The Use of Persuasion to win Opponents in Daniel 1:8-14: A Quality for Religious and Political Leaders in Nigeria

Isaac Asongo Ngobua

PhD Student

(Benue State University, Makurdi)

Registrar, Reformed Theological

Seminary, Mkar Benue State

Email: ngobua69@gmail.com

Phone: 08107605676; 08088027360

Abstract

Leadership is a noble task, which is both challenging and demanding. There are the best and worst of times for leaders. However, the success of every Organisation, State or Nation largely depends on the leadership traits and methods adopted by their leaders. There are certain issues of misrule, failures, and retrogressive implementation of certain policies that appear to be common traits of some religious and political leaders in Nigeria. The main purpose of this paper is to exposit Daniel 1:8-14 with a view to describing how Daniel and his friends used persuasion to win their opponents at the court of Babylonian Empire and how this essential leadership skill can be of use to both religious and political leaders in the contemporary Nigerian society. In view of this, the researcher discusses nine principles of influencing and persuading people in leadership. Since the Bible is a literary-historical and Theological document, the research employs all the three aspects in the exegetical enterprise, and a historical survey of the political and religious leadership. Investigation in this paper shows that, leading through persuasion as Daniel did in the court of Babylonia is a skill that must be learned and practiced by political and religious leaders in Nigeria and around the globe. Religious and political leaders in Nigeria can employ the use of persuasion rather than manipulation with a view to be successful in leadership. If the use of persuasion is adopted, the issues of misrule, and failures in leadership in Nigeria would be reduced.

1. Introduction

It is true that the quality of leadership and governance in a country directly affects the level of political stability and development of any nation. Bad governance and poor leadership that is characterize by misrule, failures and retrogression only result

in underdevelopment and political instability (Ologbenla 118). The survival of a system rests with leadership. All things rise and fall on leadership because leadership effectiveness and success is a steering that drives a nation or any organization to heights of development and productivity by the application of good leadership skills (Nnablife 41). Leadership and good governance are crucial to realizing any giant stride taken in pursuit of development anywhere in the world, Nigeria is not an exception. The trouble with Nigeria, as Chinua Achebe rightly observed is simply a failure of leadership (1). This research is motivated by some religious and political leadership in Nigeria. Issues of misrule, failures of leaders as a result of manipulation tactic instead of persuasion. As a leader, one's success depends upon his or her ability to get things done. Therefore, this paper has revealed how Daniel and his friends at the Babylonian court exhibited and used the skill of persuasion to win opponents or convince the chief of eunuchs at the court of Babylonian Empire and how this essential leadership skill can be of use to both religious and political leaders in the contemporary Nigerian society. Since the Bible is a literary-historical and theological document, the research has employed all the three aspects in the exegetical enterprise and a historical survey of the political and religious leadership in Nigeria. Nine principles of influencing and persuading followers in leadership with their implications are also discussed.

2. The Training of the Four Jewish Youths

King Nebuchadnezzar orders Ashpenaz, one of his high officials, to begin the training process for the cream of the crop among the exiled youth. According to Young, Ashpenaz etymologically has been proposed as the man whose face is sad or harsh. Syriac reads Ashpaz; ''meaning the goddess has formed the seed''. It may possibly be a shortened form, like Asnapper (Ezra 4:10). This officer was chief-marshal of the court. Chief is a translation of Rabbi, which is used in the titles of Assyrian and Babylonian officials in 2 Kings and Jer. 39:3 (39). Keil is of a similar view that, the man so named was the chief marshal of the court of Nebuchadnezzar רב סרס סריס (rab sa☐ri☐ys

saris) meaning, chief commander of the eunuchs i.e., overseer, chief of all the officers (535). Nebuchadnezzar's enlightened policy was to employ the best minds in his kingdom in government service, regardless of their national or ethnic origin. Keil notes that,

> Among the Persian the education of boys by the *paidagogai basileioi* [royal pedagogues] began, according to Plato (Alcid. i. 37), in their Fourteenth year, and according to Xenophon (Cyrop. i. 2), the *epheboi* [adolescents] were in their seventeenth year capable of entering into the Service of the Kings (535).

Leon Wood calculated that Daniel and his three friends must have been in their middle teens, since Daniel lived at least until 536B.C. (383). It is not known how many other Jews and Gentiles were the classmates of Daniel and his three friends. However, they were evidently the only ones who expressed a desire to observe the Jewish dietary laws (Exod. 34:15, Lev. 11; Deut.14; cf Deut.8:3; Prov. 20:1).

In selecting the youths for education in the King's court in Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar was accomplishing several objectives. According to Tremper, his purpose with Daniel and the others was to train them in Babylonian ways for political and propaganda purposes (47). Those carried away captives could well serve as hostages to help keep the royal family of the Kingdom of Judah in line. Their presence in the king's court also would be a pleasant reminder of the Babylonian King of his conquest and success in battle. Further, their careful training and preparation to be his servants might serve Nebuchadnezzar well in later administration of Jewish affairs (Walvoord 34). Berquist adds that, the expanding empire required an expansion in bureaucracy, which could not be met by the expertise of the native population. So the elite of the subdued nations were pressed into service in the interest of Babylonian empire building (15-16). Daniel, his three friends and others implied are referred to the passage as members of the elite class of Judah for good reasons. In verse 3, they are referred to as ''some...from the royal family and the nobility''. Rabbinic tradition associates this verse with Isaiah 39:7 and asserts that Daniel and his three friends were

descendants of King Hezekiah (Tremper 48). Even if not direct descendants of the King, they are nobly born in Judah.

The King specified the qualifications for admission of the youths. Verse 4, '' youths ילד *yeled* without blemish מום מאום *m'u☐m mu☐m*, of good appearance טוב *to☐b* and skilful in all wisdom שֹכ חכמ *śa☐kal chokma☐h*, endowed with knowledge דעת *dah'-ath*, understanding בין *bene* learning and competent to stand in the King's palace''(Baldwin 64). These men are not just good-looking and well-born, but they already show intellectual aptitude. They are showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand. The verbs and nouns used in this description are familiar to those who have read proverbs.

The command of the king to the chief court official, Ashpenaz, was to train these young men in the language and literature of the Babylonians. They were to be immersed in the culture of their enemies. The three-year programme of study that Daniel and his three companions underwent involved study of literature and languages of the Chaldeans (v.4). The term 'Chaldean' has a double meaning in the Book of Daniel. In some places, including here, it refers to ethnic southern Babylonians (cf 3:8; 5:30; 9:1). In others, it describes a class of astrologers and priests that emerged from the ethnic Chaldeans (2:2; 4-5, 10; 4:7; 5:7, 11)(Keil 74).

> The Babylonian sages combined many of the functions fulfilled by the wise men, prophets, and priests in Israel, though they are to be distinguished from those cultic functionaries who were more especially concerned with the temple and its rituals. They were the guardians of the sacred traditional lore developed and preserved in Mesopotamia over centuries, covering natural history, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, myth, and chronicle. Much of this learning had a practical purpose, being designed to be applied to life by means of astrology, oneirology, hepatoscopy and the study of other organs, rites of purification, sacrifice, incantation, exorcism and other forms of divination and magic (Goldingay 16).

Evidently what these young men studied was the history and literature of this ancient part of the world (cf Acts 7:44). This included the old Akkadian and the ancient Sumerian cultures from which the Babylonian had developed. Though Aramaic had begun to replace Akkadian by 600 B.C., Babylonian scholars continued to study and even write literature in their classical tongue (Nelson 1418).

Brotzman and Tully stated Aramaic was the native language of the Chaldean tribe that was in power in Babylon at the time, and this northwest Semitic language was becoming the lingua franca of the Near East. Nonetheless, the native language of the Babylonian was Akkadian, a Semitic language like Hebrew, but with an extremely complex writing system. It might interest you to know that, the Akkadians took over the Sumerian system of writing sometime in the middle of the third millennium B.C. (270). Further, the major change introduced by the Akkadians was a much greater use of syllabic signs. Their writing system was not exclusively syllabic, however. Their six hundred to seven hundred signs included; six signs to represent vowels, ninety seven signs that represented open'' syllables, more than two hundred signs that indicated closed'' syllables, and about three hundred signs that were used as ideograms (Mock 5). The language was written in syllabic cuneiform, with additional complexity that it often utilized the ancient language of the region, Sumerian in its technical literature. It is likely that our text has Akkadian specifically in mind in terms of the special training that Daniel and his friends were about to receive. Through archeological discovery and philosophical advances, we know something of the literature of the Babylonians (Tremper 49). Today we have examples of historical writings, economic tablets, religious myths, heroic epics, love poetry and more.

> Learning the language of a people is one of the best ways to absorb the worldview of its people. Thus Nebuchadnezzar was seeking to acculturate these youths and make them thoroughly Babylonian. In order to witness to their God in the Babylonian court they had to understand the cultural presuppositions of

those around them, just as a Christian today must work hard at the religions and cultures amongst which he lives, if different thought-words are ever to meet (Baldwin 80-81).

I have noticed the similarity between Daniel's experience and character as well as Joseph's and Moses' throughout chapter one of the book of Daniel. The names of these Hebrew Jews were changed. Daniel's name probably means ''My Judge is, or God is My Judge.'' His name was changed to Belteshazzar (either ''May [a god] protect his life'' or Lady[a goddess], protect the king'') (Tremper 50). Azariah (''Yahweh is my help'') becomes Abednego (Probably bastardized form of ''servant of Nabu''). Hananiah (''Yahweh has been gracious'') and Mishael (''Who is what God is?'') becomes Shadrach and Mashach (Wood 29-30). The new names assigned them all included or referred to various Babylonian gods: Bel, Aku, and Nego (a possible variant of Nebo). The practice of changing names was a way to express sovereign control over others. These new names would have also encouraged these youths to think of themselves as part of the culture in which they were living, rather than the culture from which they had come from (Gen 41:45). The fact still remains that, each of their Jewish names included some reference to the Lord may indicate that they had godly parents. Perhaps, their early upbringing by godly parents is one reason they stood for God in Babylon (Goldingay 24).

3. Daniel's Resolve to Please God 1: 8-14

Daniel and his friends have provided no recorded resistance to their assimilation into the Babylonian society and culture. They have received new names, and submitted to a foreign educational curriculum. The King wanted to make sure that these youths were well taken care of since they would serve in the royal court. So, he assigned for them daily meals from the royal food and royal wine. The King ordered that they were to be given the best food and wine in the kingdom (Keil and Delitzsc 539-540).

Evidently Daniel took the initiative with this decision, and his three friends followed his lead. ''Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine''v8 (Keil et al 539). His decision was not to remain morally pure but to remain ceremonially pure. Ceremonial purity was something that concerned only the most faithful Jews who were careful to remain ceremonially pure would have been equally careful to preserve their moral and ethical purity. Daniel wanted to please the Lord in every respect, not just in the most important moral aspect of his life (1 cor. 10:1-4, 6, 14). Daniel was firm to the dietary law of the Old Testament, (Lev.11, Deut. 12:23-26). Undoubtedly, the meat (food) and wine that they refused had been offered to the Babylonian gods (Marduk [or Bel], Nebo, Ishtar, etc), since it came from the King's table (2 Kings 25:29, 1 cor.10:19-20, 28-29) (Goldingay 24). These young men faced a situation common to every modern Christian youth. They could be part of the crowd and submit to peer pressure to get ahead. Or they could do what they knew would please God though it might involve persecution and cost them advancement opportunities.

> ''The command of the king, that the young men should be fed with the food and wine from the kings's table, was to Daniel and his friends a test of their fidelity to the Lord and to His law, like that which Joseph was subjected in Egypt, corresponding to the circumstances in which he was placed, of his fidelity to God (Gen.39:7) (Keil 80).
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> ''It has well been said that faith is not believing in spite of evidence - that's superstition - but obeying in spite of consequences'' (Wiersbe 254).
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> ''…the only way we can advance in the truth is by maintaining a good conscience [1 Tim 1:19; 1 Pet. 3:16; et al.]. Allow one thing in your life un-judged that you know to be contrary to the word of God, or that you fear is not in line with God's will for you, and you will soon find your spiritual eyes become darkened, your spiritual susceptibilities deadened, and no real progress made in your soul, but rather a steady decline. But where there is faithfulness in separation from that which is opposed to the mind of God; where His word

is allowed to sit in judgement on all your ways, you will learn that 'the path of the just is as a shining light, which shineth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.' The word will illumine each step before you as you take the one already pointed out' (Ironside 21).

4. Daniel Persuaded the Chief Official

Yahweh, the God of the Jews had granted Daniel and his friends favor and compassion with the chief official. Even under the circumstance Daniel was in, he remained dedicated and committed to the law of God and because of this he was favored in the eyes of a heathen official. Here, the official explains to Daniel that he would like to grant his request but the King has given orders that Daniel is to eat this food and drink the wine provided. If Daniel would not do so, he may look sickly to the King and then the chief official would get into trouble and may even lose his life.

Daniel is firm in his commitment to the dietary laws of the Old Testament (Lev. 11, Deut. 12:23-26). The verb 'defile'' here denotes religious defilement. Tremper says, Daniel's intention was to keep kosher. However, why did he refrain from wine? If not, the Old Testament laws do not restrict any but the Nazirite from wine (Num. 6:1-4). Further, in their threats and warnings, the preexilic prophets implied that it was impossible to keep Kosher in the land of captivity (Hos. 9:3, Amos 7:17) (52). Daniel may have refrained from eating the King's food because it contained meat which would be considered unclean for a Judahite to eat. Or, it could have additionally been that, all of the King's meat and wine had been offered in sacrifice to the gods which they served. Heathen nations offered animals in sacrifice to their gods as well as drink offering (Anderson 6). Those who had thus committed themselves to allegiance accepted an obligation of loyalty to the King. It would seem that Daniel rejected this symbol of dependence on the King because he wished to be free to fulfill his primary obligation to the God he served. According to Tyndale, the defilement Daniel feared was not so much a ritual as a moral defilement, arising from the subtle flattery of gifts and favors

which entailed hidden implications of loyal support, however dubious the King's future policies might prove to be (83).

Daniel persuaded the official in charge of feeding them. He proposed a vegetarian diet rather. Omitting meat and wine from one's diet does not normally result in obviously better health. Perhaps, Daniel was relying on God to cause him and his friends to look better at the end of the test period miraculously. Another possibility could be that, the youths may have been served such food that could reasonably expect to look and feel better if they abstained. Daniel must have established a good relationship with the official in direct authority over him, especially the over seer. He received a favorable response (Hebrew, *hesed, loyal love*, and *rahamim*, compassion) when he proposed a ten-day dietary test. But it was Yahweh who moved the overseer's heart (1 Kings 8:50, Ps. 106:46), another indication of God's sovereignty. Here, it is noticed that, Daniel did not rebel against the restrictions that his elders placed upon him. Instead he courteously requested permission to abstain, and then,   having received an encouraging response, he offered a positive alternative course of action.

To my mind, Daniel and his friends have used persuasion to influence and convinced the chief official to succumb to their proposal of vegetarian diet instead of the royal food which was contrary to their Jewish perspective of dietary laws. They did not manipulate but rather persuaded and influenced their elders who successfully changed their attitude from the royal decision or instruction of subjecting Daniel and his friends to royal meat and wine at the Babylonian court. In other words, Daniel and his friends have exhibited leadership skill of persuasion as they were being trained as leaders at the court of the Babylonian Empire.

5. What Persuasion Is

Scholars have defined persuasion in different ways. Some scholars have define persuasion in few words: ''A communication process in which the communicator seeks to elicit a desired response from his receiver' '' (Anderson 28). ''A conscious attempt by one individual to change the attitudes, beliefs, or behavior of another individual or

group of individuals through the transmission of some message''(Bettinghaus and Cody 50). ''A successful intentional efforts at influencing another's mental state through communication in a circumstance in which the persuade has measure of freedom'' (O'keefe 66; Perloff 45). These definitions are all boiled down to the main idea that successful persuasion involves influencing another person so that they have the freedom to choose to change their behavior or attitudes (Perloff 45). Effective persuasion allows for a freedom of choice as it becomes more of a negotiation to arrive at an agreed solution (Conger 99). Therefore, persuasion becomes more of a collaborative effort, rather than a manipulative tactic that only presents the audience with a single, fleeting opportunity or choice.

Similarly, the word influence comes from the Latin *influere*, meaning to flow into. Influence is the ability of a person or leader to affect, to shape or to transform the opinions (convincing) and the behaviors or actions (persuading) of other people without necessarily having a formal authority over these persons (Bao 9-140). Influence allows a leader to get things done and to achieve desired outcomes without coercion.

The study and practice of persuasion are not new. Persuasion can be found in the Old Testament. For instance, Jeremiah convinced his people to repent and establish a personal relationship with God. Similarly, John the Baptist exhorted people about Christ. He travelled the countryside, acting as Christ's advance man, preaching ''Christ is coming, wait till you see him, when you look in his eyes you will know you have met Christ the Lord''(Whalen 110). According to Perloff, in United States, where persuasion has played a large role in politics and society as a whole, we find that communication campaigns are as American as media-advertised apple pie (5).

Persuasion is rapidly developing as a crucial role in all organizational positions across the board and believed to become the new language of business and leadership (Conger 39). Leadership is to engage followers, nor merely to activate them, to comingle needs and aspirations and goals in a common enterprise and in the process to make better citizens of both leaders and followers (Carroll and Flood 26). Howard said,

leadership is the heart and soul of management. It is the ability to inspire other people to work together as a team, following your lead, in order to attain a common objective, whether in business, in war, or on the football field (3). These definitions are concern with leadership as a collective social process leading to direction, alignment, and commitment toward the organization's or group's goals.

Carroll and Flood says, the focus today on building and developing skills, knowledge, and morale emphasize the need for a wider range of leadership abilities. These abilities include clarifying performance expectations, setting or negotiating goals, raining and coaching, rewarding and disciplining, delegating responsibility, and managing conflict to name a few. Of course, the various leadership responsibilities mentioned are primarily driven by persuasive efforts (35). The bottom line here is, persuasion is a key to all leadership efforts.

