of Abidjan and Jerome Rakotomalala of Antananarivo.¹²¹ Bishop Joseph Malula, again, made it into the commission for the Sacred Liturgy as the only African out of twelve members.¹²² There were, out of the fourteen listed for various commission from Nigeria, four native Nigerians: Bishops J. C. Anyaogu, Auxiliary of Onitsha, G. Okoye of Port Harcourt, D. Ekandem, Auxiliary of Calabar, and A. Nwedo of Umuahia. Bishop J. Hagan of Makurdi, who was nominated for the commission on sacred liturgy, was eventually not elected to it.¹²³

It was, therefore, natural, that the discussions on the *Schema*¹²⁴ presented for the reform of the Sacred Liturgy from the fourth general session of the first period of the Council on the 22nd of October 1962 until it was passed on the 3rd of December, 1963 was to be dominated by others. A typical example of this is seen in the issue of adaptation, which appeared in the *Schema* under chapter one (B) with the title, “Norms drawn from principles of adaptation to the genius and

¹²⁰ The rules of engagement in the case of SC were clearly set out by the General Secretary during the fifth general assembly on October 23, 1962, at the beginning of the discussions on the *schemata*. Cf. *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II, Volumen Prima, Pars I*, (Roma: Typis Poliglotis Vaticanis 1960), 332-348. The English version is on pp. 346. Hereafter, AS I, Pars I.

¹²¹ Cf. AS I, Pars I, 27-31.

¹²² Ibid. 34-35.

¹²³ AS I Pars I, 86-87 shows that there were eventually 16 members of this commission voted and approved by the 6th of November 1962, of which Malula was the only African.

¹²⁴ Cf. AS I, Pars I, 262-303. (Nos 157-202).

tradition of peoples.”¹²⁵ According to Emil Joseph Lengeling, the need for adaptation as discussed in this section of the *Schema* originated as a need which was peculiar to the missions.¹²⁶ Several interventions from non-mission territory bishops, eventually led to the issue of adaptation being applied broadly to include non-mission territories.¹²⁷ Eventually, SC 38 states,

Provisions shall also be made, even in the revisions of liturgical books, for legitimate variations and adaptations to different groups, regions and peoples, especially in mission lands, provided the substantial unity of the Roman Rite is preserved; this should be born in mind when the rites are drawn up and rubrics devised.”¹²⁸

The broad interpretation of this article seems to have necessitated the elimination of the phrase “In substantiali unitate”,¹²⁹ (within the substantial unity...) and its replacement with the phrase, “Provided the unity of the roman rite is preserved...” (servata substantiali unitate romani...). The implication of this statement from the *Schema* presented, however, seems to have meant that the liturgical books published after Vatican II, should have provided for legitimate variations of the rites, and not merely regulations about legitimate variations. As B. Luykx has observed in his commentary, application of this principle is to have been, “both in the structure of the rites and in the composition of the rubrics....”¹³⁰ What this means is that rites were to be reformed and provisions made for adaptations in the various typical editions for various groups and peoples according to their psychological character, worldview and cultural-religious evolution,

¹²⁵ Normae ex principiis de aptatione ad ingenium et traditions populum”. Cf. AS I, Pars I, 270-271. (Nos 165-166)

¹²⁶ Cf. Emil Joseph Lengeling, *Die Konstitution des zweiten vatikanischen Konzils über die heilige Liturgie: Lateinisch-deutscher Text mit einem Kommentar*. (Münster: Verlag Regensburg 1964), 86-91.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹²⁸ Cf. DOL 1:38.

¹²⁹ Cf. AS I, Pars I, 270.

¹³⁰ B. Luykx, „Norms for Adapting the Liturgy to the Genius and Traditions of Peoples” in A. Bugnini and C. Braga, *Commentary and the Instruction on the Sacred Liturgy*. (New York: Benzinger Brothers 1965), 100-112. Here, 100.

especially in the missions.¹³¹ This would have provided for variations in the spirit of Synodality, while respecting the religious evolution and level of the mission countries.

The caution in the observation of Valerian Cardinal Garcias of Bombay probably serves to demonstrate what some in the missions felt about the push for adaptations. His message to the assembly on this could be summarized in the phrase, “Festinare lente”, meaning, “Go slowly”, or literally, “hurry slowly” which he used repeatedly in his intervention¹³² to express what he felt should be done with regard to adaptation, especially in the missions. He goes on to express, using an old Gallican proverb that, “That which is best can sometimes be the enemy of that which is merely good.”¹³³

It is the observation of the Nigerian Dominic Cardinal Ekandem, at the time, the Auxiliary of Calabar, that sheds more light on the need to make special room for the religious stage of development of those in the missions, especially as regards the Christian faith. Although his observation was eventually not so much taken into consideration, I consider it very informative, especially now in hindsight, and as such I have translated it into English in its entirety and I reproduce it with the Latin here.

Latin¹³⁴	English Translation
Multi, ut videtur, censent quod sine aptatione in lingua, in arte in re musica, inn tota	Many seem to think that without adaptation in language, in art, in music, and in the

¹³¹ Cf. Emil Joseph Lengeling, Die Konstitution des zweiten vatikanischen Konzils über die heilige Liturgie: Lateinisch-deutscher Text mit einem Kommentar. (Münster: Verlag Regensburg 1964), 91.

¹³² Cf. AS I, Pars 1, 400-407.

¹³³ “illud quod est optimum potest esse interdum inimicum ei quod est mere bonum”, Cf. AS I, Pars 1, 401.

¹³⁴ AS I, Pars 1, 620-621.

<p>liturgia, fidei progressus impeditur. Et ideo nimia anxietatae de hac questione laborant: contra illos, sequentes rationes affero</p> <p>1. In pluribus regionibus, praesertim in Africa, fides nuper praedicata, nondum est assimilata. Oportet neoconvertos per longum tempus religionem christianam exercere et fidem, contra impugnantes indegna defendere, ea adhibentes media traditionalia quibus per saecula usi sunt antecessores nostri ad fundandam et defendendam ecclesiam Christi. Si enim neoconverti non sunt in fide bene fundati et in praxi et traditione ecclesiae bene edotici, difficile erit eis rationem de novis aptationibus reddere. Missionarii munus prae ceteris est fidem, ut ipse accepit, populo tradere; et aptationes suo tempore faciendas successoribus suis indigenis relinquere.</p> <p>2. In concilio Vaticano primo, quot erant episcopi ex Africae regionibus? Ne unus</p>	<p>liturgy as a whole, the progress of faith is hindered; therefore, they labor with excessive anxiety about this question: against them, I bring the following reasons</p> <p>1. In many countries, especially in Africa, the newly preached faith has not yet been assimilated. It is necessary for the new converts to practice the Christian religion and for a long time so that they could defend the faith against unworthy assailants, using the traditional means that our ancestors used for centuries to found and defend the church of Christ. For if the new converts are not well grounded in the faith and well educated in the practice and tradition of the church, it will be difficult for them to account for the new adaptations. The task of the missionary, above all others, is to deliver the faith to the people, as he himself received; and to leave the adaptations to be made in its own time, to his native successors.</p>
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<p>quidem, qui fallor. Quot hodie in nostro Conciliae oecumenico? Plusquam sexaginta, inter quos sunt archiepiscopi etiam cardinalis. Et quaedam aptationes in Liturgiae lingua, in arte sacra in re musica necessariae fuerant ut nos ad fidem et ad sacerdotium traheremur? Timor eorum qui dicunt nos sine aptatione conversiones non obtinere, fundamento caret et argumentum eorum factis contradicatur; nam nos sacerdotes et episcopi indigenae pro magna parte neo-conversi sumus ex infidelitate vel ex protestantisimo</p> <p>3. Meminisse iuvat, episcopos et sacerdotes per plures, in territoriis missionum laborantes, externos esse. Et sicut natione et colore ab indigenis differunt, ita etiam indole mentis. Numquam perfectae intelligunt ingenium mentis indigenae nec sensum cordis eius plane percipiunt. Ideo in aptationibus faciendis iudices non sunt. Aptationes quas ipsi nunc introducunt forte</p>	<p>2. At the first Vatican Council, how many bishops were there from African countries? Not even one, if I am not mistaken. How many today in our Ecumenical Council? More than sixty, among whom are archbishops and also cardinals. And what adaptations in the language of the Liturgy, in the sacred art, in the matter of music, were necessary in order to draw us to the faith and to the priesthood? The fear of those who say that we cannot obtain conversions without adaptation, lacks foundation, and their argument is contradicted by their facts; for we, native priests and bishops, are for the most part (new) converts from unbelief or from Protestantism.</p> <p>3. It helps to remember, that many of the bishops and priests working in the mission territories are foreigners. And as they differ from the natives in nation and color, so also in the character of their mind. They never fully understand the character of the native's</p>
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<p>successoribus Africanæ non placebunt, e. g. Madonnæ nigro colore pictam. Et illi qui credebant se auxilium præstare potius impedimentum progressui pronebant.</p>	<p>mind, nor do they clearly perceive the feeling of his heart. They are, therefore, no judges in the adaptations to be made. The adaptations which they themselves are now introducing may not please the successors of the</p>
<p>4. Ubi sacerdotes et episcopi indigenæ iam existunt argumentum adhuc valet. Nam numerus eorum, comparatione facta cum clero advena, exiguus est, et in conventibus episcoporum vox exterorum, ætate et experientia prædita, contra persuasionem minoris numeri prævalebit.</p>	<p>Africans; for example, the Blessed Virgin Mary painted as a black woman, such that, those who believed that they were providing help were instead presenting an obstacle to progress.</p>
<p>Conclusio: In adaptatione, non solum lente et caute procedendum esse censeo, sed adaptationem episcopis indigenis relinquendam esse, ne forte in consultis adaptationibus destruamus domum spiritualem antecessorum labore, sudore et sanguine aedificatam</p>	<p>4. Where native priests and bishops already exist, the argument is still valid. For their number, compared with the foreign clergy, is small, and in the meetings of the bishops the voice of foreigners, endowed with age and experience, will prevail against the conviction of a smaller number.</p>
	<p>Conclusion: In the adaptation, I think that not only should we proceed slowly and carefully, but that the adaptation should be left to the native bishops, lest in deliberate adaptations</p>

	we destroy the spiritual house built by the work, sweat and blood of our ancestors.
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In hindsight, one might view some of these declarations as extreme, for example, the one about language. Bishop Joseph Malula, (Later Cardinal) would disagree with Ekandem on these points within the precinct of liturgical language.¹³⁵ The point that Cardinal Ekandem was trying to make, however, is the same with what Garcias made: There should be only a slow drift towards adaptation and native Bishops (not the reform commission) should be left to make adaptations, where necessary since they would have been more in touch with the inner needs of the people. These words of caution remain innocuous to our eyes, or, even over exaggerated until we begin to examine some of the reforms to the rites in the light our present Christian-religious realities and the Nigerian genius.

The Book of Blessings and the Theology of Blessings in the Nigerian/African Context

The import of the fears and caution expressed by Cardinal Ekandem at the Council chamber in 1962 is demonstrated most explicitly nowhere else—although there are several other examples—as in the revision of the Book of Blessings and the theology of Blessings and sacramentals.¹³⁶ For centuries, based on such examples as that of Christ himself in the Gospel of Mark 8:7, where he blessed the fish he gave to people, and such practices as are to be found in the ancient Church Orders like the Apostolic Tradition where such items as cheese, milk, honey and fruits are blessed, it had been the tradition that constitutive blessings, were both said over people

¹³⁵ I have presented a summary of this argument elsewhere. Cf. Jamahh, *A New Look at Liturgy*, Vol 1, 287-289.

¹³⁶ Cf. Jungmann, *Kommentar*, 72.

as well as things. Constitutive blessings are those blessings that designate persons or things for particular religious purposes or functions or ends. On the other hand, Invocative blessings, are implored on persons or objects, but do not designate them for a sacred or religious purpose or end. Their effect depends on the fervour of the recipient and on the will of God.¹³⁷

When it came to revising the Book of Blessings and Sacramentals in general, despite acknowledging that, “blessings used in the early Church would generally fall into the more recent category of constitutive blessings”, and that “blessings were imparted on material things used for a sacred function, such as holy water, sacred chrism, or the sacred vessels for the eucharistic Species,¹³⁸the committee responsible for the reforms, strayed from this long-standing tradition. They acknowledged that “the contemporary world is marked by an increasing tendency towards desacralization and secularization” and that

while in some parts of the world, including rural regions in Europe, but above all Africa and Latin America, blessings are still firmly rooted in the lives of the faithful, in other parts, especially in the developed and industrialized countries of Europe and North America, the use of blessings has diminished significantly.¹³⁹

Despite acknowledging all of this, the reformers went on to adopt principles of reform that did not consider the fact that blessings are still firmly rooted in the lives of the faithful in some parts of the world, like Africa; like Nigeria. This would have been a good opportunity to allow for synodality of the faith and to acknowledge that how the faith is lived by the faithful may differ in practice from place to place. In fact, as Lang has noted, for the sake of the fear of superstition, one of the working principles of the committee was that blessings should be invoked primarily on

¹³⁷ Cf. Uwe Michael Lang, *Theologies of Blessings: Origins and Characteristics of De benedictionibus* (1984) in, *Antiphon 15:1* (2011) 27-46. Here, 34. Hereafter, Lang, *De Benedictionibus*.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

persons and not things or places. Pierre Mariae Gy, the leader of the group even questioned whether the verb “to bless” should be applied to inanimate objects like fruits or farm produce.¹⁴⁰ For this reason, invocations against diabolic powers was to be made relative and left to the conferences of Bishops. The fear was that “blessings should not become merely apotropaic and turn into amulets or ‘talismans’.”¹⁴¹ The commentary of Lang at this point is very instructive:

Here a theological shift occurs: whereas for centuries many blessings had a strong apotropaic element, which was expressed in the actual prayers, and blessed objects, above all holy water, were meant for the protection of those who used them against the influence of evil – and indeed of the Evil One – this aspect of blessings was now to be discouraged.¹⁴²

This is exactly the point that Cardinal Ekandem had been trying to make when he gave his speech which has been dealt with before. African Christians, for example, who could associate with the palpable problem of good and evil, protection against evil and the power of Christ to be able to deal with this, were automatically robbed of this Christian formation which is key to their Christian existence. Here the principle of Cardinal Garcias, “Festinare lente” also comes to play. Adaptation seems to have been made towards secularism while the virtue of religion was downplayed for the sake of “the times” which was applicable to selected “few” places, which were and are in decline when it comes to religion and Christianity in particular. Could this have been because of the lack of input from native Africans? Out of the 60 members of the *Consilium*, only four were Africans, with only one advisor—Fr. Kilombe from Malawi—out of a combined number of 219 consultors and advisors.¹⁴³ At some point, the study group 23 which dealt with this reform was made up only of 5 Europeans.¹⁴⁴ In essence, not only the process of reform, but the reform

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 35.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 35

¹⁴² Ibid., 36.

¹⁴³ See Bugnini, Reform of the Liturgy, 942-952.

¹⁴⁴ See Bugnini, Reform of the Liturgy, 799.

itself of Blessings and sacramentals, seems to have been skewed in favour of one side of the globe, and this, despite the fact that the hermeneutic and historical contexts of the development of SC 79, which is the foundation of this reform, was supposed to have done the reforms, “For the sake of the Missions”.¹⁴⁵ It is pertinent to note here that a portion of SC 79, which stated that reform of blessings and sacramentals should be done in such a way as to allow lay persons to give some blessings, one of the major criteria used by study group 23 in the reform, was resisted by bishops in the aula of the council with very significant “no” votes: a whopping 607 votes from 2,244 on the 17th of October 1963 and still 132 “no” votes on the 21st of November 1963, that is, after very heavy efforts at explaining why the reform had to be done that way.¹⁴⁶

There are practical effects of this had on the present rite of blessing Holy Water we have today in the light of what Cardinal Ekandem had warned about. Daniel van Slyke has written a very good article on the contrast between the Order of Blessing Water in the present ritual and the ones before it.¹⁴⁷ Historically, the blessing of holy water had been preeminent among the blessings of the Roman Ritual. It consistently occupied the first place within the section on blessings in the various editions of the Ritual until the Second Vatican Council.¹⁴⁸ Why was this so? Apart from the blessing of holy water itself, all other blessings required the use of holy water, and so, the blessing of water was always placed in any ritual before all other blessings. Furthermore, because holy water was supposed to be sanctified in order to sanctify all other things and people, the formula for its blessing reflected this. The instruction describing the use of holy water in the ritual before Vatican II stated that, “the faithful could take it home for sprinkling on sick family and

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Jungmann Kommentar, 73 and Lengeling, Kommentar, 165.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Lengeling, Kommentar, 165.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Daniel G. van Slyke, “The Order for Blessing Water: Past and Present” in, *Antiphon* 8:2 (2003), 12-23. Here,

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 12.

friends, on homes, fields, vines, etc., and for sprinkling themselves daily”, a practice which can be traced back at least to the year 890.¹⁴⁹ These are instructions that would immediately make impact on Africans at the level of their Christian existence. A comparison of the two texts in the 1952 Roman Ritual and the 1982 Book of Blessings should shed more light here.

1952 ¹⁵⁰	1984 ¹⁵¹
<p>Prayer begins:</p> <p>V. Our help is in the name of the Lord</p> <p>R. Who made heaven and earth.</p> <p>Salt:</p> <p>Thou creature of salt, I purge thee of evil by the living + God, by the true + God, by the holy + God, by the God who ordered thee through Elisha, the prophet to be cast into the water to cure its unfruitfulness. Be thou a purified salt for the health of believers, giving soundness of body and soul to all who use thee. In whatever place thou art sprinkled, may phantoms and wickedness, and Satan’s cunning be banished. And let</p>	<p>In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>V. “May God, who from water and the Holy Spirit has regenerated us in Christ, be with all.”</p> <p>R. “And with your spirit,”</p> <p>V. With this blessing of water, we recall Christ the living water and the sacrament of baptism, in which we have been reborn in water and the Holy Spirit. Whenever, therefore, we are sprinkled with this water, or upon entering a church or staying at home we</p>

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 12.

¹⁵⁰ The Roman Ritual, vol III: The Blessings. Translated and edited with notes by Philip T. Weller (Caritas Publishing 2017), 8-13. I have adapted the English in some places a little.

¹⁵¹ Version in van Slyke, Order of Blessing Water, 16.

<p>every unclean spirit be repulsed by Him Who shall come to judge the living and dead, and the world by fire.</p> <p>Let us pray.</p> <p>O Almighty, everlasting God! Humbly we implore thy boundless mercy that thou wouldst deign of thy goodness to bless + and sanctify + this creature of salt which thou hast given for the use of mankind. May all that use it find in it a remedy for soul and body. And let everything which it touches or sprinkles be freed from uncleanness and assault from evil spirits. Though our Lord.</p> <p>Water:</p> <p>Thou creature of water, I purge thee of evil in the name of God + the Father almighty, in the name of Jesus + Christ, His Son, our Lord, and in the power of the Holy + Spirit, that thou mayest be water fit to brace us against the envious foe. Mayest thou be empowered to drive him forth and exile him together with his fallen angels by the power</p>	<p>use it with the sign of the cross, we will give thanks to God for his indescribable gift, and implore his help, in order that we might by living hold on to what we have received by faith.</p> <p>Reading: John 7:37-39</p> <p>Prayer:</p> <p>Blessed are you, Lord, all-powerful God, who (qui) in Christ, the living water of our salvation, have deigned to bless and inwardly reform us: grant that we who by the sprinkling of this water or by its use are strengthened may, with renewed youth of the soul through the power of the Holy Spirit, continually walk in newness of life. Through Christ our Lord. R. Amen.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Lord, holy Father, look upon us, who (qui), redeemed by your Son, have been reborn</p>
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<p>of the selfsame Jesus Christ, our Lord Who shall come to judge the living and the dead, and the world by fire.</p> <p>Let us pray</p> <p>O God, who for man's salvation dost dispense wondrous mysteries with the efficacious sign of water, hearken to our prayer—pouring forth thy benediction + upon this element which we consecrate with manifold purifications. Let this creature serve thee in expelling demons and curing diseases. Whatsoever it sprinkles in the homes of the faithful, be it cleansed and delivered from harm. Let such homes enjoy a spirit of goodness and an air of tranquillity, freed from the baneful and hidden snared. By the sprinkling of this water may everything opposed to the safety and repose of them that dwell therein be banished, so that they may possess the wellbeing they seek in calling upon thy holy name, and be protected from all peril. Through our Lord.</p>	<p>through Baptism in water and the Holy Spirit: grant, we beseech you, that those who will be sprinkled with this water, may be renewed in body and in mind and may render pure service to you. Through Christ our Lord.</p> <p>R. Amen.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>God creator of all things, who (qui) in water and the Spirit have given form and image to man and to the universe.</p> <p>R. Bless and purify your Church.</p> <p>Christ, who (qui) from the side pierced on the cross have made the sacraments of salvation flow forth.</p> <p>R. Bless and purify your Church. Holy Spirit, who (qui) from the baptismal bosom of the Church, in the bath of regeneration, have made us new creatures.</p>
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<p>After the Mixture of Salt and Water</p> <p>Let us pray</p> <p>Author of invincible strength and king of an unconquerable empire, ever the gloriously Triumphant One! Who restrains the force of adversary, Who overcomes the fierceness of the devouring enemy, Who valiantly puts down the hostile influences! Prostrate and fearsome we beseech thee, Lord, consider kindly this creature of salt and water, make it honoured, and sanctify it with the dew of thy sweetness. Wherever it is sprinkled in thy name, may devilish infliction cease, venomous terror be driven afar. But let the presence of the Holy Spirit be ever with us as we implore thy mercy. Through our Lord, Jesus Christ, thy Son, Who lives and reigns with thee in unity of the same Holy Spirit, God eternally. R. Amen.</p>	<p>R. Bless and purify your Church.</p> <p>V. “May this water be a memorial of baptism received, and may it recall Christ, who has redeemed us by his Passion and Resurrection. R. Amen.”</p> <p>Baptismal Song</p>
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The preference among these two prayers for Nigerians could be demonstrated by my personal teaching experience of ten years at both post graduate and graduate levels across the wide ethnological spaces of Nigeria in which no person has preferred the Post Vatican II prayer over the pre-Vatican II one. How valid then, we may ask, has this adaptation “to the times” and for “the missions” been in the Nigerian context? A series of rhetorical questions asked by van Slyke about the present rite of blessing water is pertinent here,

...At the completion of this Order, is the water used therein blessed? Does it differ from any other water? Can one answer “yes” to these questions when the Ordo itself provides no justification for an affirmative answer? Are the members of Christ’s faithful deceived who believe the water in their churches’ fonts is blessed? Will the farmer who sprinkles such water on his failing crops only benefit to the extent that it helps him recall his salvation? If a mother sprinkles it on her sick infant, does the infant who has not yet the use of reason – and so cannot “recall Christ” – benefit? For whom is the blessing intended – the mother or the infant? Indeed, if the purpose of blessing is primarily praise and thanksgiving, can anyone who is absent from the liturgical celebration of the Order participate in the blessing?¹⁵²

Additionally, which of the two formulae do we regard as authentic; a prayer which could be traced back to the Gelasian Sacramentary of the 6th/7th century¹⁵³ and the Gregorian of the 7th century;¹⁵⁴ prayers which were based on ancient manuals like the Apostolic Tradition of the 3rd century and sustained until 1962, and a prayer developed almost “ex nihilo” between 1962 and 1984 by scholars, departing from centuries of Tradition and which has no bearing with how Nigerians/Africans perceive the power of God—of Christ working in the world? This is an

¹⁵² van Slyke, Order of Blessing Water, 19.

¹⁵³ GeV 1556-1561. Cf. Leo Kunibert, Mohlberg, ed., *Liber Sacramentorum Romanae Aeclesiae Anni Circuli (Cod. Va t. Reg. lat. 316/Paris Bibl. Nat. 7193, 41 /56: Sacramentarium Gelasianum)* in Verbindung mit Leo Eizenhöfer und Petrus Siffrin. (Roma: Casa Editrice Herder 1960), 224-226.

¹⁵⁴ GrH, 1452-1455. Cf. Jean Deshusses, *Le sacramentaire grégorien: ses principales formes d’après les plus anciens manuscrits*, vol. 1, 3rd ed. (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1992) 472-75.

example of one of the fears that Cardinal Ekandem had expressed at the council: “For if the new converts are not well grounded in the faith and well educated in the practice and tradition of the church, it will be difficult for them to account for the new adaptations.”

How many of our Nigerian/African Christians today would perceive the second prayer here within the realm of the full, conscious and active participation of all the faithful advocated for by SC 14, as “their faith” or “their faith of the Church” when a prayer which mirrors the sentiments of their worldview, making allusions to the power of God working through sacramentals, has been arbitrarily replaced by one that seems “empty” in the name of “adaptation to the times”? Whose “times” is being referred to here? the “times” of the vibrant young churches of Africa, and others, or that of the once vibrant, but sadly declining churches of the once Christian West? Incidentally, scholars like Adogame,¹⁵⁵ Deji Aiyegboyin¹⁵⁶ and Samson Fatokun,¹⁵⁷ have shown that the preference for the pre-Vatican II prayer is simply due to worldview as these same sentiments are found in the use of water by the African Independent Churches and Nigerian Pentecostals. The use of the prayer in the present ritual of 1984, therefore, poses untold challenges to pastoral work for Catholic pastors and ministers.

Evaluation

¹⁵⁵ Afe Adogame, „Doing Things with Water: Water as a Symbol of ‘Life’ and ‘Power’ in the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC) in, *Studies in World Christianity* 6:1 (2000), 59-77. Afe Adogame, “‘Aiyé Lojá, Orun nílè:’ The Appropriation of Ritual Space-time in the Cosmology of the Celestial Church of Christ” in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 30:1 (2000), 3-29

¹⁵⁶ Deji Isaac Aiyegboyin, “Aladura Spirituality: Authentic African Initiative in Christian Missions” in *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 16:1 (2011), 165-177.

¹⁵⁷ Samson Adetunji Fatokun, “Water and Its Cultic Use in African Initiated Churches in Yoruba-land of South western Nigeria: An Issue in African Development Discourse” in *Swedish Missiological Themes* 96:4 (2008), 349-376.

In a paper presented to the Catholic Bishops' Conference at their First Plenary for the Year 2024, Prof. Anthony Akinwale, OP, drawing on the principles of synodality established by the Church for centuries and particularly promoted by the pontificate of Pope Francis, talked about a "Synodality in time and space". It is the synodality in space that is quite imperative for us Africans and Nigeria today, even though this "synodality of space" cannot be done in isolation of the "synodality in time", which is "synodality with the past".¹⁵⁸ Synodality in space, portends that the church in Africa/Nigeria acknowledges its stage of Christian religious experience, such that we own our history, live according to our history and experience, formulate our Christian faith and Catholic faith according to that history, articulate it assertively as it is (not as some people think it should be) and with this, engage in synodality with other churches, rather than being compelled or manipulated into living according to the history of one section of global Christianity, as if our religio-cultural history and ideological historical evolution are the same. This is the essence of the "participation, communion and mission" that are the cardinal points of synodality.

The point being made here is that while Nigerian and African Christianity largely exist in secular states, the African worldview unlike the contemporary worldview of societies of the west, is powered by religion and religiosity rather than secularism. But even for western societies, it has taken several centuries for their worldview to become secularised, in the sense of being largely devoid of religious considerations, or religious propriety. Their history, with several ideologies and societal developments like the Renaissance-Humanism, rationalism, empiricism, relativism, pragmatism and others, have definitely contributed to this.

¹⁵⁸ Anthony Akinwale, Synod on Synodality: Areas of Concern for the Church in Nigeria. Paper Presented to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria at its First Plenary Meeting of the Year 2024 at the Catholic Secretariat, Abuja, February 19, 2024.

Furthermore, is the Enlightenment, clericalism, anticlericalism, modernism, atheism, and the sexual revolution. These are systems and principles that have shaped Christian-societal consciousness in the Global north. While all these were happening, Sub-Saharan Africa has had a different experience. In fact, our Christian experience and religio-cultural experience is shaped by entirely different factors: trans-Atlantic slavery, colonialism, Islam, Christian missionary expeditions, conflicts, economic domination, poverty, religious pluralism, Pentecostalism and a heightened religious consciousness. For Africans and Nigerians in particular, the consistent strife between the forces of evil and good, as well as, in the light of this struggle, the sole dependence on God and the things of God in everything, is first nature. It is, therefore, counterproductive for us to adopt prayers that are removed from our religious mentality and based on the socio-religious evolution of others rather than ours, especially when there had been one that had sustained the Church for more than a Millennium and generations and fits the stage of our religio-cultural evolution and actual Christian existence, which is still available to us. This would be the true convergence of “synodality in space” with “synodality in time”.

There is an anthropological theory that supports this position, namely, the Cultural Evolutionary Theory. The Cultural Evolutionary Theory is that which holds that culture evolves and is not static; that cultures evolve from simpler forms to more complex forms. All anthropologists agree on this. The point of divergence in the cultural evolutionary theory is between the unilinear Cultural Evolutionary Theory led by people like E. B. Taylor¹⁵⁹ and Lewis H. Morgan¹⁶⁰ on the one side, and the multilinear Cultural Evolution Theory on the other hand, led

¹⁵⁹ Edward B. Taylor, *Primitive Cultures: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art and Custom, Vol I and II* (London: John Murray 1871).

¹⁶⁰ Lewis H. Morgan, *Ancient Society: Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization*. (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr and Company 1877).

by Franz Boaz.¹⁶¹ The unilinear theorists hold that the culture of man is one and that the history and experience of the people like Africans, American Indians and others represent, more or less nearly, the history and experience of the ancestors of Europeans and Americans when in corresponding conditions. This would mean that there is only one standard of measuring progress in cultural evolution and that the standard is that of the Europeans and Americans.

On the other hand, those on the multilinear side turned completely away from broad generalizations about culture. They rejected universal stages outright, instead conceptualizing cultural evolution as a process consisting of a number of forward paths of different styles and lengths. They posited that while no specific evolutionary changes are experienced by all cultures universally, human societies do generally evolve or progress; in other words, everyone progresses and there is no one universal standard that all must tend to in comparison. What this means is that the present state of European and American culture has come as a result of their own unique societal and developmental evolution just like those of Africa and Nigeria at present have come from our unique societal and developmental evolution. While cultures should be open to learning from each other through acculturation, there is, therefore, no culture which is to be treated as “maxim”.