6. Principles of Persuasion in Leadership

6.1 The principle of attraction

In Daniel 1:9 there are two Hebrew key words that are very important; *hesed, loyal love*, and *rahamim*, compassion. To my mind, Yahweh had granted Daniel favor and compassion with the chief official. This as well, connotes that, Daniel must have established a good relationship with the chief officials in direct authority over him, especially the overseer, whom Daniel earned attraction from. They were both attracted to each other and that is why Daniel could persuade him and his request for a vegetarian diet was granted. In other words, attraction is a very important tool of persuasion in leadership. This is similar to what scholars have discussed on the principle of attraction. The old adage that "opposites attract" is not nearly as powerful as the hold and pull of those with similar values and perspectives. Byrne says, people like others who are similar to them (71). Analyses of sociograms of all kinds demonstrate that generally people select others with similar dispositions (Blau and Scott 20). Even positive remarks about another's individual traits, attitudes, and performance generate a propensity to comply with the wishes of the person offering the praise (Bercheid and

Walster 19). Some people go so far as to be attracted to those who dress like they do (Emswiller 284-9) as well as those with similar political party preferences (Furnham 615-24). The point of this research is clear: people like, are attracted to, and follow others that they believe are kindred spirits.

What are the implications of this principle for political and religious leaders? The short answer is creating relationships with people by discovering common interests. Establish bonds with people and other leaders by discovering genuine common interests and by establishing good will and trust. Praise, admiration, commendation, and honour are keys to unifying relations with others. Individuals are much more prone to follow people whom they admire. Charisma is of course helpful in this regard, but we need strategies that go beyond one's personality to garner followership. The dilemma for leaders is to get others to like them without sacrificing their basic principles. Consider some simple yet powerful actions in this regard.

6.2 The principle of reciprocity

Individuals feel obligated to return a good deed; people help those who help them. The Hebrew word חסד-*che☐se☐d* in Daniel 1:9, which is kindness or favour shown to Daniel by the chief official is very important. God moved the chief official's heart, he accepted Daniel's request because of the *che☐se☐d* (kindness, love and favour) (Keil and Delitzch 540). It is important to note here that, the chief overseer helped Daniel to solve a problem by his show of love and favour for Daniel. Daniel in turn reciprocated the favour of the overseer by keeping the interim arrangement the overseer made with him, though it was contrary to the King's directives concerning the Royal feeding for Daniel and his friends. Daniel and his friends also respected the interim arrangement the official made with them for a ten day vegetarian diet. This attitude of Daniel and his friends is similar to the principle of reprocity in persuasive leadership.

If there is a universal social principle in American society, it is the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner 161-78; Blau and Scott 20). The principle of reciprocity serves as

the basic proposition of the social exchange theories of Blau et al 78) and Homans (14). There are many examples of this principle in operation. How many times has your spouse reminded that you owe a friend dinner, that is, "it is our turn?" Survey research reveals that sending a gift with a mailed questionnaire dramatically increases survey completion rates (Church, 62-79; Warriner 542). Similarly, business people have discovered that after accepting a gift, customers are much more willing to purchase products and services that they would have otherwise declined (Gruner 84). In sum, people typically feel obligated to repay a favour.

What implications does the principle of reciprocity have for leaders? The principle confers a genuine "first-mover advantage" for any leader who is trying to cultivate positive attitudes and productive relationship in the workplace (Cialdini 72). Organizational leaders can extract desired behaviours from those that they are leading by modeling the behavior first – whether it is trust (Hoy and Tschannen-Moran 184-208), civility (Selznick 20), or sense of efficacy (Bandura 18). Help your subject solve a problem, and you can depend on their help when you need it. The implication is clear give and you will receive.

6.3 The principle of colleagueship

When Daniel took the decision as contained in Daniel 1: 8 not to defile himself with the Royal food and wine of the King of Babylon, he solicited the consent of his friends and their support (Baldwin 82-83). As a result, he influenced them and they followed and supported his proposed dietary law of vegetarian diet. The researcher feels that, Daniel influenced his friends who were his colleagues and captured their loyalty and followership. Daniel also had the same followership by the chief overseer who succumbed to his proposal and gave them vegetables for ten days. Perhaps, this is similar to what Cialdini describes as the principle of ''social proof'' - following the lead of similar others.

People rely heavily on those around them for cues on how to think, feel, and act (Cialdini 74). In a specific social context, behaviours are viewed as correct if

respected people are seen performing them. This tendency works well as a rule, but of course respected leaders can fall from grace by violating fundamental moral codes. Cialdini refers to this principle as the principle of "social proof" – following the lead of similar others (75). We are more likely to follow the lead of similar others than dissimilar ones (Burn 611; Schultz 25-26) even if the behaviour is destructive. Sociologist David Phillips proposes the "Werther effect" to explain the copycat suicide phenomena. Johann von Goethe published a novel in which the hero, Werther, commits suicide; history records that a wave of emulative suicides then occurred across Europe (1001). Phillips used existing data to demonstrate the same phenomenon in American society. For example, immediately after a front-page story of a suicide, the suicide rate increased significantly in that geographic area, especially among individuals with similar demographic profiles (560). The point is that people imitate the lead of individuals similar to themselves.

The implication for our leaders is that, they should seek out respected faculty members, solicit their advice, and win their backing. The support of the group will follow. The key is to influence horizontally, not vertically. By capturing the assistance of trusted people or colleagues, the leader is on the way to gaining the favour of that group. In brief, tap into the colleague network by using horizontal power to lead. Use respected colleagues to enhance your position.

6.4 The principle of commitment

The pivotal verse of Daniel Chapter 1 is the eighth. Daniel's decision to abstain from the proffered delicacies was the touchstone of his religious commitment (Anderson 6). When Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, this shows that, he was firm in his commitment to the dietary laws of the Old Testament as contained in Lev. 11, and Deut. 12:23-26. The researcher shares the view that, the commitment exhibited by Daniel as a leader been trained in a foreign land is similar to what some scholars have discussed on the principle of commitment in persuasive leadership.

People need to not only like leaders but also to commit and identify with their vision and goals. Most individuals who take a public position on an issue "stick with it" because the stance is active, public, and voluntary (Cialdini 73; Cioffi and Garner 131-47). Once a commitment is spoken aloud or written down, it is considerably more likely to direct future conduct than the same choice left unspoken (Cioffi and Garner et al 72). In addition, small initial comments generate more substantial future commitments. In other words, get your "foot in the door" with a small commitment and then use the "snow ball effect" for greater commitments (Freedman and Fraser 195-203; Schein 149). Once an active commitment is made, then the individual's self-image is leveraged from both inside and out. There is inside pressure to align self-image with action and outside pressure to adjust one's image to the way others perceive us (Schlenker 20-23). A public stance creates pressure to maintain that posture in order to look consistent and not whimsical or arbitrary (Schlenker et al., 33).

Inferring from the above discussion, the researcher feels that, commitment is a powerful motivating force. Once individuals commit to goals, their performance can improve dramatically (Latham and Baldes 122-4). Hence, a key to success is to be committed and get followers to commit and embrace goals. Seek public and written commitments. Individuals stand for what they commit to, and they typically "live up to what they have written down" (Cialdini 76). In sum, convince people to embrace goals that are specific, realistic, and challenging because such commitments are powerful motivators of successful action. The commitments focus attention and energy, mobilize effort, enhance persistence, and facilitate specific task strategies (Latham, 125; Locke and Latham 705-17). Moreover, make the commitments public, explicit, and written, and the motivation intensifies. Motivate by obtaining public commitment to specific, realistic goals.

6.5 The principle of expertise

Daniel and his friends, at the end of their three-year curriculum, they received a final examination that concluded an oral testing by the king himself. They were given

positions of significant government responsibility and in all these positions they proved far superior to any of the other officials ''Ten times better'' (Dan. 1:18-20). To my mind, Daniel and his friends as leaders in the Babylonian government have demonstrated the needed expertise of a leader. Influence is much more easily exerted if the group is convinced of the expertise of the leader. Thus, the leader should consistently demonstrate his or her expertise. Do not assume that just because you occupy a leadership position the group believes that you are knowledgeable in the tasks at hand; the assumption is an unwarranted leap of faith. One key to successful authority is demonstrated expertise. Some individuals will defer to anyone in authority, but such compliance is short-lived when the direction is clearly wrong or ineffective. Patients typically acquiesce to a medical doctor's directions on medication, but if the medications do not work, disillusionment is not far ahead.

Simply being a leader guarantees a minimum amount of compliance to directives. Sub-heads have a "zone of indifference" in which they comply with

directives from their superiors without question (Barnard 38). That zone of acceptance, to use a more positive term, can shrink or expand depending on the expertise of the main leader; the greater the demonstrated expertise, the larger the zone of acceptance followers will have (Simon 57; Hoy and Tarter 4-19).

The challenge for all leaders is to expand their zones of influence. But how? The short answer is to demonstrate expertise. Establish expertise in context by solving problems. Political, management, organizational and faculty meetings need not be boring renditions of the leader or head giving directions and reading notices. Rather they can be arenas for innovation and problem solving, and the role of the leader becomes one of demonstrating skill in these areas – not simply dictating bureaucratic solutions. In the process of problem solving, the leader's role is not only demonstrating expertise but also recognizing the knowledge of others.

Formal meetings are not the only places to apply skills and talents. Informal meetings and conversations are other venues to display expertise. An anecdote relevant to the solution of the problem or a description of successful action in another office serve as less formal ways to reveal one's knowledge. The key is subtlety, not boastfulness – an easy give and take in serious, constructive conversation. Do not assume that your expertise is obvious; demonstrate it.

6.6 The principle of scarcity

Keil and Deilitzsch said, as God blessed the resolution of Daniel and his friends that they would not defile themselves by the food at the king's table, He also blessed the education which they had in literature and wisdom of the Chaldeans, so that the four made remarkable progress therein. But besides this, Daniel obtained an insight into all kinds of visions and dreams (541). It is important to observe here that, the gift of seen visions and interpretation of dreams which Daniel had was rare and scarce among the wise men in the Babylonian Empire. That is why Daniel was the only person who could revealed and interpreted the dream Nebuchadnezzar had in Daniel chapter 2. In Daniel chapter 4 he comes to the help of the king in a similar situation, and in chapter 5 Daniel alone can read the writing on the wall. Daniel had wisdom, knowledge, and understanding that other leaders in Babylon did not have and he was able to influence the Babylonia government.

Individuals desire what is scarce, not what is plentiful. Leaders are typically in a position to know what is available and how much. Further, those who are privy to inside information, who have the power to distribute scarce resources, and who have access to key decision makers are likely to have greater influence because they have what others want – things that are in short supply. This principle is a version of the law of supply and demand. Stock market prices spike upon the news of an oil disaster. As things become scarce, they become more valuable, and those who control the scarce commodities – be it money, resources, information, or time – have potential influence

with others; the threat of loss plays a powerful role in decisions and actions (DeDreu and McCusker 1093; Ketelaar, 2-10; Rothman 1355-69).

Our political, religious, heads of institutions and organizational leaders often have the responsibility of allocating scarce resources. The dilemma facing all leaders is to deal constructively with the fact that scarcity exists and creates value. Leaders can harness such knowledge. For example, honestly informing followers of a closing window of opportunity can mobilize action. The key, of course, is authenticity – being up front, honest, and transparent. To act otherwise is counterproductive.

It may seem negative, but the research demonstrates that framing offers and issues in terms of what people have to gain is not nearly as effective as couching them in terms of what will be lost (DeDreu and McCusker 1093). Hence, our leaders must not hesitate to use the negative language of "loss" if appropriate. Stating explicitly and directly what will be lost by an action is often a much stronger motivator than what will be gained (Rothman 1355). Win the confidence of others by sharing exclusive information especially if it presages loss. Use limited resources and information honestly and strategically.

6.7 Principle of trust

The command of King Nebuchadnezzar that, Daniel and his friends should be fed with the food and wine from his table, was to Daniel and his friends a test of their fidelity to the Lord and to His law (Keil and Delitzsch 80). ''It has well been said that, faith is not believing in spite of evidence-that's superstition-but obeying in spite of consequences'' (Warren 254). The only way we can advance in truth is by maintaining a good conscience (1 Tim. 1:19). Daniel took the initiative with this decision of a vegetarian diet and his friends followed his lead. Similarly, Daniel persuaded the official in direct authority over him and he accepted his proposal. Daniel therefore, relied on God to cause him and his friends to look better and the result was miraculous. To my mind, Daniel is a trustworthy leader whom people can trust.

Individuals follow those whom they trust Trust is an indispensable aspect of leadership. The quality and implementation of decisions ultimately rests on the degree to which leaders and followers have confidence in each other (Zand 10-30). Trust in offices or positions is crucial because it facilitates cooperation and collaboration (Tschannen-Moran 308-31). Trust is built upon interdependence and regulates mutual influence; the interests of one cannot be achieved without reliance on the other (Rosseau 404). Individuals are not persuaded by leaders whom they do not trust. The relationship is reciprocal; trust begets trust just as mistrust begets mistrust. Influence is diminished by a lack of trust in either party (Zand et al 29).

The implications of trust are clear. Leaders who want to gain the confidence of their followers must make themselves vulnerable to them by being open, reliable, kind, and honest (Hoy and Miskel 1-40). Without such trust, leader influence is limited; with it, the power of the leader's influence is great. In brief, the paths to trust and influence are competence, openness, reliability, and integrity. Leaders cannot persuade without the trust of their followers, but with trust comes both influence and responsibility. Influence of leaders expands as trust deepens.

6.8 Principle of fairness

Daniel and his friends were treated and given fairness by the chief official in direct authority over them even though the fairness was contrary to the King's command. Perhaps, the fairness demonstrated to them by the chief official of the Babylonian Empire, permitted them to exercised their religious commitment to their God and their dietary laws. As a result, this paved way to their success in all their studies at the Babylonian University and performance in the government of Babylon (Baldwin 77-85).

Individuals desire fair treatment. The notion of fairness is a critical ingredient of how workers feel about their job, organization, and leader (Greenberg, 2000). There are at least two aspects of equity, which are embodied in the well-known tenets of distributive justice – the fairness of who gets what – and procedural justice – the fairness

of the mechanisms of distribution (Greenberg 19). Although individual judgments about fairness are subjective, they are nonetheless important aspects of the work place. Individuals often work less hard if they perceive that they are being treated unjustly (Greenberg and Scott 18). In such situations, it is virtually impossible for leaders to have positive influence on followers. Equity and just treatment for all are especially important in an egalitarian society like the US. Fairness enhances performance as well as the acceptance of leadership (Hoy and Miskel 60).

The implications for leaders seem apparent. Be perceptive of the sense of fairness that exists within the organization. Objective equity is not the issue because justice is in the eye of the beholder. Take action to correct misconceptions of inequity. Fairness means empowering others, that is, involving followers in decisions that affect them, especially when they are willing to put the interest of the nation, institution, organization or party ahead of their own and they have the knowledge to improve the quality of the decision (Hoy and Tarter 435). Leader influence and fairness are inextricably bound; unjust action trumps influence. The golden rule of fairness is the hallmark of justice: Treat others as you would like to be treated. Invest in fairness and garner influence.

6.9 Principle of optimism

When Daniel and his friend were chosen according to the command of the Babylonian king with the view to train them in the Chaldean Language and Literature at the Babylonian University. They were also assigned to eat at the King's table. However, Daniel and his friends were optimistic that, even though they would not partake of the King's food but trusted God that, they would be healthy and succeed in their Babylonian education (Longman 51-52)

Optimism is a positive view of life in which individuals focus on the constructive aspects of events and experience. Seligman argues that optimism matters as much as talent or motivation in achieving success, but optimism has the added feature that it can be learned and enhanced. Optimism is similar to self-efficacy in that both are

concerned with beliefs about the ability to succeed on tasks. He also contends that learned optimism gets people over the wall of learned pessimism and not simply as individuals but also as organizational participants (5). The pessimistic view is one of apathy– one that is self-fulfilling and defeating. Optimism, in stark contrast, views people as capable, willing, and able (Hoy 425-46).

Optimism in leaders provides followers with a "can do" attitude. Such leaders communicate hope and anticipate positive outcomes, a view that carries people through difficult times (Bennis 20-23). He also argues that optimism is about possibilities, change, and hope – without which leaders cannot succeed. To influence people, leaders must exude an air of optimism, which is contagious and moves seamlessly from leader to follower. Optimism provides leaders with a perspective in which they look for opportunities in problems and concentrate on possibilities rather than obstacles. Problems are filled with possibilities and as leaders we should just find them.

7. Conclusion

Investigation in this paper shows that, leadership is one of the great mysteries of social life. Most people in most situations, proclaim their independence and individuality, yet they often sacrifice their autonomy and accept a leader's influence. But even though the word *follower* suggests to some a person who is weak or insecure, accepting a leader's influence is an adaptive process that helps people deal with situations that vary from the cooperative and collaborative to those rife with conflict, tension, and animosity. As an evolutionary account of leadership suggests, people accept influence from others because such behavioral responses are adaptive (Forsyth 12). When people join forces to achieve outcome, individuals must step forward and guide the group towards it goals and others must accept that guidance. Followers struggle, in some cases, against their leader's influence, particularly when that influence takes the form of heavy-handed, exceptionalness mandates, orders, and decrees. But, rare is the leader who relies only on direct forms of influence to keep followers

persuaded, compliant, and obedient. Most mix the direct with the indirect, and as a result leaders' influence is often so subtle that it is scarcely noticed by their followers.

In conclusion therefore, I see that persuasion or influence is different from manipulation and power. Leading through persuasion is a skill that must be learned and practice by political and religious leaders in Nigeria and around the globe. It is not about swaying people against their will, but it is rather offering others a chance to see things from a new light. As the initiator, the leader must find a delivery style that allows you to communicate your conviction in a compelling way. Practicing the act of persuading people and sweeping them up into a mutual vision is a wonderful experience for high performance and success in leadership. More so, the power of persuasion is a tool for moving people in an organization, any position of leadership or authority, by inspiring individuals to reach beyond their limits and creating motivated teams. Our political and religious leaders must not adopt the use of force, excessive power, high handedness, authoritarian and domineering methods to rule and lead the nation but must learn, possess and practice the capability to inspire and influence people to work together willingly for the common good of the citizenry. Leaders must also adopt and use the principles of persuasion and the tactics with a view to yield successes in all leadership positions.