Conclusion

What cardinal Ekandem said in that hall at the Second Vatican Council, as has been analyzed, is simply that Africans be allowed to live Christianity at their pace; to operate within our own cultural memory and multilinear cultural progression where categories like exorcism, the consciousness of evil, slavery, colonialism, injustices, religious and denominational pluralism, respect, reverence,

¹⁶¹ Franz Boaz, *The Mind of Primitive Man*. (New York: Macmillan 1922).

propriety, religiosity, verbosity and others are natural, and not abbreviation, brevity, secularism, gender ideology, and others, all of which are categories that come from outside the African genius in our present stage of cultural evolution and are known mostly only to those who have read them in books or heard them propounded by people with a different history. There is a large extent to which Cardinal Ekandem was right that we had not finished learning how to be really Christian before forms that were adapted “to the times” were given to us which have proven to be far away from us. The example of the Prayer of Blessing Holy Water outside Mass has been used to demonstrate this, and it would seem that this is just a tip of the iceberg among several aspects of the reforms when they are to be interpreted within the ambit of African Christian History, evolution and development.

The only way for Nigerian and African theologians to redeem this is to begin to study, interpret and adapt these reforms to “our own times” and “our own space” and not to “the times” or spaces of any other. This is the only way that the synodality called for by Pope Francis, which also means co-responsibility for the faith of the whole Church, will be actualized among us.

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The Relationship Spirituality in the Third Commandment and its Implications for Rwanda By Ntaganira Celestin

Abstract

The Sabbath commandment is about a good relationship and not really about a particular day of the week. We do not intend to say that any person can decide for himself on which day to celebrate the Sabbath but only those days of the week with a specific meaning like Sunday regarding the resurrection of Christ. The purpose of this paper is to treat relationship in the Sabbath commandment. Though at times some other biblical texts are used, the guiding text of this work is Exodus 20:8-11. This work considers the context of the Sabbath command within the Decalogue and of course the Decalogue within the Pentateuch. Only for a reminder, God's ten commandments are also known as God's ten words. Therefore, this work uses two words: commandment and word interchangeably. That makes it curious to look at the religious experience of Israel before receiving the Decalogue. It will be realised that it is within the atmosphere of the Covenant relationship that God realises that his elected people need ten guiding words to live out the covenant. Then this work talks about what Christ teaches on the ten words and in particular how he celebrates the Sabbath. Of course, some other personalities in the New Testament are relied on, to substantiate the argument. It is also important to see how Christianity took on this Sabbath command on the Lord's Day. Lastly, this argument elaborates on how relationship spirituality is the backbone of the observance of the Sabbath. Though the problem is a universal one, this paper focuses on Rwandan society that has at times suffered a poor relationship. Talking of the Sabbath in relation to work during the six days of the week and in reference to creation highlights its universal dimension. The Sabbath rest changes humanity's toilsome work into a constructive viewpoint, resulting in meaningful and productive work worth celebrating. We undertake this venture of biblical reading of the third word of the Decalogue, within the context of spiritual theology. For a sample, Rwanda has suffered from the tragedy of ethnic-based disputes among its people, which has been exacerbated by political issues, power struggles, unequal property distribution, and unsolved historical grievances. The nation ended up in various wars and genocide against the Tutsi in 1994 when the extremist Hutu intended to exterminate all Tutsi. The Church should keep in mind as it provides pastoral and spiritual care for the people that when the father of the family invites all the characters specified in the Sabbath command for physical and spiritual rest, everyone is satisfied. In the same way, no Rwandan should lack an appropriate participation in the life of his/her country. For God has created all of us equal in dignity. To carry on this research, our study adopts a thematic analysis, and the themes are identified through their implication within a text. There is also a comparative and a hermeneutical analysis to apply what is found edifying in the Sabbath Commandment to the context of Rwanda. The text (literature) from the Sabbath Commandment influences the context of Rwanda, but the context of Rwanda also influences the Sabbath Commandment's text. The author influences me, but I also influence him through my historical experience.

Keywords: Sabbath, Spirituality, Relationship, Rwanda.

Introduction

The relationship spirituality in the third commandment and its implications for Rwanda intends to expose the spirituality of the relationship suggested by the Sabbath commandment (Exodus 20: 8-11). This commandment carries with it an aspect of recommendation to live well with the neighbour. The discussion offers a better understanding than just a popular opinion about the Sabbath day being a day of rest from activity. And that allows the third commandment to help Rwandan Christians resolve their conflict. The Sabbath invites the father of the family to share with all other people and creatures the divine gift of rest and freedom. This is the day when a slave gets the same favours as his master. Some people and Churches have misunderstood the Sabbath as a day of rest to mean inactivity while ignoring the real significance and spirituality of the commandment. This argument shows that on a passive basis, God rested from what he had been creating for the entire week. However, it should be kept in mind that God is actively gazing at and sustaining His creation. A question could be: what is the spirituality of Sabbath command all about? And this work finds out that it is all about rest that considers four dimensions of relationship. (1) a vertical dimension that considers man's relationship toward God; (2) an inward dimension that considers man's relationship to self as far as the world of personal wellbeing is concerned; (3) a horizontal dimension that deals with man's relationship to other human beings; (4) and downward dimension which is a relationship of a human being to all non-human creatures. Christ fulfils the Sabbath as he does for the whole Decalogue. This work can help Rwandans and all other well-wishers whose relationship was broken, to find a way to restore it. For we are made for togetherness and interdependence. So, the commandment of the Sabbath can no longer be viewed in terms of a particular day of the week but in how much we relate and remove the yoke that the more fortunate have placed on the less fortunate in society.

God's Creation in Sabbath Command, a Reason for Man to Rest

Exodus 20:8-11 version establishes the intertextual associations to creation, with a focus to holiness connected with the Sabbath command. Considering the universal nature of the Sabbath, it brings out well the theology of man's imitation of God and in it, relationship to the "other" with respect and love. Besides, some people have never felt deprived of their freedom as indicated by the Sabbath version of Dt 5:12-15 (¹² Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labour and do all your work. ¹⁴ But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work; you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you. ¹⁵ Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day.), and they have never taken time to reflect on the importance of being liberated. But creation presents itself before everyone in the world. Hence, using the Exodus version, everyone can understand this language. On the issue of numbering, different traditions have also various ways of numbering the ten words according to the grouping of phrases in the text and translations over time. After all, we must also bear in mind that the subdivision into verses is not in the original text, but was formulated in the second Christian millennium to facilitate the work of identifying biblical quotations.¹⁶² It is therefore purely editorial. This work takes the grouping where the Sabbath is the third (not the fourth) commandment as in the Catechism of the Catholic Church part 3, section 2, article 3.¹⁶³ With the third commandment in Exodus God provided how the whole week can be spent. Six days to respond to our earthly calling and the seventh day which is Sabbath,

¹⁶² P. DOWNEY-B. SHAW, *Everything you want to know about the Bible: Well maybe not everything but enough to get you started*, Zondervan, Michigan 2004, p. 75.

¹⁶³ J. W. KOTERSKI, *Remember the Sabbath Day, to Keep It Holy: Decalogue Tree*, in *Elephants and Toothaches*, E. BADOWSKA - F. PARMEGGIANI, eds., Fordham University Press, New York 2016, p. 97.

to spend a sacred time with Him and deepen our relationship with Him. On Sabbath, we rest and recuperate physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. It is designated in the word of God.

Ex 20: 8-11: Text, Structure, and Stylistic Aspects

⁸ Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labour and do all your work; ¹⁰ But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it, you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; ¹¹ For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.¹⁶⁴

Some of the characteristics that distinguish the Sabbath commandment from all other commandments in Ex 20 are: the Sabbath is the longest in terms of text in the Decalogue, with 55 words in the Masoretic Text. Ex 20:8-11 establishes the structure that begins with an opening command in verse 8 and the conclusion in verse 11b makes a parallelism between that which Israel is commanded and what God has done. They both speak of the Sabbath day, not the seventh day as in verses 9-11a. Verses 8 and 11b relate the day to the concept of sanctity. The basic guideline in verses 9-10a and the motivation clause in verse 11a, roughly correspond to each other too, by forming a parallelism between what Israel is required and what God has accomplished in creation. In verse 10b is an expansion to qualify the fundamental regulation.¹⁶⁵

This word of the Decalogue has two focuses, first on humanity (Ex 20:8-10) and then on God (Ex 20:11). The verb “Remember” introduces the Sabbath and brings attention to the distinctive character of the Sabbath in 20:8-11. Such construction form is found eight times in the book of Exodus and is always used in the context of the Exodus event and God’s covenant with Israel’s

¹⁶⁴ RSV: 2nd CE, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2006.

¹⁶⁵ M. L. ANDREASEN, *The Sabbath: which day and why?*, Teach Services, Inc., Georgia, 2011, p. 170.

patriarchs known as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For Example, God remembered and liberated Israel from Egypt (Ex 2:24, 6:4-5).¹⁶⁶

The Sabbath reveals that all work performed during the six weekdays may reflect the creativity, skilfulness and satisfaction of the Creator's work. Therefore, cessation of all work on the Sabbath day completes the work of the six weekdays. Moreover, the Sabbath and Sabbath holiness reveal the essential relationship between God and humanity, a relationship implied by the theological term *imago Dei* as it relates to the creation activity referred to in Gen 2:1-3, Ex 20:11. This seventh day is different from the others because it does not have boundaries or end. This points to the eschatological aspect referred to in Heb 4. From such, we see the mysterious relationship between the creator and the created world. And even the task of human beings to the universe. Man becomes a co-worker of God.¹⁶⁷

What does it mean to give up one day of seven days regarding the work of man's own hands? And we know that the work of one's hands in the Scriptures implies not only work but also an expression that indicates the making of idols. You will not make some images of the idol; it is the work of the hands of man. Such is found in psalms (Ps 115:4). Consequently, it can be reasoned that the idol is also the work of the hands of man that enslaves those who produce it. That can be the double-sidedness of work. Work can indicate likeness to God but it can also lead to man's slavery in terms of what turns into an idol. By idol, this work refers to a person or thing that is extremely admired, loved, or revered to the extent of equating that person or thing to a deity. The early missionaries and ethnographers in sub-Saharan Africa applied this term of idol misguidedly to some of the things and persons who were not taken as deities by Africans but who served as a

¹⁶⁶ T. C. ESKENAZI-D. J. HARRINGTON, e. A., eds., *The Sabbath in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, Crossroads, New York, 1991, p. 159.

¹⁶⁷ G. V. RAD, *Genesis*, trans. J. H. MARKS - J. BOWDEN, SCM Press, London, 1972, p. 63.

medium between man and God. The point of reference for resting from work is God the creator. On Sabbath, man recognises that what he does is not enough to save him, to give him life because there is a greater origin and it is God.¹⁶⁸

Investigating on Sabbath shows that the Sabbath is not only the day for the Lord but also for the whole creation. Such is true because all creatures benefit from this day. Being a day of rest and worship, the focus of the Sabbath must remain on God without ignoring that it also has an aspect of a relationship with a neighbour. Remember that this day is to be kept holy and holiness is only found in God. The Sabbath day, according to Jewish tradition falls on a Saturday, and for most Christians, it falls on a Sunday. Christians prefer to celebrate the Sabbath on the first day of the week because that is the day on which Christ rose from the grave. Christ is the true rest of God and man.¹⁶⁹

The Sabbath establishes a particular behaviour for Israel. Yet again, the Sabbath establishes the means of evaluating that required behaviour. Furthermore, the Sabbath provides the means of self-regulation and self-governing of one's behaviour. With Sabbath, individuals become subjects to God and at the same time, subjects to themselves. It is important to realise that the Sabbath creates and establishes a relationship with the addressees (father, son, daughter, male servant, female servant, livestock and sojourner). And in turn, that relationship creates those addressees as subjects of that command as long as they accept and adopt it. According to the Jewish religion, Jews are demanded by God to remember and observe the Sabbath. These two actions are represented by the lighting of two candles at the beginning of the Sabbath.

¹⁶⁸ L. M. HARTMAN, *Christian Sabbath-Keeping as a Spiritual and Environmental Practice*, in *Worldviews*, Vol. 15. 1 (2011), p. 56.

¹⁶⁹ R. BAUCKHAM, *Sabbath and Sunday in the Medieval Church in the West*, in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and theological Investigation*, D. A. CARSON, ed., Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1999, p. 300-301.

With the Sabbath in Exodus, the priestly understanding of creation and Israel's place in it is part of a regime of truth. To be Israel requires self-understanding which recognises the importance of creation for whom and what one is. That brings out that God is the creator and has a relationship with and responsibility for Israel. Of course, we are not forgetting the rest of creation. The Creator God renders Israel distinct among the peoples of the world by having it play a special role among them. According to Exodus 20:8-11, observing the Sabbath is based on creation, which holds that the Sabbath is a component of the global order that is ruled by the all-powerful creator. The reason why the Sabbath rest in Exodus differs from the one in Deuteronomy is only that each command tries to create a particular subject position for Israel. We realise that the keyword relationship spirituality is contained in both versions of the Decalogue. Such a relationship is deep-rooted in the family.

The Context of “Remember the Sabbath Day, and Keep it Holy”

The third word obliges rest for all members of the household, all members of the community, human and animal, and even all creation. Sabbath is taking time to reflect, to take care, time to be holy and time to be human. The majority of Sabbath texts are found in the legal texts of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy (Ex 20:8-11; 23:12; 31:12-17; 34:21; 35:2-3; Lev 19:3, 30; 23:3; 24:5-9; Nb 28:9, 10; Dt 5:12-15).¹⁷⁰ It shows how important God considered the above characteristics of celebrating the Sabbath for Israel and for all of us who inherited God's gift of becoming part of his chosen people.

This research is based on Ex 20:2-17. The other Decalogue account is found in Dt 5:6-21. The two texts of the Decalogue are inserted in two different books of the Pentateuch and have two different geographical contexts. The Decalogue of the Exodus is proclaimed on Mount Sinai, while that of

¹⁷⁰ J. W. WATTS, *Reading Law: The Rhetorical Shaping of the Pentateuch*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 1999, p. 68-69.

Deuteronomy, on the other hand, is announced in the steppes of Moab, roughly present-day Jordan; at the gates of the promised land. The theological specificity of the two decalogues thus highlights that the theology of creation (Ex 20:11) is of a priestly source, while the reference to the history of freedom (Dt 5:15) can be attributed to a Deuteronomist source. The two versions of the Decalogue are the texts whose composition, in their current form, can be referred to as the post-exilic period. The existence of these two versions reflects the diversity of theological options, at the time of returning from exile, in Judea. And so, they can never be completely detached from one another. Although some scholars are of the opposite opinion, the current trend in exegesis is that the Deuteronomy version is the oldest.¹⁷¹ Deuteronomy emphasises escape from Egypt and salvation, whereas Exodus concentrates on creation. The two ideas complement one another¹⁷² and point to the theological significance of the Sabbath.¹⁷³ As much as the Sabbath reminds us of creation, it is also linked to salvation.

The context of the commandment of the Sabbath cannot be discussed without talking about the Decalogue of which the Sabbath is part and parcel. If one is to understand the Decalogue and what it meant to its original addressees and recipients, there is a need to get interested in the nation to which it was given. From the history of interpretation and tradition, the decalogue consists of two blocks. One is towards God and the other, towards the neighbour. A very curious aspect is that between the two blocks of expressions formulated in negative form, there are two positive commands. The one relating to Sabbath observance (Ex 20:8-11) and the one relating to the honour reserved for parents (Ex 20:12).

¹⁷¹ I. HIMBAZA, *Le Décalogue et l'histoire du texte*, Editions Saint Paul, Fribourg, 2004, p. 143.

¹⁷² P. C. CRAIGIE, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1976, p. 157.

¹⁷³ D. L. CHRISTENSEN, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, In *Word Biblical Commentary 6A*, Thomas Nelson, Dallas 1991, p. 118.

Taking from how the Sabbath commandment is addressed to the father of the family, these two words put the family at the centre. It is not a coincidence that in what is the compendium of the Torah and the constitutional document of the identity of Israel, the heart is represented by two commandments concerning the family. The family is at the centre of the ten commandments. It is the way of living relationship in the family that helps one to pass from the relationship with God within the first part of the Decalogue, to all other commandments concerning the relationship with the neighbour. On this, one could speak a lot about how the quality of life in the family, guarantees the transmission of the relationship that one has with God to the relationship with the brothers.

The first commandments give a picture of where Israel was coming from. It is obvious that Israel knew other deities apart from YHWH. Therefore, the commandment requires absolute loyalty to YHWH who doesn't want competition from the other deities. This is reflected in the way the first words in the Decalogue are with respect to their religion and their relationship with God. From the first patriarch Abraham, it is clear that his encounter with God took place, setting him away from other kinds of faiths. So, the word religious cult to the gods existed all along.

On the other hand, Israel kept the idea of Jacob and the relationship already established with God. They kept in mind the true God even though they fell towards inferior gods. There is evidence that Israel still remembered the God of their forefathers especially when life could get hard. The time that Israel was getting out of Egypt with other religious concepts and convictions, God took the initiative to correct those errored concepts before they could bring them to the promised land. In addition, God was aware that in Canaan where they were heading to, they could be influenced by other practices of deities. Israel needed to stand strong for its monotheistic faith at its arrival in Canaan. For that reason, through Moses God gives guidelines with which Israel lives and worships

God in a better way once Israel arrived in the land promised to their patriarchs and given to their offspring.

Some scholars like Kalland say that the Decalogue as it stands has some indications of composition, where individual words appear to have undergone expansion, especially the one on the Sabbath.¹⁷⁴ That signifies that the Decalogue may have been edited or even composed to fit the Exodus narrative at a later stage in the history of Israel. That does not mean that it was altered or changed as a Decalogue. All in all, the point remains that relationship, both vertical and horizontal mattered all through the ages.

Exodus is one of the five books of the Pentateuch. With this interesting book, step by step God makes himself known to his people. He delivers them from slavery in Egypt to establish a covenant with them in the desert. Moses is the main character as a guide of the people of God on their journey of freedom. Exodus stands, therefore, at a crossroads between the promises of the past and their culmination in the future. A theological high point in Exodus appears in 19:4-6, which outlines Israel's true nature and role within God's plan. God reminds Israel what He has done for them and how He has made them His own possession. And He tells them how He wants them to live. It is here that God reveals to Israel his name, attributes and his redemption.

Referring to Ex 3:12 God emphasises coming into alliance with the people and in providing the law as a way of liberation from Egypt. Israel was in a state of slavery, oppressed by the Egyptians, in a situation of submissive obedience. God brought these people out giving them the status of a free subject, capable of entering into a true relationship with the other. Indeed, only if the people are freed from slavery can they freely serve God on the holy mountain. God is the creator of the

¹⁷⁴ E. S. KALLAND, *Deuteronomy*, In *Expositors's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 3, F. E. GAEBELEIN, ed., Zondervan, Grand Rapids 1992, p. 55.

other's right to freedom because to respect the right to freedom, He exposes himself to the possibility of not being accepted. He faces the risk of betrayal, rejection, and even being ignored. God is the founding of the right to freedom that He renounces to assert his own right at all costs so that the other can live as a free subject. Therefore, it is from this context that the Sabbath comes with a spirituality of relationship that is able to liberate everyone and everything.¹⁷⁵

Israel's history is built around two perspectives such as time and space. Apart from occupying space, Israel's political and cultural endeavour evolved over time. The past is a part of the present, a dynamic presence that keeps changing, adapting, and evolving in order to remain relevant to the present and influence the future. The cessation of all work makes it culturally visible that man is grateful to God, based on either creation or freedom from Egypt. When honouring the Sabbath commandment, one poses to reflect on the marvellous work of God and that leads to worship Him. Although creation and freedom are expressed apparently in two different accounts, none can exclude the other in the history of Israel and in the history of any man. For one can only experience freedom after he has been created. And only a free man has the opportunity to reflect on God's wondrous work of creation. Then, we can comfortably say that the differences that exist between the Sabbath texts, especially between the two Decalogue versions in Ex 20:8-11 and Dt 5:12-15, do not nullify their close relationship, but broaden and enrich the meaning and concept of the Sabbath in the Pentateuch.¹⁷⁶

The Exodus event was an important and pivotal one in Israel as a nation. It was a significant moment where YHWH was about to fulfil the promise He made to the patriarchs. The promise was about the land and descendants. Israel was heading to the promised land. It is for that reason

¹⁷⁵ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic letter: *Dies Domini*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Roma 1998, art 9.

¹⁷⁶ M. FREY, *The Sabbath in the Pentateuch: An Exegetical and Theological Study*, Andrews University, Michigan, 2011, p. 5.

before getting there, they had to receive some directives on how to live as a God-chosen nation. This is said to have taken place at Sinai, the mountain of God. This was the mountain in the wilderness where God met with Moses after crossing the Red Sea and gave the ten commandments.

A Covenantal Relationship

This section is going to focus on the Sinai covenant. This covenant has a direct relationship with the promises that God made with Abraham regarding his descendants. This explains why the promise made to Abraham is mentioned so often in the Torah. But there are some other traces of covenant in the salvation history. The new covenant established by Christ defines the new basis of the relationship that we now have with the Father. This covenant was ratified by his blood on the cross. So, one should not be shocked when some scholars like Hamilton call the Sinai event, a covenant renewal for it was not the first in the history of its addressees.¹⁷⁷ Having managed to escape from Egypt, Israel comes to the Mount of God. In other literary genres like Elohist and Deuteronomistic writings, Sinai is known as Horeb. The Torah has been composed by editors from four major literary traditions. These traditions are known as Yahwistic (J), Elohist (E), Priestly (P), and Deuteronomistic (D).¹⁷⁸ At Sinai, the covenant is made and ten commandments are given as the pillars of the covenant. Here God binds himself to Israel and made a nation of his own possession.

Therefore, we get the understanding that the Decalogue took place in a bigger scope of things, which is the Sinai event. Ten commandments were called the tablets of the covenant, and those tablets were placed in what is known as the ark of the covenant.¹⁷⁹ It is right to say that the Sinai

¹⁷⁷ V. P. HAMILTON, *Handbook on the Pentateuch : Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, Baker Book House, Mich 1982, p. 154.

¹⁷⁸ L. BOADT, *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction*, Paulist Press, Mahwah 1984, p. 93-95.

¹⁷⁹ F. I. ANDERSEN-D. N. FREEDMAN, eds., *Micah: A New Translation with introduction and commentary*, Doubleday, New York, 2000, p. 529-530.

covenant is a tool that helped to unify and preserve a community of individuals brought together by their common allegiance to YHWH. Sinai covenant is so important because it touched all aspects of life in terms of personal and public, civil and cultic. For Israel, this was in a way, a formative period.

At Sinai, it comes out well that man is a being in a relationship. He is created in the image and likeness of God which points also to relationship. A God who reveals himself by speaking, a Being already open to the other, and therefore to the relationship. In ten words YHWH organises the entire creation, at the centre of which man finds himself. With ten words, God places this man in the right relationship with the One who created him, those next to him, and the whole creation in general. God's reasons for the Sabbath are twofold. That is vertical and horizontal or theological (between man and God) and social (between human beings themselves).¹⁸⁰ Without the Sabbath, a person risks not appreciating what God has created. One can take creation for granted and probably even the Creator.¹⁸¹ Therefore, God had to provide a guide with the relationship found in the Sabbath commandment.

God's Reason for Giving to Israelites Ten Commandments

It is good from the beginning to realise that Israel becomes a people when it arrives at Sinai and there it will receive the ten words or commandments. With the Torah and commandments, one can now talk of the constitution of Israel as a chosen people and nation. Ten words were just guidelines on how to live as a people set apart. Thus, there are some directives on how to be the children of God. They were about how to serve and worship God as a people in Covenant with YHWH. And again, how to treat one another while living in the promised land.

¹⁸⁰ W. RORDORF, *Sunday*, SCM, London, 1968, p. 68.

¹⁸¹ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic letter: *Dies Domini*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Roma, 1998, n. 65.

Law is not a dead body but living and subject to life. With it, man is called to relate, as a living being, and not with a rigid, closed and helpless conduct. The Decalogue was born in the context of helping man to relate with God, the neighbour and the whole creation. Consequently, obeying the Law of God means recognising that God is there and that there are other creatures around. The Decalogue is an experience of absolute freedom. It is only when one discovers the existence of the other, that he begins to free oneself from the dangerous slavery of the self. The Israelites embraced a spirituality (faith put in practice) that takes care of the relationship with God and with the neighbour. The Law expressed in the Decalogue is a gift that God gives his people, but even greater is the gift of the ability to obey that Law, which is freedom. That law was fulfilled in the New Testament.

Sabbath Fulfilment in the New Testament

Throughout Church history, the Sabbath has been a point of controversy. This is due to the resistance some people have against the Christian observance of the Lord's Day/Sunday rather than the Old Testament/Jewish Sabbath.¹⁸² It has to be understood that Christians do not disregard Saturday as a Sabbath. This is because they know how it was originally and why they prefer to use Sunday as a day of the resurrection of Christ. After all, Jesus who Christians believe to be the Messiah frequented and taught in the Synagogue on Sabbath. In this way, even the New Testament is a source in some ways to establish Jewish Sabbath practice. It is not understandable why some people do not recognise that all time long no one has managed to keep the law perfectly! Only Christ came and fulfilled it.¹⁸³

¹⁸² Y. YANG, *Jesus and the Sabbath in Matthew's Gospel: Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series*, Sheffield Academic Press, London, 1997, p. 13.

¹⁸³ H. A. MCKAY, *Sabbath and Synagogue: Question of Sabbath Worship in Ancient Judaism*, Brill Academic Pub, New York, 1994, p. 132.

Concerning the Sabbath, Jesus will very often clash with the religious authorities of his time about his observance (Mt 12:1-8; Mk 2:23-28; Lk 6:1-5) and the healings made on this day (Lk 13:10-17; Jn 5:10-18). The Gospels show Jesus accused of having violated the law of the Sabbath. But on the contrary, he never failed as far as the holiness of this day is concerned. Only he provided a distinctive interpretation of what it meant to keep the Sabbath. It is Jesus' interpretation that Christians regard as authentic and authoritative. For example, "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mk 2:27). It is out of compassion that Christ asserts that the Sabbath is reserved for doing good and not for harm, for saving life and not killing (Mk 3:4). After all, it is in His resurrection that the perfect rest is found. This is about eschatology, Christology and salvation history.¹⁸⁴

Jesus fulfils the Sabbath by beginning the reign of God's rest in which Sabbatical vision of justice, freedom and love are ever mandates. Just as the Sabbath celebrates God's deliverance of Israel from Egyptian Slavery, also the Lord's Day/Sunday celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ, delivering all from sin and oppression. While the Sabbath is uniquely rooted in the Exodus, the Lord's Day is uniquely rooted in the resurrection.¹⁸⁵ Christ established the new covenant with his own blood and we are made partakers of this covenant by faith in Him.

The real Sabbath observance inspires the Church to consider God's invitation to rest with and in him, rooted in faith that expresses the perfect love, truth, righteousness, goodness, holiness, and all the attributes of his self-revelation, Jesus Christ. Cohen quotes Origen in his book *De Principiis* saying that "the truth of the Bible is revealed solely through faith in Christ; the Bible is a Christian

¹⁸⁴ J. P. MEIER, *Law and History in Matthew's Gospel: A Redactional Study of Mt. 5.17-48*, Biblical Institute Press, Rome, 1976, p. 88-89.

¹⁸⁵ W. M. SWARTLEY, *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women*, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1984, p. 67.

book, and the Jews, because they deny Christ, misapprehend the very text that they claim to interpret”.¹⁸⁶

The Sabbath and Christianity

It is well known that the early Christian community began as an offshoot of Judaism. Early Jewish Christianity, in holding on to traditional Jewish customs did not only honour the seventh day as the Sabbath (Acts 13:5, 14, 42, 44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4; 19:8), they also called the first day of the week which is Sunday (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2), the day of the Lord, and made it a special day of worship¹⁸⁷ as a memorial of the day of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (Mt 28:1). This is evident in Mk 16:1, Lk 24:1, and Jn 20:1. There are some people who do not understand the reason why Christians should rest and worship on Sunday. For such people, worshipping on Sunday is breaking and dishonouring the Sabbath command. That is why some theologians like John Paul II have taken the time to explain the theology contained in the Lord’s Day. Aquinas for instance provides a Theological foundation for Sunday to substitute the Jewish Sabbath.¹⁸⁸

From the time of the Apostles, the Church celebrates the Easter mystery on Christ’s resurrection day referred to as the Lord’s Day (SC 106 or *Dies Domini* 31). Eventually, Christians began to observe Sunday as their day of rest instead of the Sabbath. “What began as a spontaneous practice, later became a juridically sanctioned norm” (*Dies Domini* 30). When Catholicism became the official state religion, civil legislation began to prohibit certain activities on Sundays (*Dies Domini* 66).

¹⁸⁶ J. D. COHEN, *Sabbath Law and Mishnah Shabbat in Origen De Principiis*, Mohr Siebeck GmbH & Co. KG, Tübingen, 2010, p. 161.

¹⁸⁷ V. KESSLER, *The Sabbath as a remedy for human restlessness, In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi*, Vol. 46.2 (2012) Art. 61, p. 5.

¹⁸⁸ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, vol. 5, Benziger Brothers, New York, 1948, Ia2ae 100.

It was during the time of Constantine the Great 308-337, that Sunday was officially put as a day of rest and worship. When the Industrial Revolution began to sweep across North Atlantic societies, Pope Leo XIII spoke of Sunday rest as a worker's right in his famous Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum* (11). Of course, the right of workers to rest presupposes the logically prior right to work. The laws concerning Sunday rest were mostly directed towards relieving the burdens of those who worked in agriculture (*opera ruralia*) because they had the most tedious jobs. Faith gives a deeper meaning to rest so that it will not become banal and trivialised (*Dies Domini* 13). To avoid the degeneration of Sunday rest into emptiness, it must offer spiritual enrichment, greater freedom, opportunities for contemplation and fraternal communion. In short, the Lord's Day thus becomes in the truest sense the day of man too (*Dies Domini* 68).

Some people that do not understand what the Sabbath is find it hard to take a walk with their spouses after Church or play with their children on a Sabbath because they think they are violating the Sabbath. However, the Sabbath is about relationship. It is unfortunate that even in contemporary times, one might find people who rigidly hold the Sabbath observance as the Jews did, and still regard themselves as Christians. It was such behaviour that caused the writer Shea to say that Barnabas opposed some characteristics of the Jewish faith as he knew it. About Sabbath and Sunday directives Shea says:

Does opposition to the Sabbath in this epistle imply that it was being kept in the author's time and place? Certainly. But the question is, by whom? If the party the writer opposed was composed of Christians then they were Judaizers of the rankest type...Barnabas' antagonists were more likely non-Christian Jews. The epistle was directed against the Jews and various features of their faith and practice to prevent his Christian readers from becoming Judaizing Christians (or returning to Judaism itself).¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ W. H. SHEA, *The Sabbath in the Epistle of Barnabas*, in *Andrews University Seminary Studies (AUSS)* 4. 2 (1966) p. 171.

Given the opportunity to consider the Theology of rest based on the idea from *Laborem exercens* and keeping in mind that it was on the ninetieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, man ought to imitate God in man's resting. As human beings, workers' dignity is the primary focus of *Laborem Exercens*. The encyclical notes that reductionist viewpoints in the economic realm, which see labour as merely a tool of production, pose a possible threat. John Paul II develops a work-based spirituality to draw everyone nearer to God.¹⁹⁰ From a human point of view, it is as if when the Old Testament says that God rested on the seventh day after finishing all of the work of creation, then He must have stopped acting (Gen 2:3). However, God's rest on the seventh day is not inactivity. The resting on the seventh day included passive and active aspects to both God and man. On a passive basis, God rested from what he had been creating the whole week. But remember on an active basis, God was still gazing at and sustaining that creation.¹⁹¹

It can never be thought as if on that seventh day, God went to bed and slept. On Sabbath God creates rest as a gift to man. When a man receives this gift, especially the father of the family to whom the commandment is addressed, is to actively communicate and share this gift to others. Not only human beings but all kinds of creatures. Pope John Paul II gives an example of how one can actively observe Sunday rest:

Naturally, this right of workers to rest presupposes their right to work and, as we reflect on the question of the Christian understanding of Sunday, we cannot but recall with a deep sense of solidarity the hardship of countless men and women who, because of the lack of jobs, are forced to remain inactive on workdays as well.¹⁹²

All is about a relationship. When some individuals are not able to consider their fellow human beings with respect and have the same needs, start to greedily possess excess. He who possesses

¹⁹⁰ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter: *Laborem exercens*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Roma 1981, n. 9.

¹⁹¹ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter: *Laborem exercens*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Roma 1981, n. 25.

¹⁹² JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter: *Dies Domini*, n. 66.

excess possesses the share of the neighbour. Those who are fortunate fail to share with the less fortunate. And that is a lack of solidarity. It is an injustice. And that injustice provokes the breaking of relationship.

Relationship Issues as a Backbone in the Observance of the Sabbath

The recurring one-day weekly gathering in prayer gives Jewish and Christian worship a more meaningful significance. Just by that interruption of earthly activities, unfortunately, the temptation of exaggerated leisure of a contemporary generation tends to alter those six days of work and the one day about the sanctification of the Lord's Day. There is a danger of people forgetting the religious character of worship values. This is a religious and social problem. This is because when a society is becoming more hedonistic and considers the Lord's Day as a time of having long hours for weekend pleasures, the identity and consciousness of Christianity are overlooked. In such a context, one may plan for many kinds of merry but ignore going to Church to worship. There is no consideration of vertical and horizontal relationship treasured in the Sabbath.

In normal circumstances, God had told the Israelites to collect the quantity of enough for one day only. But from his providence and respect for Sabbath, on the eve of Sabbath, they were allowed to collect twice as much in order to avoid tempering with Sabbath (Ex 16:22-30). On Sabbath God did not only rest but according to the account of creation in Genesis, "Three acts of God denoted the seventh day: He rested, He blessed, and He hallowed the seventh day (Gen 2:2-3). To the prohibition of labour is, therefore, added the blessing of delight and the accent of sanctity."¹⁹³

Man's relationship with God also demands times of explicit prayer, in which the relationship becomes an intense dialogue, involving every dimension of the person. The Lord's Day is the day

¹⁹³ A. J. HESCHEL, *A Palace in Time*, in *The Ten Commandments: The Reciprocity of Faithfulness*, W. P. BROWN, ed., Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, 2004, p. 215.

of this relationship par excellence when men and women raise their song to God and become the voice of all creation in thanksgiving. One of the ways of doing so is sharing in the Eucharist which is the heart of Sunday. However, the duty to keep Sunday holy cannot be reduced to such a thing. In fact, the Lord's Day is lived well if it is marked from beginning to the end by grateful and active remembrance of God's saving work. This commits each of Christ's disciples to share the other moments of the day such as family life, social relationship and moments of relaxation. In such a way, the peace and joy of the Risen Lord will emerge in the ordinary events of life.¹⁹⁴

Various constituents mentioned in the Sabbath commandments in terms of the son, the daughter, the male and female servant, the animals and the stranger (Ex 20:10) call for another close reflection. They point to the fact that the Sabbath does not detach human beings from one another. It does not dissolve familial and emotional relationships. It does not put human beings in isolation. But it brings human beings closer to one another. On the Sabbath, there is no distinction between master and slave, between successful and unsuccessful people. The Sabbath is understood as an embodiment of the belief that human beings are equal. Moreover, it is a day of independence from social conditions as far as it refers to the yoke that the more fortunate may load on the less fortunate, the strong on the weak and the master on the slave. Kessler stated, "the Sabbath also offers an opportunity to refresh social relationships and to spend time with our family or friends."¹⁹⁵ Therefore, the father of the family uses his authority to lift the burden of his children, servants male and female, and even animals who collaborate in family work. The stranger who is

¹⁹⁴ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic letter: *Dies Domini*, n. 15.

¹⁹⁵ V. KESSLER, *The Sabbath as a remedy for human restlessness*, p. 3.

found at home on Sabbath becomes part of the family of Israel and is associated with that freedom and rest.¹⁹⁶

It is important to see how the concept of liberation is extensive until it touches the whole creation evoked in Ex 20:8-11. To cease from all work is to offer that creation the freedom from the working hands of man, give it a breathing space, peace and the possibility that it can be regenerated from the many aggressive activities to which man sometimes subjects it. Spiritually speaking, there is a need to avoid a generation that is always on the run, that never has time, and whose time seems never enough. There is a need to stop and dedicate time to God, and to Him alone. Sabbath passes to us Israel's biblical tradition to celebrate the cessation of work as a sign and gesture to participate in God's rest, by making the created world also rest from the tension that man's working hands submit it to. From that one builds a better relationship spirituality with everyone and everything around him. Convincingly, Barth was right when he concluded that in the moment when God ceased, he had found the object of his love. God established his love relationship with humanity on the Sabbath and commenced his history in direct relation to the history of the world.¹⁹⁷ Rwanda is a sample of the context in need of a relationship spirituality.

Rwanda in Need of a Relationship Spirituality

It is important to mention that Spirituality is the branch of theology that deals with the Christian lived experience. It is about living all of life, not just some portion of it before God, through Christ in the transforming and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ H. R. COLE, *The Sabbath and the Alien*, in *Andrews University Seminary studies (AUSS)*38.2 (2000) p. 228.

¹⁹⁷ K. BARTH, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. 3, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1961, p. 215.

¹⁹⁸ G. G. SCORGIE, *Overview of Christian Spirituality*, In *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, G. G. SCORGIE-S. CHAN, at al, eds., Grand Rapids, Zondervan 2011, p. 655.

Rwanda has experienced the tragedy of conflicts and hatred between its inhabitants based on ethnicity with some other causes like political causes or the struggle for power, inequality in sharing national property, and unresolved past grievances. That bad condition grew in history and led the country to genocide¹⁹⁹ against the Tutsi in 1994 and other kinds of wars. Rwandan people like any other human community, have their relationship issues. Some authors like Nyagahene attribute the source of the poor socio-religious relationship in Rwanda to colonialists and missionaries. Nyagahene shares the opinion that “Tutsi and Hutu were not, in the beginning, the words meaning the ethnic affiliation, but the different level of social class in terms of poor and rich without the consideration of one’s origin.”²⁰⁰ Some authors like Rennie have described it as just a normal socioeconomic variance: Either a class difference between the poor people and rich ones, or a division of labour between those who worked in the farm as agriculturalists and those who kept the cattle as pastoralists.²⁰¹ Of course, even before the colonial and missionary period, there were some indications of division among Rwandans. But those conflicts aggravated with colonialism and took a more dangerous connotation in terms of ethnicity. And as one can realize in the history of Rwanda, there has been an aspect of the ingroup blaming the outgroup. To avoid such problems as far as Rwanda is concerned, there is a need to treat history with honesty and prudence remembering that whatever happened, there is a need to ensure a better future for every group. In such a way, “the past can become a force for personal growth and political and social

¹⁹⁹ O.N.U, *Convention pour la prévention et la répression du crime de génocide du 9/12/1948*, art. II.

²⁰⁰ A. NYAGAHENE, *Histoire et Peuplement: Ethnies, clans et lignages dans le Rwanda ancien et contemporain*, Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, Paris 1998, p. 212.

²⁰¹ J. K. RENNIE, *The Precolonial Kingdom of Rwanda: A Reinterpretation*, In *Transafrican Journal of History*, Vol. 2 (1972), p.15, 24-25.

betterment.”²⁰² The lack of a critical examination of history ends up making history a prisoner of a particular regime.

The crime of genocide is regarded as the crime of crimes since it is ultimately committed against humanity itself. The United Nations in 1948, in article II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, defined genocide saying:

Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, including (a) killing members of the group (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part (d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, (e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.²⁰³

Genocide systematically terminates the lives of human beings; it does not spare any of their rights.

The right to life is the foundation of all other human rights. The uninformed may, perhaps, think that the genocide that was perpetrated against the Tutsi in Rwanda in 1994 is purely and exclusively Rwandan. The 1994 genocide is complex and it involved not only Rwandans but also, directly or indirectly, foreigners.

The Church being the custodian of faith, in her pastoral care should also think of how people can understand what they experienced in the mirror of faith. It is a fact that genocide destabilised Rwanda’s national Church. As has been attested in a host of critical studies, tens of thousands were killed on the grounds of Catholic parishes, schools, and medical centres.²⁰⁴ Such is not to be taken for granted. It shows how much man can go wild and how much man can provoke God. The quality of life depends much on the quality of one’s relationship. As the Church pastorally and spiritually

²⁰² J. BLUSTEIN, *The Moral Demands of Memory*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008, p. 13.

²⁰³ A. DESTEXHE, *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*, New York University Press, New York 1995, p. 5.

²⁰⁴ C. PETRIE, *the failure to confront evil, a collective responsibility*, in *Genocide in Rwanda: Complicity of the Churches?*, C. RITTNER-J. K. ROTH, e. A, eds., Paragon Press, Minnesota, 2004, p. 83.

cares for the people's Sabbath/Sunday rest, it should also remind Rwandans that when the father invites all the mentioned characters in the Sabbath command for physical and spiritual rest, everyone is satisfied. No one lacks his or her appropriate participation. So, it should be so for Rwanda. Rwandans can use the Sabbath rest to restore their social relationship and heal injuries of the genocide. Rwandans need to embrace the words of Pope Francis that "no one can experience the true beauty of life without relating to others, without having real faces to love."²⁰⁵

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship spirituality in the Sabbath commandment in relation to Rwanda. With ten commandments, the Israelites learned to recognise their weakness before God but always with a will to continue trying and never to give up. It has been argued that the Sabbath word is addressed primarily to the father of the family, the one with direct experience of freedom granted to him by God (Ex 20:2). Having the authority over the children, servants, and even the stranger who comes in the house, he is in a proper place to communicate that God's kindness to others. Since the Sabbath command is usually taken from two different accounts, that of Exodus 20:8-11 concerning the Creation and Deuteronomy 5:12-15 about the liberation from Egyptian slavery, creation and freedom are unseparated components of the Sabbath. Christ, Son of man is the Lord of Sabbath, therefore, the Lord's Day is to be a point of departure to build up a spirituality of relationship with God, with neighbour and all creation in general. For contextualisation, we have seen that political unrest, power struggles, unequal property distribution, and unresolved historical grudges have all contributed to the tragedy of ethnic-based conflicts among Rwandans. In 1994, the country was faced with war and genocide against the Tutsi. The extremist Hutu killed Tutsi. When the Father calls all the characters listed in the Sabbath

²⁰⁵ FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter: *Fratelli Tutti*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Roma, 2020, n. 87.

command for bodily and spiritual rest, everyone is fulfilled, and this is something the Church should have in mind as she offers pastoral and spiritual care for the people of Rwanda. Every Rwandan citizen ought to be suitably involved in their nation's affairs. If this is done, a healthy relationship spirituality will certainly be the outcome.

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ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS, *CULTURE OF PEACE* AND THE GLOBAL ETHICS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

By Philip Osarobu ISANBOR & John Okuchukwu EGBONU

Abstract

The philosophical, sociological and theological beliefs always flag the societal convictions that human actions and choices determine the contents of human lived-experiences, be it driven towards the values of peace or war, or being strongly initiated to sustain a lasting culture as a way of living in minds and in developmental values, especially as it is demanded by the contemporary waves of civilization in the courses of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Both the actions for the *Culture of Peace* and the *Culture of War* are indispensably exercised in and on the environment that houses the human persons who are the subjects of lived-experiences. It is on these beliefs that this paper is aimed at the proper valuation of ecological awareness in realizing SDGs, where the human person is placed as the causal agent of environmental sustainability through the institutionalization of *Culture of Peace*. It is from this socio-philosophical valuation of human person in relation to the environment, that ethics for the adoption of ecological awareness emerge contemporarily, owing to the increasing activities on the environment, especially through the employment of science and technology. The contemporariness of ecological awareness directs the developmental consciousness to the conviction that: the environment is to be seen as human; and the human as the environment. This inseparability of the human person and the environment, therefore, demands that the human person avoids the activities that will lead to environmental pollution and degradation. Such a philosophical view recognizes that the global courses adopt in realizing SDGs are inevitably built on the values of *Culture of Peace* as against *Culture of War*, for real peace is development personified. Adopting the analytical and expository method of research, the paper considers that the realization of SDGs cannot be separated from the sustained values of human life, rights and dignity through the institutionalization of a *Culture of Peace*

Keywords: *Culture of Peace, Culture of War, Ecological Awareness, Environment, Global Ethics, Human Actions, Human Person, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).*

Introduction

The issues of ecological continence in reference to the values of the *Culture of Peace* will contemporarily remind us as subjects of lived experiences of the revolutionary and ethical importance of *Papal Messages of the World Day of Peace*. The messages projects that the basic understanding of ecological awareness is centralized on the promotion and protection of the wholeness of creation that houses the human person and other life forms. This is always in reference of the contents and motifs of human actions and choices in developmental pursuits

and interests.²⁰⁶ It presupposes the needs for human responsibility to the environment in sustaining all created lives including themselves, simply by safeguarding the environment from misemployment of actions and valued choices especially through the misguided scientific and technological creativities and innovations.²⁰⁷ It is in channeling human actions properly and integrally that the human society can contemporarily achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) locally, nationally and globally.²⁰⁸ It is in this light of understanding that some contemporary consciousness for collective civilization directs human values and choices in managing societal activities through some collected working policies and programmes, especially the United Nations Climate Change Conferences, called the Conferences of Parties (COPs). These conferences have been held over the years, and still in continuum, owing to the increasing development interests in nuclear and technological industrialization by many members-states.²⁰⁹

With COPs and other ecological and developmental measures, the United Nations Organization (UNO) projects the possibilities of more healthy and safe environment for the present and future generations of persons. This is to sustain the environment where common development concerns are possibly dependent on the contents of environmental stewardship through the promotion of human wholeness and worthiness. Such conviction goes with the philosophical saying that: “No environment, no humanity.”²¹⁰ It takes a good moral disposition and actions of the human persons to sustain the factors and elements of

²⁰⁶Cf, M. A. Izibili, “Environmental Ethics: An Urgent Imperative.” In P. Iroegbu and A. Echekwube (eds.). *Kpim of Morality*. Ibadan: Heinemann, 2005, p. 388; G. Nnamani. “Ethics of the Environment.” In P. Iroegbu and A. Echekwube (eds.). *Kpim of Morality*. Ibadan: Heinemann Books. 2005, see, p. 395; P. O. Isanbor, Ensuring Integral Ecological Sustainability for Integral Human Development in Francis’ Laudato Si. *Nigerian Journal of Religion and Society*, Vol. 10, 2020, p. 119.

²⁰⁷C. N. Ogbujah. The Culture of Death and the Crisis of Modernity. *Igwebuikie*, 6(7), 2020, pp. 123-137.

²⁰⁸Cf J. N. Agbo, “Is Globalisation a Process or a Product?” In A. B. C. Chiegboka, T. C. Utoh-Ezeajugh, and G. I. Udechukwu (Eds.). *The Humanities and Globalization in the Third Millennium*. Nigeria: Rex Charles and Patrick, 2010, p. 28; A. B. Ojo, Ethical Response to Ecological Challenges: A Call of Responsible Stewardship. *Nigerian Journal of Religion and Society*, Vol. 10, 2020, p. 102.

²⁰⁹Augustine Akhogba & R. N. Onah, Responding to the Demands of Laudato Si: Contemporary Climate Challenges, A COP26 Response. *Enwisdomization Journal*, 8(3), 2022, pp. 95-107

²¹⁰Cf, P. O. Isanbor and A. I. Bature, Morality, Integral Ecology and Development in Francis’ Laudato Si: A Review. *Philectics: Benin Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2018, pp. 56-63.

the environment. This is in order to realize that they owe to the stewardship of themselves, simply and reasonably by valuing the environment.²¹¹

From the above assertion, the reference of “nature” as a “Mother” shows the commonness of the environment which gives birth to lives. It inevitably presupposes its protection from human actions that may endanger the process of giving birth to healthy and vibrant lives for the sustainability of the whole creation.²¹² This process presupposes that the contemporary concerns for environmental sustainability recognize the growing trends of environmental pollution and degradation, and demands workable and pragmatic senses of ecological awareness in relation to the increasing senses and values of scientific and technological creativities and innovations.²¹³ This is about overcoming the inventive scientific, technological and industrial engagements on the environment, and it is a condition where some of the industrial, production and mining activities are pushing the whole humanity into a culture of common destruction in most case, rather than the situations in which human persons are supposed to engage themselves in responsible activities that promote common good and survival.²¹⁴

More often than not, the quests for common good and survival are not sequentially collaborating with the growing cultures of environmental pollution and degradation, especially associated with the increasing *Culture of War* and other forms of violence and conflicts. With variances inherent in the values of human actions and choices, very often, we simply need to remind ourselves of the needs of ecological stewardship, justice and aesthetical consciousness in view of attaining a *Culture of Peace*.²¹⁵ The global ethics for the

²¹¹John Ekei, Ethical Contribution to Sustainable Development in Africa. *WAJOPS*, Vol. 17, 2015, p. 40.

²¹²See, Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*. VC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015, no. 10.

²¹³See, M. A. Izibili, 2005, p. 390; G. Nnamani, 2005, p. 398; P. O. Isanbor, 2020, p. 121.

²¹⁴P. O. Isanbor and A. I. Bature, p. 59.

²¹⁵According to Douglas Roche, “A *Culture of Peace* is an approach to life that seeks to transform the cultural tendencies toward war and violence into a culture where dialogue, respect, and fairness govern social relation. In this way, violence can be prevented through a more tolerant common global ethics. The *Culture of Peace* uses education as an essential tool in fostering attitudes supportive for non-violence, co-operation, and social justice. It promotes sustainable development for all, free human rights, and equality between men and women. It requires genuine democracy and the free flow of information. It leads to disarmament” (Douglas Roche, *The Human Right to Peace*, Mumbai: Better Yourself Books, 2006, p. 100).

Culture of Peace in relation to the environment is about caring for ourselves as subjects of lived experiences through sustained beauty and values of the environment, and directing human consciousness and consciences to the valuation and realization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).²¹⁶ It is the conscious recognition of the environment as human common heritage, and the rational and reasonable pursuit of its sustainability. It is about the basis for the respect, protection and promotion of fundamental human rights as in reference to the values of human rationality and reasonability.²¹⁷ It is about the awareness for the sustainability of the contents and values of nature, specifically including the understanding of the human persons as products of nature and creation. To be created with rational capacity and capability; and as to be integrally human, one as an active agent of development is to be reasonably powerful in caring the continuous process of creation.²¹⁸

With such a conviction above, we understand that the human persons develop the necessary social, economic, political, psychological capabilities and capacities in protecting and promoting the environment and all therein. Such awareness of the contents and values of the environment calls on the human persons for a lifestyle that should be reasonably and ethically marked by love, truth, trust, sincerity, courage, simplicity, sobriety and solidarity.²¹⁹ The ecological awareness created in, for and by the human persons brings to the fore the senses of purposes, choices and responsibilities in which we derive the knowledge of what happen to the environment, and which necessarily and indispensably happens to us as humans. We seek for reasonable duties and responsibilities towards environmental sustainability, because, it is by so doing that a *Culture of Peace* is guaranteed in society, locally, nationally, and even globally.²²⁰ Hence, through the responses of ecological awareness, we look at the nexus between the ecological sustainability and the values of the

²¹⁶P. O. Isanbor, "Environment in the Cultures of War and Peace." In I. A. Kanu (ed). *African Eco-Philosophy: Cosmology, Consciousness and the Environment*. Maryland: APAS, 2021^b, p. 211.

²¹⁷P. O. Isanbor, "Environmental Sustainability and the Quest for Global Social Order in Francis' *Laudato Si*." In I. A. Kanu (ed). *African Eco-Philosophy: Cosmology, Consciousness and the Environment*. Maryland: APAS, 2021^a, p. 44.

²¹⁸P. O. Isanbor, 2021^b, p. 211.

²¹⁹Pope Benedict XVI, *Message for the World day of Peace*. VC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2010, no.5.

²²⁰John Ekei, p. 41.

human persons. Through such consciousness, we know that the nature and contents of human actions determine the values of the environment.

Methodologically, this paper is analytically positioned to assess the understanding of ecological awareness for the realization of SDGs. The concern for the sustainable development is believed here to be possible when there is collective consciousness for a *Culture of Peace* through humanized actions and choices. It is on conscientious and conscious institutionalization of a *Culture of Peace* which guarantees the respect, protection and promotion of human right and dignity; as against a *Culture of War* which dehumanizes the wholeness of creation, where and when the society will overcome the increasing effects of ecological pollution and degradation.

Basis of Ecological Awareness

As beings whose lives depend on what ecology as a science of the environment can offer, human development is owned basically on proper understanding of the same ecology. To many ecologists and environmentalists, the word “ecology” is simply derived from two Greek terms, “oikos”, meaning house or a place to live, and “logos” which means; especially to the ancient Greek philosophers, “reasoned discourses in the study of the meaning and nature of realities”. Over time, it has come to mean the scientific study of realities. The combination as “oikos logos” comes to mean the science of living or the study of lives or life forms in a system that necessarily sustains them.²²¹ The word “ecology” was first employed by the German Nationalist, Ernst Haeckelin 1869 and then used by Charles Darwin.²²² This developmental concern for ecological sustainability contemporarily reminds us of the philosophical thoughts of Paul Taylor’s *Respect for Nature*, Arne Naess’ *Deep Ecology*, Aldo Leopold’s *Land Ethics* and Gareth Hardin’s *Ethics of the Lifeboat*. These natural studies personalities as environmental ethicists mentioned in connection to the development of the word “ecology”

²²¹See, P. I. Osaghae, Climate Change: A Moral Issue. *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2019, pp. 154.

²²²D.M. Gates. “Ecology” In *The Encyclopedia Americana*, 30 Volume, Connecticut: Groller Incorporated. 2005; E. M. Ehiogha, Flesh Foods and Ecological Crisis: A Re-examination of Gen. 1: 29. In C. U. Manus (ed). *Biblical Studies and Environmental Issues in Africa*. 2008. Ibadan: NABIS Western Zone, p. 130.

show the Western interests in the scientific study of the environment for the development of the human persons and their social changes and interrelationships.

Ecology is simply the scientific study of the interrelationship between plants, animals and the other parts or components of the environment.²²³ The technical usage of the word “ecology” situates the study of the wholeness of creation, the “eco-system” known as “ecosphere.” The ecosphere consists of hydrosphere (water bodies), lithosphere (land space), atmosphere (airspace), and biosphere (organism).²²⁴ With these compositions of ecosphere, ecology remains the study and understanding of the creation or the practicality or workability of the wholeness of the universe in relation to the development of the human persons.²²⁵ Though, in recent past, according to some ecologists and environmental ethicists like Paul Taylor and Gareth Hardin, the word “ecology” has sometimes been misused as a synonym for the understanding of the environment. But they are not the same.²²⁶ The environment is subsumed under the study and understanding of ecology. The environment is studied as a system that sustains life forms and it takes those same lives to study it. That is, without lives (humans and non-humans), the existence and values of the environment will be inconsequential of any great importance. As it is greatly recognized, the environment includes both the physical or abiotic (non-living) component, and the biological or biotic component, and projects the symbolic nature of these components. Ecology has to do with the interrelationship between both components.

On the other hand, the operational meaning of the word “awareness” from the phrase “to be aware” and it centred on the social consciousness that initiates the proper explication, development and understanding of the knowledge of concerned reality, condition or situation for the betterment of human person and society. Hence, the conceptual usage of “ecological awareness” comes to be situated within the dangers of alienation and possible

²²³E. W. Werner, “Ecology.” In *The American Encyclopedia*, Vol. 21, Connecticut: Grollier Inc., 1994. p. 42.

²²⁴P. O. Isanbor and A. I. Bature, p. 58.

²²⁵P. I. Osaghae, p. 155.

²²⁶E. M. Ehiogha. “Flesh Foods and Ecological Crisis: A Re-examination of Gen. 1: 29.” In C. U. Manus (ed). *Biblical Studies and Environmental Issues in Africa*. 2008 (pp. 126-136). Ibadan: NABIS Western Zone.

extinction human species are facing due to the rapid rate of environmental pollution and degradation.²²⁷ In view of this development, there are demanding advocacies for environmental awareness on the needs to understand the right human actions in order to safeguard and sustain creation (nature). From some developmental indications, it appears that the courses of environmental sustainability are mainly through the advocacies for the culture of peace, the sincerity of oneness, and the consciousness of the environment as a common home.²²⁸

Ecological Awareness and Concerns for SDGs

Contemporarily, the considerations of SDGs are basically the need to rescue the human persons from the yaws of possible ecological alienation, isolation and subjugation, and ultimately from ecological extinction. The advocacies for ecological awareness direct that to avoid possible extinction of human persons as a result of ecological devaluation, society must develop the positive and humane attitudes towards environmental sustainability. This should be through informed and responsible actions and valued choices, and especially the institutions of the courses of a *Culture of Peace*. We understand that the possible extinction of human persons is the possible extinction of other beings due to ecological pollution and degradation. The fears of possible extinction of all creation are leading to the cultures of false aquatic, land and air migrations of creatures, looking on one hand, for possible surviving territories relatively free from the effects of ecological fallouts, then again trying to avoid the emergence of new diseases and sicknesses in the local and global frontiers.

The global directedness of SDGs posits that humanity should be more concerned with the increasing phenomena of the nuclear radiation and wastes on the environment as a result of scientific and technological inventions, leading to the fears of possible dehumanized future.²²⁹ This common directedness of technological, industrial and consumerist values posits the concern for common survival that should be hinged on the harmonization of groups' interests of development, considering the dignity of the human persons who are the

²²⁷Cf, A. I. Kanu, Introduction: African Eco-Philosophy and the Environment, p. xi.

²²⁸Cf, Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, nos. 1-3.

²²⁹P. O. Isanbor and P. A. Edema, Environment and the Emergence of Dehumanised Future. *Cogito: Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, Vol. XIV, No. 3, 2022, pp. 28-42, see, p 34.

subjects of lived experience. This harmonization of interest should be evident in the management of ecological crises and which cannot be viewed in isolation from other related questions on all factors of development, since it is closely linked to the notion of SDGs and our understanding of the human person in his or her relationship to others and to the rest values of the created order.²³⁰ The sense of isolation breeds the culture of subjugation, suppression and oppression of others which sustains greed and selfishness in their actions and choices. This, in the long run, promotes local, national and international hegemonies that engineer -the *Culture of War* and other forms of violence, and ultimately, destroys human otherness and ecological conscience.²³¹

With the current contemporary increasing rate of environmental pollution and degradation, especially due to high trending increase of industrialization, deforestation and urbanization, it appears that humans are neglecting their ecological stewardship divinely given to them due to their rationality and intelligibility, and are simply abandoning their responsibilities in caring for the environment as their common home and heritage.²³² They are exploiting the values and resources of the environment rather than exploring it. Our stewardship and friendliness of the environment demands that we reasonably tame and explore it in order to enhance its values and resources for the betterment of the wholeness of creation.²³³

The policy advancement for the courses of common human survivals by international agencies suggests that ecological awareness classifies and indicates the directions of conscientious disposition for the courses of SDGs.²³⁴ This consciousness should be aiming at protecting, promoting and sustaining the environment; especially through the provision of basic social amenities and infrastructures for masses which necessarily and inevitably guarantee a *Culture of Peace*. It is simply by the provisions of enabling environment for proper sustenance of creation that peace becomes meaningful and enduring, only when the human persons readily conscious of the actions and choices responsibly. We know that

²³⁰Pope Benedict XVI, *Message for the World day of Peace*. VC: LibreriaEditrice Vaticana.2010.no.5.

²³¹Pope Benedict XVI. 2010. No.5.

²³²Cf, Francis, Pope Francis. *Laudato Si*. VC: LibreriaEditrice Vaticana, 2015, nos. 1-3.

²³³P. O. Isanbor, 2021^b, p. 214.

²³⁴P. O. Isanbor, and P. A. Edema, 2022, p. 40.

environmental issues really pose moral challenges, when such issues are a means to create a *Culture of War* and other forms of violence against the values of human life, rights and dignity.