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An Appraisal of Social Justice in the Book of Amos and its Implications for Socio-Political and Religious Situation in Nigeria

Ajim Joshua Aondoawase *PhD* **&**

Rev. Abare Kallah

Department of Religious Studies,
Federal University of Kashere,
Gombe State
Email: ajimjoshuaa@gmail.com
Phone: 07035849406

Abstract

Social justice is a situation or social condition predicted on human rights and equality which social injustice does not guarantee. This paper examines the concept of social justice in the book of Amos and presents its ethical implications for the contemporary Nigerian society. The aim of this paper is not to do an exegesis of the book of Amos, but to consider the moral messages of prophecy of Amos as it affects the socio- political and Religious situation in contemporary Nigerian society. The work uses both historical, sociological and expository approaches in analyzing data which is mainly obtained from secondary sources. The findings in this paper revealed that Nigeria accommodates certain social conditions that are similar to those in Israel at the time of Amos; the wealth of the nation is concentrated in the hands of the few privileged and mostly corrupt Nigerians. The poor masses are suffering in the midst of multi-millionaires who corruptly enriched themselves at the expense of the poor masses who are divided along tribal and religious lines without the unity needed to challenge their corrupt leaders. This paper therefore recommends the application of, Amos' teaching on social justice by Christians in Nigeria to remedy the situation of gross injustice and economic inequality in the contemporary Nigerian society that is obviously lacking in religious and moral integrity

Key Words: Justice, Book of Amos, Ethical, Integrity, corruption, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Social Justice refers to fair treatment to all classes of people in the society. Social justice entails the absence of such vices as; oppression of the poor by the rich, bribery and corruption, pervasion of justice, favoritism or nepotism and social discrimination among other vices. These were some of the social evils in Amos days;

the people committed the following sins: They sold the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes (Amos 2:6-8). Dishonesty in business (Amos 8:4-6). Greed and drunkenness. Selfish luxury of the rich at the expense of the poor. Licentiousness or sexual immorality. These evils were practiced in Israel in the midst of colourful religious activities which Amos described as false religion. True religion according to Amos, entails purity of heart and honest desires, not empty religious ceremonies. According to Amos, elaborate religious worship if not based on honesty and sincerity of heart is only an insult to God. (Amos 5:21-24).

Social Justice was thus, the dominant theme of prophet Amos message. In a passage which by now should have entered deep into the consciousness of many believers, God says through Amos, 'Let justice flows like waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream (5:24). In other words, when justice is perverted in the law courts, it is an abomination to the Lord, an act wholly incompatible with the nature of God. Kelley explained that Israel had grown "prosperous, corrupt and pitiless" (9). Thus God demands for integrity in religious activities of which Israel was very much aware but rebelled against their God. Thus, Amos was incensed when he saw the miscarriage of justice. His people "sell the righteous for money and the needy for a pair of sandals" (2:6; 8:6). To Amos this was gross injustice to the poor and a sin against the moral law.

Amos was so concerned with social injustice which manifested in dishonesty in the courts and in the market places, oppression of widows and orphans, and the immorality and lack of integrity in the organized religion. Thus emphasis on social justice was imperative in the time of Amos as well as in the present Nigerian society. Our spirituality cannot divorce us from such temporal matters like politics, economics and other social concerns/problems of the Nigerian society. Like the Israelites, Nigerians have no moral right of freedom to do as they please in social, economic, and political matters. According to Alexzander, "Amos coordinated sin against people with sin against God" (22). Thus Christians ought to oppose injustice in Nigeria because God calls us to a model of treating people as people, not as things. We must get involved in

social issues because God expects us to do so as models of His divine love, kindness and mercy.

This paper thus attempts to buttress Amos' concept of social justice as expressed in the book of Amos and its importance to our contemporary Nigerian society.   To achieve this, the paper is divided into four sections. The first part is the introductory section which tried to link Israel at the time of Amos with the contemporary Nigerian society and set the structure/direction of the study. The second section is an exposition of Amos concept of social Justice in relation to Israel and Nigeria. The third section underscores the relevance of Amos' Justices to the contemporary Nigerian society; while the last section is a concluding remark and recommendations.

2. An Exposition of Amos Concept of Justice

Justice is a virtue that has been defined as rights and duties of people to each other.   According to Iwe, "justice as an ethical concept with immense social significance implies the notion of fairness, fair deal, moral integrity and righteousness in the dealings of men with one another and in the affairs and transaction of social life" (235). Injustice which is opposite of justice refers to man's inhumanity to man, unfair distribution of natural resources and infringement of fundamental human rights. Social injustice on the other hand is the opposite of social justice. Social justice is primarily concerned with how society is organized, how health, power, privileges, rights and responsibilities are distributed to each strata of the society. Obiajulu, defines social justice as "a more equitable distribution of the social resources and more equitable access to the various social institutions by all members of the society" (18). Social justice has its direct object as the common good of the members of the society. Social justice recognizes and assumes the fact that we are all members of the same human family. Ojiakor and Unachukwu, are also of the view that:

> Social justice means above all working to build a society that is intrinsically balanced, a society in which the structures are fair to everybody without exception. For instance, constructing a society in which the minorities, the

homeless, women and the poor are not discriminated against either in law or in practice (174).

On the basis of the above definitions, social justice demands that each member and each sector of the society should contribute its own quota for the attainment of the common good of the whole. Social justice in this context is based on human rights and equality which social injustice does not guarantee. **A**mos' concept of Justice is clearly stated in Amos 5:24, which calls for social justice as an imperative of true religion or religious integrity. He stood for social justice and righteousness.

Amos believes that social justice should be practiced at every level of the societal social engagements or relationships. Amos understanding of justice is comprehended in the fact that when justice is spoken of in his prophecy, over and over again, the targeted beneficiaries are widows, orphans, aliens, and other vulnerable groups. Justice is thus intimately connected with the fate of these groups. To become just, a society must bring into community all its weak and defenseless ones, giving them voice and a fair share in the goods of the community. Amos bluntly warned the people of Israel about the way the God of justice responds to oppressive social structures. Sider, stresses that "God cares so much about the poor that He works to destroy social systems that tolerate and foster injustice" (66). God dealt with Israel and Judah because they forsook their God and involved in social injustice. When we choose to participate in and benefit from evil social systems, we sin against God and our fellow human beings. Thus, there is no substitute for justice, God's passions for justice is a two-edged sword. When Israel was oppressed, God championed their freedom. But when Israel became the oppressors, God championed their destruction. God cannot condone injustice regardless of who are involved. (Amos 5-6).

3. Social Injustice in Amos' Time and Contemporary Nigerian Society

Looking at Nigeria and Israel in the time of Amos, one would observe that Nigeria has become a place where the land, money and wealth are shared among the elites at the detriment of the poor m**ajority**. Since Nigeria gained independence in

1960, tribalism, nepotism, corruption, discrimination, rigging of elections and gross injustice have dominated the economic, political, judicial, cultural, religious and Social lives of Nigerians. This is evident in the following   discussions.

4. Socio-Judicial Injustice in Nigeria

As justice was denied at the time of Amos, so it is also being denied in the contemporary Nigerian society. The judiciary is the branch of government invested with judicial powers to interpret, construct and apply the law so as to produce justice by discovering the truth. The court   is expected to be a temple of justice. However, Oputa laments that "It is a common knowledge that the courts are infested by the virus of bribery and corruption" (6). This has made justice in our courts a purchasable commodity with the hammer falling for the highest bidder. In the same vain, Ugwueye observed:

> penal judges and all other people that settle disputes at all levels of the society deny poor people justice, because of bribe from the rich. The rich are constantly claiming poor people's acres of land, yet the court always rules in favour of the rich, because of bribery. (56).

> This was the same social condition in respect to justice that was prevalent in Israel at the time of Amos which the prophet preached against in very strong terms. The situation in Nigeria may even be worse as Ugwueye further lamented that;

> It is very unfortunate that Nigerian courts have turned into war zones by greed, avarice, selfishness, and various unspeakable deeds of judges who prepare two contradictory verdicts (judgements), one for the plaintiff and the other for defendant; these judges wait anxiously to sell the verdict to the highest bidder. (55).

This is to say that in Nigeria, judiciary as an organ of government is no longer the hope of the common man. The equality before the law seems to be a statement in mass deceit. Our police cells and prisons are filled with inmates whose only crime was

that they could not pay their way through the corrupt criminal justice system. Human rights are abused daily under obnoxious decrees, injustices and police brutality which recently led to EndSARS protests in the country.

5. Socio-Economic life in Nigeria

The socio-economic situation of Amos time in Israel is very much like that of Nigeria today. Nigeria is naturally blessed with a lot of mineral resources. The fleet of cars being paraded in Nigeria is a sign of this economic prosperity. The economic prosperity could also be seen in the extravagant way some Nigerians eat and dress, just like in Amos time. Amos called only the women of Samaria cows of Bashan (Amos 3:4) because of their extra size, gained through excessive eating and drinking, but here in Nigeria both men and women have this extra size, gained through greed/ corruption or ill-gotten wealth. The expensive jewelries and perfumes they wear speak of affluence.   In spite of   the prosperity or wealth of the Nigerian nation, which is confined in the hands of few people, majority experience all kinds of economic hardship, social disintegration (Kolawole et tel 11-20). At Amos time, the businessmen of his time get impatient for the termination of the holy and work free periods of new moon and Sabbath so that they can engage in their corrupt business practices. The same situation is applicable to Nigeria as affirmed by Ugwueye in the following words:

> Nigerians who are engaged in what may be called the real business of buying, selling and supplying of goods and services for money are the real deceits. They, of course, make the shekel and the ephaph small as Amos said. The cups, tins and bags used in measuring grains are below their sizes and still the grains measured with them are sold at the same price as the ones measured with full sized measures. (54).

The above situations show that traders in Nigeria like the Israelites do not have the interest of the buyers at heart and therefore cheat the buyers in order to enrich their own purse. Despite these difficult situations, Nigerian government, Religious

institutions has done little in alleviating the problem of injustice in the economic sector of the country.

6. Socio-Political Injustice

As was the situation in Amos" time, the prosperity or wealth of the Nigerian nation, which is confined to some few group of people, has brought with it all kinds of political decay in Nigeria. The quickest way of amassing wealth in Nigeria today is to occupy a political office or position. Unemployed youths are paid and used as thugs to manipulate elections. Human life is valued less than political goals just as the poor were equated with a pair of shoes in Amos time.

Embezzlement of public funds by those in authority has been given the appearance of legality in Nigeria. Schools, roads, hospitals and other social facilities are poorly maintained. The poor masses bear the direct brunt since they are the only ones that goes to public hospitals where there are no adequate and effective drugs. The children of the poor are also the ones that attend the public schools where the teachers are not devoted to their work because of lack of financial motivation. The wealthy ones can afford to pay for the bills in private hospitals and schools. Most times their children attend schools in overseas countries. The poor parents who spend their fortunes to train their children in school cannot reap the benefit of their effort because government cannot provide jobs. It is no longer graduate unemployment, but post-graduate unemployment. Many Masters and PhD degree holders are jobless and involved in criminal activities (See Abayam 2012: 35 -40). Nigeria as a nation is rich but those in authority embezzle and mismanage the wealth to the detriment of the poor masses as it was the case in Israel at the time of Amos. This is the reason why Achebe earlier said: The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to challenge personal example which are the hall marks of true leadership. (4).

7. Socio-Religious Injustice

In spite of all the corruption and immorality in the 8th century Israel, Amos made us know that the people Zealously observed their religious activities. The same is true of Nigerians. Despite all the corruption and immorality in Nigerian society, people are pretending to be religious, observing their religious duties as if is a matter of life and death. Obiora , rightly observes that religion in Nigeria today is being used for selfish ends. He sees religion as a fast business that people are embarking on. Looking at Christianity in Nigeria, the numerous churches in Nigeria today are not born out for pure motive of serving God but for self-aggrandizement (17).

There was constant performance of rituals at the sanctuaries during Amos time. Nigerians as well show diligence to these external forms of religion without any moral/ spiritual commitment. Religious feasts, which are very many in Christianity, are observed meticulously by Nigerian Christians. Offerings, especially thanksgiving offerings, by those who succeed in their improper business are regularly given in the churches. Both the offering and the music are all religious formalism and external rites unrelated to religious/ moral integrity which is more acceptable to God as well as the society.

8. The Relevance of Amos Concept of Social Justice to the Contemporary Society

The prophecy of Amos is still relevant to the contemporary societies like Nigeria. The God of justice, whom Amos represented, is the same God of Nigerians. He does not change, and His characteristic nature remains the same. Thus, the relevance of Amos concept of social justice will be discussed under four points.

8.1 God's Attitude towards the Oppressors and the Oppressed has not Changed

God is the God of justice, and desires justice in every nation and community, especially among His children is evident from the book of Amos. "Justice is a communicable attribute of God, manifesting His holiness" (Garland 1966 :8) . The prophecy of Amos has made this clear to us (2 and 3). God hates injustice and oppression everywhere but He loves and promotes justice everywhere. God is

concerned for the poor and the oppressed. He defends and take vengeance for those who are oppressed unjustly. The God of Amos is the same God of Nigerians and He is working just as hard today to bring down sinful societies where wealthy classes live by the sweat, toil, and labour of the poor masses. The prophecy of Amos is very relevant to our nation especially to the Christian community who are participating in evil social systems and societal structures that unfairly benefit few and harm the majority.

The Christian church seems not to care about the biblical teaching on structural injustice or institutionalized evil prevailing in Nigeria. Many restrict morality to a narrow class of "personal" sin. Many charismatic and Pentecostal preachers emphasize prosperity without preaching about the injustice in politics and business. Conservative pastors speak out on personal evil but fail to preach about the sins of institutionalized tribalism, nepotism and unjust economic and political structures that destroy many citizens. Few Church leaders like Bishop Hassan Kukah who are courageous enough to contextualize the biblical message are persecuted and even assassinated. Social evil hurts more people then personal evil. This is not to deny or de-emphasize personal evil, but to underline the fact that both kinds of sin devastate societies anywhere in the world.

God is concerned for justice in all nations. He hates injustices and oppression. This world still belongs to Him and He cares for it to the point of becoming like one of us in the person of Jesus Christ who was crucified because of our sin. We are expected to be committed to work for God's justice in the face of oppression, for God's truth in the face of lies and deceits; for service in the face of the abuse of power; for love in the face of selfishness and hatred: for co-operation and peaceful coexistence in the face of destructive antagonism and wars; and for reconciliation in the face of division and hostility. It is thus very clear that God loves justice and He has a very soft spot in His heart for the poor and the oppressed. "He who oppresses a poor man insults his maker" (Prov. 14:31). There is therefore every need for us Nigerians to truly amend our ways and truly execute justice while dealing with one another.

8.2 *Religious Activities of the Oppressors cannot be Substituted for Justice*

One of the most disturbing things in Nigeria today is the practice of religion without morality.   Nigerian Christians and Muslims can quote their scriptures, understand theology, and explain doctrines, many more are faithful attendance at worship centers, give their tithes and offerings, and many other religious activities. However, all these involvements are not more than "forms and ideas" or mere head knowledge and empty formalism(Mepaiyeda,50). Their hearts are far away from Biblical truth and the applications of its principles which involves love, justice and fairness. As Christians particularly, we seem to believe what we preach and teach well enough. Yet, we do not live our lives according to what we believe and teach thus our religiosity lacks morality and is therefore an abomination to God. It is too easy for Nigerians to say all the right words, to write and publish the Biblical truth and neglect just and loving actions towards one another. Christianity is more than believing the right things and preaching same but practical application of what we believe and preach. The people of Israel in Amos' days had the same problem-a heartless knowledge. They knew and practiced the proper ways of worship. They knew what their scripture said, and yet, Amos said God had rejected them and would judge them.   According to Barker, Israel loves the forms and rituals of religion but did not love what God loves-goodness, mercy, kindness, justice (85).

God rejects the religious activities of the people of Israel because of oppressions (Amos 4:4-5). A true religion requires justice and righteousness.   God will not be pleased with our worship or religiosity when we are not having right relationship with people.   He charges Israel with unfaithfulness and rejects their practice of religion (5:21-24). Amos' concept of justice causes Christians in Nigeria no less trouble today. It is an exposure of false hopes and false religiosity in the gospel ministry of our time. Christianity is now measured by fine churches and cathedrals, large congregation and religious gatherings, manifestation of spiritual gifts, in the midst of moral and social injustice in the society and even in the church. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are now

made to overshadow the fruit of the spirit. However, anointing without character is a false religiosity; it is an oppression of the poor in the Spirit. It is high time for all Nigerians especially Christians to pursue justice and righteousness hence it is more acceptable to God than our solemn assemblies.

9. A relationship with God that is meaningful cannot be separated from morality

God is a God of justice as well as of Love and righteousness. He is the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness (Exodus 34:6). But the same God is also concerned that our community life be characterized by love and justice. This is why God lamented over Israel and call them through Amos to repentance from her transgression and sin (Amos 5:6a, 14 – 15). God calls His people to repent and save their live as He advised; "seek me and live." It is not a call for more sacrifices at the nation's corrupt sanctuaries (5:5; 21-23, 25-26), but a call for reformed living, a return to His standards of justice and right conduct in public life and in private life as well (Agahwenu 200). Twice Amos prevails on God to stay his hand; but judgment cannot be delayed forever, however, God is always willing to accept oppressors and the unjust who repent. Perhaps we may have assumed, like Amos' audience, that God honours our religious ceremonies, Amos message reveals to us that an intimate relationship with God that is meaningful cannot be separated from good moral behaviour towards all people. This is true because religion without morality is useless and an abomination to God.