Therefore, through our actions and valued choices, we are challenged to examine the quality of our relationships with ourselves, nature and the entire universe, if we must attain a *Culture of Peace* that undoubtedly guarantees the realization of SDGs.²³⁵ These relationships confront us as subjects of lived experiences with the duty of becoming responsible for our actions and choices, and then, the duty of becoming the people who desire a healthy and safe future through their undertakings.²³⁶ The environmental challenges behold on humans to create the needs for ecological peace, justice and equity, and direct their choices and decisions made along the reasonable consideration of moral responsibilities at all times, even in the applications of science and technology. It is in a *Culture of Peace* that the environment is sustained, and it is in sustaining the environment that creation, which is God, is humanly and transcendentally understood.²³⁷

It is only with values of moral responsibilities towards the human person and the environment that society can have its cares and inestimable values. The consideration of ecological awareness is owing to the fact that human persons are a paradox in nature. They are obviously children of nature, subject to its vicissitudes, compelled by its necessities, driven by its impulses, and confined within the brevity of years of living which nature permits its varied organic forms, especially the human persons. No wonder, Paul Oredipe confidently recognized the indispensable understanding of the human persons in the sustenance of the society through the institutionalization of a *Culture of Peace*, as he posits that: “No doubt, a better understanding of humanity is necessary at the present time. We need the courage to risk a new visioning and thinking of what it means to be human who brings together in a fitting, unified society, what should be called meaningful with many

²³⁵J. N. Agbo, p. 30.

²³⁶G. Nnamani, p. 395.

²³⁷See, P. O. Isanbor, “Human Freedom and the Theistic Valuation of the Environment.” In I. A. Kanu, G. Pwakim and E. S. Igbochese (eds). *Theology, Philosophy and Education in the 21st Century*. Jos: Jos University Press Limited, 2022, p. 60.

dimensions of being human”.²³⁸At the same time they are spirits who stand outside of nature, life, and the world. What happens to human persons inevitably happens to the environment, and the value of the environment depends on the values human persons have assigned to their very selves, and this is only achieved by the content of human impulses or intelligence through the exercises of their freedom, choices and decisions.

Culture of Peace and the Ecological Perspective of SDGs

The quest for a *Culture of Peace* is strongly situated within the needs to sustain and manage the contents and values of the environment, especially by the avoidance of violent conflicts. For the sake of a *Culture of Peace*, contemporary humanity cannot remain indifferent before the problems associated with ecological pollution and degradation of the environment. This is especially as a result of rapid climate change hinged on the depletion of ozone layers, desertification, natural catastrophes, deforestation of equatorial and tropical zones, loss of productivity in vast agricultural areas, loss of biodiversity, increases in environmental refugees, false migration, and the likes.²³⁹ Within the quests for a *Culture of Peace*, it is always very difficult in trying to differentiate individualistic and nationalistic concepts of development. The understanding of what development should be is a collective idea of situations and events, and it is based on political decisions and laws that affect the individuals of the particular state in which these decisions and laws are made. The concept of development is always associated with policy making and legislations of the State in relation to the demands or quests of basic human and civil rights. Such policy making posits that the living arrangement for the established courses of social order and justice demands the valuing of human life, rights and dignity, and promotes the interaction between governments and the governed through social contract initiatives and administrations.

From a great understanding by many existential thinkers, especially on the ethics of peace like Pope Paul VI, Douglas Roche, Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, the courses of development are to be directed along the purposeful and vibrant implementations of states' policies and programmes formulated in relations with the respect, promotion and protection

²³⁸P. K. Oredipe, “Be not afraid”: faith as the authentic basis of integral humanism. *West African Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 15, 2013, p. 69

²³⁹P. O. Isanbor, *Environment in the Cultures of War and Peace*, p. 215.

of human life, rights and dignity.²⁴⁰ Development for the states-members of United Nations Organization (UNO) means the willing engagement and purposeful-driven policies for the reformation of the society. It is constantly working with the national wealth and resources at its disposal for the development of capital and people. The social structure is always on the demanding and receiving end, because the system recognises these aspirations of individuals as rights and privileges that must not be withheld from them. The system demands transparency and accountability and the elimination of corruption so that these riches and resources of the nation can be fully managed. For the avoidance of ecological crises due to the contents of human actions and choices, regional conceptualizations and operations of SDGs consider the holistic evaluation, protection and promotion of human life, rights and dignity through state' legislative platforms and international policies.²⁴¹ Both nationalistic and global conceptions of development are directed or propelled by the trending forces of economic powers of people and nations.

The economic development that many social economists and environmentalists hoped for should thus lead to real growth that benefits everyone and which is genuinely sustainable. It is true that growth has taken place, and it continues to be a positive factor that has lifted billions of people out of misery, and recently it has given many countries the possibility of becoming effective players in international politics and economies.²⁴² This is by providing the needed structures and amenities through the promotion of developmental factors, such as: peace, justice and maintenance of human rights. The demands to save the world from total destruction and even extinction have brought about the global conceptual and pragmatic courses and relevance of SDGs. It is global because everyone is involved and facing relief. The world is considered as a global village, it is becoming smaller in interaction, because, there is

²⁴⁰Cf, P. O. Isanbor & G. O. Ojebun, Socializing Development Media Theory and Contents for Integral Ecological Humanism. *Nigerian Journal of Religion and Society*, Vol. 11, 2022, p. 80; P. O. Isanbor, Acting Person and the Quest for Integral Humanism in the Crisis of Truth. *Cogito*, Vol. XV, No. 1, 2023, pp. 30-46.

²⁴¹P. O. Isanbor & G. O. Ojebun, 2022, p. 82.

²⁴²Pope Benedict XVI. *Caritas in Veritate*. VC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2009, no. 21.

a lot of social networking that is bringing peoples in the world very close. The same global benefits also initiate global fears in the aspects of common misuses of freedom and power.²⁴³

Environment and the National Legislations and Cooperation on the Courses of SDGs

For the sake of realizing SDGs, some national developmental legislations and progress are vested with the aim of adding more values to the lives of the peoples. At the local, national and international level of development, there is need for the establishment of a *Culture of Peace* for humanity to reach its full potentiality. Both national and international bodies through their formulation of policies and legislations cannot afford not to listen to the demand of a *Culture of Peace* in pursuance of the respect for human rights which are fundamental and inevitable to human existence. Thus, the nation-states have the responsibility to protect and promote the fundamental human rights as recognized by UNO and to ensure that the welfare of the individual person is guaranteed through the achievement of development indexes.²⁴⁴ Secondly, it also entails one particular State seeking to intervene in the welfare of peoples outside the State. This intervention of one State in favour of another is justified in the same way as that of one individual in favour of another person(s). Nevertheless, if any government should impose on its own national burden such as taxes for the benefit of some foreign nation(s), and it should always remember that it is primarily responsible for the common good and the rule of social order within the nation of which it is the politico-juridical organ with a sense of achieving SDGs.

UNO is leading the growing awareness of the ecological problems associated with militarization, urbanization, industrialization and nuclear technologies, and it has been leading humans start to cope with such developments. The unsatisfied need of the poorer nations and the danger to peace they impose have in fact given birth during the last fifteen years to two kinds of organisation: specialized intergovernmental agencies associated with

²⁴³See, Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*. VC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2020.no.100.

²⁴⁴This is contained in article 25 of the Universal Declaration Rights as declared by The United Nations to respect, protect and preserve the fundamental human rights. With the recognition of these rights, UNO becomes a monitoring and advisory agency to the member' states on their roles in enforcing the policies and programmes directed towards achieving the development indexes that inevitably and indispensably foster the growth and advancement of the human person and society. Such operation of the UNO also ensures the legislative prevention, sanction and persecution of the member' states that violate the dignity of these rights

UNO, such as the Food Association Organization (FAO), World Health Organization (WHO), and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); and other related fiscal organizations such as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, intended to promote and finance international aids for the environmental sustainability. The same growing awareness of the ecological problems has also produced various governmental organizations and actions for bilateral aids in a number of nations, and numerous public, semi-public and private organizations have been developed to train the necessary experts for technical cooperation and research scientists who make it possible and determine the natures of human actions on the environment. Such international concern for the environment is about the growth of a global community in which the needs of every nation and every individual are met by the commonwealth of the earth.

The UNO's institutions of international agencies have universal values and international legal backing that encourage member states to follow the agency's guidelines and principles for the betterment of human society and international diplomacy. These guidelines and principles necessarily govern the relations between individuals within a national community, and such consciousness should be extended to cover the relations between nations within the international community.²⁴⁵ It is expressed in *duties* imposed by justice on rich nations with regard to poorer countries, and also, reciprocally, in *rights* possessed by nations suffering from want with regard to more generously endowed nations. The achievement and sustainability of *The Right to Development* inherent in respect for the dignity and right of the human person behooves the individual State to work with the international agencies in the development of common humanity.

Ecological Awareness, Culture of Peace and the Contemporariness of SDGs

With the issues of violent conflicts in the world there have been increasing rates of air, water and land pollutions and degradation. The environment is becoming increasingly hostile to living organisms; and as such, these pollutions and degradations accelerate the pace of the extinction of species. For many environmentalists and ecological ethicists, it has been

²⁴⁵P. O. Isanbor, Education for All (EFA) as Nigerian Philosophy of Education: a Futuristic Consideration. *African Journal of Studies in Education*, 10(1), 2015, pp. 205-224.

estimated that over a hundred species go extinct each passing decades and that this rate will triple in the next few decades.²⁴⁶ With such culture of misguided lived experiences, contemporary humanity longs for conflicts rather than a *Culture of Peace*, and so, the environment constantly cries for survival and regeneration due to its degradation and pollution.²⁴⁷

We can recall the disordered politics of domination of others and imperialistic politics of lived experience being masked of hegemonic powers and identities, when the humanities are trying to keep away God and the human family from politics, education and policy formulations²⁴⁸ We can start with the theological concern for the attainment of environmental sustainability, especially in the context of creating ways of social order and justice, where Pope John Paul II's *Message for the World Day of Peace* in 1980, with the theme of: *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation* undoubtedly and inevitably becomes a referenced material for the understanding such concerns. These concerns explicate the indispensable relationship between the valuation of the human family and respect for nature. It is through the awareness of the values of the human family that the environment can be loved, respected, protected and promoted. John Paul II demands from humankind to recognize the need for ecological awareness in order to overcome the culture of environmental degradation and pollutions occasioned by contemporary culture of industrialization, modernism and consumerism. For John Paul II, "there is a growing awareness that world peace is threatened... also by a lack of the respect for nature."²⁴⁹ It is in respecting nature that human personhood is basically safeguarded. John Paul II added that, "ecological awareness rather than being downplayed needs to be helped to develop and mature, and find fitting expression in concrete programmes and initiatives."²⁵⁰ Such initiatives are directed or should be informed by the contents of one's conscience and which

²⁴⁶G. Nnamani, p. 396.

²⁴⁷E. U Ekuigbo and P. O. Isanbor, Sustainability of the Human Family for the Realization of World Peace. *International Journal of Innovative Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 2020, p. 20.

²⁴⁸Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, VC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2020, no. 15.

²⁴⁹Pope John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1980.

²⁵⁰Pope John Paul II, *Ibid*.

are about human development of consciousness toward the achievement of ecological peace, justice and equity.

We must long for the needs of a *Culture of Peace* through environmental preservation and friendship. It was on this development of consciousness for a *Culture of Peace* as against a *Culture of War* through the interrelation of the human person and environment that Pope Benedict XVI, in his 2010 *Message for the World Day of Peace*, with the theme: “*If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation*”, reiterated the commitment of Paul VI and John Paul II on the needs of ecological awareness for the achievement of world peace and development. For Benedict XVI, the achievement of world peace and development is possible through the sustainability of human and divine relationship in creation. The culture of ecological peace and development can be achieved when the factors and pathways of ecological pollution and degradation are ethically and technically avoided or overcome. Through ethical and legal formulations and implementations, we are aware of the effects of ecological pollution and degradation in order to safeguard human and non-human lives.²⁵¹ We create the necessary awareness for the valuation of world peace by creating awareness against the cultures of ecological pollution and degradation, especially through wars, deforestation, nuclear technology and weaponry, overfishing, industrial wastes and the like.

The possibility of the operational adoption of ecological awareness by everyone in the society will become an invariable foundation for progressive change of the same society, when actions and choices are expressed through humanized creativities and innovations.²⁵² It will be about the avoidance of wars and other forms of conflict, elimination of arm race and any political subjugation of nations by the threat of war. For we know that a lot of funds are invested in militarization, nuclear weaponries and military technologies.²⁵³ Such thought of development collaborates with governmental provision of basic amenities such as electricity, water, security, medicines and the like should be in respect to the dictates of natural law

²⁵¹E. U. Ekuigbo & P. O. Isanbor, Peace Education and its Place in Human Sociological Development. *Journal of Sociology, Psychology and Anthropology in Practice*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2013, p. 48.

²⁵²P. Iroegbu. “Ethics of Science and Technology” In P. Iroegbu & A. Echekwube (eds). *Kpim of Morality*. Ibadan: Hennamen Press, 2005, p.337.

²⁵³E. U. Ekuigbo and P. O. Isanbor, 2020, p. 21.

principles. It is in the nature of the human person to strive for positive development, owing to the activities from the application of science tools and technology properly examined and monitored towards fostering the courses of SDGs.²⁵⁴

We should necessarily examine the imposing effects on the valuation of *Culture of Peace* on 'civilization', since the most profound meaning of the latter term is not merely political. Civilization rather pertains to human culture, owing to the recognition that it belongs to human history, as it answers human's spiritual and morals needs based on the social operations of culture and politics.²⁵⁵ For the sake of the *Human Right to Development* in respect of achieving SDGs, environmental ethics remains the study of the "ought to be" of human actions and responsibilities towards the environment and all natural entities in general. As an ethics of life, ecological awareness is the principle which differentiates the acceptance of the good from the bad actions and opinions on the environment, and it should be built on the values of our culture and politics. With cultures, economies and politics and forms of socialisation, human actions and valued choices find meaningfulness and completeness in the pursuit for a *Culture of Peace*. When the values of culture and politics are formulated and implementations with right moral or ethical principles and dictates, they will necessarily bring the true meaning of human life, rights and dignity, then, cultural and ethical development of the individuals and the governments of nations at large cannot be pushed aside when the agitated issues for developmental peace are made.²⁵⁶

In all, we should not be loss on us that, the operational adoptability of a *Culture of Peace* as a basis of SDGs advances the social considerations that the human person as a subject of lived experience. He or she does not live in any environment alone, for he or she necessarily lives in relationship with other persons in order to be regarded as developed humans. To have safe and healthy environment, the human persons rationally and reasonably based their communality on the values of lived experiences and responsibly sustain it for a better future.²⁵⁷ As such, human persons must be ethically reasonable regarding their actions,

²⁵⁴Cf, P. O. Isanbor, 2023, p. 43.

²⁵⁵E. U. Ekuigbo and P. O. Isanbor, 2013, p. 48.

²⁵⁶See, Pope Paul VI, *Message for World Day of Peace*. VC: LibreriaEditrice Vaticana, 1974.

²⁵⁷P. O. Isanbor, *Acting Person and the Quest for Integral Humanism in the Crisis of Truth*, p. 45.

values and ideologies. It is in light of understanding of humanity in reference to its transcendental values that Pope Francis explicated the undying dialogue for peace, justice and equity, and such, he posited that “dialogue entails listening to one another, sharing different views, coming to agreement and walking together. Promoting such dialogue between generations involves breaking up the hard and barren soil of conflict and indifference in order to sow the seeds of a lasting and shared peace.”²⁵⁸ Such dialogue and consciousness of development demand that the human community understands the task of safeguarding the future from the actions of the present. In realizing SDGs, the common task human persons are facing is to be very conscious of lived experiences and be truthful in expressing them in defining the present and the future. This consciousness for common development will help them to sustain their common heritage and cultural nuances, which is their environment. It is about what the person as a being of actions does in and with politics, culture, economy, commerce, education and other sociological and psychological indexes or factors of development, as a subject of lived experiences.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, we have been explicating that environmental care belongs to the human person, and the benefits of proper environmental care indispensably guarantee healthy and safe future generations, especially through the institutionalization of a *Culture of Peace*, which is the foundational course for SDGs. With the pragmatic sense of ecological awareness, contemporary humanity necessarily and reasonably agitates for a *Culture of Peace* in the world in which we now live in. It owes to the fact that a *Culture of War* has been putting a lot of pressure of destruction on the environment that sustains lives. The paper recognized that some human actions and choices in the present generations have been a danger for the future generations, and these have been inevitably result to the deplorable state of the environment which human persons have caused for themselves.

²⁵⁸Pope Francis, *Message for the World Day of Peace*, VC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2022, no. 2. Here, this message for peace welcomes the ethics of living that recognizes the “war, hunger and turmoil are connected” and it takes for purposeful and humane dialogue to dismantle the interconnectedness of evil. Only by acting reasonably and ethically to listen to the pains and joys of others that we together learn the values of the peace which keep the creation in existence.

With an increasing value of ecological awareness, we all need to live healthy and responsibly by changing our attitudes and choices of actions that we must indispensably express especially through creative and innovative skills and knowledge. Such consciousness must be based on the values of the human persons as active agent of development and subject of lived experience. The contents and values of future generations surround the consideration for the human persons and their environment in the present generation, although, many of us are yet to understand the full composition of what makes us human due to some unethical exercises of our innovative and creative capability and capacity. And when we do that, the world will simply be better. In order to achieve holistic environmental sustainability, it is essential to respect, promote and protect human life, rights and dignity.

Therefore, with this paper, we are been concerned with the conviction that the responsible actions for the realization of SDGs are through the caring for the environment, and this concern remains global. Such global consciousness recognizes that the environment is not just a concern forenergy that binds and sustains all human races but for a sustained healthy and safe creation, which must be bequeathed to future generations by the present generations without depletion of its resources, possibly through the reign of *Culture of Peace*. We must live to love a *Culture of Peace* that necessarily promotes human wholesomeness and essentiality. With this insight, the human persons must be respectful of the totality of nature and environment. This owes to abuse the wholesomeness of the created universe is to deform the totality of nature. In all, the human persons should legitimately exercise responsible stewardship over nature, in order to protect it, to enjoy its fruits and to cultivate it in new ways, with the assistance of advanced technologies, so that it can worthily accommodate and feed the world's population.

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Transformative Tension: The Matthean Particularization and Universalization of Jesus.

By Victor Mureithi, SJ

Abstract

This essay argues that the Gospel According to Matthew exhibits a tension between a drive for particularization on one hand, and a call for universalization of the mission of Jesus on the other hand. This tension particularly plays out in the narrative of Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite Woman in Matthew 15:21-28. In this centrally located pericope Jesus' initial emphasis that his mission is to the "lost sheep of Israel" and the disciples' insistence on dismissing the woman is contrasted with the Woman's persistence in the Christological virtue of faith, which leads to a transformative resolution highlighting the universality of the person and mission of Jesus. The study situates the narrative within its sociocultural and historical contexts, analyzing the factors at play and emphasizing its implications for inclusion, justice, and mercy in contemporary human communities. The essay notes that Matthew's account offers a resource for challenging contemporary social constructs that cause the othering of people and calls for inclusivity in the increasingly pluralistic world. Further, the essay's examination of the narrative unit's theological, ethical, and pastoral dimensions offers a fresh perspective on the universal reach of the good news of Jesus Christ.

Keywords: Jesus, Canaanite Woman, particularization, universalization, mercy, transformation, universality, gentile

²¹ Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon.

²² Just then, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon."

²³ But he did not answer her at all. Moreover, his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us."

²⁴ He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

²⁵ But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me."

²⁶ He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs."

²⁷ She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

²⁸ Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly. (NRSV 2007)

Introduction

The ancients conceived human beings as rational and social creatures. The social nature of human beings makes human relationships central to the human experience. However, human experience is characterized by complexities in relationships that stem from historical social, cultural, political, and religious conventions. These factors inform a people's social constructs,

which influence human relationships along social stratifications such as race, gender, age, status, and so on. Such social constructs highlight the power dynamics in human relationships that often marginalize and oppress others. These dynamics particularly play out in metropolitan contexts where diverse social groups find themselves with a shared reality. Similarly, the author of the Gospel According to Matthew, faces a dilemma in human relationships when presenting the good news of Jesus Christ to two competing groups. The faith community in the Matthean reflection on the life of Jesus is believed to have been a metropolitan community of Jews and Gentiles. These two groups had separate social, cultural, and religious histories, but the Matthean author purports that Jesus had come to save them all. That claim perplexed many. On the one hand, the Jews wondered whether Jesus was the Messiah promised in the sacred traditions, while on the other hand, the Gentiles worried if they fit into the salvific message of Jesus. Thus, Matthew sets out to address the dual concern of the community. To the Jews, Matthew shows how Jesus is connected to the sacred traditions of Israel through the genealogy (1:1-16) and parallels Jesus with Moses, as seen in the discourse of chapters 5-8. Yet by incorporating some non-Jewish characters such as Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth in the genealogy points to the necessity of inclusion of non-Jews in the salvation history embodied by Jesus. Matthew also incorporates several other events involving Gentile interactions with Jesus. The story of the Canaanite Woman is one such incorporation. This essay argues that the Canaanite Woman's encounter with Jesus highlights a tension inherent in Matthew between the drive for the particularization and a call to a universalized understanding of the person and mission of Jesus. It is a tension that ushers in the transformative power of mercy.

In Matthew 15:21-28, Jesus heals the daughter of a Canaanite woman after a series of back-and-forth arguments between him, the disciples, and the Woman. She approaches Jesus,

identifies him as Lord and Son of David, and makes a request that is ignored the first time by Jesus. His silence could be interpreted in many ways, including that: he is avoiding her by ignoring her (Park 276), he is using silence treatment to drive her away (Asikainen 116), or he is leaving space that acts as an “invitation for the woman to engage in self-reflection and thought about the human community” (Hart 24). To make matters worse for her, the disciples request that their master, Jesus, send her away. Undeterred, she requests again, this time in only three words: “Lord Help Me.” She gets his attention, and he responds. However, his response is not promising; it is more of “a paradox or a problem she must resolve” (Hart 23). Jesus, in what can be interpreted as a prejudiced response, claims it is unsuitable for him to use food meant for children to feed the dogs. Again, she does not walk away in defeat. She lodges her third request, still calling him Lord. She insists that even dogs eat scraps that have fallen from the tables of their masters. At this moment, Jesus commends her faith and heals her daughter. The Woman's physical situatedness is essential in comprehending the power dynamics behind the healing.

The healing encounter occurs in Tyre and Sidon, a region with an on-and-off relationship with the Tribes of Israel. The encounter raises questions of belonging, faith in the Jesus movement, and the universality of the person and mission of Jesus in the Gospel. In light of the Matthean theme of reaching out to a metropolitan audience of Jews and non-Jews in the first-century Graeco-Roman world, the dialectic highlights the tension in the community's desire for the particularization and universalization of Jesus. The stakes for a contemporary reader in a faith community include the social, cultural barriers in societies, the insider-outsider group dynamics, and Christological issues on the person and mission of Jesus. The wider society is invited to consider the othering of people in social-cultural spaces, for instance, regarding gender, race and migration issues. The actions of Jesus and his disciples, the historical relevance

of the region of Tyre and Sidon to the Tribes of Israel, and the Woman's insistence and choice of words are evidence of the difficulties of multiculturalism. Furthermore, the placement of the narrative unit in the chapter offers an exciting observation supporting the thesis. The unit occurs just after a challenge to Jesus on his breaking of traditions from Pharisees and Scribes in verses 1-20 and is followed by the healing and feeding of crowds in vv. 29-39.

Context and Source

Jesus ventures into a territory beyond the borders of Israel into Tyre and Sidon (v. 21). The two coastal towns located at the northwestern tip of the land of Graeco-Roman-occupied Palestine had a complicated relationship with Israel. The Hebrew Scriptures record their ancient kings and prophets interacting with that district. The tribes of Israel settled in the area located around Tyre and Sidon, eastwards and southwards, as allocated by Joshua. The district is featured in the writings of the early settlement of the tribes of Israel after the Exodus. The book of Joshua recognizes the territory as the Land of the Canaanites, and the author admits that Israel had not settled on it by the time Joshua was "old and advanced in years" (Joshua 13:1-2, 4,7). Joshua allocated the land of Tyre to the Tribe of Asher (Joshua 19:29). Tyre and Sidon were once allies with the United Monarchy (2 Sam 5:11; 1 Kings 5:15, 21-25), however, by the time of the Roman occupation of Palestine, the Canaanites were considered enemies of Israel. The Canaanites influenced Israel to worship Baal under King Ahab and the Omri dynasties. For instance, some Prophets called out King Ahab for marrying Jezebel, who brought her Baal gods to Israel (1 Kings 16:25-33; 2 Kings 8:18; 11:1-21).

The Canaanites were the inhabitants of the Land of Canaan, the "land along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean encompassing modern Lebanon, part of southern Syria, and most of Palestine west of the Jordan" (Schmitz 828). This geographical location entails Tyre and Sidon.

Canaanites were neighbors of Israel, whom according to the Hebrew traditions turned the heart of Israel away from YHWH at various times; hence, some prophets warned Israel from forging alliances with them. Prophetic literature characterizes the district as wealthy, strategically positioned as a trade route, and secure. Some ancient Hebrew prophets delivered their prophecies and oracles mainly to their nation (Israel) and, at times, to non-Israel targets, often called oracles to the nations. Hence, at times, the prophets prophesied of Tyre and Sidon as well. The prophets declared that God would destroy the district due to their pride (Isa. 23:1-18; Jer. 25:22) and for treating Israelites harshly (Joel. 3:4-6, Amos 1:9-10). Interestingly, prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel speak of incoming Babylonian invasion, destruction, and hostage to Israel, and the same fate is predicted on the district (Jer. 27:3; 47:4; Ezekiel 28 and 28). Ultimately, the district suffers the same fate as the chosen people of God.

The narrative unit begins with Jesus withdrawing to the district of Tyre and Sidon (v. 21) due to the hostility faced by the religious authorities of Israel (Aguilar Chiu et al. 940). Jesus is a foreigner in the region, and a local woman approaches him. Thus, Matthew's identification of the Woman as a Canaanite emphasizes that she is an enemy of Israel, hence an outsider. Her ethnic identity highlights the huge socio-religious and historical difference between her people and the people of Jesus. The Gospel According to Mark uses the term "Syrophoenician" to identify the same Woman (7:26), a Greek rendering of the same name. Identifying her as a Canaanite would have been enough to show her identity as a Gentile. However, Matthew goes further to mention that she is a woman. Gender is relevant to narratives written in a patriarchal society. Up against considerable odds, given the ethnic and gender barriers she faces, she exhibits exceptional purpose, courage and determination.

The source of the narrative unit in Matthew is Mark (7:24-30), and possibly “there are no other or secondary sources” (Luz and Crouch 336), since the unit has no parallels in either Luke or John. The activities of Jesus were reported in stories passed orally in the communities of the Jesus movement. The stories in circulation were later collected into writings, hence the existence of the Q material as a source for the canonical Gospels and the many extra-canonical writings on Jesus. The Q material is a hypothetical collection of sayings of Jesus Christ that scholars believe was used as a source for the Gospels According Matthew and Luke. The term “Q” comes from the German word *quelle*, which means “source”. The Gospel According to Mark is also generally regarded as a source for the Synoptic Gospels. The passage is a moral story relating to the treatment of others, especially those at risk of being regarded as outsiders by the community. There are significant differences between the Marcan and Matthean accounts. Vv. 22-25 of Matthew are mainly additions, and v. 28 has been rewritten. Further, Matthew’s analogy of lost sheep and the house of Israel in v. 24b makes it more Jewish than Mark’s, and the metaphor of feeding children’s food to the dogs (v. 26) makes Matthew’s account less welcoming to non-Jews. The differences point to Matthew’s redactional work of Mark. Matthew seems set to highlight the community struggle with the inclusion of non-Jews (Davies and Allison 542). A similar tone of insider versus outsider in the work of Jesus can be found in Matthew 8:5-13. The unit’s emphasis on inclusivity is best understood after a consideration of its literary context. The immediate literary context of this narrative unit is the debate with the Pharisees and Scribes about the observation of tradition, especially pertaining to clean and unclean practices according to the law of Moses (vv. 1-20) and the healing and feeding of crowds (vv. 29-39). The larger context is the Matthean attempt to show that Jesus is both a pious Jew rooted in his Jewish context and the Messiah who comes to fulfill Jewish heritage’s laws and tradition and save the

whole world. Thus the message of Jesus as the Messiah is at the center of the Gospel of Matthew, the other Gospels, and the other writings of the New Testament (Ehrman 130). The unit also has relationships to the larger context manifested by the choice of words used. For instance, the Woman's reference to Jesus as the son of David is also found in 9:27 where the blind men use the title "Son of David" on Jesus. A similar usage is recorded later in 20:30. The other Synoptics have the title "Son of David" (Mark 10:47; Luke 18:38) but with only one blind man instead of two as reported in the two Matthean accounts. Mark identifies the blind man as Bartimaeus (10:46); Luke does not name him. In addition, Jesus' metaphor of the lost sheep of Israel is used in Matthew 10:5-6, which also alludes to the Canaanites' identity as foreigners. Moreover, the commendation of Jesus on faith as a basis for the healing is used on another outsider, the centurion in Matthew 8:13.

Genre, Form and Structure.

The canonical context of this pericope found in Matthew 15:21-28 is the gospel genre, which plays a critical role in the sacred scriptures and worldview of the emerging followers of Jesus. The Gospel According to Matthew, like the other Synoptic gospels, shares similarities with the biographical genre of writings common in the Graeco-Roman world in the first century. However, the gospel genre is more than a record of facts about the person named Jesus; it is a theological portrait of Jesus. This theological portrait has historical facts but is mainly a theological reflection of the faith community handed down from those who experienced Jesus in their life. The Matthean reflection on the life of Jesus is believed to have been written between 70-90 CE to a possible metropolitan audience of Jews and Gentiles (Coogan et al. 1383; Shin 399). This metropolitan audience is a source of some tension in the Matthean narrative.