10. Amos Message Calls for Transformation of Socio-Political and Economic Relationship among Nigerians

Amos prophetic ministry regarding social justice is still very relevant to the socio-economic situation of our country today. Amos believed that it is the right of every human being to enjoy the dignity, equality and responsibility of being created in God's image in order to have a cordial relationship with God our fellow human beings and the material world. To Amos, any person or institution that would deny mankind of these divine privileges is an oppressor. Israel was found guilty of such oppression

(see Amos 5:10-12; 8:4-6). It is easier to condemn Israel than to realize that we have committed the same offenses in Nigeria. We have been involved consciously or unconsciously in one form of social and economic oppression or the other. Most wealthy Nigerians have failed to seek God's perspective on the plight of the poor, the needy and the oppressed. Even those with deep religious beliefs are no more concerned about assistance and development for the poor. The prophecy of Amos referred to physical oppression and poverty, and called for repentance and freedom. This means we cannot claim to be truly religious people if we neglect the wellbeing of the poor and vulnerable members of our communities.

Amos condemned the gross inequalities between the rich and the poor. Amos saw in Israel what is now the situation in Nigeria, a structure where the rich were getting richer and the poor were getting poorer. Israel loves money more than her fellow man or woman (Amos 8:4-6). The rich people were and are accumulating their riches unjustly by fraud. The materialism of the day was and is accompanied by all manner of evils. The ruling class acquired large estates, taking possession of the land until there is no room for the poor (cf. Isaiah 5:8).

Thus, God's warning to the Israelites is also a warning to Nigerians as well. God demand for justice is against any form of illegal acquisition of wealth. In the Nigerian situation today, the person who rightly should be called thief does not hesitate to put a stamp of approval of an expense account, or robs his employer of a quarter hour's pay. Some take the advantage of other people's ignorance to rob them of their deals in business. Some other even rob their families by squandering the family income. Thus the Nigerian society like that of Israel is dangerously divided between the rich and the poor. In fact, what Amos saw in his day was little to be compared to the social inequality and injustice in Nigeria.

Social justice is essential to any system of government, thus making Amos' ethic of social justice very relevant and essential to the Nigeria's political life as a nation. Omoregbe, opines that, "Any group of people who come together to form a government

without justice is a gang of criminals on a large scale" (8). The Nigerian political atmosphere is engulfed with political instabilities, characterized by corruption, election rigging and industrial disharmony in all sectors of the society. The situation cannot change for the better unless the governance of the country has regard and fear of God and thus embrace Amos message of social justice as a fundamental factor for national development. Sadly, Politics is no longer service oriented but an avenue for treasury looting and embezzlement. Omoregbe captured the situation in the following words; "Our governments have been made up of national treasury looters men (and women) who came to politics primarily, or even solely, to enrich themselves by looting the national treasury without qualm of conscience. We have gangs of thieves in government, each with the key to the national treasury." Thus, all along, Nigerian politicians have been oppressing the poor masses and denying them of good governance in a nation richly endowed by God with both natural and human resources, yet, only few individuals' grab the national wealth and leave millions of other Nigerians in abject poverty and penury.

This situation clearly shows that God's demand for justice is not only for Israel. Amos depicts God's relationship to all nations (1:3-2:5). Therefore, God is concerned for the whole sociopolitical activities in Nigeria. The sins which the ancient nations committed and were condemned by God through the prophet, Amos, are still being committed even at present in Nigeria. Christians are therefore enjoined to be the voices of conscience to the Nigerian society like Amos was in Israel of his time, and show other Nigerians the way by acting justly and righteously with one another especially to the poor and vulnerable in our Nation.

11. Recommendations and Conclusion

Amos prophetic message on social justice is an exhortation to repentance and reformation. This call for repentance starts with an individual, then move to various communities and religious groups, and finally to national repentance and reformation.

Christians especially are called to be in the vanguard of God's demand for social justice in the Nigerian society. Nigerians are called upon to let justice flow like a river among the people, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream.

This calls for a general reformation of character among Nigerians especially Christians. Our religious activities must be seen to have corresponding effects on the quality of our interpersonal relationship with others. Nigeria will then be watered with Justice and righteousness, bringing down all vices and immoralities. Thus there is every need for Nigerian Christianity to produces more Christian thinkers in the affairs of the society, men and women of integrity whose motivation will be to promote love, social justice, compassion, honesty and freedom in society, and a vision of humanity, made in God's image, moral responsibility, and with a conscience to be respected. Amos was filled with a sense of divine call, he single-handedly championed the course of the oppressed. Nigeria is therefore in dire need of people of integrity like Amos who will be filled with zeal to please God and love for humanity, that will champion the reformation of Nigeria so that justice will flow like a river, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream (Amos 5:24). For this is the only test of true religion as opposed to empty formalism devoid of good morals which Amos described as false religion that is an abomination to God. Until Nigerians embrace true religion as advocated by Amos social justice will continue to elude us, while injustice and social/economic inequality will increase until calamity befalls us as a nation as it was the case in Israel.

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An Exegesis of Genesis 1:27-28; 2:20b -23 and its Implications for Gender Relations and Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria

Uzoma Amos Dike

National Open University of Nigeria, FCT, Abuja; Email: udike@noun.edu.ng; Phone: 08036982770.

Abstract

Gender is not only a contemporary issue in theological debate, but that which has caused a division in the Christendom and in the larger society as well. In this research therefore the author surveys the purpose of God for the creation of humanity-using an exegesis of Genesis 1:27-28; 2:20b-24. The researcher also examines how gender relations fit into God's goal for the good of the society. A qualitative approach featuring grammatical-historical exegesis was adopted. The study reveals that God created humanity male and female for complement. None is man without the other and each lives in the context of the other. The researcher argues that if this understanding is well appreciated in the Nigerian society, both sexes will form a synergy towards the achievement of the much needed sustainable development. Thus, the author calls for responsibility on the Church to accurately critique biblical teachings on gender in order to resolve the tension that exists in some Christian settings between affirmations of gender equality and gender roles.

Keywords: Gender, Gender Relation, Gender Equality, Gender Inequality

1. Introduction

Gender denotes sexual classification. The United Nation Development Program (UNDP) describes gender as the qualities associated with men and women that are socially and culturally, than biologically determined (258). The reference to "biologically determined" in UNDP's definition is important because of the popular notion that biological differences account for differences in both the behavior of men and women and the roles they play in society. Contrary to the popular view, Stoller, a sociologist opines that gender is a term that has psychological and cultural connotation. He observes that the proper terms for sex are 'male' and 'female' the corresponding

terms of gender are masculine and feminine, these latter might be quite independent of (biological) sex (607).

Sex is a biological function that comes with functional attributes and values that inform and form femininity or masculinity. By implication, whether a person is male or female refers to the biological make while gender refers to the roles assigned to a person in the society and socially constructed relations. Kate Millett opines that gender differences have "essentially cultural, rather than biological bases" that result from differential treatment (28–9). Millett defines gender as "the sum total of the parents', the peers', and the culture's notions of what is appropriate to each gender by way of temperament, character, interests, status, worth, gesture, and expression" (31). Thus, Dike argues that gender difference is a biological fact but the significance attached to it by the society is a human creation – a biological fact that has been taken over by human society (90).

Gender relations is drawn from the gender ideology which presupposes that the masculine encompasses the female or takes priority in relation to the female and is entitled to expect subordination and submissiveness and self-abasement of the female. The UNDP's report further observes that gender relations tend to include strong element of inequality between women and men and are strongly influenced by ideology (258).

The African cultures are remarkable for patriarchal ideology in which the male is regarded as the dominant sex while the female is conceived as secondary, subordinate and inferior; thereby encouraging the marginalization and subjugation of women. The reality of women marginalization and subjugation in Africa and Nigeria in particular is evident in different areas and fields of endeavor such as economic, political, religious, educational, and social-cultural among others. In fact, Nigeria has been listed, ninth among the bottom 10 countries measured for equality by The World Economic Forum (WEF). Sauter, Hess and Frohlich report on The World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap of 2013 measured the disparities between men and women in 136 countries. In the nations that scored the worst in gender gap, economic and educational opportunities,

health and survival, political empowerment as well as political representation and health outcomes, were far worse for women than for men. According to the Global Gap Report of 2016, Iceland (0.874) having 1.6 times the number of women over who progress to tertiary education in the country, was the best country for gender equality, while Yemen (0.516) was the worst. Pappas observes that countries scored worse by each measure when the gap between men and women for that measure was the widest (211). Nigeria specifically scored 0.643, according to report. The gaps between women and men on economic participation and political empowerment remain wide but only manage to narrow its gender gaps in secondary education enrolment and wage equality. Gender equality or inequality is the key factor in these reports. Gender inequality is the unequal treatment or perception of individual on the basis of gender. For Archibong, Bassey and Nwagbara, gender inequality is the perspective in which members of a particular sex are not granted equal opportunities to develop their inert endowments and strengthen their natural capabilities to make choices without being constrained by traditional gender roles and stereotypes (21). Gender equality on the other hand can be described as the provision of the same opportunities for women that are available for men.

The world is not silent over the plight of women. There have been campaigns and awareness by both international (religious and secular) and national bodies. The United Nations in her 1979 General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (UN Women, 2014) and Nigeria was among the countries that signed it. Moreover, Gender equality is well articulated in the document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development entitled: "the future we want" adopted in 2012 which include recognition of the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment across the pillars of sustainable development namely; social, economic and environment (Department for International Development, 2012). Archibong, Bassey and Nwagbara (25) outline Policies and programs in Nigeria towards bridging the gender gap to include the following: Better life for rural women (1987), Family Support Program (1994), Family

Economic Advancement Program (FEAP) (1996), National Policy on Women (2000), National Gender Policy (2006), and the establishment of the Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation (1999) among others.

Yet there still exists glaring fact that inequality continues to deepen in spite of all efforts globally and locally. This requires greater need for awareness of the gender relations between men and women and the key role it plays in the attainment of sustainable development goals.

The issue is: "Did God create man to be superior to woman? Or "what is really God's purpose in the creation of the man – male and female? This issue forms the loci of the study. The aim of the paper therefore is to survey the biblical account of creation in Genesis 1:26b-28; 2:20b-24 with the view of finding God's purpose for the creation of humanity. The paper examines biblical basis for gender relations enshrined in the text; appraises God's goal for the creation of man – male and female; discover why the Church as a religious body has not been at the fore front in the campaign for gender equality and analyze possible roles the Church can play to end discrimination against women in all forms and provide the structure for the actualization equality between men and women. The study adopted grammatical-historical exegesis. This is necessary to bridge the gap linguistic and cultural differences between the Bible and its readers today.

2. The Purpose of God in Creating Humanity Male and Female

Discussion in this section focuses on discovering the purpose of God in the creation of man – male and female. It has been divided into the following subheadings:

2.1 The Text: Genesis 1:26-27; 2:18-23 in Hebrew and English Versions

| 26 | וַיֹּ֣אמֶר אֱלֹ֩הִ֨ים נַֽעֲשֶׂ֥ה אָדָ֛ם בְּצַלְמֵ֖נוּ כִּדְמוּתֵ֑נוּ וְיִרְדּוּ֩ בִדְגַ֨ת הַיָּ֜ם וּבְע֣וֹף הַשָּׁמַ֗יִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה֙ וּבְכָל־הָאָ֔רֶץ וּבְכָל־הָרֶ֖מֶשׂ הָֽרֹמֵ֥שׂ עַל־הָאָֽרֶץ׃ | Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, |

		and over all the creatures that move along the ground."
27	וַיִּבְרָ֨א אֱלֹהִ֤ים ׀ אֶת־הָֽאָדָם֙ בְּצַלְמ֔וֹ בְּצֶ֥לֶם אֱלֹהִ֖ים בָּרָ֣א אֹת֑וֹ זָכָ֥ר וּנְקֵבָ֖ה בָּרָ֥א אֹתָֽם:	So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
18	וַיֹּ֙אמֶר֙ יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹהִ֔ים לֹא־ט֛וֹב הֱי֥וֹת הָֽאָדָ֖ם לְבַדּ֑וֹ אֶֽעֱשֶׂה־לּ֥וֹ עֵ֖זֶר כְּנֶגְדּֽוֹ:	The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."
19	וַיִּצֶר֩ יְהוָ֨ה אֱלֹהִ֜ים מִן־הָֽאֲדָמָ֗ה כָּל־חַיַּ֤ת הַשָּׂדֶה֙ וְאֵת֙ כָּל־ע֣וֹף הַשָּׁמַ֔יִם וַיָּבֵא֙ אֶל־הָ֣אָדָ֔ם לִרְא֖וֹת מַה־יִּקְרָא־ל֑וֹ וְכֹ֩ל אֲשֶׁ֨ר יִקְרָא־ל֧וֹ הָֽאָדָ֛ם נֶ֥פֶשׁ חַיָּ֖ה ה֥וּא שְׁמֽוֹ:	Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.
20	וַיִּקְרָ֨א הָֽאָדָ֜ם שֵׁמ֗וֹת לְכָל־הַבְּהֵמָה֙ וּלְע֣וֹף הַשָּׁמַ֔יִם וּלְכֹ֖ל חַיַּ֣ת הַשָּׂדֶ֑ה וּלְאָדָ֕ם לֹֽא־מָצָ֥א עֵ֖זֶר כְּנֶגְדּֽוֹ:	So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found.
21	וַיַּפֵּל֩ יְהוָ֨ה אֱלֹהִ֧ים ׀ תַּרְדֵּמָ֛ה עַל־הָאָדָ֖ם וַיִּישָׁ֑ן וַיִּקַּ֗ח אַחַת֙ מִצַּלְעֹתָ֔יו וַיִּסְגֹּ֥ר בָּשָׂ֖ר תַּחְתֶּֽנָּה:	So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh.
22	וַיִּבֶן֩ יְהוָ֨ה אֱלֹהִ֧ים ׀ אֶֽת־הַצֵּלָ֛ע אֲשֶׁר־לָקַ֥ח מִן־הָֽאָדָ֖ם לְאִשָּׁ֑ה וַיְבִאֶ֖הָ אֶל־הָֽאָדָֽם:	Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib **j** he had

		taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.
23	וַיֹּאמֶר֮ הָֽאָדָם֒ זֹ֣את הַפַּ֗עַם עֶ֚צֶם מֵֽעֲצָמַ֔י וּבָשָׂ֖ר מִבְּשָׂרִ֑י לְזֹאת֙ יִקָּרֵ֣א אִשָּׁ֔ה כִּ֥י מֵאִ֖ישׁ לֻֽקְחָה־זֹּֽאת:	The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman, for she was taken out of man."

2.2 Interpretation/Exegesis of the Text

2.2. 1 Adam as Humanity Created Male and Female

In Genesis 1:26-27, the Hebrew אָדָם is translated in English as follows: Man, mankind; also human someone (indef.); Adam (the first man). The usage of אָדָם calls for special notice. אָדָם is not a reference to the man Adam as a person but to humanity. Thus Adam is variously translated as "humankind" (Complete Jewish Bible), "human being" (The Message) and "*madu*" that is person (Igbo Bible). By implication, God saw that humanity created only male was not good. It was not about Adam as a person but about humanity as a whole. "God said, Let us make man .... and let them" (verse 26), the latter word "them" defining "man" in the former clause. So in verse 27, "in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." Observe that "them" is synonymous with "him," meaning that Adam is a collective term for human beings; created male and female in the image of God. Adam as humanity is clearly the sense of the context of the narrative of Genesis 1; although it later became used as the name of the first male human being.

In creating humanity male and female, the creator knows that there are aspects of the "dominate and rule" mandate that is to be carried out by the sexes in their uniqueness. Attempts to subdue either of the gender may lead to negative impacts in the society. A study by Salami and Alawode (91) found that a child from homes where the father and the mother are present will be taken care of and socialize in the best way possible. Santrock opines that the process of socialization depends on both parents

playing complementary roles in bringing up the child. Such a child is likely to achieve self-actualization later in life (76). The argument is that a child from a single parent family in some cases became delinquent, failing in school, developing inappropriate sex role attitudes and behavior, or exhibiting other types of pathological conditions. Nwachukwu reports that teachers commonly describe children from single parents as more hostile, aggressive, anxious, fearful, hyperactive and distractible than children from intact families (137-146). Among the proponents of single parenting, Doherty and Beaton advocate that single parenting has positive effects on the child, pointing out that it is not all about being a single parent but it is all about parenting styles and close family ties between the parent and the children (24).

However, Mabuza, Thwala and Okeke reveal that findings suggest that the negative sides to single parenting appear to undermine whatever the positive outcomes maybe (22-60). Thus, the family setting as the basic unit of the society attests to the fact that there are roles that are natural for the woman (mother) which even if the man (father) struggles to do them, will remain impossible and the same goes with the woman. This strengthens the argument for collaboration of both women and men in the building of the society for the male or the female alone cannot achieve God's purpose for creation.

Advocates of gender inequality argue that Genesis account of creation shows that man being the first to be created is in a position of leadership over woman so that is a Christian duty for women to be subordinate to men. Commenting on Genesis 2:18ff, Keil & Delitzsch state "By this the priority and superiority of the man, and the dependence of the woman upon the man, are established as an ordinance of divine creation" (234). Payne has observed that this logic, when applied to Genesis, would imply that the creatures of the sea and the birds of the air created in the fifth day should have authority over the lands animals – and all of these should have authority over the human race since they were created prior. If so, then the authority granted to humans by God in Genesis 1:26. 28-29 is contradicted.

2.2.2 Female - Suitable Help, Not a Subordinate

GOD said, "It's not good for the Man to be alone; I'll make him a helper, a companion … but he didn't find a suitable companion" (Genesis 2:18, 20). "Helper suitable for him" is translated from the Hebrew עֵ֖זֶר כְּנֶגְדּֽוֹ – which is literally "a helper corresponding to him." English renderings of עֵ֖זֶר include: support, help, help mate, help meet, companion among others. **Helper** should be taken in the widest sense because references to the use of עֵ֖זֶר include both divine and human help (Schultz, 198). Payne argues that "The noun used here, throughout the OT does not suggest "helper" as in "servant," but "help, savior, rescuer, protector" (44). For instance, עֵ֖זֶר is used in Psalm 121:1, "From whence does my help come? My help comes from the Lord." The sense of the usage is that of divine support; this does not in any way suggest that God is man's slave by being man's "help." Nothing in the context of any of these passages warrants concluding that, as עֵ֖זֶר either God or woman is subordinate to man.עֵ֖זֶר כְּנֶגְדּֽוֹ according to Payne (45) highlights the role of the woman as the rescuer of the man, "a strength corresponding to him," and hence no less than an equal. Reyburn and Fry warn that:

> Care should be given to the translation of **helper**, since in some languages the term may have the sense of "servant," "waiter," "one who works under another." A word suggesting a person who carries out menial tasks for a superior is to be avoided. In many cases it is possible to use a verb phrase; for example, "a companion, partner, mate, to work with him (205).

The design of God in the creation of the woman is further pictured in Adam, as he awoke and saw the woman brought to him by God. He felt a gap has been bridged hence, without any further revelation from God; he described her as "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." In order to fully appreciate the expressions in this verse, Reyburn and Fry (55) advice that translators may take these expressions in either the idiomatic or the literal sense. If they are idiomatic, the sense is something like "She is my very own kind," "my close relative," or "just like I am." If the sense is literal it

may be expressed as in a translation that says "Her bones were taken out of my bones, and her flesh was taken out of my flesh."

The words are expressive of joyous astonishment at the suitable partner, whose relation to himself he describes in "She will be called Woman *(אִשָּׁה□ה)*, because she was taken out of Man *(אִישׁ)*. אִשָּׁה□ה is rendered by *Luther* as *"Männin"* which literally means "a female man" Keil and Delitzsch (75). By naming the creatures and particularly the woman אִשָּׁה□ה, Ortland (102-3) affirms that "… Adam brought the entire earthly creation under his dominion. He states further, "This royal prerogative extended to Adam's naming of his helper … (God) allowed Adam to define the woman." Recall that in Genesis 1:26 and 28, God had given humanity – male and female dominion over all creatures; this is not owing to the naming by Adam. Moreover, אִשָּׁה□ה (woman) is merely a derivative of אִישׁ (man) with a feminine ending pointing to the opposite of the masculine gender not a proper name. She was only called Eve after the fall. Therefore, Ortland's idea of dominion resulting from the naming lacks biblical evidence.

The expression "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh…" also describes the uniqueness of the woman not as a mere extension of man; she possesses a unique individuality in her own right. There is no indication that woman is inferior. On the other hand, since her body is made from the man's, there is continuity between the two with the result that they can find a fulfilling relationship only in one another, but never with the same intensity in any other part of creation. Woman's origin makes it possible for a man and a woman to establish a dynamic relationship in which they become "one flesh" (Gen. 2:24) or partnership in national building. God made her from the man's rib, close to his heart, to establish the intimate link between them in their very creation. By implication, the woman is to consider the man as part of her very being, and the man is to see her as the help he needs, without whom he is incomplete. It is this understanding of the complementarities of the creation of man – male and female that will enable the "male man" to help the "female man" to live up to her potential, with thankfulness for

God's gift of companionship. Without the woman, he is not man in the generic fullness of that term and vise versa. Therefore, man and woman are divinely endowed for equality, and are mutually interdependent.

3. Women in Contemporary Church and Society

The world is still struggling with the issue of gender equality/justice. Gender equality is often identified as a key issue in economic development of emerging economies. Archibong, Basseyand Nwagbara, have observed that the gaps between women and men on economic participation and political empowerment remain wide but only manage to narrow its gender gaps in secondary education enrolment and wage equality. There still exists a glaring fact that inequality continues to deepen in spite of all efforts globally and locally. This calls for greater need for awareness on the gender relations between men and women and the key role it plays in the attainment of sustainable development goals (22). These gaps have necessitated gender mainstreaming projects.

It is good to remark at this juncture that the Church has witnessed an emergence of a Bible called the Women's Bible - A treatise essentially summarizing the religious ideology of Elizabeth Cady Stanton. According to Guenther (76), the book is divided into two parts-the Pentateuch and Joshua to Revelation. Selections from the King James Version of the Bible are followed by commentaries on the text, focusing on those sections of the Bible that mention women or that Stanton thought should have been included them. Her main intent was to correct the prevalent anti-female interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. Guenther reports further that the appearance of the first part of the book, however, caused a considerable amount of turmoil because of its irreverent approach to the biblical passages relating to women. Thus, in 1896 the National American Woman Suffrage Association voted to renounce any connection with the publication of the first volume and censured Stanton because it feared that the adverse publicity associated with the book would detract from the principal goal of the women's rights movement of that era.

They may have succeeded in stopping the circulation of the Women's Bible but the truth remains that it may not be possible to resist women forever. Another generation may arise and go beyond translation of the Bible to inaugurating Christian denominations that will be meant for only women. As the text reveals, God's purpose in the creation of humanity is clear – equality and complementarity. It is high time the church hid the advice of Gamaliel in Acts 5:34ff. For if this venture is from God, people should endeavor not to be found fighting against God and his move. While the Church's efforts towards gender equality or justice cannot be denied, much is still desired. Thus, the church needs to be dynamic and gender sensitive with a view to drawing newer insights into biblical inspiration and revelation in relation to the challenges posed by life experiences of injustices suffered by women as a result of past misinterpretation. Duty is on the church and the society to reconsider the structural tendency of male domination for the purpose of attaining God's goal for the creation of humanity. More so, a new gender theology and hermeneutical exposition that sees the Bible as wholesome and valuable good news not just for the man but for the woman also should be adopted by the Church.

4. Conclusion

Thus far, the study has surveyed the purpose of God for the creation of humanity by place the text of Genesis 1:27-28; 2:20b-24 on the exegetical lens. The study reveals that God created humanity male and female. No doubt, the male was created first, the female was created not as a subcategory of the male specie of humanity but as a suitable help for the male. The reveals no evidence of any inherent disability in either of the male or female to suggest superiority or inferiority, but throughout it emphasizes their equality. Instead of being inferior, the woman is a collaborator; "a help-suitable" for the man. The composite two form humanity. None is man without the other and each lives in the context of the other. Moreover, God in creating humanity male and female has community-centered goal in which both sexes have unique contribution towards the divine mandate to rule and dominate the earth.

Both man and the woman need each other to accomplish God's purpose at creation which is to sustain the earth. The researcher argues that if this understanding is well appreciated in the Nigerian society, both sexes will form a synergy towards the achievement of the much needed sustainable development. Thus, the author calls for responsibility on the Church to accurately critique biblical teachings on gender in order to resolve the tension that exists in some Christian settings between affirmations of gender equality and gender roles.

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Ideological Clash in Matthew's Gospel: Implications for Societal Peace

Igbakua Iorjaah, *PhD*

Department of Religion and Cultural
Studies, Benue State University,
Makurdi, Nigeria
Email: iiorjaah@bsum.edu.ng
Phone: +234 814 042 3319

Abstract

Matthew's Jesus came announcing the dawn of God's kingdom—the Davidic Kingdom by Jewish royal ideology. The crowds followed Jesus but Jewish authorities saw him as a power swindler, opposed him, and masterminded his execution for treason. Analogous royal ideology explains today's global web of armed conflicts. Using ideological analysis this study therefore examines the dynamics undergirding the conflict between Jewish leaders and Jesus in Matthew's story of Jesus' countercultural project. The approach espouses that knowledge of how those controlling others in Jesus' society affected those they controlled has implications for addressing comparable social-political conflicts in today's societies, Nigeria in focus. The study divulges crossing point among three constructs: politicization of religion, sacralisation of politics, and economic control. It advocates replacing religionism, veneration of ideologies, and concentration of economic power in few hands with politics of neighbour love which promotes respect for human dignity and the common good.

Key Words: Nigeria**;** politicisation of religion; sacralisation of politics; veneration of ideologies; economic control; conflicts.

1. Introduction

Every society has dynamics that dictate its social process. For the Jewish community in first century AD Palestine, like Nigeria in the twenty-first, these were religious, political, and economic powers. Initially, the Jews were governed as a theocracy, a form of government in which God chose to administer his people mediatorially through vicegerents—chosen individuals who spoke and acted for God in governing functions and who were personally responsible to Him for what they did (Constable 34). By virtue of their covenant status the Israelites were not a nation, but

the people of Yahweh (Anderson 124). By the first century AD this royal theology was displaced by an alien royal ideology[1] that introduced the monarch as the number one citizen and patron of his subjects as clients. In so doing the Jewish leadership derailed from the time-honoured Israelite theocratic conception of politics[2] (Jdg 8: 23; 1 Sam 8:7, 19-20; 9:1-10:16; 12:12; 1 Kings 1:1-45; Hos 3: 4; 7: 3; 13: 19-11) and invited myriads of opposition problems, including the emergence of many messianic claimants. Matthew's story of the Jesus event captures this well. Matthew presents Jesus as the son of David from the line of Judah and therefore as *the* Jewish messiah (Mat 1-2). The story depicts the reception of Jesus' messianic ministry with mixed reactions. Among the populace, Jesus pulled large crowds of followers who clung to him because of his acts of compassion (Mat 4:25 - 5:1). He brought succour to them in their hardships emanating from a social ideology that had made most of them perpetual day labourers (cf. Mat 20:1-16). Among the Jewish authorities however, Jesus was seen as a power swindler that had to be eliminated by all means. Why did they think so?

Matthew hints that the dual response was informed by opposing perspectives in Jewish royal ideology (Mat 22: 41-46; cf. 12:22-24; 38-45; 21:9-16). The Jewish leadership in Jesus' time was immersed in the Roman patronage system, which was built on the framework of sovereignty, and understood politics as "being in with the right group" to maximize personal gain. This excited class conflicts spurred on by the

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[1] By royal ideology is meant the way people think about and depict kingship, using various means to achieve their ideal of royalty. It contrasts with royal theology, which is a group's understanding of a god's commitment to and with it that governs the relation of the king to the god and the people.

[2] Politics in our usage in this work simply denotes the relational act of assembling people and ideologically influencing them to imbibe the idea of God's government on earth. That is the kingship of God—the situation where God's sovereignty is expressed in thought, speech, and behaviour. It means to live by God's standards of relationships—among men and with God. This was Jesus' idea of *ekklesia* (Mat 16:16; 18:17), which was used in his day to indicate the assembly of the *politēs* (citizens) of a given city state (*polis*) to express *politiké* (politics), that is, the civic duty of the assembly for their common good.

mean socioeconomic situation of the populace that was driven by the honour-shame culture undergirding politics. It largely undermined potentials for peaceful coexistence with the emergence of numerous Jewish revolutionary movements it created.

Matthew's Jesus conceived of politics in the messianic framework of neighbour, indeed, enemy love which emphasises conformity to God's will on interpersonal relationship through individuals' acts of compassion for the common good (Mat 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; cf. Lev 19:18; Deut 19:11-13; Ezek 34). For Jesus, sovereignty is God's prerogative and all humans only exercise delegated authority in serving God through fellow humans (Mat 20:25-28; 23:8-10). He thus embarked on ideological reorientation of his society by giving his followers kingdom citizenship education in word and deed on the essential nature of the government of God, the character of kingdom citizens, and life in that kingdom (Mat 18-20). But Jesus' royal theology collided with the royal ideology of the Jewish leadership; especially its development with strands from Roman patronage system. Consequently in their interaction with Jesus it was intrigues all the way.

Nigeria today is caught up in a web of armed conflicts that have similar features with the conflict between Jewish leadership and Jesus' messianic movement. Both exhibit concern to grab political power and therefore economic power through the dynamic of religion. The Boko Haram menace in Northern Nigeria is being perpetrated because the Islamic sect believes that politics in northern Nigeria is being controlled by a group of corrupt, false Muslims that must be removed to create a 'pure' Islamic state ruled by *sharia* law for the Federal Republic of Nigeria generally (Walker "What Is Boko Haram?"; Samu 15). The Fulani drive to occupy the Middle Belt and eventually all of Nigeria has a shared ideology with Boko Haram (Ribadu 10). The social banditry in the Niger Delta area, the activities of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) among others, that are pushing for secession are undergirded by the ideology of economic sovereignty through political power. Bob Brown Chinda makes this clear when

enumerating the imbalances that have necessitated the struggle for a separate Igbo state through the activities of MASSOB, quoting Uwazuruike:

> Since 1970 till now, no Igbo man has been president of Nigeria, civilian or military. No Igbo ward has been Chief of Staff or Police IG. Are you not surprised there is no International Airport in the south East? Nationwide, we have the worst road network. The least of everything is allotted to us to wit: only five out of 36 states of the federation. Just 95 out of 774 Local Governments and 15 out of 109 senators. This is pure marginalisation and yet we are not allowed to stand on our own – we want to go. (Chinda 7)

It is hoped that Matthew's discourse on the Jesus event can elucidate the Nigerian situation and enhance its management. We need some knowledge of how those controlling others in Jesus' society affected those they controlled to enhance understanding of analogous royal ideologies and the web of armed conflicts in Nigeria today. To this end in the following sections I try to interpret Matthew's story of Jesus' Messianic mission which highlights a collision of Jesus' royal theology with competing Jewish royal ideology. Matthew's story is first x-rayed in light of his Gospel's setting and agenda to unravel the moving cause and decipher the collision of the competing royal ideologies and Matthew's strategy for its management. Then the Nigerian situation is discussed in light of the promise the features of the conflict presented in Matthew's narrative holds for peace in Nigeria today.

2. Jesus' Messianic Mission from Matthew's Perspective

A good starting point for understanding Matthew's story of Jesus' messianic mission is to grasp his setting. Scholarly opinions on the matter are far from unanimous. Major Arguments often centre on the question of whether his community considered itself a part of Judaism or a separate group. A key problem is how to reconcile the author's apparent inconsistent attitude toward Judaism. Matthew at once seemingly

wants to persuade the Jews to accept his view of Jesus as Messiah and criticises Jewish leadership for rejecting Jesus and the government of God he offered them.

Anthony J. Saldarini and those like him argue that Matthew's group was the Christian sect of the late first century Judaism (*Sanhedrin* 167). He says Matthew was a Jewish teacher in a power tussle with certain groups of Jewish leadership such as the Pharisees, Scribes, Chief Priests, elders of the people, Sadducees (Mat 16:1; 22:23) and Herodians (Mat 22:16). Matthew attacked their legitimacy to "rule over the Jewish community (Mat 15:14) (Saldarini *Reading Matthew* 170). But, for Richard S. Ascough Matthew's setting was a Jewish-Christian community (Christians of the Jewish race, not Christian Jews—a Jewish sect). His group was a "deviant association" that believed in Jesus as the expected Messiah and saw itself as *ekklesia* (Mat 16:13-17), a distinct and completely separate community from Jewish groups, which were known as synagogues (Mat 4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54; 23:34) (Ascough 102). Donald Hagner similarly argues that Matthew had its setting in a Jewish-Christian community where "Christian" is the determining noun and "Jewish" the modifying adjective. For him, the community was just recently broken from Judaism but saw itself as a continuation of the old people of God in a new expression. In Matthew Jesus the Christ is central not the law as in Judaism, he argues. Moreover, the mission of Jesus whom Matthew projects is to proclaim the dawn of the kingdom of God, not to promote the Torah as would be expected of a Jewish community (Hagner 70-72).

A close reading of the Gospel reveals that Matthew weaves together two important ideas in his narrative. Throughout the text, Jesus engages in proclaiming the dawn of the kingdom of heaven on earth (Mat 3:2; 4:7; 10:7). Intrinsic to this is a serious polemic against the Jewish Authorities—usually on the subject of Jesus' messianic claims (Mat 12:38-39; 16:4; 21:33-46). There are deep tensions between Jesus and the authorities expressed in such passages as Matthew 3:7; 6:1–18; the Sabbath controversies of chapter 12; proclamation of woes on Jewish leadership in chapter 23

and 24:51 and the Jews' self curse of 27:25 seen in light of 23:25. Matthew also polemically presents two major ways that Jesus' contemporaries saw him; the Christians, saw him as their promised messiah, but majority of the Jews, led by their leadership, saw him as an impostor and called him names, like magician (Mat 9:24-34) and deceiver (Mat 27:63-64).

This portrayal depicts social and political contest between Jesus' group and the Synagogue that some passages suggest was oppressing the poor through the heavy Roman taxation policy (France 27; Storkey 36). This probably heightened anxieties in many for the arrival of the expected Davidic messiah (Jer 23:5–6; Isa 11:2–9; Mic 5:2) to establish a global Davidic empire, (1 Chron. 28:5; 2 Chron. 13:8; cf 1 Chron. 17:14; 29:11–22; Mat 20:21; Lk 19:11) and relieve Israelites of the burden (Mat 17:25-27). The anxieties birthed many messianic movements whose leaders led a number of insurrections against the Roman authorities in power: Judas, the son of Ezekias (Josephus *Ant.* 17.10.5.271–72; *J.W.* 2.4.1.56); Simon, servant of King Herod (*Ant.* 17.10.6. 273–76); and Athronges (*Ant.* 17.10.7.278–85). Each of them aspired to be Israel's king (*J.W.* 2.4.1.55; *Ant.* 17.10.8.285). Many Jews, especially their leadership, erroneously perceived Jesus as one such messiah and so held him as a potential enemy to be eliminated.

The Jewish leaders were the collective client of the Roman Emperor enjoying both the status of "the rulers of the people" (Mat 20:25) and the benefits accruing to that position. They had sought and gotten permission to institute direct rule through the Sanhedrin (Storkey 40) so that the Roman governor in Judea was only an overseer (Jos *Ant.* 18.251-52). They therefore, resented and worked against anything that threatened their position—what would disturb the "colonial peace" (Storkey 40) and dethrone them (cf. Jn 11:45-48). Jesus' messianic activities thus posed for them a serious political threat and generated a developing conflict. They thought that after killing Jesus his movement would disappear as those of the messianic pretenders before him (cf. Acts

5:34-39) but instead, it waxed stronger through the activities of his apostles and the Jewish leadership turned their wrath towards them (cf. Acts 4-5).