The passage takes the form of a short story with a structural feature of dialogue proceeding dialectically between the Woman on the one hand and Jesus on the other. The disciples intervene once and remain silent afterward. It is possible to posit “four dyadic units, each of which consists in turn of words addressed to Jesus followed by his reaction” (Davies and Allison 541). These units are composed of the requests by the Woman to Jesus, and the request by the disciples for her dismissal. Each request gets a response from Jesus that moves from silence to non-committal to finally giving in to the Woman’s request. The structure of this passage revolves around the dialectic between Jesus and the Canaanite Woman. A simple outline can be mapped as follows:

1. Jesus in a Foreign Territory (v. 21)
2. Christological Confession and First Request and Response (vv. 22-24)
 - a. Confession and Request by the Canaanite Woman (v. 22)
 - b. Response of Jesus (v. 23a)
 - c. Response of the Disciples (v. 23b)
3. Second Request and Response (vv. 25-26)
 - a. Request by the Canaanite Woman (v. 25)
 - b. Response of Jesus (v. 26)
4. Final Request and Response (vv. 27-28)
 - a. Canaanite Woman (v. 27)
 - b. Positive Response by Jesus (v. 28)

The structure highlights the back and forth between the three characters, a pointer to the complexity of human relationships that are laden with power dynamics. Jesus has faced such dynamics before with the religious leaders of Israel. Such power dynamics can be seen in that the

Matthean narrative up to this chapter has been interested in the “proper application of Pharisaic and Scribal rules, rather than their abrogation” (Basser and Cohen 356). The author thus highlights the failure of a rigid application of laws to deal with human experiences, especially the experiences of those in the margins. The Woman's insistence thus underscores a key image of Jesus; Jesus is the face of the God of mercy. Mercy is at the center of the encounter between Jesus and the Canaanite Woman where she pleads, “Lord help me” in v. 25, as shown in the below chiasm:

- A.** Jesus in a Foreign Territory (v. 21)
- B.** Request Number 1 by the Canaanite Woman (v. 22)
- C.** Response of Jesus (v. 23a) and Response of the Disciples (v. 23b)
- .X.** Request number 2 by the Canaanite Woman (v. 25) with the words “Lord Help Me.”
- C’.** Response by Jesus (v. 26)
- B’.** Request number 3 by the Canaanite Woman (v. 27)
- A’.** Jesus’s Positive Response (v. 28)

As this chiasm shows, Jesus performs an act guided by mercy, and the unit of healing of the crowds that follows this unit indicates that this encounter proves there is no insider or outsider regarding mercy. For instance, there is a great likelihood of Gentiles in the great crowds (Matthew 15:30) that follow him for healing. Mercy is a central gospel value in the Christian tradition. Pope Francis’s pontificate has emphasized a lot on mercy. The Pope even promulgated an extraordinary jubilee of mercy in 2016 following his election to the papacy in March 2013. Further importance of this chiasm is that chapter fifteen is roughly at the center of the Gospel since Matthew has twenty-eight chapters. The chapter has twenty-nine (29) verses, and the encounter is between vv. 21-28, which places the unit almost at the center of the chapter. Hence,

this chiasm figuratively presents the Gospel as centered on mercy, which applies to, and includes both Jews and Gentiles.

Use of Language and Power Dynamics

Language is a crucial element in human experience. It particularly plays a key role in power dynamics mainly as tool box utilized to order one's experiences and interactions with others. As a tool, it influences strategies of actions towards experienced reality, identifies acceptable behavior, and shapes, reinforces or challenges structures and systems. It is to this end that the pericope uses figurative language that elicits various emotions and value judgments. It also uses metaphoric categories of sheep, house, food, and dog.

Jesus claims to be sent only to the lost sheep of Israel. The sheep metaphor is prominently featured in the scriptures, and Matthew will use it again in chapter 25:31-46 on the final judgment, where Jesus presents the sheep as good servants and the goats as the opposite. The discourse in the Gospel of John (10:1-18) on Jesus as the Good Shepherd (v11) also uses the metaphor of sheep and forms the central part of the teachings of Jesus. The metaphor of sheep in John plays a vital role in the imagery of sheep in Christian communities to represent faithfulness to the message of Christian life. Luke 15:3-7 and Matthew 18:10-14 present the imagery of the lost sheep used in Christian communities to evoke various interpretations of themes of repentance, reconciliation, compassion, and mercy of God, amongst others. Other scriptural use of sheep highlights the themes of restoration and redemption (1 Peter 2:25), God as provider and protector (Psalm 23), condemnations of unfaithful shepherds who cause the sheep to scatter astray (Ezekiel 34), and the raising of a good shepherd to lead the flock that has gone astray (Isaiah 53). The image of lost sheep is thus used to highlight God's forgiveness and tender care for the people.

The other imagery used is that of a dog. Jesus claims it is not fair to give the food meant for the children to the dogs. This condescending image of a dog is used in other Biblical narratives, such as Proverbs 26:11, Psalm 22, and 1 Kings 19. In general, the metaphor of a dog points to uncleanness, impurity, enmity, persecution of some people in the general population, and lack of watchfulness or integrity in some leaders and their work. It is a slur generally used against Gentiles (Collins et al. 1204). Some scholars claim that Jesus's use of the dog metaphor is in line with the testing and probation that Judaism would require of Gentiles who desired to convert (Samson L. Uytanlet and Kiem-Kiok Kwa 168). Such candidates would be tested to prove whether they have conviction of faith in the God of Israel. Proponents of this view think that Jesus's commendation of her faith proves the practice of testing converts. However, we can all agree that the metaphor is contentious, and this interpretation is not the only viable one.

The Canaanite Woman's agreement with Jesus on the food being meant for children and not for dogs highlights the distance caused by human prejudice and bias (Asikainen 117). It is a symphony of distances: the distance between the dog and the owner of food at the table, between Israelites and Canaanites, between the Woman and Jesus, between women and men, and between Jews and Gentiles. Aware of the manipulative power of language, the Canaanite Woman argues that dogs obtain the food by chance, not as intended recipients, and effectively moves beyond the metaphor to appeal to the very nature of Jesus. She forces Jesus into a dilemma of choice between the social kinships that separate him from her or the mercy of God that binds the firstborn of all creations to all other creations (Love 151). Consequently, Jesus has only one option since he is the Lord of all. She demonstrates a genuine desire to encounter God's grace, which is available to everyone: Jews and Gentiles, Christians and non-Christians, believers and non-believers. The encounter thus transforms Jesus into his true self, a universal, inclusive Lord.

The narrative unit has a tone of impatience or edginess. The Canaanite Woman is on the edge of losing her daughter, who is “severely possessed by a demon” (v. 22). Her maternal instincts and love compel her to choose the best for her child. Even after Jesus is silent on her first request and his subsequent metaphor of a dog to lock her out, her insistence finally pays. The disciples, too, are impatient with this foreign woman. Her insistence must have rubbed them the wrong way, hence their recommendation that Jesus should send her away (v. 23). The two layers of edginess contrast. The Woman asks for openness, to stretch the boundaries, and to be as inclusive as possible. In contrast, the disciples close the doors, wanting to keep the boundaries close to the inner circle of the followers of Jesus.

Theological and Pastoral Implications

The Gospels continuously present the land of Tyre and Sidon in association with Jesus (Matthew 11:21-22; Luke 10:13-14; Mark 3:8; Luke 6:17). In withdrawing to the district that was “unclean,” Jesus becomes an outsider or foreigner while the Woman is an insider of the district (Collins et al. 1204). However, the Woman is also an outsider/foreigner in the religious imagination of the people of Israel. So why did Jesus withdraw to that district? We see two earlier incidences of Jesus withdrawing from the crowds in Matthew (12:15; 14:13). So, possibly Jesus goes to Tyre and Sidon to escape the Jewish crowds and leaders, but his withdrawal ends up as a profound inclusion of another group (Samson L. Uytanlet and Kiem-Kiok Kwa 167). Jesus commended Tyre and Sidon for their receptivity to him, compared to the Jewish communities of Chorazin and Bethsaida (11:21-22). Jesus is confronted by people wherever he goes, but in this unit, “the persons confronting Jesus abruptly change from the Jewish leaders to a Gentile woman” (Luz and Crouch 28). Thus, reading Tyre and Sidon as providing tranquility and respite for Jesus compared to the lands of Israel is possible.

The Woman approaches Jesus (v. 22), who is now technically in a foreign territory, and she identifies him with the two titles of “Lord” and “Son of David.” The latter title is familiar to her since the United Monarchy attempted to bring the territories of Tyre and Sidon under monarchical rule. However, the Woman’s Christological confession of Jesus as Lord is strange, given that she is not a follower of Jesus. Such a confession would be expected from the disciples of Jesus or the Pharisees and Scribes, especially the latter, who were well-versed in the Hebrew scriptures. Ultimately, the Pharisees and Scribes have difficulty figuring out the Davidic heritage of Jesus and instead reject Jesus. For the Matthean author, the Woman’s confession aligns with the genealogy and infancy narratives at the beginning of the Gospel in Chapter One. Thus, this Gentile woman acknowledges the authority of Jesus. Such comprehension of the identity of Jesus is exemplary, given that “in rabbinic writings, women are seldom presented positively and rarely illustrate faith or theological acumen” (Kgatle 600). The compliment on her faith by Jesus is thus an affirmation of her spiritual depth and genuineness in seeking the good. Interestingly, other marginal figures in Matthew identified Jesus as Lord; these are the leper (8:2), the Roman centurion (8:8), and the blind men (9:28). The title of “son of David” is used by other marginal figures such as the two blind men (9:27), the crowds (12:33), another two blind men (20:30), and the crowd during Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem (21:9). The story of this woman thus holds together the priority of the descendants of Jacob and the promise of mercy made to Abraham, the father of all in faith.

The Canaanite Woman and Jesus dialectic highlights the cultural themes of uncleanness and insider-outsider boundaries that were prevalent in Roman Palestine during the Graeco-Roman occupation as well as during the monarchy, and after the division of the monarchy. The initial response to the woman’s request opens a can of worms on the insider-outsider relation or

treatment of the “other” in a society. Jesus remains silent (23a). Though such indifference in the face of such pain and anguish of the woman is considered uncharitable and unacceptable in most cultures, it is a common practice by those who consider themselves superior to others. If Jesus’ silence is uncomfortable, the disciples’ request for Jesus to “Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us” (23b) is agonizing, unpromising, and scandalous. These responses help us to grasp Jesus and the Apostles as persons rooted in the worldview of their time and space operating on paradigms of insiders versus outsiders, of us versus them. Such an othering is not peculiar to first-century Palestine; it is still common today. The disciples are convinced that the message of salvation by a Messiah is for the children of Abraham through Jacob. Further, we can read the text backward to the event of Sarah asking Abraham to send Ishmael away (Gen 21:10). Ishmael was the son born to Abraham by Sarah’s slave maid, Hagar. Sarah felt he should be sent away so that all inheritance goes to her son, Isaac. However, Jesus transcends such categories of perceiving reality, and by the end of the dialogue, the disciples, who were the first to speak, remain silent after Jesus fails to send her away. Jesus manifested YHWH’s promise to Abraham that nations will be blessed through his faithfulness.

The words uttered by the Canaanite Woman identify Jesus with the Davidic line. The Davidic heritage in the sacral tradition is associated with the coming Messiah. Matthew writes that she came out and cried, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David” (15:22n). The author introduces her words with two verbs, “to come out” and “to cry.” These action words point to the need of an individual to do something to change the status quo, to strive for justice and good, regardless of their background. It is a call to resistance and to rebuilding. A call to boldly imagine an alternative society that is inclusive and compassionate. She identifies Jesus with the titles of “Lord” and “Son of David.” These titles prefigure his divinity and stem from the Hebrew

tradition of a Messiah who will come to save the people. Salvation comes from God's unmerited grace – the grace of a merciful God. As illustrated above with the chiasm, mercy rests at the center of the unit, the unit sits almost at the center of that chapter, and the chapter is situated at the center of the Gospel. Mercy is thus crucial in the dialogue of the Canaanite and Jesus and, indeed, in the Matthean narrative. The debate and teaching on traditions in the chapter (vv. 1-20) before the unit and the events of healing and feeding of crowds (vv. 29-39) after the unit demonstrate an interesting appropriation of mercy. The former shows rigidity and legality to traditions that can choke out mercy; the latter demonstrates the life-giving effect of mercy. Interestingly, there are seven baskets full of leftovers after the feeding (15:37), and the Canaanite insisted that the dogs at least deserve the crumbs that fall from the table. Seven is a perfect number for the Hebrew people. Such symbolism demonstrates that mercy tends towards perfecting things and relations. The feeding can thus be interpreted to emphasize how in the mercy of God, there is always enough for the children of the house and beyond.

The narrative direction in the Gospel According to Matthew, therefore, seeks to particularize Jesus to the Jewish heritage, as seen in the genealogy (1:1-17), which connects Jesus to the patriarchs, matriarchs, and kings of Israel. Yet, the appeal to Abraham, the father of promise, pushes the narrative in the direction of universalizing Jesus, making the gospel message available to all who profess it by faith. The tension embodied by the Canaanites has to do with the Matthean incorporation of non-Jews in the Jesus movement. The early church faces this tension as well as seen in the tenth chapter of the Acts of Apostles, which reports the events where Simon is shown in a vision that there is no clean or unclean and that he has to bless Cornelius, a non-Jew (10:1-33), who, together with other Gentiles in his household receive the good news and are anointed with the Holy Spirit (vv. 34-48). Peter proclaims, "I truly understand that God

shows no partiality, but in every nation, anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him” (v. 34-35). The final act of Jesus is granting the Woman’s request and commending her faith (Matthew 15:28). Hence, Jesus affirms the author’s inclusion of Abraham, whom the Christian tradition identifies as the father of faith for all who seek God with a sincere heart. Further, the presence of Rahab and Tamar, who had Canaanite origins, prefigures the inclusion of women and Canaanites in the works of Jesus.

The story of the Canaanite Woman and Jesus presents the woman’s relevance in various dimensions of biblical interpretation. The unit provides lenses for interpreting the scriptures for marginalized, discriminated, or unwelcome groups. For instance, it makes a good reading for insider-outsider dynamics in faith, liberation, feminist hermeneutics, and post-colonial reading. The Woman’s persistence and the eventual cooperation of Jesus despite the opposition from the disciples show that inclusivity, compassion, mercy, and justice are universal values open to all. The unit also expounds on the universality of the person and mission of Jesus. The story fits into the general Matthean frame of presenting the universality of Jesus, who is rooted in the divine revelation of God in Israel’s history. The Woman stands for Gentiles, a category that would be hotly debated in the early church regarding their inclusion in the Jesus movement. As history shows, the Gentile world formed a main part of the early movement and was instrumental in spreading the movement beyond Palestine and the Mediterranean world of the first to second centuries. In the end, Jesus grants her request, but he first commends her faith, addressing her by an appropriate category of human identification, “woman, great is your faith!” (v. 28). The woman’s faith is the main point of the encounter, not just the miracle, for her faith demonstrates a gift that Jesus desires all to have.

The outsider has the gift that Jesus has longed for from the “insiders”, that is, his disciples and religious leaders of Israel. Jesus challenges the “insiders” in Matthew for their lack of faith several times (6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8). The Canaanite Woman, therefore, overcomes barriers both as a woman in a patriarchal society and a Canaanite outsider in an ethnocentric context, exposing the universality and inclusivity of the person and mission of Jesus. Her story shows that God is faithful to all who seek God regardless of the human-centric distinctions made in society. Faith is an act of asking from and seeking God. Matthew 7:7 encourages one to ask, seek, and knock, and one shall receive from God. The Christian tradition recognizes faith as a Christological virtue, together with love and hope. Consequently, the woman demonstrated that the goodness of God revealed in Jesus is universal and is deserved by all, the sheep and the dogs, for they all have the same master.

Contemporary Relevance

The encounter is much needed in our contemporary world, characterized by various forms of marginalization and discrimination. As the central character is a woman, today, there is still a need for more work to allow women spaces to flourish. Her concern is not even for her welfare but that of her child, yet she personalizes her request, saying, “Have mercy on me, Lord” (v. 22). Her relationship with the daughter makes her feel “the torments that her daughter experiences” and convinces her that “the affliction of her child is her own affliction. As the daughter cannot rest, neither can she!” (Okure 5). Similarly, many women today are feeling the pain and anguish in their communities. They are busy meeting the needs of their beloved at times to the detriment of their health or career progress. Such sacrificial love is even more common in communities where patriarchal and oppressive social structures disadvantage women in contexts of war and violence and with refugees and migrants who have to take care of their families on the move.

This task requires everyone to be on board. In the end, how the marginalized, the weak, or those deemed different are treated is a reflection of the depth and level of comprehension of the identity of Jesus and the nature of God that a people profess.

The theme of the other stands out in this encounter. Our contemporary societies are increasingly becoming intolerant, leading to the othering of minorities such as historically oppressed people like indigenous people, peoples of African ancestry, former colonized peoples, and so on. While we cannot go back in time to correct historical wrongs, we can act to correct and improve the present world. Initially, the disciples and Jesus seem rooted in their tradition, rejecting the woman's appeal. Jesus' metaphors of "sheep of the house of Israel" and "children's food" on the one hand, and "dogs" on the other hand point to the social-cultural tradition that draws a line between Israel and her neighbors like Canaanites. The house of Israel is the insider that deserves all the privileges – the food. The woman challenges tradition to show that mercy overflows to all in need – there is more than enough. She demonstrates a "spirituality that is truly life-giving, other-centered, and faith-filled" (Okure 10). This invites us to pay attention to our realities – to see, discern, and act wisely toward creating a more hopeful future. Hearers and readers of the Word ought to align their values with the values of the Gospel. Such an alignment of values will enable persons to move beyond the prevailing values that lock people out and embrace inclusive, just, and fair practices that enable individuals and communities to lead meaningful lives and flourish together.

The pericope thus invites the reader to consider the person and the mission of Jesus and feel a sense of belonging. A Canaanite's identification of a Jew as Lord and Son of David surpassed the reading and education of the Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees, who had difficulty accepting Jesus. The passage is an invitation to growth in faith for a Christian reader of the scriptures and

to live this faith in universal communion with others who may not be from their same social-cultural background. This growth is part of Christian identity, given a Christian's belief in the presence of God in human history and the incarnation of the son of God that brought the great revelation of God as love. Such a conception aligns with what Karl Rahner describes as God's self-communication through Jesus as an act of love that is open to all persons without "prejudice," for the communication is "free and unmerited" (Rahner 127). Jesus is thus a pathway to God's grace for all humanity and is therefore accessible to all, especially those who seek him genuinely, regardless of their backgrounds and affiliations. The encounter demonstrated that the person and mission of Jesus is non-discriminatory, bestowed on all, including the unworthy, and enables the flourishing of all peoples (Okode 8).

Conclusion

The first response of Jesus to the first request by the Woman is silence (v. 23); the Woman's persistence is her request for justice and righteousness on behalf of her daughter. She sticks to the metaphor of a dog used by Jesus to describe her and her people to demonstrate the universality of her requests. Since Jesus is the savior of humanity, and her ailing daughter is part of humanity, therefore, she deserves healing from Jesus. She can recognize the deep love that the "Lord" possesses and requests that it be shared with her. In the face of her brokenness and pain, she is convinced that the grace that flows from Jesus is available to all and is not "based on some pre-existing moral, social, religious, ethnic, or biological criteria for worth" and that the "Messiah's benefaction is offered without regard to worth since no one is worthy" (Okode 15). The goodness obtained from Jesus is not by merit but rather by God, who sends Jesus to and for all creation. This encounter invites an engaged reader to realize the great love to be found in Jesus and go out to love. Out of love flows acts of charity, mercy, generosity, and other virtues

and values needed for a multicultural world. Her persistence also calls believers to embrace the hope to be found in Christ. Indeed, a life lived in faith and love must be strengthened with continuous trust and reliance on God's providence and grace. The Canaanite persists in her request three times; similarly, a believer should not give up no matter how difficult things become.

This essay has demonstrated that Matthew 15:21-28 explores the tension in the particularization of Jesus' mission to the "lost sheep of Israel" vis-à-vis its universalization to include Gentiles. It is a quest to hold in creative tension the particular mission of Jesus to Israel and the universal scope of God's grace. The essay has explored the sociocultural and historical factors around the othering of the woman, showing how the person and mission of Jesus ultimately side with the marginalized woman, beyond the power dynamics of her context. The Woman's transformative encounter flows over to contemporary pluralistic societies, highlighting the centrality of inclusion, justice, and mercy in human communities and relationships. The tension thus highlights the challenges in reconciling cultural, social, and religious boundaries with the inclusivity of the reign of God. It is a call to action, especially for Christians, to take note of the marginal and bring about transformative encounters of mercy. Such encounters are important in contexts that are rife with ethnic or religious intolerance, racism, and mistreatment of refugees and migrants, imploring an embrace of a vision of justice, mercy, and universal belonging. Jesus demonstrated that God's unmerited grace is an invitation to resist, restructure and rebuild our communities around universal values shaped by freedom in God.

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Topic: An Insight into the Challenges of Parenting in the Digital Age to Safeguard the Well-Being of Digital Children in Nigeria

By Elizabeth Titilayo Aduloju, Ph.D

Abstract

Parenting today poses unprecedented challenges as parents navigate the complexities of raising children (digital natives) in a rapidly evolving world. The digital natives are the generation of people who have access to mobile phones, computers and the Internet from a very young age and consider technology an integral and necessary part of their lives. They are undoubtedly vulnerable to being deliberately targeted, having their behaviours, beliefs and morals shaped and manipulated by media content and others' agendas. Therefore, this article delves into the changing parenting landscape in Nigeria, exploring the factors that have shaped how today's children perceive and interact with the world. It focuses on the children's ability to critically assess and make informed choices in critical situations and the perceived challenges Nigerian parents face in fulfilling their roles. Additionally, the study investigates how parents facilitate their children's access to online opportunities while safeguarding them from potential harm. Essential to this inquiry is examining parents' preparedness to manage and mitigate their children's exposure to digital technologies and content. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, understanding and addressing these issues is crucial in promoting children's well-being and successful parenting.

Introduction

Parenting has never been easy! Parents today face significant challenges when raising children; interestingly, many of the challenges and issues they experience today were unheard of some 50 years ago. However, things have changed drastically, even within our local context, Nigeria. Innumerable factors are responsible for this radical change in how today's children view life. These include, according to Cline and Fay (2006), “the human rights revolution, the communication explosion, the Internet, cell phones, changes in nuclear family...” (p.1). Many challenges involve digital technologies and various gadgets that did not exist a few decades ago. For instance, when the Nigerians notably raised their children in the '70s and '80s and even the early '90s, they did not have mobile phones, DVDs, video games, personal computers or the Internet.

Nevertheless, they raised intelligent, sociable and responsible children. Most children today imagine and wonder what life was like without technology, mobile phones, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and all the gadgets and digital opportunities they have today. The reason for this may not be farfetched; for instance, according to DataReprotal (2024), as of January 2024,

there were 103 million internet users in Nigeria, and the Internet penetration stood at 45.5 per cent. The report also stated that Nigeria was home to 36.75 million social media users, equating to 16.2 per cent of the total population, and a total of 205.4 million cellular mobile connections were active in early January 2024, equivalent to 90.7 per cent of the total population (DataReportal (2024)). No doubt, the current epoch has a lot of opportunities and potential to offer people, particularly young people, in terms of creating awareness, getting information, socialisation, education, health, creativity, capacity building and self-reliance when appropriately and responsibly utilised.

Notwithstanding, it poses many challenges, dangers, and risks to young people. Digital children are open to violence, war, amoral movies and pictures, and video games that portray immorality, sexuality, smoking, drugs, cyberbullying, hate speech and fake news right from the teething age. In a way, the age of innocent childhood is far gone! It seems there is little or no room left for innocence when the millennium children (digital natives) even know more than their parents and adults (digital immigrants) concerning digital technologies. Many of the adult's life lures – drugs, violence, pornography, premarital sex, alcohol, indecency – are thrown at children every day, every moment. The curious questions from such a scenario are: How would children cope with such attractions? Do they have the skills to deconstruct such content? What choices would they make when facing these critical situations? Do parents feel challenged in their roles? Are parents ensuring their children's access to online opportunities and protecting them from potentially harmful effects? Are parents equipped with the requisite skills to control and caution their children's appetites for digital gadgets and content? These questions probably informed Cline and Fay (2006) to argue that contemporary parents must learn to use new approaches and modes relating to their children who live in today's complex, rapidly changing world of digital technology.

As observed, children in Nigeria spend fewer hours playing and socialising outdoors; unfortunately, they spend endless time glued to the television, mobile phone, iPad, iPod, internet, social media, video/computer games and many others (Aduloju, 2017a). Contrastively, parents no longer spend quality time with their children to monitor their activities and inculcate societal morals, values and norms in them. For millennia, training and modelling children rested heavily on the parents. Of course, being a parent in the digital technology era is one of the most

challenging tasks, from knowing where they are to knowing what they are doing and who they are with within the real and virtual world. On the one hand, there is a limited effort that parents can take to control external factors such as access to the proliferation of hardware and software digital technologies; on the other hand, there are other ways they can employ to nurture and train their children to be responsible children and innovative adults in the digital environment.

Thus, this article takes a critical look at the challenges of parenting in the 21st century in Nigeria and advocates that effective parenting should centre on parents being available more than ever to monitor and control their children's media diets, encourage outdoor games and develop a family digital plan to alleviate fear and challenges of the technology-driven century (Aduloju, 2017a). More importantly, parents today should be digitally skilled to educate their children on "netiquette". Thus, directing, educating, escorting and guiding children through the virtual world is critical to effective parenting in the digital technology era.

The Digital Technology Era

The digital era is also called the information and communication era, as many studies have been conducted on collecting, processing, and transferring information (Bahman, 1991, cited in Haris, 2016). The era begins with the "Digital Revolution". According to Steven (2004), the digital revolution is the shift from mechanical and analogue technology to digital electronics from the late 1950s to the late 1970s, with the adoption and proliferation of digital computers and digital record-keeping that continues today. Similarly, Haris (2016) describes the digital era as "a period where a shift process occurs from industrial-based to an information-based economy using a computer or other technology devices as medium of

communication" (p. 1). Citing Lau (2003), Haris also sees the digital era as a period in which there is prevalent, ready, and effortless access to, sharing, and use of information that is electronically accessible. Besides, the digital era can be seen as the development of an evolutionary system in which knowledge turnover is not only very high but also increasingly out of the control of humans, making it a time in which human lives become more challenging to manage (Shepherd, 2004). To him, the era is vast and will continue to grow as technological functionality becomes more knowledge-based and people's everyday lives and understanding of themselves become more linked. It takes on a 'life' of its own (Shepherd, 2004).

Digital technologies are electronic tools, systems, devices and resources that generate, store or process data. Some recognisable examples of digital technology include but are not limited to social media, online games, multimedia, mobile phones and many others. It is an era characterised by technology, which increases the speed and breadth of knowledge turnover within the economy and society. Shepherd (2004) avers that:

The era is ever more associated with information and communication technology (ICT), the functionality of which is increasingly able to mobilise knowledge at faster speeds and in ways that can be addictive (e.g. chat rooms) or out of control (e.g. computer viruses), as well as productive (e.g. across distances). Innovative and analytical knowledge workers and celebrities move the Digital Era forward faster. Knowledge workers have access to and interact with more and more knowledge. Every day, people become celebrities through communication technology such as the Internet, photo messaging, and traditional media (p. 2).

Shelly, Cashman, Gunter and Gunter (2008) explain that the digital technological revolution, as experienced today, has changed and transformed the entire media landscape. This is because it clearly explains how mobile phones, digital phones, digital music players, computers, the Internet and other technologies work. Digital technology is illustrated as a method that encodes messages –sound, text, and on-and-off pulses that are often indicated as zero and ones (Donimick, 2009). This means that digital technology, the Internet, mobile phones, cameras, and other devices have triggered a reformation in the storage and transmission of messages.

Thus, the current era has affected every component of human endeavours, including the relationship between parents and children. Corroborating this, Aduloju (2017b), citing Pavlik (1998), stresses that the digital technology era has radically transformed almost every aspect of how people communicate and with whom, as well as any other dimension of their lives, including parenthood. Therefore, understanding the era of growth and development will help people build sustainable socio-economic and socio-cultural relationships with technology and with the advanced knowledge that technology helps them create.

Generation Gap between Immigrant Parents and Digital Children

The generation gap is a psychological gap between parents, teachers, adults and the younger generation. There has always been a persistent rift between the two generations concerning life,

love, family, training, success, entertainment, etc. Today, technology has virtually widened it all up. A single sentence can explain the generation gap: “You won't understand this” (Heddon, 2016, n.p). This solo sentence has been spoken and heard often from the new generation to the previous. In Surendran’s view, the generation gap has to do with the wide rift between the parents’ experienced outlook and the experimental attitude of their children to learn from trial and error (Surendran, 2016). She avers that most parents do not understand the tender world their children occupy nowadays, and the children in term also feel that their parents are dictators who want things done in their own ways.

Of course, there are many things that immigrant parents do not understand about their digital children today, such as their slang, dance, fashion, music, access to both hard and software technology, etc. For instance, today's children have unrestricted access to smartphones, tablets, Internet, emails and all the social media apps, which have distanced them further from the older generation. The previous generation lived and believed in the real, communal and physical world and shared their feelings, challenges, and thoughts among their friends, family and relations. The present generation lives and interacts in the virtual world, and sharing stuff on social media is more important than sharing with their family. Instead of making mealtimes fun and time for informal training in some form of etiquette, unlike the older generation, the digital natives keep busy with their phones, playing games, checking out on the latest from friends and responding to chats and emails even at meals (Aduloju, 2019).

There are various reasons for this generational gap. According to the description of Presky (2001), as cited by Aduloju (2017a), the younger generation is the digital natives, while the older generation is digital immigrants. To accurately categorised the reasons for the wide rift between the parents' experience and children, Aduloju (2017a), citing Shelly, Cashman, Gunter, and Gunter (2008), makes these available in a tabulated form as shown below:

Table 1: Reasons for Generational Gap between Parents and Children

Parents (Digital Immigrants)	Children (Digital Natives)
Prefer slow and controlled release of information from limited sources	Prefer quick receiving of information from numerous multimedia sources

Prefer singular processing and single or restricted tasking	Prefer equivalent processing and multitasking
Prefer providing text before pictures, sound, and video	Prefer processing pictures, sounds, and video before text
Prefer providing information linearly, logically and sequentially	Prefer random access to hyperlinked multimedia information
Prefer children working individually rather than networking and interacting with others	Prefer interacting or networking concurrently with many others
Prefer teaching "just-in-case (It is on the exam)	Prefer learning "Just-in-time."
Have a preference for deferred gratification and deferred rewards	Have a preference for instant gratification and instant rewards
Prefer teaching the set rules following the guidelines	Prefer learning that is relevant, instantly useful, and fun

(Source: Shelly et al. 2008, p. 16 (as cited in Aduloju, 2017a)

In addition, Surendran (2016) states five factors responsible for the generation gap. They are: i. Parents do not speak their children's language ii. Parents keep making mistakes with their children iii. They want their children to be their xerox-copy iv. They constantly compare their children with others v. Parents do not interact with their children.