Matthew seems to be at pains to correct this erroneous perception of his principal by the Jewish leadership (Mat 12:23-30; 21:9; 22:42-46), probably also to check its negative influence on his community of believers in Jesus' messiahship. In that case, his group was most likely still part of Judaism of which Jesus himself had been a member. It still had much to do with the synagogue where they were being persecuted (Mat 10:17, 23:34). His gospel book would mitigate the friend-enemy antithetical conception of the political among the Jewish authorities and ensure the wellbeing of all segments of the community including Matthew's own group.

If the Jewish leadership was wrong about the identity of Jesus, who was he as Matthew understood him? How did Matthew plan to mitigate the antagonism of the Jewish leadership against his group if he corrected the erroneous identity of his principal by his presentation of Jesus' mission? The answer is in his presentation of the Jesus mission analysed below.

3. Jesus' Messianic Mission in Matthew's Agenda: Exposition

Analysis of Matthew's story reveals a Christology developed from a messianic kingdom motif. The problematic thing in his story is the dual perception of the Messiah among his Jewish community which generates a developing controversy about the Messiah's leadership of the community. The conception of leadership in a society is governed by that society's conception of the political, though. In Matthew's community there were two major conceptions of politics. The one understood politics from the Roman patronage ideology as being in with the right group to maximise personal gain (Mat 9:11; 11:19; 17:24-27; 27:24; cf. Lk 23:2; Jn 19:12, 15). It was a prime example of Carl Schmitt's conception of the political on friend-enemy dichotomy dimension which sees the political opponent as "at least potentially, one fighting collectivity of people [that] confronts a similar collectivity" (28). This group comprised people who relished positions of political and economic power; groups of Jewish leadership such as

Pharisees, Scribes, Chief Priests, elders of the people, Sadducees (Mat 16:1; 22:23), Herodians (Mat 22:16) and even absentee landlords; they exploited and jealously guarded their clientele positions (Mat 12:9-14; 22:15; 26:4, 59; 27:1; Jn 11:45-48).

The other group saw politics as a social control institution in which religion and economics are only embedded (Malina 71). It is a means of bringing people together to influence them to jointly actualise the will of God for the wellbeing of humanity (Mat 18:15-17). Its members were mostly of the small but powerful prophetic opposition party led in earliest times by the likes of Samuel (1 Sam 8:6-7; 12:12; 15:11) and Elijah (1 Kg 17:1; 18:16-40) but in Matthew's time by its last known prophet, Jesus of Nazareth, who succeeded John the Baptizer. They understood the crux of Jesus' messianic ministry as the reestablishment of the rule of God on earth. Their member, Matthew, well represents this position: "Let your kingdom come, [that means] let your will be done on earth as it is done in heaven" (Mat 6:10). This kingdom motif is made evident by the statistics of its occurrence in his book. In tandem with Jewish high reverence for God, Matthew uses the expression, "Kingdom of Heaven" (Mat 3:2) 32 times; "Kingdom of God" (Mat 12:28; 21:43) four times; "the kingdom" (Mat 4:23; 6:13; 8:12; 9:35; 13:19, 38; 24:14; 25:31); and "the kingdom of their Father"—once (13:43). Jesus Messiah, for this group, is the Son of David (Mat 1:1; 9:27); "King of the Jews" (Mat 2:2; 27:11) who, along with his twelve apostles sitting on the twelve thrones of Israel, shall "judge" the twelve tribes of Israel at the "restoration" of the kingdom of David (Mat 19:28). Going by the concept of "judging" in the Old Testament (Jdg 4:4; cf. 8:23; 1Kgs 15:5), especially of a king in 1 Samuel 8:5 "to judge us like all the nations," governing positions in the kingdom are probably meant.

At his very first public appearance after his wilderness retreat (Mat 4:1-11), Matthew's Jesus launched his kingdom campaigns (4:12-17). His message was simple, but politically charged: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (4:17). "Kingdom" is no doubt, a political term Jesus used for "empire". Jesus was so understood by those in power, having been born son of David, in a royal line and accorded the title, "King

of the Jews" which irritated Herod the Great, the sitting "King of the Jews" (Mat 2:2-3). Also, Jesus' mission succeeded that of John the Baptizer, which Yoder describes as having a "pronounced political character" (Yoder 23). Storkey even argues that the crowds the Baptizer pulled around him by his kingdom-proclamation threatened Herod's political equilibrium and became the real cause of his execution (61-64). Josephus earlier associated John's imprisonment with Herod Antipas' fear of a possible insurrection by his activities (*Ant.* 18.5.2). These indices aroused controversy.

Matthew indicates that such controversy deepened into conflict when Jesus recruited a twelve-man team to recruit followers (Mat 4:19-; 10:1-7). This appointment of the twelve marked the formal founding of a new social reality; a visible socio-political intervention which challenged the existing system to a point Jesus' words by himself would have posed no threat (Yoder 32). The existing political organisations—Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, etc.—understood this action as the usual political process of gathering popular support (Storkey 30). That is why they joined forces, planning strategies to put him down (Mat 12:14; 26:4; 27:1). With the twelve, Jesus embarked on a vigorous campaign for popular support concentrated in the Galilean region, which incidentally was linked with a number of insurrections (Acts 5:34-37).

With large crowds now following him, Jesus Messiah's apparent threat to the Jewish establishment became more real. The crowds and even Jesus' disciples construed the Messiah as agitating for a political kingdom such as the Roman Empire (Mat 19:28; 20:20-28). All groups indicated political interest as the determinant of their response to Jesus. Matthew gives some notes that the source of the sweeping antagonism of Jewish leadership was their doubts about the veracity of Jesus really being God's king. This seems to be the central theme of chapters 11-12. Amid heightening opposition, Jesus' adversaries, two times over, demanded a proof sign for his messianic claims (Mat 12: 38; 16:1). When he was crucified the leaders mocked *Him* saying, "He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him" (Mat 27:41-43 NAU).

But, for Matthew, Jesus' audience misconstrued the essence and goal of his messianic activities, especially the Jewish Establishment which was vehemently antagonistic to the messianic mission. According to Matthew, the kingdom Jesus proclaimed is not a visible geopolitical territory, but a relational concept which outlines how people relate in the government or rule of God (6:14; 8:11; 20:20-28; 25:34-46). It is a countercultural revolutionary concept (Yoder 1; Storkey 56) which gradually, but effactually reorients human thought faculty and behaviour toward the dignity of the human person and the common good (13:31-33; 36-43). It is the inauguration of a different worldview than that common among the Jews; one which sees God's dealings with humanity through Jesus, the Messiah, in light of a new people of God, a new creation community or counterculture; as a community of people who recognise the sovereignty of God and do his will (Jer 31:31-34). As R. T. France puts it, "where the will of God is done, there is the kingdom of God" (147).

4. Jesus' Messianic Mission in Matthew's Agenda: Explanation

The main issue in Matthew's story of Jesus' messianic mission is the question whether Jesus was truly the legitimate leader of Israel (Mat 2:6; 9:36). Leadership of the Jews in those days, as provided by the Roman-Herodian party and the Jewish Sanhedrin, was built on the Greco-Roman royal ideology of patronage. This was the modern expression of Ancient Near East (ANE) religio-cultural system of social control. Most ancient world cultures saw the political framework of society in a religious culture wherein kings were usually divinised. In such a world, kinship politics was embedded in religion. In this wise, Judaism by the time of Jesus became more or less, a political religion which embedded economics (McGiffert 42). The leading figures utilised the human psychology of "dependency" and with the help of priests and religious myths, they created worldviews in which citizens were boxed up. Top persons of the given communities then, manipulated this system to dominate the life of the citizens.

At the time of Jesus, leadership responsibility was in the hands of the Sanhedrin which governed all secular and religious matters, with the High Priest presiding. The Sanhedrin had 71 members (Num 11:16; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 12, 2, 5) drawn from the chief priests among the Sadducees, "elders" or leaders of the lay aristocracy who also had Sadducean affiliation (cf. Ezr. 8:1 ff.) and scribes (drawn from the Pharisaic party) in good number (Marshall 363-64). These clients of the Roman emperor had great economic power undergirded by the political power they relished as the religious and political leaders of the people. Their continued rule of the people depended on their ability to ensure the colonial peace. But in their view Jesus' messianic activities had potentials to lead to insurrection which would call the Romans to dethrone them for inability to rule. This became a moving cause of the prolonged conflicts between this coalition of leaders and Jesus. But, were they justified for the antagonism?

Going by the above exposition, the political leaders of Israel had nothing to panic relative to Jesus' proclamation of the dawn of God's government on earth. For Matthew therefore, the conflict was ill-informed and uncalled-for. It was simply "a reaction to threat of change that usually endangers entrenched political and economic interest" (Agnivesh 43). Those who relish manipulation of religion for political gain live in fear of an enemy's schemes even when there is none (cf. Prov 28:1). This is the problem of the conception of politics on friend-enemy antithetical dimension rather than on the framework of neighbour love that Jesus espoused. Matthew is saying that if the political opponent is seen from Jesus' perspective of neighbour love which thrives on compassion (Mat 9:13; 12:1-7; Lk 10:33), it can be seen that the neighbour includes the enemy because the neighbour is on Jesus' categories, any other person you meet, especially one in need of your help (Lk 10:36-37). This form of politics breaks down barriers and will go a long way in mitigating conflicts. It is this royal theology that united the Christian community, Jesus' prophetic minority party, and made it thrive as

a counterculture (cf. Acts 2-4 on the nature of that community). Nigerians need to borrow a leaf from this royal theology of Jesus to make their country a better habitat.

5. Jesus' Messianic Mission: Implications for Understanding and Resolving Armed Conflicts in Nigeria

Nigeria today is characterised by devastating armed conflicts that are usually defended by religio-political reasons. The Fulani are killing thousands of innocent civilians to occupy the Middle Belt and eventually all of Nigeria. They have a shared ideology with Boko Haram which is driving them to take the Federal Republic of Nigeria from what they see as a group of corrupt false Muslims, and make it a 'pure' Islamic state ruled by *sharia* law, to fulfil Usman Dan Fodio's dream that the Qur'an must be dipped in the Atlantic Ocean (Ribadu 10). In the South East social bandits are pushing for secession undergirded by the ideology of economic sovereignty through political power.

These few out of the many conflict situations show that royal ideology is the dynamic perpetrating conflicts in Nigeria. But, for ease of understanding, a focus on the spate of conflicts in Northern Nigeria, particularly Boko Haram insurgency and the Fulani aggression suffices. The identity of Boko Haram [Arabic – *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad* – "the Congregation of the People of Tradition for Proselytism and Jihad"] is quite elusive. By its simplest, it "is an Islamic sect that believes politics in northern Nigeria has been seized by a group of corrupt, false Muslims. It wants to wage a war against them and the Federal Republic of Nigeria generally, to create a 'pure' Islamic state ruled by sharia law" (Walker 2). The sect is an off-shoot of "The Nigeria Taliban," an Islamic group that appeared in Borno State around 2002 professing dislike for Western influences. The Nigeria Taliban was dispersed in 2004 by the Borno State Police Command, but one of its members, Mohamed Yusuf, continued with its ideology and formed a new group under the name "Ecomog." This ironically bred political thugs for political leaders in Bauchi, Yobe and Maiduguri (Samu 10). Ecomog was a group of unemployed young people in Borno State, many of them university

graduates. They became frustrated with life under their unemployed condition, destroyed their educational certificates in protest against the bad leadership that made them social misfits with higher degrees, and withdrew from society into the mountains of Yobe State (Samu 11-12).

Boko Haram's religio-political violence in Nigeria has roots in Usman dan Fodio's jihad of 1804-1808 which used religion to grab political power. The phenomenon depicts a political economy that is concerned with identity and purity, based on religious fundamentalists' ideology of theocracy, which is dubbed "ideal State" in Islam. Underlying the struggle for power using religion is the belief that a good grasp of political power is invariably a hold on economic power of the given society. But, since human beings are innately predisposed to religion, it is supposed that these two social dynamics are more easily grasped by manipulating religious power. This is the spirit in which Ahmed Sani Yerima, former Governor of Zamfara State, led others to introduce Islamic Law [*shari'a*] in 12 of the 19 States of Northern Nigeria, invariably declaring Islamic States within the Nigerian State.

In Islam the State [*ummah*] is held as the universal community of believers who recognize neither authority nor guidance—that is law—except that which comes from Allah and the prophet of Islam as what constitutes the supreme law to which every Muslim must completely submit (Qur'an 4:5; 24:47-48; 33:36). All other laws are on this category, man-made systems devoid of divine guidance. They therefore, only lead to chaos and crookedness (Qur'an 20:24). The assumption underlying the *shari'a* on this thinking is basically that men are incapable of discriminating between right and wrong by their unaided powers. This is also why the government of the State must be theocracy. In this association with the concept of the state, *shari'a* assumes political dimensions, and therefore, new dynamism. It becomes synonymous with "Islamic government, "a system based on the application of *shari'a* and headed by a religious leadership" (Ashmawy 64).

The Fulani are occupying the lands of various ethnic groups in Nigeria for the same ideological agenda of a theocratic state for Nigeria as is Boko Haram. Encyclopaedia Britannica makes it clear: the Fulani are a Saharan pastoralist race that is known in history for Islamic state-building invasions. They are particularly receptive to the doctrine of jihad. The Fulani strategy is to exploit the weak points of a people, occupy them, and take over their political power and impose on them their own religious culture. They also ally themselves with "disgruntled groups of locals and mobile pastoral kinsmen to make jihad a military reality" (Britannica "Fulani Empire"). Starting a few months back, by May 13, 2017 they had already made forty-six attacks and taken over sixteen villages in Benue State alone.

The same strategy was used in their 17th and 18th century exploits that imposed Fulani rule over Zamfara and Kebbi and then spread to other Hausa states. The breakup of the Songhai Empire had led to a power vacuum there, which had been an encouragement to Fulani settlement. Usman was an opportunist. As an employee (an Islamic cleric) at the court of the Hausa king of Gobir for 20 years, he saw the weakness of the king and then "used the influence he had gained to develop a Muslim community of his own, some miles away from the capital, governed according to the strict principles of law preached by the Qādirīyah" (Britannica "Fulani Empire"). When the kings of Gobir decided not to allow a kingdom within their kingdom, in 1804 Usman (his popular name) declared a full-fledged jihad against them. The numerous ethnic tensions in Nigeria today have provided a good landscape for Fulani to resume their occupation and Islamisation agenda since they know that under such circumstances hardly any two ethnic groups can unite against them as was in the 1800s. In fact, Adamu Mohammed, recently circulated a post on Facebook in which he boasted that

> We hate you ... because you are infidels. ... I heard that stupid governor of Oyo State, Ajimobi said that they won't accept the proposed Grazing Bill. But my message to the filthy Yoruba pig is that, if you don't want to give us your cursed land, we will rear our cattle not only on your farmlands but in

your churches. And if you try to stop us we would killed (sic) your chicken hearted men like rabbits then turn your mothers, wives, sisters and daughters to our sex slaves like we have always done. It is either you give the whole of South to us to use as grazing reserve or we soak it with your blood. *And what you would do as you always do is noise on Facebook and Twiter. You cannot be united against us because there would always be the likes of Tinubu, Amaechi and Okorocha in your midst who will divide you for selfishness and love of money* (emphasis added). Such treacherous characters can't survive in our midst because we burn them and their families.

The ideology behind the jihad now as then is that it is easier to rule a people with one religion. In 1804 Usman replaced all the Hausa kings, save El-Kanemi, with Fulani emirs who acknowledged his supreme authority. In this way he created a caliphate, with its seat at his newly established town of Sokoto. The caliphate was built on the framework of patron-clientelism which underlies the Nigerian system of government to this day. The present Fulani aggression is a revival of the Dan Fodio jihad. And most of the ethnic identity crises in Nigeria today are traceable to a reaction against this jihad. How can this be addressed?

6. The Necessity to Dethrone Politicisation of Religion and Sacralisation of Politics

The first step towards addressing the conflict situation that has characterised Nigeria today is to dethrone politicisation of religion and sacralisation of politics in Nigeria. That is, the manipulation of religion to legitimise the power of the ruler, observed in all forms of absolutist power systems. Once this is done, Nigerians will better see and take the path to genuine democracy and abandon the present presidential monarchy that thrives on sacralisation of politics and politicisation of religion. As my studies on monarchy in my Doctoral thesis which I completed in 2011 pointed out, the idea of kingship developed from certain people's hunger for power to rule others. Having known that the human being is innately predisposed to religion, clever men (the

priest-nobles) manipulated the populace's religious instincts to cause them to follow and obey the local god's 'son.' They thus, "established their own authority as supreme head of a fabricated religio-political system; then they held their subjects in gross spiritual darkness and abject physical slavery" (Gaffin Jr., "Kingdom of God."). That is why each king, in his city-state (in recorded history) claimed to be a "son of the patron god or goddess" (of his city).

If Nigeria is to see authentic peace and development, Nigerians must pull out of their tendency towards retrogression to the days when Arnold and Beyer say the temple was the institution for the organized hierarchy of decision-making and administration of human society (66-69); when, the *ensi* (the priest) was the headman of this "complex social hierarchy and political and economic power that had developed around the temple" (Owen "Foundations of World Civilization").

Nigerians seem to have been attracted to this system, which came through the Fulani hegemonic scheme that the British adopted for Nigeria, because of its elitist character. Elitism has held sway for most of Nigeria's life as a political entity. It informed Usman Dan Fodio's conception of the Sokoto Caliphate that the Caliphate has the exclusive "divine" right to rule and can only co-opt anyone from among the *talakawa* ("the ruled") into this Fulani hegemony and grant him a *shigege* ("acquired status)" (Kukah 5). The dividing line between the ruling class and the ruled is sharp and is test summed up in the Hausa proverb: *Zuriyar sarki ba talakawa ba ne* ("the descendants of the king can never become commoners"). This class ideology is built on the concepts of power in Hausa society in which the ruler [*sarki*] has to be "surrounded with pomp and pageantry so as to instil fear and respect. The resources of the land should be centred on him and these could be disbursed to maintain the loyalty of subordinates" (Abubakar 326).

As is evident in Nigerian national and political life, this framework of absolutism guided by a hierarchically stratified society, with the Emir at the top influenced the political development of the first Nigerian republic to a considerable degree. The

parliamentary system adopted at independence was quickly discarded on grounds that it was heavily imbued with the British monarchical autocracy. Yet the presidential system that replaced it is even more monarchical; it places into the hands of the president both "the sovereign prerogatives of the king and the political executive prerogative of the prime minister ... onto that one office. Consequently, the president becomes a king who reigns as well as rules" (Nwankwo 266). In this absolutist conception of the presidential system, those who wield power construe their positions as sovereigns. They are benefactors who rule through the clientele patronage framework of monarchy with its sacral connotation of sovereignty and the notion of agency-extended social formation, with some elements of kinship bonds.

Elitist segregation in Nigeria is dictated by greed and involves creating hegemonies by suppressing peoples and then showing them in bad light as socially unfit to share in available resources. It means "ascribing different scales of values and different sets of rights to people" (Agnivesh 43) so that they are frozen into underdevelopment and their identity socially redefined to deny them the right to share in the resources available. This is disrespect to the dignity of the human person at its utmost.

In our digital world, such politics of sovereignty ultimately convulses the system. There is intrinsic link between Nigeria's political and social instability and the factor of its leadership. Nigerian leadership, beginning with Babangida and Abacha regimes, is built on the logic of divide and rule and constructs ethnic state access maps through which the leader distributes social goods and scarce resources and creates polarization and division amongst ethnic groups. This has prompted cries of social injustice, marginalization, neglect, deprivation and apparent social and economic insecurity for the people. This has provided platform for the emergence of ethnic militia groups. As Chinua Achebe argued, lack of social justice prompts people to scramble for social goods, which include positions and status (28-29). This is the undergirding force of agitations for resource control that has become the greatest destabilising force for

contemporary Nigeria. Social goods entail the entire idea of social stratification in class, status, and power, which are beyond economic wealth. While social stratification is natural, the real cause of social unrest, especially violent conflicts in Nigeria is "the proper nature of that gradation" (Nwankwo 56) which has to do with proper distribution of the social goods.

As seen in their respective cases above, this is the cry of Boko Haram, IPOB, and the Niger Delta militia groups. Because the hegemony of rulers has sacralised their power positions by manipulating religion to grab and surround themselves with the nation's social and economic wealth and give to others only as patronage, each of these identities feels ideology can only be matched with ideology. Each of them has therefore been religionised to meet the sacralised political ideology of hegemony. Each of their armed conflicts is a reaction to the Fulani hegemonic ideology. The trouble is that no war in historical times has ever ended on the battlefield; it always ends at a round table discussion where peace and reconciliation are negotiated. In the Nigerian case, peace and reconciliation are barricaded by sacral politics which sees every person on the other side of the politician's platform as the enemy who must be eliminated by hook or sink. Nigerians must pull out of this friend-enemy dichotomy politics and embrace the politics of neighbour-love to be able to see the way out of their problem.

7. Conclusion/Recommendations

As the foregoing has made it clear, the continuing controversy between the Jewish leadership and Jesus was informed by ideological differences concerning leadership in, and the kingdom of God. Whereas the Jewish Establishment understood that kingdom as the Davidic World Empire promised the Jews by Yahweh through his prophets, Jesus saw it as man's submission to God's sovereignty. The gap between the two was especially widened by Jewish leadership's subscription to Roman patron-clientele politics that worked for the good of the ruling class and those in the corridors of power to the exclusion of the common good. This created the web of Jewish rebellions that led to several massacre raids on them by Roman authorities culminating

in the interim in the 66-70 AD siege and destruction of Jerusalem. It was this scenario that motivated Prophet Jesus to lead the campaign for the return to the true theocratic rule of the Jewish people which excited the arms conflict against him by the Jewish leadership of his day. This scenario mirrors the situation in today's Nigeria. Boko Haram and the many other identity groups are simply ideologically reacting against the Fulani hegemonic ideology which has arrogated to itself the exclusive divine right to rule Nigeria. Just as the Middle Belt discovered this ideology and worked against it in the First Republic, so are the present "politics of recognition."

In view of the above analysis, the question immediately pops itself up: which is the way forward for Nigeria? This study answers that to have peace, first, Nigerians must choose a compromise position—one that must be acceptable to majority of members of the society—between concentration of economic power in few hands and absolute lack of it since both extremes are adversely defective. In addition, Nigerians must avoid veneration of ideologies to support their identity games; instead they should respect the dignity of human life. Thirdly, Nigeria has to dig up the roots of the complex of violent conflicts to properly understand them. To this end one has to first of all unearth the history of each of these armed groups, which should identify those sponsoring and controlling them and each group's relation to the others. Possibility of some relation among the groups, say between MASSOB and the Niger-Delta militia groups, and between Boko Haram and Fulani herders is quite high. As I write, the violent activities of some of these groups have been largely reduced, but their tactics continue to increase in sophistication so it seems that they are simply restrategising. There is also pressing need to closely study the factors impeding efforts at curbing their havoc. The Fulani aggression for instance, calls to mind the possibility of and the need to examine the relation of these groups to the Nigerian statecraft, certain business interests, the neighbouring countries, and even the armed forces who are supposedly the agents of peace. This view is taken because of the comments of members of these

various groups on the matter monitored in the media as the example of Adamu Mohammed's Facebook post quoted above shows.

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Jesus' Example of Prudence in John 6:12: Implication for Curbing Mango Wastage In Ogbomosoland, Oyo State, Nigeria

Funke Elizabeth Oyekan *PhD*

Religious Studies Programme
College of Liberal Studies
Bowen University, Iwo, Nigeria.
Email: funkeoyekan@yahoo.com
Phone: 08062313277

Abstract

Previous researches on Jesus' feeding of the multitude in the four Gospels have focused on the miraculous provision for the needy. However little has been done on Jesus' use of the phrase, "Gather up the fragments…." in John 6:12. The study, therefore, is an exegetical analysis of Jesus' example of prudence in John 6:12 in comparison to glaring wastage of mango fruits in Ogbomosoland, Oyo State, Nigeria. The work employs both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The researcher observed over a period of three years and personally witnessed how mangoes are being wasted. Eighty copies of two sets of questionnaires were administered to mango farmers (40) and mango consumers (40), while structured interviews were conducted on the agricultural officers (5) and religious leaders (15) resident in the five Local Governments areas of Ogbomosoland in Oyo State, Nigeria. Information gathered was subjected to both content and quantitative analysis. The study affirmed Ogbomosoland produces one of the best mangoes in Nigeria and that there is frequent mango wastage in Ogbomosoland during harvest period due to lack of storage and transportation facilities, and ineffective charitable ministry on the part of the Christians who form a high percentage of the residents of Ogbomosoland. To breed a society that is spiritually balanced, physically healthy and economically prudent, the people of Ogbomosoland, especially Christians, should align completely with Jesus' example of no wastage in whatever form.
Keywords: Prudence, Leftover, Wastage, John 6:12, Charity

1. Introduction

The importance of food to human existence cannot be overemphasized. It is so important that God, in biblical narratives did not create man until all other things, including food, had been created (Genesis 1:1-31). Indeed the saying, 'a hungry man is an angry man' is normative at all time, for all classes of human existence and cultural environments. There are six classes of food (carbohydrates, protein, fats and oil,

minerals, vitamins and water) and nutritionists would insist that all these classes of food must be taken proportionately by individuals for good health and sound mind. This is called a balanced diet or healthy diet. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies avers, "A healthy diet is made up of a variety and balance of different types of food each day, including fruit and vegetables, cereals, tubers, roots, pulses, nuts and animal products. The variety of foods in the diet will usually depend on what is in season and locally available. The amount of food a person requires depends on age, sex and time of life"(19). This definition by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) reveals the beauty in and of creation. The implication is that under normal conditions, whatever man needs to eat, whether a balanced or healthy diet, is locally available in his or her environment. Besides, since all the needed foods are not produced at once because they have their seasons there is the probability that they are available all the year round. The assumption is that all the food nutrients that an African man needs are within his environment, and the same thing applies in other continents of the world. However, due to climatic conditions, some agricultural or food products would grow well in some areas while they would not grow well in other areas. This is the reason, many times for the transportation, exporting and importing of food items from one continent to the other, one nation to the other, one town to the other and within localities.

Mango (*Manigfera indical*) is one of the fruits that are a rich source of vitamins. It is not only a source of vitamins; it is also rich in protein, fats, sugar, pre-biotic dietary fiber, and poly-phenolic flavonoid antioxidant compounds (Ara *et al*, 2169). Ojedokun and Oladejo opine that Mango is one of the two most delicious and admired tropical fruits in the world (1). Apart from the fresh juice which mango is known for, mango's stem bark, stem extract, and mango leaves beverages are also used for medicinal purposes (Singh *et al*, 454). There are about 500 classes of mangoes worldwide and Nigeria is one of the major mango producers of the world and Ogbomosoland (consisting of five local Government areas), one of the major cities in

Southwestern Nigeria, is home to one of the best species. During the period of harvest, February to Early June, mango is plenteous in Ogbomosoland to the extent that fruit sellers and consumers go to Ogbomosoland to buy mango. As a matter of fact, there is a general preference for what is now popularly known as the "Ogbomosoland mango." However, despite the transportation of mango across the whole country, many more are still left behind, leading eventually to waste. By late June, the indigenes would have started yearning for the mango. If the excess mangoes had not been wasted, there would definitely be mangoes to eat when the fruit is out of season.

Therefore, there is the need to answer or ask the following questions: Why is the production of one of the best mango species situated in Ogbomosoland? Why is the largest growth and harvest of Mango in Nigeria found in Ogbomosoland? What is the reason for the huge wastages at the peak of production? What is the religious and economic implication of mango wastage to the Nigerian Society? These questions reveal the extent of mango production as well as the extent of mango wastage in Ogbomosholand. The remedy to the issues raised and problem discovered in the production of mango in Ogbomosholand can only be found in Jesus' example of prudence as exemplified in John chapter 6, verse 12.

2. A Review of Related Literature

Reports of the United Nations Development Programme of 2002 and 2004 show that majority of the countries in the Low Human Development Index Countries (LHDICs) were African nations (Björk 51). The Bad Pillars of development include economy, trade, entrepreneurship and resources (Björk 78). The status of Nigeria remains the same as the Human Development Index (HDI) of 2020 reveals that Nigeria has one of the lowest human development indices with 0.532 and a population of 206, 139,589(HDI). Omorogiuwa, et al aver that agriculture is the backbone of Nigeria's economy and if Nigeria will be stripped of poverty and distress, she needs to examine the factors that hinder the development of the agricultural sector, thereby strategizing on moving the agricultural sector forward(145). This idea is supported by Nallari and

Griffith that if agricultural productivity is developed sharply, other aspects of the economy would also increase as this is vital for stimulating growth in other parts of the economy (306). Ajakaiye, et al posits:

> To create more decent jobs …Nigeria must consider how to increase productivity in agriculture and non- farm enterprises and devise avenues of attracting youths into the sector. There should also be resolute commitment to raising productivity in the agricultural sector through sustained massive support for agricultural research and extension (as has been done in Brazil, China, India, and Malaysia), mechanization, commercialization of technologies, and enhanced value addition through effective support for agro-processors and agri-businesses(27).

The views of the aforementioned scholars are very real and tenable especially when one looks at the attitude of the Federal Government of Nigeria towards agriculture in the last 42 years (1978-2020); it reveals that agriculture still remains the bedrock of the Nigerian economy. By 1976, the Military Head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo, insisted that the Nigerian economy would thrive if agriculture is taken more seriously. Hence the launching of "Operation Feed the Nation" in 1976, the "Green Revolution" of President Shehu Shagari in April, 1980, the Directorate for Food Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) of January 1986 under General Ibrahim Babangida's administration, the Better Life Programme (BLP) for rural women of 1987, the National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA) of 1992, the National Fadama Development Project (NFDP) of early 1990s, National, Special Programme on Food Security (NSPFS) of January 2002 and the Root and Tuber Expansion Programme (RTEP) of April 2003 were all geared towards revamping Nigerian economy using agriculture (Philippe; Iwuchukwu and Igbokwe).

Oluwafemi notes that one of the aims for the implementation of an Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) as one of the key drivers of the National Economic Transformation Agenda is to among other things "reduce post-harvest losses, add value

to local agricultural produce, develop rural infrastructure and enhance access of farmers to financial services and markets"(13). Nigeria would solve her food crisis if she is not depending on external capitalist economies and the elites who have the monetary power and have great influence in international trades (Oculi 73)). The theories of underdevelopment, comparative advantage, environmental constraints, and the incessant dependence on foreign food aid are usually put forward for food deficits in tropical Africa. Only genuine empowerment of the peasantry, land-tenure policies that recognizes both the small-scale and the large scale agriculture, freer access to commodity markets and agricultural policies that are sensitive to environmental constraints would solve the issue of food crisis (Lofchie and Commins 182).

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in 2014 noted that about 1.3 billion tons (per year) of the edible portions of food produced for human consumption, valued at US $1 trillion gets lost or is wasted globally (Tielens and Candel 11). Sonesson, et al in a research on food wastage concluded that a certain amount of food was usually discarded in almost all food categories (274). In such cases there may not be much problem. Likewise, Parfitt et al note that food waste generally could occur at any point in the food supply chain (FSC); that is, from the farmer (producer) to the consumer (3065). Tielens and Candel state that "Food waste generally refers to food discarded at the end of the supply chain, by retailers or consumers. Food wastage refers to the combination of both food loss and food waste"(7). Parfitt et al, on the other hand opine that food wastage refers to a situation whereby the food intended for human consumption is discarded, lost, consumed or degraded by pests, or is intentionally fed to animals, or a situation where the value of food consumed is more than the food needed by the body system(3065). Food wastages could be high to the extent that it adversely affects the economy of the society. Economically, the financial gain is absent. Health wise it affects the growth and development of the citizens, especially the younger generation and this is a pointer to a damaged future for the younger generation. When food wastage is reduced, hunger, malnourishment and

poverty are also reduced, and therefore there is food security (Tielens and Candel 7). The definitions of Tielens and Candel and Parfitt et al have bearing on the issue of food security. It connotes that food wastage is directly associated with food insecurity, anywhere in the world.

Mango, like other fruits is seasonal and if not treated very well before storage, it becomes highly perishable (Guiamba 17). Scholars hold different views for this wastage. Coursey postulates that mechanical injuries that agricultural products suffer at harvesting, packaging, transporting and storage, especially extreme heat and cold at times, usually lead to economic losses as it reduces the market values of the products(492). Corroborating Coursey's claim Akinnifesi, et al opine that careful selection of propagation techniques, postharvest handling and commercialization of products are core principles that must be taken care of in indigenous fruit trees production(420). Hence Coursey and Akinnifesi are saying that if agricultural produce such as mango are not handled well at propagating, harvesting, packaging transporting, storage and marketing, there would be wastages and economic losses. Indigenous fruit trees reduce the poverty level of the local farmers when handled carefully (Akinnifesi, et al. 419).

The Yoruba of southwestern Nigerian hold food in high esteem. Two of the Yoruba proverbs are '*Ebi kii wonu, koro mi ran wo*' and '*eniti ebi n pa ko gbo y'ago*'. The two literally mean you cannot do any other thing when you are hungry. These correspond to the English proverb, 'a hungry man is an angry man.' Hence, traditionally, whatever offence a Yoruba man commits as a result of hunger is usually forgiven. A Yoruba man can enter another person's farm to take what he and his household would eat as long as he is not selling it. In fact, the stealing of a food item as a result of hunger is usually overlooked (Ogunleye). The Yoruba people would also say, '*ohuntia o je, la'gbakini a o ta*' literally, what we're going to eat comes before what we are going to sell. In other words, food comes before any other thing (Oyekan). The Yoruba people do not believe in measuring the food a person eats. They would say,

'*mojesu, mojeru, enua yo lomo*' literally means, no matter the volume of what you eat, when you are full, you will stop eating. The interpretation is that it is not ideal to measure what an individual would eat. Let the individual eat to his or her satisfaction (Sangodele). As long as the individual is in need of what to eat, they continue to give as long as the person is not taking the food to exploit for commercial purpose hence the saying, '*a fun ni je, kii fun nii ta*' which literally means he who give you food for subsistence would not give you food for commercial purpose (Olayinka). So, foods of all classes are very important to the Yoruba, and they are ready to help their neighbours in times of lack of food. However, wastage, especially food wastage among the Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria is considered a serious offence before God and also a cultural taboo. In cases where an individual has eaten to his or her satisfaction, the leftovers should not be wasted. A moral virtue that is usually inculcated into the Yoruba man/woman from childhood is, '*ounje a maa sepe fun eniyan*.' It literally means that food curses the waster. This has a serious religious implication among the Yoruba people. They strongly believe that anyone wasting food would be cursed by God, and such a person would never be satisfied and continue to live in abject poverty. Therefore, a high level of caution is usually taken against wasting of food. This is the reason why the Yoruba man has cultivated the habit of reusing leftover food. They sometimes eat contaminated food so as not to waste such a food (Orowale).

The advent of the Southern Baptist Missionaries in Ogbomosoland in the 1850s brought about some developments such as beautification of the environment, provision of good roads, provision of healthcare and educational facilities. These missionaries brought with them so many things, including seeds of fruits to see whether they would germinate and grow well. One of the seeds they brought was the seed of this mango that now thrives well in Ogbomosoland. The missionaries started planting it in other parts of Yorubaland. Unfortunately, though they germinated and grew, the yield from other parts of Yorubaland would not do well (Segilola). The missionaries took the seedlings of the mango to Jos, the capital of Plateau State, Northern Nigeria, it would

not grow well. The missionaries later found out that the soil of Ogbomosoland was the reason for the good yields and taste. Information has it that the missionaries, in order to have this mango in Jos, started exporting Ogbomosoland soil to Jos and they did plant the mango seed on the Ogbomosoland soil they exported to Jos. However, the harvest was not exactly as the one in Ogbomosoland (Segilola). The missionaries, having done everything they could to make the mango of the same taste available in other parts of Yorubaland to no avail used another method. They got helicopters and broadcasted the mango seed in all Ogbomosoland. Hence, the mango tree is available in every nook and crannies of Ogbomosoland, and the reason for plenty production. Most indigenes who are mango farmers do not cultivate, they simply harvest most times. In fact, they would sometimes cut down mango trees when they want to plant other agricultural produce or build houses. For some, the mango trees are an inheritance from their parents, and they do not replant at times as the seeds now also germinate through natural broadcasting; that is, planted by the throwing away of the seed of the fruits eaten (Orowale).