From the above, it is evident that as the world is changing at a rapid pace, it is inevitable that there will be differences between people born at different times. As is the case with almost everything/concept on earth, the generation gap also has its own pros and cons, specifically regarding parenting patterns. Thus, parents need to develop understanding and form new modes or styles of parenting to bridge this gap.

Digital Children and the Risk of Digital Era

The world has never changed so fast! For the first time in history, most children today are techno-savvy, great observers and enjoy unlimited access to knowledge, unlike their parents and

grandparents. However, they are vulnerable to being deliberately targeted, and their behaviours, beliefs, and morals are shaped and manipulated by media content and others' agendas (Killalea & Ave, 2016). Today's children are referred to as digital natives (Prensky, 2001), "Gen Z", and "Gen Alphas" (McFadden, 2019). This new generation of young people seems to have their umbilical cords replaced by gadget power cords. They are the generation of people who grew up in the era of ubiquitous technology, including computers and the Internet. Digital natives are comfortable with technology and computers as early as age five. Unlike the older generations, the contemporary generation is characterised as having access to mobile phones, computers, and the Internet from a very young age, and they consider technology an integral and necessary part of their lives. Many can communicate and learn mainly via computers, social media sites, and texting (Halton, 2019). They are in the era of instant connectivity and gratifications in which many values and morals are sacrificed at the altar of digitalism and e-connectivity (Aduloju, 2019).

Regrettably, technology, though a great tool and boon to humankind, offering unlimited opportunities for communication and commerce, learning and free expression (Halton, 2019), is also a threat to children's way of life. It does this by exposing them to the effects of things like cyberbullying, fake news, hate speech, violence, crimes, drugs, pornography, predators, etc., that were unthinkable to previous generations (Aduloju, 2017b). Besides, McFadden (2019) argues that in the current age, free time to play is decreasing, and there are worries about reducing old-fashioned activities like running outside and other outdoor games in favour of time spent in front of a computer screen. Gone are those beautiful days and years when children were playing with one another outside all day, riding bicycles, flying kites, and playing all sorts of indoor and outdoor games (Aduloju, 2019). In other words, digital children continue to witness and experience the ever-falling value of face-to-face social communication and interaction. One can agree with Aduloju (2019) that "Today people do not lack e-connections, but they do certainly lack human connections" (p. 90).

Indeed, the children have predominantly taken to the latest ways of communicating and interacting, such as instant messaging, emailing, texting, WhatsApping, Facebooking and Tweeting. Children today face online and offline challenges based on their 24/7 activities on the Internet and other digital gadgets and platforms. This means that the two worlds (real world and

virtual world) in which the children live pose risks to their morality, safety and general well-being. Various scholars (Michelle, Vogel, Surbey, and Stills, 2013) assert that challenges in the virtual worlds include but are not limited to violent and pornographic pictures/videos, internet addiction and sexting. Gimenez, Baldo, Horassius, and Pedinielli (2003); Smith et al. (2008); Carlsson (2009); Michelle et al. (2013) add paedophilia, cyberbullying and sharing of too much personal information as parts of the challenges that young people today go through, making parent-child responsibility difficult. Television, Video, Music, the Internet, Social Media, Video Games, Pornography, etc, are all part of the virtual world.

Challenges of Parenting in the Digital Era

From time immemorial, parents raised their children based on their parents' training modes and equally applied them to their children. Today, these modes are more apt to bomb than boom (Cline & Fay, 2006). No doubt, parenting has never been easy, but the current digital technology era, with its many challenges, poses a significant challenge to parents and parenting styles. Understandably, the digital revolution of the past two decades has induced a "moral panic" in parenting (Ramasubbu, 2015). The challenges in digital parenting arise from the general belief that now is the only time in human history that the child knows more than the parent (Ramasubbu, 2015). Thus, the biggest challenge of parenting is accepting that they face a world very different from the one they grew up in.

One of the wrong assumptions Nigerian parents make is that digital children are the same as they were when they were their age and that the same styles of training and techniques that worked for them would work for their children (Aduloju, 2017b). Unfortunately, this premise is no longer applicable. In other words, the parents' solutions do not work today as their children know more than they do technologically.

Across the world, including Nigeria, today's people live in a world with the additional complexity of the rapid destruction of walls between cultures. However, technological culture has made present-day parenting more challenging than ever. In other words, parenting is a challenging task in the digital age. The rapidly changing lifestyle, newer demands and requirements of life, etc., put numerous challenges to parents.

The modern age has brought many changes to the way people live and work. Observation reveals that many parents in Nigeria in the present age are so involved in their work (career) that they do not have enough time to train their children. Many parents – husbands and wives -are no longer living together because of the nature of their jobs. One may also agree that they must fend for the family. Nevertheless, the family, particularly the younger ones, suffer from a lack of attention and proper guidance, which affects their moral, social and cultural development (Aduloju, 2017b). As such, many parents are increasingly giving their children more TV, video games, the latest iPads and mobile phone devices, and even increasing monthly subscriptions on their cables. Unfortunately, this continues to create a profound and irreversible gap between the children and parents since children's overdependence on phones, computer games, and social media would dramatically change their mode of communication and interaction and slowly erode home training and societal values. This will inevitably increase the challenges of parenting in the digital era.

Also, due to the ever-increasing financial obligations and the fact that women empowerment is now the norm, both mother and father must work. Some parents in Nigeria have no choice but to delegate their parental roles to domestic staff, relatives, teachers, celebrities, technology, etc. These are the people and gadgets that parents love and trust. Unfortunately, these "trusted people" exploit the children's vulnerability. Many children are abused emotionally, physically, and sexually. The effects of these forms of abuse have robbed them of their God-given childhood innocence and experience. It is a pity that the people, both real and virtual, that the children look up to for protection have become threats to their lives and safety. Sadly, many parents are ignorant of the fact that parenting in the digital era requires that they become more aware of the risk of delegating their roles to people in both real and virtual worlds. The family itself has become a threat to the moral values of children, with the increase in divorce and domestic violence happening in a lot of homes in Nigeria. Growing up in such an uncertain environment would harm a child's future.

Other challenges of digital parenting are:

1. Time, a scarce resource: Parents today face the scarcity of time to meet their children's needs. Most parents spend quality time of the day juggling home, office, children, and themselves. It is

difficult to reserve time for each of these requirements in the best possible way. Good parenting requires considerable time spent with children for proper moral inculcation.

2. Failure to mend moral life: There is no doubt that a lack of moral principles is why children engage in unwanted activities and acquire unaccepted behaviour patterns in the real and virtual worlds. The digital technology era has opened ways for children to get familiar with computers, television, and the internet and explore both the good and bad realities of life. They often follow the so-called wrong or unaccepted paths of life. They learn a lot from the movie actors tagged as role models and also waste time playing and watching games or the freely available porn on the Internet. However, parents do not recognise the changes in children as they get very few chances to interfere in children's lives and communicate with them.

3. Imbalanced life: This is another challenge that parents face in discharging their responsibility of parenting in the digital environment. Office, work, children, personal requirements—nothing can be avoided or neglected. Balancing these requirements is a tiresome task, and as a result, many parents become highly imbalanced in life.

4. Emotional dissolution: Many parents face the challenge of a lack of emotional bondage. It is easy for parents nowadays to lose time and energy spending time with their children to create emotional bondage with them. Knowing each other's feelings is essential to growing affectionately. When the emotional bond between parents and children is broken, children go astray from their parents and live in their own world (virtual world).

Consequently, based on the challenges of parenting in the digital era, Aduloju (2017a) explains further that the new condition would necessitate a new approach, learning, skills and techniques. This may be hard for today's parents since combating the challenges of the 21st century requires them to do more studies, research and consultations. Thus, for 20th-century parents to respond appropriately to parenting their 21st-century children to be responsible and prudent users of digital technology, they need new modes or styles of parenting.

Parenting Styles in the Digital Era

In today's technology-driven world, parents face unique challenges as they navigate raising children in a digitally saturated environment. From smartphones and social media to online learning and the recent surge in artificial intelligence, these advancements necessitate that

parents themselves be digitally literate, or "e-literate." A technology-centric world, which provide young people access to invaluable resources and learning opportunities, also presents parenting challenges that include active participation in digital literacy, management of screen time, protection from cybercrimes such as cyberbullying and cyber-theft, and filtering age-appropriate content. The digital age requires that both parents and children not only possess the ability to use technology but also understand its implications.

A digitally illiterate parent poses a clear risk to the privacy and safety of their children. In a moment of parental pride, a technology-naïve parent may post pictures, videos, or information about their children online, unaware of the violation of their children's privacy rights and the potential for public scrutiny (Ramasubbu, 2015). Privacy management on the Internet and social networks is the primary and most crucial e-skill a parent must possess. Every parent needs to understand that information in the cyber-universe is permanent and not difficult to retrieve, posing risks for the child's future and, often, even their present. Thus, in the parent-student-teacher triad partnership, parents play a vital part in teaching children the practice of "netiquette" outside of the classroom (Ramasubbu, 2015).

Parents' parenting patterns can affect everything about the child—from self-image, self-confidence, and self-reliance to interpersonal relationships. At such a young age, children can only do things that parents let them do. This gives parents almost absolute control over the things they watch and do. Parents should take full advantage of this power and ensure they know what their children are watching, listening to, and playing.

In line with this notion, the World Health Organization (WHO) 2007 developed a framework that examines critical dimensions of parenting or parental roles that positively affect children and adolescents' well-being. Fortunately, this framework can be easily applied to all situations and environments, including parenting in the digital environment. The framework includes connection, behaviour control, respect for individuality, modelling appropriate behaviour, and provision and protection (WHO, 2007). These are exemplified as follows:

1. Connection: This concerns a positive, stable, emotional bond between parents and their children. In the digital technology era, if children are more connected with their parents, they are more likely to freely share their media experiences online and offline without fear of intimidation, rejection and refusal of further access to such content. This means that when

parents and children have a positive, stable, and emotional relationship, children will have the trust to share their negative experiences with them.

2. Behaviour control: This, according to WHO (2007), includes “supervising and monitoring children' activities, establishing behavioural rules and consequences for misbehaviour, and conveying clear expectations for behaviour” (p. 11). This means parenting in the digital environment should include setting specific rules about time spent on the Internet, using digital devices after bedtime, in children's bedrooms, during mealtime, and understanding what children do online. Parents should also ensure they know how their children set up their privacy controls, with whom they share personal information and what they generally do online.

3. Respect for individuality: Parents respect their children’s dignity and rights. It means allowing the children to build up a healthy sense of self, independent of the interference of the parents. Respect for children should also mean listening to what they say and trusting them to complete their responsibilities or take on new family roles. Despite the risk in the digital domain, children should be allowed some freedom to explore the Internet independently as much as they would be allowed to explore the physical world, although the age and capacities of the child matter, as younger children will need more guidance than the older ones (Lim, 2018).

4. Modelling appropriate behaviour: Here, parents should, as much as possible, be good role models for their children. Undeniably, children tend to identify with their parents, absorb the values and norms established in the home and try to emulate their parental behaviour. For instance, if parents spend most of their free time online, there is a strong likelihood that the children will do too. If parents share too much information online, it will undoubtedly affect how children share their personal information or information about their friends. However, some children may depart from the established norm in the family and take a different approach from their parents. There have been cases where children disagree with their parents over their “sharing” or parental sharing of content and images of their children online (Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2017, cited in Lim, 2018).

5. Provision and protection: Parents cannot meet all the needs of growing children. Their primary concern and responsibility are to find the proper resources for their children and to ensure that they have access to appropriate services.

Apart from WHO's framework, parents should also get or purchase some of the popular apps and tools to help them manage their children's screen time, online safety and digital well-being.

These app and tools include but not limited to:

- i. Screen Time Parental Control, Freedom and Questodio: These track and limit screen time, set bedtime schedules and block apps
- ii. Net Nanny, Kaspersky Safe Kids and Bark: These apps are good in monitoring online activities (social media, email, text), block harmful and inappropriate content from websites.
- iii. Life360, Family Orbit and OurPAct: These tools track locations, phone activities and provides emergency alerts.
- iv. Common Sense Media, Moment and Digital Wellbeing: These apps help to set goals and provide insights on app usage, provide guidance on digital citizenship, online safety and media literacy

Of course, most parents struggle with the tension between protecting their children and allowing them to explore, learn, and grow independently. Nevertheless, when protecting children online, all stakeholders—parents, peers, teachers, pastors, media creators/professionals, and other responsible adults—have an essential role in children's lives. Parents specifically, should be encouraged to draw on what they know about their child and the wider society, as this knowledge is often applicable in the digital domain.

Digital Literacy: A Way Forward

Digital literacy, according to Stempedia (2023), involves competently accessing, evaluating, and using digital information, as well as understanding how to effectively utilise digital tools, protect personal information, and engage in digital communication and collaboration. It is an essential skill set in today's digital world, enabling individuals to adapt to technological advancements, make informed decisions, and actively contribute to the digital age's opportunities and challenges.

Although, digital literacy goes beyond the mere ability to use technology, it encompasses understanding how digital tools work, their implications, and how to manage them responsibly (Statti, & Torres, 2020). For parents, this means being able to monitor their children's online

activities, set appropriate boundaries for screen time, and educate them about potential online risks such as cyberbullying, identity theft, and exposure to inappropriate content and predators. One of the key components of digital literacy is understanding and managing digital footprints. Digital literacy as a critical life skill, is important not only for career readiness, but also for educational and social success (Lcom, 2023).

Below are some of digital literacy skills parents must teach their digital children:

- i. **Basic Computer Skills:** Parents and teachers should equip their children with the basic computer skills to operate digital devices such as computers, tablets, and smartphones. This includes familiarity with hardware components, operating systems, and common software applications.
- ii. **Internet Navigation and Online Search Abilities:** Children should be able to navigate the Internet effectively and safely. This involves understanding web browsers, using search engines to find information, evaluating search results, and discerning reliable sources.
- iii. **Information Literacy:** Children must learn how to evaluate and critically analyse information obtained from digital sources. They should be able to determine the credibility, relevance, and bias of online information to make informed decisions.
- iv. **Multimedia Creation and Digital Storytelling:** Digital children should be guided on how to use digital literacy skills to create multimedia content and digital storytelling. This involves using various tools and platforms to create presentations, videos, podcasts, and other digital projects.

By acquiring these essential digital literacy skills, children are better equipped to engage with digital technologies, explore online resources, and participate actively in the digital world. Parents will play a critical role in teaching their children how to create a responsible and positive online presence. This involves being mindful of what they post, understanding the potential long-term consequences of online actions, and recognising the permanence of digital content. By instilling these values, parents can help their children build a digital reputation that reflects integrity and responsibility.

Biag (2015) also provides a convenient way of dealing with or overcoming parenting challenges in the digital era while imbibing digital literacy. According to him, "RACE" is the solution. RACE stands for Read, Anticipate, Create, and Execute, which is an acronym for what is needed to deal with the challenges of raising children in the current era.

Read: According to Biag (2015), the current era is experiencing a flagging in the reading culture and habit. Unsurprisingly, redundancy in reading is the root cause of most of the problems of the modern period. No doubt, not reading disengages one from one's own history, culture, religion and world beyond. The fact remains that, through reading, one is empowered and able to know what is happening in one's environment and society. Reading widens the children's and everyone's knowledge and horizons. It affords people the opportunity to face life challenges and overcome them. Hence, parents should intensify efforts to encourage reading habits in their children, particularly "real books" in the "real world", such as novels, inspirational books, the bible and academic books. Parents should ask their children to read several books every week or month.

Nevertheless, parents should also read! Ignorance is not bliss or virtue. Digital parenting involves not only saying but also doing. Thus, parents should read and encourage their children to read as well. They should read, analyse, discuss and even debate with their children. This should allow children to ask questions. Here, the questions should be much more important than the answers. Reading and analysing can lead children to think critically about the real world and virtual world content. Parents should allow critical questions to arise in their minds and answer them as much as they can or find others who could answer them better. However, in any case, parents should not shun them, which may undoubtedly discourage them.

Anticipate: Parenting in the digital age requires that parents have ample time to be with their children. Parents need to monitor and control their conversations and company, particularly in the presence of their children. They should also check whom they meet with their children and to whom they are exposed. The parents have to anticipate what they will learn from them and ensure they keep the right company and are exposed to the right company. Most children today spend time with their own age groups. The question is, what can a ten-year-old teach another ten-year-old? Children need the company of wise and knowledgeable elders to learn life skills and draw on their own life experiences and the traditions and knowledge of their community.

According to Biag (2015), this is how mammals learn – from elders. Most children today are starved of this knowledge and skills from wise elders, and the tragedy is that most are not even aware of what they are losing. The elders here include older siblings, stepparents, grandparents, and other adults taking on a caring role. Nevertheless, care must be taken lest they fall victim to the hands of those elders who might misuse and abuse them.

Create: As digital parents, parents now know the challenges ahead of them and have anticipated how some will likely affect them and their children. The skill of creativity comes as a solution. Digital literacy possesses the skills that encourage children to be critical consumers of mediated content and to create content such as drawings, writing, painting and creating media content in all formats (pictures, graphics, audio sounds, audio-visuals, etc). It also help parents to have a deep enough understanding of available digital apps and tools guide their children through creative content and projects.

Execute: The parent must create a schedule to impart or execute all these skills and knowledge to the children. Parenting is a contact sport. One cannot outsource it, no matter how competent the caretaker (Biag, 2015). Parents should never forget that children listen with their eyes. If parents do not read, the child will not read. Moreover, if he/she reads because his/her teacher inspires him/her to do so, he/she will soon know more than the parents, which will be shameful. Parents need to ask their children what they learned from them as digital parents. In other words, parents should be good role models for their children through their activities online and offline. Therefore, parents should execute and implement what they want from their children because only results can be banked, as the saying goes (Biag, 2015).

Conclusion

Parents need to ensure their style of parenting in the digital age is especially helpful because the mode of parenting would affect the child throughout his/her life. To what extent these parenting roles will be fulfilled, what parenting style will be adopted and what parenting practices will prevail will depend on many factors, including parental education, beliefs and culture, and the individual and institutional support available to parents. Today's parents are challenged to inspire, support, teach and prepare their children for a world they know nothing about. Good parenting is one of the significant resources for good behaviour, national development and

progress. It is the sole premise of personal development that lays the ground for a successful future, marriage and family life.

It is simply not enough for parents to feed, clothe, and *gadgetise* children and then leave them to their own devices except to refill their bellies or accounts. They must be serious with their upbringing and well-being, particularly in this age and time. Thus, parenting in the digital age includes teaching tools to help children develop independent minds because parents' answers may not always work. Teaching timeless tools and skills that can be applied to all problems is vital. In other words, directing, educating, escorting and guiding children through the physical and virtual worlds are critical components of effective parenting in the digital technology era. To achieve all these, all stakeholders –parents, peers, teachers, pastors, media creators/professionals and other responsible adults- have essential roles to play in their children's lives.

Recommendations

Based on the discussion in this in this article, the following are therefore recommended:

1. **Stay Educated and Informed:** Parents should be digitally skilled to educate their children on “netiquette” and more importantly, they should be more available and connected to their children. Parents should keep up with the latest trends and developments in technology. This includes understanding new apps, social media platforms, and online safety measures. They should also participate in digital literacy workshops or online courses. These can provide valuable insights and practical skills for managing digital tools and ensuring online safety of their children.
2. **Dialogue with Children:** Parents should maintain open and honest communication with their children about their online activities. Encourage them to share their experiences, both positive and negative and hold regular family meetings to discuss digital boundaries, screen time limits, and online safety rules.
3. **Establish Clear Guidelines:** Parents should set clear rules for screen time that balance educational use with leisure activities. They should promote hobbies and activities that do not involve screens, such as sports, reading, and creative arts. That is to say, children should be encouraged to engage in outdoor games, play and learn together as a family, and value face-to-face interaction by engaging in family activities that provide quality time together away from digital devices. They should be good role models for them.
4. **Use Monitor Apps and Tools:** Parents should use apps and tools that help monitor and manage screen time of their children. More importantly, they should ensure that children have access to age-appropriate content by using parental controls and content filters.

5. Foster Critical Thinking: Children should be opened to media and digital literacy which equip them with the ability to think critically, evaluate the information they encounter online, question information sources and verify facts before accepting information as true. Children should also be educated about responsible online behaviour, including respecting others' privacy and avoiding harmful activities such as cyberbullying and spread of fake news and hate speech.
6. Collaborate with Educators: Parents and schools should work together to ensure that digital literacy is part of the curriculum. Parents should also collaborate with teachers to stay informed about what children are learning and how they can reinforce these lessons at home.

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Francis' *Laudato Si*: Towards an Oiko-Theological Ethics

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Abstract

In Christian ecological theology, the concept of *Oikos* has emerged as a theological framework depicting the ideal state of relationship that humans ought to exhibit in the relentless quest to save the earth from total collapse. This changing perspective of the current ecological discussion is given a higher intellectual accentuation through the effort of Pope Francis in his encyclical Letter, *Laudato Si*. *Laudato Si* constantly refers to the earth as our “common home (*oikos*).” The *oikos* vocabulary that permeates the entire document gives us reasons to believe that, in Pope Francis’s view, a perception of the earth as our common home is the basis for ecological engagement, ecological conversion, and ecological spirituality. In the light of the *oiko*-theological perspective offered by Pope Francis, we envision a Christian “oikological” ethics that rests on a tripod of Deep ecology, Deontology, and Virtue ethics. This essay shall be expository, descriptive, and prescriptive.

Key words: *Oikos*, *Oiko*-Theology, Theology of responsibility, Ethics, Deontology.

Introduction

This article focuses on the encyclical letter *Laudato Si* of Pope Francis. *Laudato Si* is viewed as a robust enterprise in *oiko*-theology and seeks to sharpen our collective orientation to the environment as a home made by God for us. Responsibility is identified as a hermeneutical key to unlocking the profound *oiko*-theological message of the Holy Father. Here, our primary concern is to argue that *Laudato Si*’s styled *oiko*-theology offers us the language and tool for re-envisioning Christian Ecological Ethics for effective ecological praxis and engagement by the Church and everyone.

Summary of *Laudato Si*

The encyclical, *Laudato Si*, was issued on the 24th of May, 2015. This encyclical's content has vibrated worldwide and received numerous reviews, a testament to how seriously both the ecclesiastical and global communities have received the work. It is a work of scientific significance and theological relevance, an essential document on Christian environmental activism, and an excellent resource for scholarly research. The encyclical consists of six chapters, logically arranged, beginning with a prolegomenon that assesses the deplorable state of the environment,

‘our home,’ and terminates with a Christian solution to the problem of the environmental crisis in the last chapter. Although the environmental aspect of the encyclical is irrepressibly conspicuous, a robust reading of *Laudato Si* similarly reveals some other conspicuous themes. One cannot successfully scan through the document without noticing the social dimension of the Pope’s concern. He emphasizes, “We are faced not with two crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental.”²⁵⁹ The neglect of the poor,²⁶⁰ social justice, preservation of culture²⁶¹ and respect for the dignity of the human person, both born and unborn,²⁶² are all issues of great concern for Pope Francis. Little wonder he avers that what he writes is now added to the rich treasure of the body of the social doctrines of the Catholic Church.²⁶³

The best description of the central message of *Laudato Si* is given by Francis Nwosu’s description of this document. For Nwosu, “one may describe *Laudato Si* as an *ecological parable*.”²⁶⁴ He likens this ecological parable to the parable of the Good Samaritan.²⁶⁵ The ecological parable, which *Laudato Si* is, tells a sad story of our beautiful environment (our common

²⁵⁹ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #139.

²⁶⁰ Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #48.

²⁶¹ Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #145. Here, Pope Francis refers to the disappearance of culture as serious or even more serious as the disappearance of a species of plants or animals.

²⁶² Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #81.

²⁶³ Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato si*, #15. This is also evident in his extensive reference to some documents of his predecessors on social doctrines. He reverses as far back as fifty years, prior to *Laudato si*, to resort to Pope John XXIII, who’s encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, advocated for peace and strongly rejected war in the heat of the nuclear crisis at that time. He would also make reference to Pope Paul VI’s Apostolic Letter, *Octagesima Adveniens* (14th May, 1971), which identified the ecological crisis as “a tragic consequence” of unchecked human activity (*Octagesima Adveniens* (14th May, 1971), #. 21. He was not oblivious of the social teachings of John Paul II, whose social concerns drove him to condemn consumerism (See Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March, 1979), no. 15), and to advocate for *ecological conversion* and the adoption of the principle of human ecology (See *Centessimus Annus* (1 May, 1991), #38), and finally to make us realize that reality is an interconnected network of relationships in an ordered system of the universe (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (30 December, 1987), no. 34).

²⁶⁴ Francis Nwosu, “Ecclesiological Ecology and Ecological Ecclesiology: The Theological Dimensions of Ecology in Pope Francis’ *Laudato Si*”, p. 35.

²⁶⁵ Cf. Luke 10:29-37.

home), which is “robbed, trodden, wounded and left dying by the wayside.”²⁶⁶ She does not only suffer the brutality of robbers but she is also neglected, uncared for, and disrespected. It will take humanity with a changed heart and attitude towards the environment to save it. Will the Good Samaritan ever come her way? *Laudato Si* may not be Good Samaritan, but it teaches all humanity to be Good Samaritans towards the wounded earth.

Laudato Si is both a lamentation and a prophecy. It is a lamentation because it sadly narrates, with tears, the despicable situation of our “abandoned and maltreated”²⁶⁷ home, which now ‘groans in travail.’²⁶⁸ It is prophetic, prophetic in the sense of forth-telling and not fore-telling.²⁶⁹ Pope Francis presents to us, upon careful and critical evaluation of our current situation, the truth about our present earth and leads us to make the right option between the following alternatives: first, if we continue in this mode of rapidification²⁷⁰, our earth will soon become uninhabitable; second, if we amend our ways of life and attitude towards the environment, we will save our earth from total collapse and save it for future generations. The task then lies on us to choose. However, the Pope is not merely saying we should choose one; instead, he tells us what to choose, that is, we should amend our ways of life and attitudes towards the environment, save it from destruction, and save it for future generations.

²⁶⁶ Francis Nwosu, “Ecclesiological Ecology and Ecological Ecclesiology: The Theological Dimensions of Ecology in Pope Francis’ *Laudato Si*”, p. 35.

²⁶⁷ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #2.

²⁶⁸ Romans 8:2.

²⁶⁹ Here, this distinction is very necessary to the point being made. A prophecy of fore-telling merely says what must happen in the future. It is on this ground that we can convict others as being false prophets especially when what they fore-tell does not happen. However, a prophecy of forth-telling is the product of a very candid review of the past and the present with a view to presenting options to humanity going forward in order that we may play a part in the reshaping of our future. (Cf. Thomas L. Leclerc, *Introduction to the Prophets: Their Stories, Sayings, and Scrolls* (New York: Paulist Press, 2007), pp. 55, 69.)

²⁷⁰ Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato si*, #18. The Pope defines rapidification as “a more intensified pace of life and work.”

The tone of the title of the first chapter of the document immediately shows that there is a problem, the magnitude of which requires urgent attention. “What is happening to our common home?” The Pope then undertakes a comprehensive analysis of the different shades of our ecological crisis to vividly portray what is happening to our common home. Pope Francis looks at the various symptoms of environmental degradation. The impacts of climate change are considered alongside issues of freshwater depletion and loss of biodiversity. The encyclical firmly posits that a truly ecological approach is also inherently social – an approach that simultaneously hears the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.²⁷¹

The second chapter, “The Gospel of Creation,” considers the world how God intended it. The chapter surveys the rich scriptural traditions to show no biblical justification for “a tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures.”²⁷² In the third chapter, “The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis,” Pope Francis examines the twin notions of what he calls the “technocratic paradigm” and a “modern anthropocentrism” borne out of a view that sees nature as a mere given, devoid of any spiritual or transcendental value. These notions have led to the misplaced idea that the earth’s resources are infinite and that economic growth and technology alone can solve global hunger and poverty.²⁷³

In the fourth chapter, “Integral Ecology,” the encyclical charts a path to recapture awareness of the interconnectedness of creation. It is essential to appreciate the impact of

²⁷¹ Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, # 49.

²⁷² Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, # 68.

²⁷³ Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, ##109, and 144. This, however, does not mean that Pope Francis condemns science and technology. He himself holds a master’s degree in Chemistry (cf. Anthony Akinwale, ‘What does Pope Francis know about Climate Change?’, A paper presented at the 31st Annual Conference of the Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria, 30th March to 5th April, 2016, p. 1. (Unpublished)). Citing an address of John Paul II, Pope Francis reaffirms that “Science and technology are wonderful products of a God-given human creativity.” (John Paul II, “Address to Scientists and Representatives of the United Nations University, Hiroshima” (25 February 1981), no. 3.

environmental degradation on “cultural ecology,” such as those social networks and ways of life bound up with the environment in which communities are placed. The experience of indigenous peoples is specifically referred to in this regard. The Pope also introduces other facets of integral ecology and cultural ecology, which are already mentioned, including economic ecology,²⁷⁴ social ecology,²⁷⁵ human ecology,²⁷⁶ and what he refers to as the ecologies of daily life.²⁷⁷

The fifth chapter, “Lines of Approach and Action,” sets out various international collective actions needed. It highlights the imperative to switch from fossil fuels to renewable energy, using government subsidies where appropriate. The sixth chapter, “Ecological Education and Spirituality,” focuses on the individual believer, families and communities and invites them to make a difference in small but tangible ways. Consumer choices, the cultivation of ecological virtues such as reducing wastefulness, and environmental education for the young are explained as practical steps leading to a more profound, spiritual “ecological conversion”²⁷⁸ through which the follower of Christ recognizes the true worth of all created entities.

The ‘Home’ Perspective of *Oiko*-Theology in *Laudato Si*

Oiko-theology represents the current generational phase of the environmental discourse. Pope Francis’ excellent piece, *Laudato Si*, is an enterprise in *oiko*-theology. The preponderance of the word ‘home’ in the encyclical lends credence. Of the twenty-seven appearances of the word ‘home’ in the encyclical, sixteen are deliberately used to refer to the earth-home. Twelve times, Pope Francis deliberately uses the expression ‘our common home.’ This indicates that Pope

²⁷⁴ Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #141.

²⁷⁵ Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #142.

²⁷⁶ Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #155.

²⁷⁷ Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, ##147-155.

²⁷⁸ Pope Francis sees ecological conversion as a necessary component of an eco-spirituality “whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them” (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #217).

Francis's view of ecology goes beyond purely environmental considerations in which the earth is simply an environment to consider the earth as a home. This takes inspiration from the *oikos*' meaning of 'home,' for Pope Francis, it is 'our common home.' Realizing that in challenging times such as this, the last thing desirable is more talk, Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si*, seeks to expand the boundary of theology as a 'discourse about God' to include theology as an action for God. As observed by D.K. Ray, theology is now "God-talk" and "God-action."²⁷⁹ This action-based theology also requires a radicalization of terminologies or the ecological language that spurs people to deeper action, appreciation, and responsibility for the environment. The *oiko* language is an ecological language providing a hermeneutical framework capable of inciting a radical action for creation, hence the preponderance and acceptability of the language of 'home' in *Laudato Si*.²⁸⁰

The theological perspective that the *oikos* language in a theology of the environment offers is that the earth should not be seen merely as a physical environment without sacredness, merely as a system to be studied, understood and controlled²⁸¹ or solely as a source of profit and gain²⁸² or just a pool of wealth and resources to be exploited. Theology with a solid orientation to 'home' also shifts our mindset from a utilitarian relationship with creation to the kind of relationship akin to 'family,' and that is because to create a home is to create a family. This explains why Pope Francis also refers to the earth as 'a place of universal fraternity', making all of us ecological citizens, which enables us to say 'brother sun' or 'sister moon.' As ecological citizens, Pope Francis' *oiko*-theology seeks to help us wake up to the reality that environmental concerns must

²⁷⁹ Cf. Darby Kathleen Ray, "Prologue" in Darby Kathleen Ray (ed.), *Theology that Matters: Ecology, Economy, and God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), p. 2.

²⁸⁰ Eulogizing St. Francis from whom he took his ecological inspiration, Pope Francis says, "Francis helps us to see that an integral ecology calls for openness to categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology, and take us to the heart of what it is to be human." Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #11.

²⁸¹ Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #76.

²⁸² Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #82.

be directed towards maintaining the earth as a 'suitable home.' This "home also entails a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures but joined in a splendid universal communion."²⁸³ The earth (our common home) is a place of solidarity and civic friendships, and it certainly includes us and brings us together. The sense being engendered is that we share a kinship with all other creatures as one big universal family with God as our Father.

With this deep sense of the environment as a suitable home, we are easily charged and motivated to take up full responsibility for the earth, not just as our common home but our only home in the flesh. One feature of *Laudato Si* styled theology of the environment is Francis' use of responsibility as a hermeneutical key to a pragmatic and contemporary *oiko*-theology. The encyclical clearly shows, and as shall be demonstrated in the ensuing section, that the underlying theological thread that runs through the ecological agenda of *Laudato Si* is a **theology of responsibility**.

The responsibility spoken of here is imposed on us by our faith in a creator we lovingly accept. Pope Francis says that "it is good for humanity and the world at large when we believers better recognize the ecological commitments which stem from our convictions."²⁸⁴ Reiterating the words of Pope John Paul II, Pope Francis emphasizes that both responsibility and duty towards nature and the creator are an essential part of our faith.²⁸⁵ From this, it becomes clear that the theological-linguistic framework within which a theology of ecology of *Laudato Si* is to be understood is within the categories of responsibility, duty and commitment. This is where the general discussion of the theology of *Laudato Si* should begin.

²⁸³ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #220.

²⁸⁴ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, # 64.

²⁸⁵ Cf. John Paul II, "Message for the 1990 World Day of Peace", #15. Cited in Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, # 64.

A Theology of Responsibility in *Laudato Si*

Having identified the category of responsibility as the fundamental theological thread that underlies the Pope's concern for a theological engagement in ecological matters, we now have to develop, in detail, the theology of responsibility of *Laudato Si*.

The term responsibility could have several meanings. However, we shall restrict ourselves to Francis' unique usage of the term in *Laudato Si*. Francis tells us what he means by the term responsibility. In *Laudato Si*, responsibility is intimately tied to the virtue of respect and is defined in terms of respect. In explaining what responsibility for God's earth entails, he says, "responsibility for God's earth means that human beings, endowed with intelligence, must **respect** the laws of nature and the delicate equilibrium existing between the creatures of this world..."²⁸⁶ He adds that responsibility entails "respecting the rhythms inscribed in nature by the hand of the creator."²⁸⁷ In the words of Pope Francis, "Not only has God given the earth to man, who must use it with respect for the original good purpose for which it was given, but man too is God's gift to man. He must, therefore, respect the natural and moral structure with which he has been endowed."²⁸⁸

Similarly, Pope Francis speaks of our responsibility to our fellow humans regarding respect for each person as possessing a "particular dignity above other creatures."²⁸⁹ It is on this ground that abortion is unjustifiable since it constitutes a rejection and gross disrespect for the new life of the unborn.²⁹⁰ The same is said of our responsibility to God. Our responsibility to God consists of

²⁸⁶ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, # 68.

²⁸⁷ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #71.

²⁸⁸ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #115. Benedict XVI also sees respect for nature as a "responsibility that knows no boundaries." (Benedict XVI, "If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation", Message for the 2010 World Day of Peace (January 1, 2010), no. 11.)

²⁸⁹ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, ##119, 154.

²⁹⁰ Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #120.

recognizing our covenantal relationship with God, in which we are bound to respect and keep God's commands. Ultimately, therefore, Francis' theology of responsibility, based on the traditional triadic relations of God, humans and nature, is also essentially a theology of respect, respect for the commands of God, respect for the dignity of the human person and respect for the rhythms inscribed in nature by God. This is the fundamental principle that *Laudato Si* takes our attention to. Therefore, it is as if the Pope is saying that the present surge in the ecological crisis has, as its fundamental cause, humans' gross disrespect for the inherent rhythm in nature, the dignity of human life and the commandments of God. Climate change, loss of biodiversity and the extinction of species of both animals and plants are all symptomatic of this lack of respect for the rhythm inscribed in nature. This explains why Pope Francis writes in the introductory part of *Laudato Si*, "This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her."²⁹¹

The fundamental basis of a theology of responsibility in *Laudato Si* is based on the Pope's firm conviction that all creatures are interconnected and interdependent. All creatures, humans and nature, are connected to God, their creator, because they are the effects of God's self-communication outside of himself. The realization of this fundamental truth calls for a deep sense of responsibility. As the Pope rightly observes, "Because all creatures are connected, each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us depend on one another. Each area is responsible for the care of this family."²⁹² Our interdependence and connectedness also reveal that there is the *otherness* of other created beings, that is, what Pope Francis refers to as "another thou."²⁹³ "This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature."²⁹⁴ The

²⁹¹ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #2.

²⁹² Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #42. See also #70.

²⁹³ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, # 81.

²⁹⁴ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #67.

preceding statement's idea of 'mutual responsibility' makes responsibility a relational term. As a relational term, responsibility, in the sense of committed respect, is ontologically altruistic. A theology of responsibility supplies a necessary relational code, that is, respect, for maintaining proper relationships among creatures, without which this necessary relationship risks being broken and destroyed, as the ecological crisis already suggests. The magnitude of the ecological crisis is a glaring manifestation of the propensity of our broken relationship with nature.

Furthermore, *Laudato Si*'s theology of respect highlights a critical quality of all creatures: the intrinsic worth and value of all creatures. We can never truly care for nature without respecting all creatures' intrinsic or inherent value. Creation has a value that is independent of us.²⁹⁵ This is not the economic value humans have forced on nature, but one put in nature by God himself. *Laudato Si* affirms, "Together with our obligation to use the earth's goods with responsibility, we are called to recognize that other living beings have a value of their own in God's eyes."²⁹⁶ Each creature participates in the divine essence of God. The inner life of God is also imparted into each creature, and each creature receives it according to its mode of being.

Consequently, divine goodness is received by each creature, no matter how microscopic it is. This explains why, at the end of each day of creation, God saw that "it was good." Consequently, the goodness inherent in each creature is the goodness of God. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "Each creature possesses its particular goodness and perfection.... Each of the various creatures, willed in its being, reflects in its way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness. Man must, therefore, respect the particular goodness of every creature to avoid any

²⁹⁵ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #140.

²⁹⁶ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, # 68.

disordered use of things.”²⁹⁷ That is why nature, viewed as a source of profit and gain, is inconsistent with the original divine plan of God.

When Adam was asked to “till and keep” the earth, he was entrusted with a responsibility. Humans were entrusted with a task when asked to have dominion over all creatures. Hence, *Laudato Si* emphasizes greatly that “dominion over the universe should be understood more properly in the sense of responsible stewardship.”²⁹⁸ Responsibility to eco-sanity is not a choice but an imperative because the God to whom we owe our first responsibility also requires it for all his creatures.

In addition, *Laudato Si* applies the theology of the recapitulation of all things in Christ as a soteriological principle to advance its theology of responsibility. The classical text in the document about this claim is quoted extensively below:

The ultimate destiny of the universe is in the fullness of God, which has already been attained by the risen Christ, the measure of the maturity of all things. Here we can add yet another argument for rejecting every tyrannical and irresponsible domination of human beings over other creatures. The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us. Rather, all creatures are moving forward with us and **through us** towards a common point of arrival, which is God, in that transcendent fullness where the risen Christ embraces and illumines all things. Human beings, endowed with intelligence and love, and drawn by the fullness of Christ, are called to lead all creatures back to their Creator.²⁹⁹

What is akin to us is that both humans and the rest of the created order are journeying back to God, our ultimate destiny. These creatures are, however, moving **with** us and **through** us to God. The expression **through us** can be interpreted to mean that human beings are determined to fulfill the longing of nature. If they fail to come to their fulfillment in God, they will be unable to fulfill

²⁹⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, # 339.

²⁹⁸ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #116.

²⁹⁹ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #83. Emphasis in bold mine.

nature.³⁰⁰ Thus, humans are to take responsibility for their common pilgrimage with the whole of creation to God. Eternal life will be a shared experience in which each creature, resplendently transfigured, will take its rightful place in the glory of God, the creator.³⁰¹

The Concept of *Oikological* Virtue: Towards a *Laudato Si* Inspired Oiko-Theological Ethics

The need for changes in our attitude towards the environment, which has become imperative in our time, requires possessing some moral credentials or virtues, the exercise of which enhances the life of all ecological participants. These virtues could be termed *oikological* virtues. By *oikological* virtues, we mean all those dispositions and virtuous actions of humans necessary for enhancing the integrity and well-being of the environment, a just economy and fraternal harmony. The well-being and integrity of the environment, the economy and ecumenism constitute what is referred to as the '*oikological* good'.³⁰² Therefore, Human actions are to be considered as *oikological* virtues to the extent that they promote personal good and the general good of the *oikos* family (i.e., the good of the environment, the economy and ecumenism). The concept of *oikological* virtue must be located within the general parameters of ethical deliberations in its philosophical and theological considerations.

In evolving Christian ethics of *oikological* virtues, our vision of an ethics of ecology takes some principles of deep ecology as its foundation. It evolves from a hybrid of two ethical approaches to morality: virtue ethics and deontology. Many environmental ethicists attempt to construct ecological ethics around either the virtue ethics of Aristotle or the deontological ethics of Immanuel Kant. Our approach is uncommon yet unique in that we seek to construct an approach

³⁰⁰ Cf. Pan-chui Lai, "Paul Tillich and Ecological Theology" *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 79, no. 2 (April, 1999), p. 237.

³⁰¹ Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #243.

³⁰² Cf. Nicanor Pier Giorgio Austriaco, "Living the Natural Moral Law and Respecting the Ecological Good" in *Green Discipleship: Catholic Theological Ethics and the Environment*, edited by Tobias Winright (Winona: Christian Brothers Publications, 2011), p. 156.

to ecological ethics simultaneously from virtue and deontological perspectives. This approach embraces and is more attuned to a Christian vision of evolving a set of virtues that can be adequately called *oikological* virtues. We shall consider how the principles of deep ecology and the ethical approaches of virtue ethics and deontology shape our vision of Christian *oikological* ethics.

Principles of Deep Ecology as a Foundation for Christian Ecological Ethics

Deep ecology is a language of ecosophy and represents humans' ecological attitude towards nature. The term was coined by Arne Naess in 1973 in an article titled “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary.”³⁰³ Naess contrasts Deep ecology with a more dominant ecological paradigm, Shallow ecology.³⁰⁴ He criticizes Shallow ecology for engendering and enforcing “the arrogance of its human-centered instrumentalization of non-human nature.”³⁰⁵ In other words, Shallow ecology is highly anthropocentric and sees value only in humans, and all other non-human creation exists solely for the sake of humans. The only value that can be assigned to other creatures is utility-based. He rebuffed this attitude of Shallow ecologists as inimical in shaping the right relationship with the environment.

Deep ecology, on the other hand, as many have come to understand it, involves questioning the fundamental assumptions of Shallow ecology's anthropocentrism. It is called Deep ecology because it digs, conceptually more profoundly, into concepts concerning our relationship with the

³⁰³ Arne Naess, “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary” *Inquiry* vol. 16, no.1 (1973).

³⁰⁴ Cf. Arne Naess, “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary”, p. 95.

³⁰⁵ David R. Keller, “Deep Ecology”, *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*, vol. 1, eds. J. Baird Callicott and Robert Frodeman, 2009 ed., p. 206.

environment. According to Warwick Fox, Deep ecology is a deep questioning approach to our relationship with the world around us.³⁰⁶

Arne Naess' articulation of Deep ecology is hinged on two central tenets, which are germane to our attempt at evolving Christian ecological ethics. The first is what is termed biospherical egalitarianism. Biospherical egalitarianism is an attitude of respect for all life forms as having "equal right to live and blossom."³⁰⁷ It is further hinged on an axiology that recognizes the intrinsic value of all living beings. No being is assigned an instrumental value, and all non-human creatures, like humans, have an intrinsic worth or value that must be respected. This ecological egalitarianism challenges an anthropocentric axiology that assigns intrinsic value to only humans. Deep ecology simply advocates that there is democratic access and claim to intrinsic value by every living creature. Hence, as Naess rightly affirms, "*the equal right to live and blossom* is an intuitively clear and obvious value axiom. Its restriction to humans is an anthropocentrism with detrimental effects upon the life quality of humans themselves."³⁰⁸

The second central tenet of Deep ecology is the recognition of metaphysical or ontological holism, which "asserts that the biosphere does not consist of discrete entities but rather internally related individuals that make up an ontologically unbroken whole."³⁰⁹ This notion of metaphysical holism underscores the interconnectedness and interrelatedness of all creatures, humans and nonhumans, as members of the same biotic community. Thus, biospherical interest becomes the interest of all, allowing humans to relate well with other creatures and nature.

³⁰⁶ Cf. Warwick Fox, *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology: Developing New Foundations for Environmentalism* (Albany State: University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 91-94.

³⁰⁷ Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary", p. 96.

³⁰⁸ Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary", p. 96.

³⁰⁹ David R. Keller, "Deep Ecology", *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*, vol. 1, p. 207.

For our vision of ecological ethics, we shall prefer a modification of the tenet of biospherical egalitarianism. Rather than emphasizing the **equal** rights of all creatures within the biosphere because of putative equal value, we prefer to talk of the intrinsic value of all creatures without emphasizing equal value. It is sufficient to recognize that all creatures possess an intrinsic value, God being the sole efficient cause of each creature's intrinsic worth. Tapping into the benefits of Deep ecology's principles, we realize that Deep ecology provides us with the terminologies of the intrinsic value of all creatures, which must be respected and the truth of the interconnectedness and interrelatedness of all creatures in a single universe. Without these ideals as foundational, any ecological ethics, whether Christian or non-Christian, is bound to be superfluous and destined for failure. These tenets align with Christian or Biblical foundations of environmental ethics. The fact that all beings have a value of their own because God created them good (intrinsic goodness), and the fact that humans must exercise a responsible participatory role in the biosphere because all other things do not exist just because of humans but that humans together with all other creatures exist for God are reverberating Biblical echoes of Christian environmentalism. Having laid the foundation, we shall articulate an ecological ethics that wears two shoes: an ethics of ecology that wears the shoe of virtue ethics on the one leg and the shoe of deontology on the other.

Virtue Ethics and Evolving Ecological Virtues

Virtue ethics is an approach to ethics that emphasizes our way of being in the world and the qualities or character traits needed to live well or flourish. As a normative approach to ethics, it is concerned more with a morality of being than a morality of doing. It emphasizes a person's moral character as a chief element of ethical thinking and moral judgment. Virtue ethics also focuses on character formation. Virtue ethicists see virtuous living as always directed to some

ultimate goal. Aristotle identified the ultimate goal of virtuous living as *eudaimonia*, loosely translated as happiness.³¹⁰ The qualities of soul or moral character that characterize a virtuous person are acts of deliberate choice that always lie between two extremes. A virtue, thus, always lies in the mean, which is always determined by a rational principle known as practical reason.³¹¹ Aristotle held that the way to acquire these virtues is by habituation, whereby the person, by repeated practice, acquires the permanent disposition of habit to act appropriately. Over time, that becomes a defining quality of a person for which we can say the person is virtuous.³¹² In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle mentions several virtues, which he categorizes as moral and intellectual. These virtues are justice, temperance, liberality, courage, modesty, practical wisdom, etc. For Aristotle, these virtues make their possessor good, which means they will always act right because the virtues have become a habit of the soul.³¹³ A vicious person can occasionally perform a virtuous act, but that does not make them virtuous. Being virtuous is not an occasional display of a virtuous act but acquiring the permanent disposition always to act morally. Such a person is better disposed to act virtuously towards fellow humans and the rest of creation. There is an emphasis on being virtuous rather than merely acting virtuously.³¹⁴ Action can only flow from being. The former is virtue ethics' priority.

Virtue ethics holds excellent prospects for dealing with environmental concerns because it effectively tackles the anthropogenic causes of the ecological crisis. As has been said earlier, most of the ecological crises are anthropogenic in causality: human greed, disrespect for other life forms,

³¹⁰Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by J.A.K. Thompson (London: Allen & Unwin, 1976), Bk. I, Ch. 7, 1097b2-21.

³¹¹ Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. II, Ch. 6, 1106b9-1107a27.

³¹² Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk II, Ch. 1, 1103a14-b1.

³¹³ Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. II, Ch. 6, 1106a20.

³¹⁴ Cf. Roger Crisp and Michael Slote, "Introduction" in Roger Crisp and Michael Slote (eds.), *Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press Inc., 1997), p. 3.

contempt, cruelty, irresponsible domination or mastery of humans over nature, a divisive dualistic thinking, exploitation interplay of production and economic forces, (inexcusable) ignorance or thoughtlessness, indifference, insensitivity, manipulation, pride, reductionism and wastefulness. All these attitudes we put up against the environment compromise the ecological good. This is a moral problem. An ethical approach that emphasizes **being** moral and merely **doing** morally right actions is necessary to form a humanity whose relationship with the environment will flow from their inner beings as moral agents. One can spontaneously perform a morally good act by saving a pregnant squirrel from a death trap. It does not necessarily make the person an ecologically virtuous person. The same person may burn a nearby bush. This is because the person has not yet acquired those stable dispositions of character that define them as **being** ecologically moral.

However, one who has acquired the stable habits or dispositions of an ecologically virtuous life or morality will always act morally right in each given ecological situation, always considering the ecological good. The general assumption is that humans will act morally towards the environment if humans are moral. This is because they also translate their moral relationship with humans to nature. Thus, respect for humans also becomes respect for nature and all forms of life; justice towards one's neighbor becomes justice for the entire created order; peace with one's human neighbors becomes peace with one's ecological neighbors. In this way, all the virtues can also become ecological virtues: eco-justice, eco-peace, eco-respect, eco-prudence, eco-love, eco-care, eco-temperance, eco-honesty and eco-courage. Our ecological crisis has no hope of any significant reversal without virtuous people, that is, virtuous people and not just those who occasionally perform virtuous acts. Hence, an approach to evolving ecological ethics must wear the shoe of virtue ethics.

Eco-Virtues and Deontological Imperatives

In addition to virtue ethics, sound ethics of ecology must also imbibe a deontological approach to morality. Although we believe that forming humans to acquire the stable disposition or habit of being virtuous in all situations is necessary, it cannot be guaranteed that all people will go the extra mile of disposing themselves to acquire these virtues. For this reason, it is necessary to make room for ethics that will also evaluate the quality of our moral relationship with nature, the poor and every creature from the point of view of duty and obligation. This is precisely where the deontological categories of duty and obligation come into the environmental discourse. In addition, deontology ethics will be more productive in addressing the environmental threat posed by technological and market forces, which are leading actors in the ecological wreck we are in. How this is achieved through an ethics based on deontology shall be explained shortly.

Deontology ethics is an approach to ethics that evaluates the morality of an action in terms of its conformity or non-conformity to rules of obligation as a matter of duty.³¹⁵ Duty-based ethics directly address humans' sense of responsibility to obey moral laws as a rational necessity. One of the leading proponents of deontology ethics is Immanuel Kant. He sees duty as our commitment to moral obligations even against the counsels of our desires, aspirations, hopes or feelings.³¹⁶ For Kant, acting out of duty could also coincide with a quest to satisfy one's inclinations or some form of personal pleasure. For Kant, a rational moral obligation must prevail when such clashes arise. Priority, therefore, must be given to duty and commitment to what moral obligations stipulate. According to Kant, the motive of duty consists of respect for the moral law, as possessing a value

³¹⁵ Cf. G. O. Ozumba, *A Course Text on Ethics* (Lagos: Obaroh & Ogbinaka Publishers Ltd., 2001), p. 30.; William F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, p. 341.

³¹⁶ Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, edited and translated by Allen W. Wood, with essays by J. B. Schneewind *et al.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), sec. I, Ak 4:398.

surpassing the satisfaction of one's inclination.³¹⁷ This explains why Kant formulated the supreme moral principles as moral imperatives. Unlike virtue ethics, which focuses on the character of the moral agent, deontology focuses on the agent's action. Thus, in deontology ethics, there is an emphasis on **doing** good over being good. While being good in virtue ethics is a matter of choice, doing good in deontology ethics is a matter of duty. Deontology may prove unhelpful to environmental concerns if they are to be strictly applied to human beings. However, removing it from a purely anthropological application is the best approach to addressing the ill impacts of technology and economics on the environment.

Technology, as observed earlier, together with economics, is more concerned with the maximization of utility and profit at any cost. It seldom considers its horrendous negative impact on the environment or humans, as is evident by their voracious hunger to over-exploit the natural resources for production. Against the requirements of international laws that have legislated on properly treating the earth's natural resources, the technological and economic actors ignore these rules because they conflict with their ultimate quest for maximum profit. They ignore their duty to protect the environment because they are more committed to making gains than preserving nature. Deontological ethics will help oblige every technological advance to be duty-bound and environmentally friendly. Thus, designers and promoters of new forms of technology must be obligated to include eco-sanity mechanisms in their advances such that the use of such technology does not compromise the integrity of the environment and with ample room for recycling or using recyclable materials. This must be a matter of legislation that national and international laws must enforce. Thus, the approval of a new form of technological advances would be judged based on its

³¹⁷ Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, sec.I, Ak 4:400.

conformity or non-conformity to environmental legislations or rules by which they must comply as a matter of duty.

Technological and economic forces which feel duty-bound to respect the environment would comply with environmental legislation. This sense of duty would force technological and economic lords to avoid such vices as over-extraction or over-exploitation of natural resources and over-production, which encourages a consumerist attitude. Thus, we argue that an ethics of duty, wherein the morality of technoscience and the market would be judged based on their conformity or non-conformity to moral laws concerning the environment, is a viable approach to curbing the spate of the environmental crisis caused by technoscience and economics.

Deontological motives coincide perfectly well with the motives of deep ecology. Deep ecology recognizes an axiology that places intrinsic value on all creatures. An overly anthropocentric humanity must now see and recognize the intrinsic value of all creatures. This will require an external measure in moral legislation, which must commit humans dutifully to obeying them. Thus, compliance with the moral laws of the environment is a commitment to one's duty to safeguard the *oikos*-sphere. However, compliance with the moral laws also means respect for the laws that protect the environment, ensure economic justice, and promote fraternal communion. However, since environmental moral laws exist to respect the integrity of the environment, respect for the moral laws is, invariably, respect for the value of every creature and the entire environment. From this, we see that deontological ethics coincides perfectly well with the axiology of deep ecology in addressing the environmental crisis, whose causes are rooted in the combined forces of technology and economics and broken relationships.

Ecological Conversion and Eco-Spirituality

Pope Francis offers all humans living on earth another viable way of righting our relationship with God and with one another, especially the poor and the earth, to significantly forestall further severe ecological damage. He offers us the paths of ecological conversion and ecological spirituality. We firmly assert that these two ecological instances are necessary for every Christian ecological moral theory.

By ecological conversion, Pope Francis calls all humanity to a positive change of attitude and lifestyle together with a committed renewal of our thought patterns that will turn us away from being exploiters and destructive agents of the ecology to protectors and responsible stewards of creation.³¹⁸ According to Pope Francis, this involves the recognition of our errors, sins, faults and failures. This initial recognition stage leads to a heartfelt repentance and desire to change.³¹⁹ This conversion involves seeing ourselves and our relationship with nature in a different but positive light. No longer are we to see ourselves as militaristic domineering exploiters of God's creation but as humble, caring and responsible stewards of creation. We must be imbued with a spirit of love, peace, justice, generous care, and generosity in self-sacrifice, tenderness, and gratuitousness towards creation. According to Pope Francis, living out this life of committed conversion is essential to a life of virtue and not an optional aspect of our Christian life and experience.³²⁰

Pope Francis also invites all to cultivate an eco-spirituality. Ecological spirituality has to do with the appropriation of the rich treasure of Christian spirituality that is grounded in the convictions of the Christian faith to ecological concerns, which motivate the Christian's proper relationship with nature. Eco-spirituality counters the stringent divisive and dualistic bifurcation

³¹⁸ Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, ## 216, 217.

³¹⁹ Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, # 218.

³²⁰ Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, # 217.

of reality into two opposing components: spirit/matter, soul/body, heaven/earth, etc. To imbibe an eco-spirituality is to recognize that “the life of the spirit is not dissociated from the body or nature or worldly realities but lived in and with them, in communion with all that surrounds us.”³²¹ Eco-spirituality requires we also listen to creation, recognizing that “each creature reflects something of God and has a message to convey to us.”³²² As Pope Francis beautifully says, eco-spirituality makes us realize that “...God created the world, writing into it an order and a dynamism that human beings have no right to ignore.”³²³ Eco-spirituality instills a sense of wonder in a single gaze at the massive universe and all its interrelated parts. It enables us to develop a contemplative lifestyle, which turns the soul’s gaze at creation to the creator. On a more practical level, eco-spirituality encourages a “growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little.”³²⁴ This helps us avoid the temptation to acquire more, in both possession and pleasure and not yielding to a consumerist attitude but spiritually detached even from what we legitimately possess. Above all, it is to listen to the groans of the earth³²⁵ and identify with the earth in her suffering.

The Silence of the Pulpit on Ecological Concerns

Many have wrongly construed that the sacred pulpit is only meant for expounding scriptural passages, preaching the divine word, and for dogmatic and doctrinal preaching and exhortation of the faithful to a sound moral life. For these reasons, most of our pulpit have become silent on environmental issues. We prefer to talk about ecological concerns in the classrooms. This silence of the pulpit on climate and environmental issues in many of our Catholic churches is

³²¹ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #216.

³²² Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #221.

³²³ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #221.

³²⁴ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #222.

³²⁵ Cf. Romans 8:22.

‘murderous.’ The pulpit belongs to God, where God stands (using anthropomorphism) to speak about all our human situations and conditions.

The propensity of the current ecological crisis in the world is partly attributable to the silence of the pulpit. The silence of the pulpit is our silence. The pulpit is silent on ecological issues because we are not speaking. The silence of the pulpit on ecology is a disservice to our common home. Our preaching for the salvation of souls is more comprehensive than we often imagine. It is co-extensive with everything in God’s care, including the environment. Thus, preaching for the salvation of souls is not incompatible with preaching for ecological sanity since the ecosphere is also subject to the care of God. The ecological crisis we now face will continue to hunt the world until the pulpit begins to speak.³²⁶ Priests and preachers should use the pulpit as an avenue for ecological education. Much of the texts of scripture can be seen as ecological texts. The Bible is the first ecological textbook. We, who are members of God’s church, must not be oblivious to the ecological dimensions of the Word of God, which we are mandated to preach and live by.

Conclusion

Our focus on the ‘home perspective’ of *Laudato Si* explored its theological potential to tease out the ethics of *oiko*-theology that responds to the ecological, economic and ecumenical crisis. The import of the ‘home perspective’ of *Laudato Si* is that it shapes the meaning of the earth for positive transformation and sustainability. The earth is no longer seen merely as a physical environment without sacredness, merely as a system to be studied, understood and controlled, solely as a source of profit and gain, or just a pool of wealth and resources to be exploited. The earth is a home where we cohabit with other relatives in universal communion. The theology of

³²⁶ According to Pope Francis, “Political institutions and various other social groups are also entrusted with helping to raise people’s awareness. So too is the Church. All Christian communities have an important role to play in ecological education.” (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #214).

responsibility inspired by *Laudato Si* featured significantly as an underlying theological thread that weaves Pope Francis' thought into a powerful *oiko*-theology. Achieving ecological sustainability goals according to the eco-social ethics envisaged by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* requires a certain ethics of orientation and conduct to ensure a desirable ecology, economy and ecumeny. This ethics has as its foundation some principles of deep ecology and evolves out of a hybrid of two ethical approaches to morality: virtue ethics and deontology. While there is considerable admiration for the Pope's call to ecological conversion and spirituality, we have also lamented over what we have identified as the 'silence of the pulpit' in which ecological interpretations of scripture are exposed to the lay faithful in the Church by priests in homilies are nearly absent. The pulpit is a fine place for ecological education, where ecology, economy and ecumenical crises can be adequately discussed to engender ecological conversion.

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**The Church and Society in Malawi: Remembering the pastoral letter -*Living our Faith*
By Precious Nihorowa CSSp**

Abstract

Since the dawn of independence, there has been a yearning among Malawians for a nation in which everybody lives a dignified life. Beginning with the heroes that fought for independence, those that fought the prolonged autocracy, various prominent politicians and leaders that have arisen among Malawians, the yearning has been evident, differing only in intensity. The Catholic Church too, in exercising her prophetic role, has acted more than a whistle-blower in reminding those in authority to always aspire and ensure a dignified life for the people they serve. A quick look at the themes and issues addressed in the Episcopal Conference pastoral letter 'Living our Faith' bears witness to this fact. This article highlights the role the Church has played in Malawi in ensuring adherence to the common good and how she needs to continue playing her prophetic role.

Keywords

Church and society, living our faith, politics, economic development, principle of the common good

Introduction

During the Industrial Revolution, when society was registering all sorts of scientific advancements and economic progress, there arose a problem. While the revolution brought about economic fortunes to some, to others it bred exploitation and more poverty and misery. The gap between the rich and the poor was widening at an alarming rate because those who were getting more profits got richer at the expense of the majority who were getting poorer. In the midst of "the vast expansion of industrial pursuits and the marvellous discoveries of science; in the changed relations between masters and workmen; in the enormous fortunes of some few individuals, and the utter poverty of the masses,"³²⁷ the great Pope Leo XIII stood up with all the courage and wrote the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. While applauding all the progress made by the industrial revolution, he bemoaned and denounced its consequences on the poor masses and felt "that some opportune remedy must be found quickly for the misery and wretchedness pressing so unjustly on

³²⁷ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1891), #1.

the majority of the working class.”³²⁸ The promulgation of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* marked the birth of modern Social Teaching of the Church (STC). Consequently, *Rerum Novarum* was christened the Magna Carta of the Church’s social doctrine. In a prophetic voice, the Church acted like a whistle-blower to warn the society of the impending danger that could result from the path that was trodden.

After that, in the subsequent years, a series of encyclicals on STC were written to remind all members of the society about their obligation towards the common good. The Church in particular countries has also done likewise in standing up and preaching against all forms of injustice against the weak and the defenceless. In all this, the aim has always been the same: to promote the dignity of each person and enhance the principle of the common good. The Church in Malawi too has not lagged behind. In 1992, during the one-party system of government, when it was not easy to voice out any criticism against the government of that time, the Church, through the Episcopal Conference of Malawi, spoke up with all the courage against all that was not going on well in the country. All the issues were raised in the Lenten Pastoral letter called *Living Our Faith*. Through the letter, they preached conversion and called on all to respond in commitment and faith.³²⁹ Just like *Rerum Novarum*, *Living Our Faith* should rightly be considered the Magna Carta in Malawian politics among the other pastoral letters because the letter opened up doors and, in a way, paved the way for change in Malawian politics. Thus, two years later in 1994, Malawi transitioned from a one-party system to a multi-party system of government and had its first democratically elected president.

³²⁸ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, #3.

³²⁹ Episcopal Conference of Malawi, *Living our Faith* (Balaka: Montfort Media, 1992), 1.

Today, more than thirty years after that pastoral letter, Malawians can only look back with mixed feelings but mostly with sentiments of dissatisfaction with the state of affairs. A close look at the issues raised in the letter reveals that most things have either remained the same or worsened. Definitely, in the literal sense of the word, this is not the Malawi that the citizens dreamt of at independence when they courageously drove out the colonial masters to initiate self-rule. It was not the Malawi that they dreamt of when they opted for democracy and booted out dictatorship. But what went wrong? Why is there no desirable progress made? What is delaying the aspirations of the common people to live a dignified life? This article argues that the Local Church still has a prophetic role in actualizing a better and prosperous Malawi. The need for a better Malawi is manifested in different creeds from politicians and society organisations that promise to give hope to the common people. However, greed stands in the way and denies the country the progress it needs. The article, therefore, explores how the Church has played a great role in the society in calling for the adherence to the common good. The paper suggests that the Church's role in the society ought to be an all-time one to ensure the realization of a just society.

The Yearning for a better Malawi: Going back the history lane

Malawi's struggle for freedom can be traced as far back as 1915 with the uprising of John Chilembwe against the thangata system (forced labour)³³⁰, a move which seemed premature and yet significant. The battle was later picked up by the likes of Orton Chirwa, Masauko Chipembere and others in the 1960s.³³¹ This finally bore fruits in 1964, the year which Malawi got independence from colonial rule. As if this was not enough, Malawians had yet to endure the

³³⁰ The thangata system was a labour system employed by the British colonial masters in Malawi to force the local people to work in their farms, such as tea, coffee and tobacco farms, without any payment.

³³¹ Attati Mpakati, "Malawi: The Birth of a Neo-Colonial State." *The African Review: A Journal of African Politics, Development and International Affairs*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1973, p. 68.

autocratic government of the first local president, Kamuzu Banda, for 31 years. They finally decided that such a system was not good for the country and eventually ushered in multiparty democracy in 1994.³³² From 1994, Malawi has seen leaders such as Bakili Muluzi, Professor Bingu wa Mutharika, Joyce Banda and Professor Peter Mutharika rising to the presidential throne. With the Peter Mutharika administration being accused of corruption, nepotism, poor quality of education, a nosediving economy that led to deep poverty levels, high unemployment rate, loss of trust and professionalism in public institutions and crisis of leadership in a government that took the people for granted, Malawians believed that they deserved something better and they kept fighting for it.

In the historical 2020-repeated election, Dr Lazarus Chakwera was declared the winner and eventually the sixth president of the republic of Malawi. As widely noted by many people both within Malawi and the international community, the 2020 elections arose from interesting circumstances that should rightly be considered as a step forward in the maturing of Malawian democracy. Thus, a previous 2019 presidential poll was declared rigged by the Supreme Court, and hence null and void, necessitating a repeated poll in 2020. However, with the current state of affairs, one wonders whether such an election was a step forward or backward in as far as the yearning for a better Malawi is concerned. Thus, the current state of affairs indicates that people still dream of and yearn for a government that will fulfil their economic aspirations as citizens of the land. They want a government which will no longer take them for granted, one which will work towards delivering on their promises and ensuring a dignified living for all.

***Living Our Faith* and other Pastoral statements by the Episcopal Conference of Malawi**

³³² Wiseman Chirwa, Nandini Patel and Fidelis Kanyongolo, *Democracy Report for Malawi*, (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2000), 2.

From time immemorial, the Catholic Church has been a partner in development in different governments and countries. In doing so, the Church shuns any partisan involvement as that would compromise her role. The Church has not just proved to be a partner by simply criticizing any faults of government and voicing out against any forms of injustice in the society but as part of her involvement, the Church has set up structures that promote justice. An example to this is the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP). Additionally, the Church also constructs structures for providing social services such as schools and health facilities. In her prophetic role, however, the Church in Malawi also issues pastoral statements to talk about issues of national interest at particular moments. She cannot remain silent and watch the people suffer; the poor, the weak and the defenceless being oppressed. The Church always strives to be faithful to the teaching that “the joys and hopes, the griefs and the anguishes of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anguishes of the followers of Christ as well.”³³³ As pointed out earlier, the 1992 pastoral letter, *Living Our Faith* was very instrumental in Malawian politics. We hereby highlight some key issues that were addressed in the letter. Since the pastoral letter for the year 2022 was a commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the same, this paper will explore the two letters side by side as well as touch other supplementary pastoral statements.

One of the issues that *Living Our Faith* addressed is about the dignity and unity of the human person. It bemoaned the growing gap between the rich and the poor with regard to expectations, living standards and development. Many people lived in circumstances which were hardly compatible with their dignity as sons and daughters of God. Only a minority enjoyed the fruits of development and afforded to live in luxury and wealth. The Bishops, therefore, appealed

³³³ *Gaudium et Spes*, #1.

for a more just and equitable distribution of the nation's wealth.³³⁴ Today, the Bishops note, the situation is not any better. In the Bishops' own words, "the present environment, in which the people of Malawi live, can be described as very dehumanizing. Vast numbers of men, women and children are today, like Lazarus in the Gospel (Luke 16:19-31), languishing in abject poverty while wealth and luxury are enjoyed by a few who are unconcerned about these dehumanizing conditions of the majority."³³⁵ As stated earlier on, the worsening state of affairs too is noted by the wave of dissatisfaction observed through anti-government protests and demonstrations which resulted from, first, the rising cost of living in the country and second, what the Bishops termed "weak leadership." To ameliorate the state of affairs, the Bishops recommend the implementation of the values of equality, justice and unity as this is the only way that the country can experience true development that benefits all citizens.³³⁶ The same commitment should be shown towards ending nepotism, regionalism, tribalism and cronyism which the Bishops also sadly noted.

The Pastoral Letter of 1992 also addressed the need for the government to pay attention to providing quality education for its youth. It stressed that education should be holistic, should help the student acquire values such as respect for elders, promote creativity in the pupil, enable the student to appreciate his or her cultural heritage, help the student develop training and skills that would allow him or her to earn a decent living in the future.³³⁷ In short, the Bishops called for excellence in education while also aiming at providing education for everyone. Looking at the state of affairs today, one can note that while Primary School education was made free for all, the country still grapples with a lack of proper infrastructure for learning especially at the primary

³³⁴ Episcopal Conference of Malawi, *Living our Faith*, 2.

³³⁵ Episcopal Conference of Malawi, *Commemoration of the 30th Anniversary of Living Our Faith*, (Balaka: Montfort Media, 2022), 3.

³³⁶ Episcopal Conference of Malawi, *Commemorating the 30th Anniversary*, 5.

³³⁷ Episcopal Conference of Malawi, *Commemorating the 30th Anniversary*, 5.

level, with a lack of adequate learning and teaching facilities at other levels, lack of adequate teachers resulting in a high teacher-learner ratio which in turn compromises the quality of education that is offered. Definitely, to reap desirable fruits from the educational system, the education system has to be revisited in terms of opportunities for all and quality of what is offered.

Other equally important issues addressed by the Bishops include ensuring adequate health services for all. Under this discussion, they acknowledged the success of the Primary Health Care programme that the Government had initiated. They also recognized the part that the Church was playing in supporting government efforts. At the same time, they drew the attention of the nation to the severe difficulties faced in areas such as overcrowding, shortage of medical personnel, inadequate care given to the sick, inequality in medical treatment and the unfortunate situation of drug theft in health facilities and at drugs central stores.³³⁸ All these challenges can be still noted in the health facilities even today. Most political leaders do not feel the pinch of this because their families have access to standard health facilities outside the country. They, therefore, choose to selfishly leave such challenges unattended to. The solution, according to the Bishops, is that deliberate efforts should be made to develop a health care system in this country which will address the needs of all Malawians regardless of their status in society.³³⁹

On participation of all in public life, the Bishops recommended that there should be transparency at all levels including villages and communities on how funds meant for development are used. This also means that citizens should wake up and hold accountable anyone they entrust with public office and authority.³⁴⁰ This may make office bearers aware of the duty and responsibility that they have towards their people. Holding the leaders accountable can prevent

³³⁸ Episcopal Conference of Malawi, *Commemorating the 30th Anniversary*, 6.

³³⁹ Episcopal Conference of Malawi, *Commemorating the 30th Anniversary*, 7.

³⁴⁰ Episcopal Conference of Malawi, *Commemorating the 30th Anniversary*, 8.

and lessen issues of plundering of resources which is regrettably still rampant even today under the current government which declared a total war and a zero tolerance to corruption. This lack of commitment towards stopping corruption is creating an impression that the current government is siding with looters and plunderers.

The Bishops also talked about revamping the judicial system to ensure a workable justice system for all. On this, there was an appeal to the Judiciary to ensure that corruption cases are expedited and that everyone is seen to be treated fairly and similarly before the law.³⁴¹ This comes from the background that corruption cases take very long, even several years, to conclude. This compromises evidence and makes such cases of fraud get forgotten by the common citizens even when most of such cases deal with squandering of public resources by public officials. Lastly, there is seemingly lack of cohesion and cooperation among the constituent member parties of the current *Tonse alliance*³⁴² government.³⁴³ The infighting has also led to a rise in campaigning for the next elections for individual parties before even the promises of the previous elections are attended to. The most painful thing is that, until today, the government does not seem to make any move to address the issues at hand. This is also testified to by a pastoral statement by the ECM that was published on 10th October, 2022. In part, the statement reads:

The cry of the poor gets louder and louder in Malawi each day. This cry is caused by, among other things, the worsening general inflation with biting food price increases, rising youth unemployment, rising school fees, inadequate medical services, the fuel crisis

³⁴¹ Episcopal Conference of Malawi, *Commemorating the 30th Anniversary*, 10.

³⁴² *Tonse alliance* is the name of the current government of Malawi that won the 2020 Presidential elections and is an alliance made up of various political parties that came together to contest under one candidate.

³⁴³ Episcopal Conference of Malawi, *Commemorating the 30th Anniversary*, 11.

driving up transport costs, exploitation by unscrupulous traders and business people, foreign exchange shortages, and lack of effective consumer protection.³⁴⁴

Up to now, this is still the state of affairs. Hopelessness still increases among Malawians especially the common people. The Bishops, therefore, recommend that “To truly respond to the Cry of the Poor requires bold and viable public policy actions.”³⁴⁵ Such public policy actions, they further add, are being prevented and undermined by the vice of corruption, defective service delivery systems, inconsistent government austerity measures, bleak picture of the oncoming crop growing season, and the government’s retrogressive way of governing.

The Need for a Malawi for all: Then and Now

In March 2022, at the beginning of the Lenten season, the Episcopal Conference of Malawi issued a pastoral letter. The letter addresses some of the developments and challenges that are facing our country since the onset of the *Tonse alliance* government. The letter, which was a commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the famous and historical 1992 pastoral letter called *Living our Faith*, highlights several current issues in the light of what the commemorated letter reflected upon. Despite acknowledging the many positive developments that the government has made, the phrase that is frequently repeated in the letter is that things have not been any better now as compared to 1992, the time that the country transitioned from one-party system to democracy. Thus, issues such as the dignity of the human person, equality and unity, the right to adequate education and health services, freedom of expression and association are still a matter of concern even today, three decades later.

³⁴⁴ Episcopal Conference of Malawi. *A Call to hearken to the Cry of Poor Malawians: a Pastoral Statement by the Episcopal Conference of Malawi*, (Balaka: Montfort Media Publications, 2022), 2.

³⁴⁵ Episcopal Conference of Malawi, *A Call to hearken to the Cry of Poor Malawians*, 2.

In fact, the letter points out some new ills that have come about and worsened under the current regime. These include issues of governance, leadership crisis, corruption and the widening gap between the rich and the poor; just to mention a few. Such a call and concern come at a time when Malawi as a country has recently experienced a wave of dissatisfaction over the performance of the *Tonse Alliance* in respect to its campaign promises. The dissatisfaction has been manifested, among others, through the spate of anti-government protests. All this shows that there is a general feeling that there is a need for the country to offer all her citizens a dignified status. In other words, there is a need for a Malawi for all, an aspiration that has been evident throughout the political history of our country.

The American political scientist and political economist, Francis Fukuyama, in his famous book, *The End of History and the Last Man*, explores the historical evolution of political systems through different epochs and generations which culminates in the current Western Liberal democracy. According to him, in as far as political systems are concerned, the human race has reached an end of exploration as there will never be another human system of government that will replace liberal democracy. As part of his exploration, Fukuyama presents the motivations for the successful propelling of history and notes that “It was the slave’s continuing desire for recognition that was the motor which propelled history forward, not the idle complacency and unchanging self-identity of the master.”³⁴⁶ In other words, the slave’s dire need for better life has been the core factor for determining the socio-political and economic direction of states.

What Fukuyama posits seems to be very true of Malawi as a nation and indeed of many other African countries. It was the slave’s (here slave refers to citizen) desire for recognition, freedom and dignified human treatment that reinforced the spirit of independence in the 1960s that

³⁴⁶ Francis Fukuyama, *End of History and the Last Man*, (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 198.

led to the collapse of colonialism. It was the same desire that has been driving politicians of all ages of our history to come up with campaign promises and manifestoes that promised to fulfil the people's desire for recognition. It is the same desire that arouses courage in civil society members to stand up as whistle-blowers against governments that tend to forget or neglect their campaign promises. As Fukuyama alludes to Hegel, throughout history "freedom was not just a psychological phenomenon, but the essence of what was distinctively human...Human freedom emerges only when man is able to transcend his natural, animal existence, and to create a new self for himself."³⁴⁷ For Malawians too, freedom means more than what they got at independence but the realization of a dignified life.

The Stumbling Block: Greed as the Betrayal of the Aspiration

Our discussion so far has proved that the need for a better Malawi has not been fulfilled and still persists. In other words, according to the state of affairs, a Malawi for all is not yet realised. As already discussed, the Malawian justice system still shields some people while punishing the defenceless, there is still a wide gap between the rich and the poor, the living costs keep worsening for the common Malawian. And, in all this, the government of the day seems to have no sense of direction. Notably, since the dawn of independence, there have been so many politicians and political parties that have come up with creeds in form of manifestoes. They have been promising to make Malawi a great nation and a liveable country for all. So many years down the line, unfortunately, such manifestoes have remained mere creeds woven beautifully to woo votes from the common people and later forget their aspiration for a good life. But what really makes the nation to slide into such a state of affairs whereby the creeds fail to satisfy the need? This paper submits that greed remains the stumbling block. So, how does the greed manifest itself? First, the

³⁴⁷ Francis Fukuyama, *End of History and the Last Man*, 152.

paper categorises the greed into two: greed that is imbedded in public systems and one that is fuelled by individuals. An explanation on this is of paramount importance.

Systemic greed is imbedded in public governance apparatus, whether in governmental or non-governmental organisations. As a matter of an example, in Malawi, there is no clear law in the constitution that allows the people to give a leader, whether as a Member of Parliament or President, a vote of no confidence during his term of office. Thus, people cannot hold a vote to remove a leader who is not performing before the end of his term. The only right that people have is the right to hold public protests against a leader. And, the leader has the right to heed the call to resign or not. This means that the system itself does not have an adequate law in place to keep leaders on their toes as they rule and lead. Another painful system fault that fuels greed is that even though there are laws that are clear on how to handle some malpractice, they are not enacted once the malpractice is registered. An example on this is section 65 of the constitution that calls for removal from office of a leader, President or Member of Parliament (MP), who crosses the floor or leaves his party through which he was voted into office and joins another before the end of the term. Since the law was put in place, how many MPs have crossed the floor? Obviously they are uncountable. Even the late Bingu wa Mutharika was guilty of this. And yet, how many have been held accountable and brought to book?

Greed fuelled by individuals is so diverse. The first example is our political leaders who keep on promising a lot of things to win the votes of the people and forget the same people as soon as they assume power. Amassing wealth becomes their preoccupation and garnering votes for the next election becomes their daily talk. The suffering of the people does not even move them. They do not even make any effort to stop ills such as plundering of resources or corruption generally. Therese Tinkasiimire discusses that in political leadership, there is need for leaders to show

honesty and integrity which demands a sense of responsibility on the part of the leader. She continues that where honesty, integrity and accountability prevail, there is improved allocation of resources and monitoring systems towards expenditure of public resources.³⁴⁸ She regrets that many African leaders have failed in their obligation to manage the public resources under their stewardship as they are eager to amass wealth at the expense of the people.³⁴⁹

Other forms of individuals perpetrating greed are the working class. Some of these people deliberately make the public service slow so that they can, for political or other reasons, sabotage the efforts of government. Since they make public service slow and yet people need quick assistance, most citizens resort to soliciting bribes to push them to work, hence making corruption the order of the day. The last on the list are the common people themselves who are not spared of the greed. They are the ones who most of the time give bribes even though they know this is against the law. They feel so weak and vulnerable to stop or refuse such and yet if they were patriotic enough not to give bribes, the solicitors would not continue asking for them. To think of how voting is done during presidential and parliamentary general elections could be mind-boggling. A good number of the common people betray their nation by voting for a leader based on tribe, region or simply because such a leader has given them handouts. For such people, it does not matter whether a leader has a vision for the country or not as long as he satisfies any of the above needs. This is pure selfishness which is a manifestation of greed and which, in turn, betrays the aspiration for a prosperous nation for all.

³⁴⁸ Therese Tinkasiimire. "Integrity, Transparency and Good Governance." In *African Theology Comes of Age: Revisiting Twenty Years of the Theology of the Ecumenical Symposium of Eastern African Theologians (ESEAT)*. (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2010), 59.

³⁴⁹ Therese Tinkasiimire. "Integrity, Transparency and Good Governance," 62.

Towards a Malawi for all: The Principle of the Common Good as a Remedy

The Church, through her social doctrine, always advocates for a society in which all are treated as children of God. Thus, all members must be treated based on their dignity rather than their status. As such, the dealings of people must be punctuated by love which is the basis of fraternal living. As this paper has been submitting earlier on, the Church in Malawi has always preached that the current state of affairs in Malawi demands that the society puts into practice the principle of the common good. This will go a long way to rectify the society which is damaged and broken by selfishness and greed. So, what does the principle of the common good state and how can it help Malawi as a country?

The principle of the common good, which is one of the seven key principles of the Social Teaching of the Church, is born of the encounter between the Gospel message and its demands. The Gospel is summarised in the supreme commandment of love of God and neighbour, treating everyone justly in relation with the problems emanating from the life of society.³⁵⁰ In a nutshell, the principle demands that the Gospel must be put into practice and reflect in one's love of neighbour. The principle of the common good, together with other principles of the social doctrine, constitute the primary articulation of the truth of society by which every conscience is challenged and invited to interact with other conscience in truth, in responsibility shared fully with all people and also regarding all people.³⁵¹ Thus, the principle, invites all to do a self-examination of conscience and challenge everyone to ask themselves whether they strive to love their neighbour and to what extent they have fulfilled such a command in their daily living. This is exactly what

³⁵⁰ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2004), 88.

³⁵¹ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 89.

the pastoral letters that we have reflected on are asking Malawians to do. Everyone must make it a personal project to sincerely ask themselves to what extent they have contributed to the rise and fall of the society and how they have betrayed the aspiration towards a Malawi for all. This is a good starting point for a Malawi for all. To bear fruits, therefore, every member of the society must adhere to this principle.

Like other principles of STC, the principle of the common good also treats people based on dignity rather than status. In other words, the principle treats people from their dignity as a point of departure, that is, that they are all made in the image of God and all are the same before God. Pope Francis weighs in and adds that, “the dignity of the human person and the common good rank higher than the comfort of those who refuse to renounce their privileges. When these values are threatened, a prophetic voice must be raised.”³⁵² He further exhorts us to acknowledge the dignity of each person and so contribute to the rebirth of a universal aspiration to true fraternity.³⁵³ All human beings are also equal not only in dignity but also in their origin, destiny, existential questions they ask and also in their quest for a better life by improving their living conditions. Life status and other inequalities that exist among them are only treated as secondary factors.

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church clarifies that, the common good does not consist in the simple sum of the particular goods of each subject of a social entity. Belonging to everyone and to each person, it remains “common” because it is indivisible and because only together is it possible to attain it, increase it and safeguard its effectiveness, with regard also to the future.³⁵⁴ In the words of Pope John XXIII, every social group must take account

³⁵² Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, #218.

³⁵³ Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, #8.

³⁵⁴ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 90.

of the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups, and even of the general welfare of the entire human family.³⁵⁵ The principle of the common good, in African terms, can be likened to the concept of *ubuntu*, the idea that “I am because we are.”³⁵⁶ *Ubuntu* acknowledges and preaches interdependence as a prerequisite for a fully-lived human life. It is a recognition that individual choices and actions directly and indirectly affect others. And so, this calls for responsibility on the part of individuals as individual responsibility enhances communal responsibility.

So, what are the actions that are demanded of every individual to ensure a practical commitment towards the common good? According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the demands of the common good are dependent on the social conditions of each historical period and are strictly connected to respect for and the integral promotion of the person and his fundamental rights.³⁵⁷ This leads us to a number of things worth exploring. First, each society can have its own demands for realizing the common good. There is no universality in details of such demands. In the case of Malawi, we could then reflect and see what we are demanded of the citizens as a commitment to the common good. Secondly, the demands change with time. Each epoch of history presents a different set of demands. Demands that are not met for a long time too are addressed differently depending on the period of history that a society is undergoing. For instance, addressing illiteracy during the time of independence could mean constructing more schools to increase enrolment while during our time it could simply mean improving the quality of education. And indeed, our educational curriculum in Malawi currently has not done very well in empowering students to become productive citizens. The American Educationist, John Dewey generally

³⁵⁵ John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra, An Encyclical on Christianity and Social Progress* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1961) #53.

³⁵⁶ John Mbiti, *An Introduction to African Religion*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 108.

³⁵⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995), #1907.

advocated for a link between pedagogy and pragmatism. By pragmatism, Dewey was referring to the ability to transform acquired knowledge into practice. Thus, there should be a link between education and practical life.³⁵⁸ The education sector in Africa and Malawi in particular, needs to emphasise on the practical aspects of education to bring an impact on the continent. According to Edward Shizha, education is not limited to accumulating knowledge and skills but also involves acquiring ways of interpreting and giving meaning to experiences of the society.³⁵⁹

As a matter of guidance, the demands of our time towards achieving the common good in Malawi are listed very well by both the 1992 pastoral letter and the one that commemorates its 30th anniversary. However, despite that demands towards the common good are subjective to a period in history as well as locality, they must all aim at the promotion and betterment of the person and his rights. Otherwise, whatever course of action is taken would be devoid of its own essence. To make it more clear, the demands towards the common good concern, above all, the commitment to peace, the organization of the State's powers, a sound juridical system, the protection of the environment, and the provision of essential services to all, some of which are at the same time human rights: food, housing, work, education and access to transportation, basic health care, the freedom of communication and expression and the protection of religious freedom.³⁶⁰ In other words, the list of the demands is endless as long as it is dictated by historical social realities of a society and it is meant for the promotion of all human beings and God's creation.

³⁵⁸ Precious Nihorowa, "Reviewing the Aims and Content of Education in Africa: Retrieving John Dewey's Thoughts on Education," *Chiedza Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 19:2 (2017), 34.

³⁵⁹ Edward Shizha, "Reclaiming Our Memories: The Education Dilemma in Postcolonial African School Curricula." Abdi, A Ali and Ailie Cleghorn, eds, *Issues in African Education: Sociological Perspectives*, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 66.

³⁶⁰ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 91.

Furthermore, the common good involves all members of the society: the rich and the poor, the young and old, male and female. And so, no one is exempted from cooperating, according to each one's possibilities, in attaining it and developing it.³⁶¹ Similarly, everyone has the right to enjoy the conditions of social life that are brought about by the quest for the common good. Pope Pius XI lamented that the distribution of created goods, which, as every discerning person knows, is laboring today under the gravest evils due to the huge disparity between the few exceedingly rich and the unnumbered property-less, must be effectively called back to and brought into conformity with the norms of the common good, and that is, social justice.³⁶² However, even though the attainment of the common good remains a responsibility of each individual member of the society, the State has a crucial role in facilitating the realization of the same. On this, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that “the responsibility for attaining the common good, besides falling to individual persons, belongs also to the State, since the common good is the reason for which the political authority exists.”³⁶³

To understand this better, government must be thought of in terms of the Leviathan of Thomas Hobbes. He sees political authority as a social contract or commonwealth that people enter into which promises to safeguard their rights and prevent what he calls ‘the state of nature.’³⁶⁴ In this case, without the people then, governments would not exist. The State also has a bigger role to play in attainment of the common good because it is responsible for coming up with policies and laws that guide the conduct of the people and keep them in check. Since it decides on legitimate conducts over illegitimate ones, it has the responsibility of making sure that those conducts that

³⁶¹ Paul VI, *Octogesima Aeveniens*, #46.

³⁶² Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1931), #197.

³⁶³ CCC #1910.

³⁶⁴ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company. Inc., 1994), 106.

are deemed legitimate are the ones that help people to strive towards the common good. And so “to ensure the common good, the government of each country has the specific duty to harmonize the different sectoral interests with the requirements of justice.”³⁶⁵ Finally, the common good that is aspired for must also not be deprived of its transcendental aspect and must help people attain the ultimate end.³⁶⁶ It should not be simply confined to its historical dimension. A purely historical and materialistic vision would end up transforming the common good into a simple socio-economic well-being, without any transcendental goal, that is, without its most intimate reason for existing.³⁶⁷ For believers in religion, such a transcendental aspect or ultimate end would mean union with the Supreme Being, God.

Conclusion

In the post-synodal exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, John Paul II emphasizes that “In Africa, the need to apply the Gospel to concrete life is felt strongly.”³⁶⁸ He made these remarks in the context of the social and political difficulties facing Africa during the time of the first African synod. The situation is not any better today, close to thirty years after the conclusion of that synod. The Church in Malawi, in fulfilling her prophetic role, has been faithful in not only partnering with government in development projects, but also pointing out missteps in the society, both among leaders and the common people alike. Alluding to George Ehusani, Orobator Agbonkhianmeghe argues that the Church must continue being prophetic and shun all temptations to be a mere social commentator.³⁶⁹ Being a prophet demands that the Church must always exhort and stand up to

³⁶⁵ CCC #1908.

³⁶⁶ John Paul, *Centesimus Annus*, #41.

³⁶⁷ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 93.

³⁶⁸ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa: Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Church in Africa and its Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995), #51.

³⁶⁹ E. Orobator Agbonkhianmeghe, *The Church as Family: African Ecclesiology in Its Social Context* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2000), 81.

speak out even in moments when doing so entails a lot of danger and persecution. She must also give hope and pray for the suffering. This is what all other Biblical prophets did. In doing so, perhaps all people will strive towards the common good which has the potential to bring back order in the society in the midst of chaos.

Author's Biography

Precious Nihorowa CSSp is a Malawian by nationality and a Roman Catholic priest belonging to the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (Spiritans). Since 2016, he has published book chapter and a number of scholarly philosophical and theological articles on various topics, in journals such as *Asian Horizons Dharmaram Journal of Theology* (India), *Hekima Review: Journal of Theology* (Kenya), *Chiedza Journal of Philosophy* (Zimbabwe) and *Dare Journal of Theology* (Zimbabwe). In 2020, he published a fiction novel. For so many years, he has been a regular contributor of opinion articles on topical societal issues to various newspapers and magazines. His current research interests are religious and socio-political issues especially those pertaining to the African continent. preciousniho@gmail.com

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