A close look at the rate of harvest reveals that, in spite of the various exports of Ogbomosoland mango to other parts of Nigeria, the production could still be made available for about three months after harvest. However, this is not the case. In spite of the high yield and good production being realized in Ogbomosoland every year, the demand for exotic fruits in Nigeria is still high. It is very glaring even for any traveler travelling from the West to the North via Ogbomosoland to see how mangoes are being wasted during this period. Heaps of rotten mangoes are usually seen by the roadside.

The Bible is against wastage of any kind. According to the Old Testament, God detests food wastage. The gleaning legislations of Deuteronomy 24:19-22 and Leviticus 19:9, 10; 23:22 (cf. Ruth 2:2-23) are made to provide for the needy. The gleanings include those produce that are forgotten, fell off the harvest, grew in the corner of the field or those products that were overlooked at harvest and carelessly left at the corner of the Field (Kent 281). Nevertheless, Walter notes that the gleaning of the ears of corn after the harvest cannot be left to waste away and that the leftover should be taken care

of to the extent that if the cost of gathering them is high, it should be pastured (2). In the New Testament, some of the parables (parables of the lost sheep, lost coin, parable of the talents prodigal son, etc.) and miracles of Jesus (the feeding of the five thousand), reveal that nothing should be wasted or lost – humans, animals and plants.

3. Jesus' Attitudes towards Wastage in John 6:12

John 6: 1- 15 is one of the nine meal scenes in the Fourth Gospel (Kobel 73). It tells of the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. It is so important that it is the only miracle of all the miracles of Jesus that is recorded by all the four gospel writers (Matthew 14: 13-21, Mark 6: 35-44, Luke 9: 10-17, and John 6: 1-15). The place of the miracle is described variously as desert, Bethsaida and other side of the Sea of Galilee in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John respectively. However, the 'lonely place' must be Bethsaida, a well-known small fishing village on the Northern East shore of Galilee, since John in 6:1 noticed that the place lay across the lake (Fryer, 1987:33). The event took place shortly after the death of John the Baptist. Jesus decided to retract to a lonely place in order to rest and in order to allow the people to rest (Mark 6:31). The people had heard all that Jesus was doing and they wanted to hear more. The Synoptic gospels record that the disciples wanted Jesus to send them away but Jesus would not. The Gospel of John has been chosen for this study because of the different way in which the story is told.

Firstly, it is only in the Gospel of John (6:5) that Jesus noticed that the people were in need of food. "Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a multitude was coming to him, Jesus said to Philip, "How are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" Neither the crowd nor the disciples asked Jesus for anything, but Jesus himself noticed that they were in need to survive. Secondly, the phrase in John 6:6, **"**This he said to test him, for he himself knew what he would do" can only be found in John. He had a plan for the feeding of the people. White et al (2010: 5) notes that Thomas Aquinas compares this act of Jesus to that of Abraham as to allow others to learn something from the tested. Thirdly, it is only in the Gospel of John (6:12) that we see the gathering of the fragments

left over as an imperative. Jesus says, "…, Gather up the fragments left over, that nothing may be lost." In the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 14:20, Mark 6:43 and Luke 9:17) the authors notify that the twelve baskets of fragments leftovers were taken care of just like in the Gospel of John (6:12). Morris believes that Jesus asked his disciple to gather the leftovers to show the preciousness of the food, but Carson opines that to gather the leftovers was a Jewish custom (313, 10).

However, two things can be noticed. Firstly, in the Synoptic gospels the fragments left over were picked. The verbs used are ἦραν, (aorist active third person singular of αἴρω) and ἤρθη (aorist passive third person singular) in Matthew, Mark and Luke respectively. This has the idea of literally picking something by an individual so as not to waste it or for reuse by or for another person. In the Gospel of John 6:12 the verb, συναγάγετε (verb imperative aorist active 2nd person plural) is used for the taking care of the fragment left over. It is from the Greek verb συνάγω meaning to gather or to bring together. The same verb is used in Matthew 13:30 and Luke 15:13 in the parables of the Prodigal Son and the parable of Weeds and the Wheat. "In secular Greek the verb is documented in the passage in commercial usage in the sense of "yield as a total sum" and in the translation account with the meaning "collect" in the life of Greek associating" (Balz and Schneider). It has something to do with economic value. The Prodigal Son came back and was welcomed by the father because the father would not want to lose him. Again, it was economical for the farmer to get rid of the weeds than lose the wheat. Jesus gave the command to gather the leftovers so that the leftover, might probably be useful at another time.

Secondly, the gathering of the baskets of fragments left over was a command, an order from Jesus unlike what it is in the Synoptic Gospels. The command was given so that "… nothing may be lost" (John 6: 12b). 5,000 men were present, and the synoptic gospels recount that women and children were not counted. The disciples did exactly as Jesus commanded. A disciple is not just a disciple because he listens to his master. He

is a disciple because he is ready to imitate and follow the steps of his master with the aim of becoming like him (Walker 93).

4. Methodology and Findings

Personal interviews were conducted on six Ogbomoso indigenes whose ages range from 56 to 92 years. This was carried out to elicit information on the advent of the mango production in Ogbomoso since there are no documents on how Ogbomoso became the center of mango production in the South Western Nigeria. Information garnered form part of the review of the previous work on the study. Eighty copies of two sets of questionnaires were administered to mango farmers (40) and mango consumers (40), while structured interviews were conducted on the agricultural officers (5) and religious leaders (15) in the five Local Government areas (Ogbomoso North, Ogbomoso South, Ogo-Oluwa, Surulere and Oriire) of Ogbomosoland in Oyo State, Nigeria. A total of 38 (95%) mango farmers affirmed mango wastage during production. Another 36 (90%) agreed that they make profit. However, all (100%) the mango farmers affirmed that they often make only about 50-60% of the total profits they ought to be making every year. In other words the farmers claimed that they are losing so much income every year, mainly because of the wastage. Finally, 30 (75%) claimed that the government does not give them any incentives as mango farmers.

Agricultural officers in the five local government areas claimed that unlike other agricultural produce, mango does not need any special attention in Ogbomosoland. To them mango farmers "do not undergo any form of stress" since mango is an annual crop and requires little or no special attention like spraying of insecticides or pesticides. They however claimed that they have tendered the request of the farmers for incentives and processing of mango fruits in Ogbomosoland to appropriate quarters. Mango consumers within Ogbomosoland claimed that mango is usually very cheap during the period of harvesting. Some claimed that they can never use their money to buy mangoes, though they are not mango farmers. They affirmed that they usually eat more than enough mangoes during production periods.

Mango consumers in Ogbomosoland claimed that mango is usually very cheap during the peak of harvesting. They however averred that they usually were not always able to buy in large quantity because it perishes easily, since there were no storage facilities.

Some religious leaders were interviewed on what the church is doing to curb the wastage. All the church leaders claimed that they knew there used to be gross mango wastage in Ogbomosoland but they have never seen the need to curb it. Almost all the religious leaders have preached from John 6:12 several times but had not given it much application as it is affecting mango production in Ogbomosoland.

The findings can be grouped into three. Economically, money is lost. Mango farmers and sellers are making profits at a decreasing rate. The government does not see any reason to come to the aid of the mango farmers and they are invariably losing a probable income through wastage. Health wise, when unused mangoes are left to litter the environment, they constitute nuisance and breed flies which are detrimental to human health. From the religious perspective, the inaction of the Christians in Ogbomosoland calls for an examination into their compliance with Jesus' teachings and examples. Definitely, Christians have the opportunity to form associations whereby they would either be making it available for free distribution in evangelism, sell at lower prices for communities who do not have, or come together to establish a mango processing factory within Ogbomosoland . However, they did not do any of these.

5. Recommendations and Conclusion

Mango production in Ogbomosoland outdoes those being produced in other parts of South West, Nigeria in quality and in quantity. However, at the peak of its production, so much of it is usually been wasted. This wastage is usually done by human factor. Apart from the fact that the Yoruba culture detests food wastage, Jesus' example in John 6:12 indicates that wastage is ungodly and uneconomical. There is therefore the need to look at Jesus who would not encourage the wasting of God's miraculous provisions. Only God knows why he has allowed this mango specie, which is rarely found in other

parts of Nigeria, to do well on Ogbomosoland, and it should be used to better the lots of the consumers, the producers and the nation at large.

To curb mango wastage in Ogbomosoland, there is the need for food wastage intervention. This will be made possible firstly, by the provision of good transportation system. The provision of good roads is a must if Mango production would be improved and made beneficial to the citizens of Nigeria. Farmers need trucks and not cars to transport Ogbomosoland mango to other parts of Nigeria. Most peasant mango farmers may not afford this but the government can assist in such a way that the trucks are available and farmers would just be paying tokens that would enable them to make their profits without much wastage and stress. Secondly, the Federal and State governments would greatly help and encourage mango farmers if good storage facilities are provided. That mango is one of the food products that do not have high percentage of durability is not an exaggeration. It perishes quickly. Since mango production in Ogbomosoland is usually in large quantity to the extent that it would compete favourably with the international market, the Nigerian government, at the State and Federal level should make storage facilities readily available to farmers. This will reduce wastage to a great extent. Thirdly, the establishment of factories for the processing of the mangoes in Ogbomosho is a necessity. This would probably be one of the best ways to reduce the high cost of mango production, and higher profit for the mango farmers. The problem and stress of transportation would be minimized to a large extent. Fourthly, it is true that mango production in Ogbomosoland seems to be without much stress since it is a perennial crop, cultivated by the mango farmers' parents. Yet, the government and religious organizations need to make incentives available to mango farmers as well as intending mango farmers. This will aid larger production to the extent that Nigeria would be a mango production competitor in the international market.to mango farmers in the production of the mangoes. Religious organizations in Ogbomosoland should do more in using mango for charity during the harvest periods. Instead of watching the mangoes getting rotten due to lack of storage facilities and transportation, religious

organization should form cells whereby mangoes would be taking to other towns, and State of the Federation as charity.

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Appendix

A. Questionnaire for Mango Farmers
1. Mango is usually being wasted during production. Yes/ No
2. Do you make so much profit? Yes /No
   a. I make : a. 10- 20% profit   b. 30-40% profit   c. 50-60% profit d. 70-80% profit e. 90-100% profit
3. Any incentives from the government?

B. Questionnaire for Mango Consumers
1. Do you enjoy the eating of mango during its harvesting? Yes/No
2. Usually costly at the period of harvesting. Yes/No
3. Usually cheap at the period of harvesting. Yes/No
4. Do you have storage facilities for mango? Yes/No
5. What type(s)?
   a. Refrigerator   b. Others
6. Any hindrances to enjoying mango consumption?
   a. Inadequate supply of electricity for storage
   b. Non –durability of mango.

C. Structured Interview for Agricultural Officers
1. Any incentives for the farmers?
2. Any request from them? Yes/ No

3. What are the requests?

D. Structured Interview for Religious Leaders

1. How do you see mango production in Ogbomosoland?
2. Do you think that the farmers and the consumers are enjoying the production and consumption to their satisfaction? Yes/ No
3. Explain the reasons for your response in question 2.
4. Do you think there are wastages during mango production in Ogbomosoland? Yes/No
5. If yes in question 4, what is the Church doing to curb the wastage?
6. What is your understanding of Jesus' "Gather up the fragments…." in John 6:12?

Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil in Freewill Theism

Aku Stephen Antombikums

PhD Researcher at the Faculty of
Religion and Theology, VU Amsterda
Emails: a.k.u.antombikums@vu.nl,
antombikums@gmail.com,
Tel: +31645090446, +2348065324122.

Abstract

Freewill Theists extrapolate that classical theism is internally incoherent in its concept of divine providence as it relates to the problem of evil. They argued that meticulous providence and exhaustive divine foreknowledge renders human's freedom ineffective. Further, they argued that divine foreknowledge does not add to God's effectiveness in handling the problem of evil. God created the entire universe in a way that both humans and the created order are endowed with the freedom to act contrary to the will of God. The presence of evil is not in any way part of God's divine plan even if good emerges from it. The aforementioned according to them is the best response to the problem of evil. This study examines the implications of this view and its practical relevance amidst the reality of evil. The researcher adopted the method of conceptual analysis as well as expository and evaluative methods to construe key operational concepts in freewill theism and to further examine them. By conceptual analysis, the researcher means a rigorous examination that looks at a concept to ascertain whether it is genuine or factual and not contradictory, how it agrees and differs from other concepts and if it is practically relevant to the purpose to which it is formulated to address. Freewill Theism looks promising. However, a closer examination reveals that: 1. this concept is not completely faithful to the scripture. 2. arguing for an 'open' and 'ongoing' nature of creation doesn't solve the problem of evil 3. Providence may involve some level of risk on the side of humans 4. There is a contextual dimension to God's responses to most situations in the Scripture not upheld in freewill theism.

1. Introduction

The quest for a coherent view of how divine control or providence relates to human freedom is age-old and unending. The issue continues to be particularly pressing as it relates to the problems of evil and suffering. On the one hand, as a result of dissatisfaction with the explanations provided for these problems some have come to

doubt the existence of a good, loving and powerful God. On the other hand, others seek a redefinition of the classical conception of God.[3] Freewill theism (*FT* henceforth) is one among major alternative views in the struggle to find *an adequate concept of God and humanity* given the paradox of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. FT rejects the traditional concept of divine causality and human freedom arguing that it is internally incoherent. For instance, FT argues that to assert that God controls everything, yet humans are free and are morally culpable for their immoral actions and demandable at the eschaton is paradoxical and violates the law of non-contradiction. Or to assert that God knows all future contingent actions with absolute material certainty and at the same to argue that humans are free. For humans to be free, they argued, their actions must not have an *antecedent*; otherwise, they are not free. However, since humans do perform many morally culpable actions, it must follow that such actions are performed out of human volition devoid of divine influence. The existence of evil from this conclusion is a result of the exercise of human freedom. This study first of all does some exposition of how FT conceives divine providence, divine omniscience and human freedom and its implication for the problem of evil after which these concepts are analyse through the method of conceptual analysis.

By FT in this study, the researcher means Open Theism. FT is a movement within American Christianity that emerged around the early 1990s intending to redefine the traditional understanding of God. Early proponents include Richard Rice[4], Clark Pinnock, Gregory Boyd, John Sanders, William Hasker and David Basinger. However, this research centres mostly on the works of John Sanders and William Hasker because they both give an existential response to the problem of evil from their understanding of the doctrines of creation and providence. A summary of the main contours of this view include the following:

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[3] Open theism, process theism and to some extent deism are examples of this.

[4] Richard Rice published a book on this novel conception as early as 1985. *God's Foreknowledge and Man's Free Will.* Minneapolis: Bethany, 1985.

1. God is a community of love. He created humanity to replicate this love.

2. God is in time experiencing the temporal succession of time as humans do.

3. God is *weakly immutable;* He changes His plans when the condition warrants. The reason for the adjustment of plans is because He is *in* time.

4. Because God is in time, He knows past and present happenings perfectly but does not know all future contingencies.

5. Omnipotence is *omnicompetence* ably demonstrated only in persuasion as a result of love

6. Love is the most important attribute of God. Love is sensitive, responsive, and vulnerable. Hence, God suffers on the account of His love for mankind.

7. Creation is an ongoing and open project with multiple goals.

8. Because of the above listed, divine providence is risky. God cannot coerce humans because He loves them and gives them freedom. For humans to be free, the intentions, plans and actions of humans must not be known to God beforehand otherwise, they are not free. The future does not exist. (Sanders *The God Who Risk* 14-15, 61, 177-182, 197, 200, 218 Cf. Hasker *Providence* 97, 125).

9. Therefore, the existence of evil.

In what follows, the researcher briefly gives a preliminary background of how divine providence has been conceived in the Augustinian-Calvinistic tradition. Next, he shows how FT disagreed with the aforementioned and as a result presents a new alternative. After a few critical observations, the paper will be brought to a conclusion.

The word providence from a literal point of view has the idea of providing (Helm 18). It is derived from the Latin word *providentia* and from the verb *providere* which means to "take thought for" or to "look ahead" while the Greek rendering of the word providence is προνοια (*pronoia*). It is from the verb προνοεισθαι (*provoeisthai*) (Milton 7189). It has the same meaning as the Latin word above. Almost all Greek words with the prefix, πρo (*pro*) have the idea of 'coming ahead', 'before' or

'beforehand'. It has the idea of acting in advance when applied to words like knowledge πρo-γινωςκω *(pro-ginosko)*. As a result, the word providence has come to mean that God *governs, preserves, sustains, nourishes and cares for His creation* (Calvin *Institutes* I.16.1). It also suggests that God has made *provisions* for the continual sustenance and preservation of the whole creation *before* He brought it into existence. This idea suggests that nothing can happen to the creation contrary to the will of God. However, creation, as we have it today, reveals the contrary. It does not appear as if the creator still preserves, sustains, nourishes and cares for the creation. This is because, as the apostle, Paul wrote 'the whole creation *groans* in pains.' Romans 8:18-23. The search for meaning in suffering in life, therefore, calls for a truly biblical doctrine of divine providence that is faithful to the scripture, adequate for the demands of life, intelligible, authentic and coherent as well as congruous with tradition.

Christians believe that humanity is created with freedom. They also believe that God exerts some level of control over what goes on in this life. But how can these two be held together? CT holds that God knows everything and everything including human actions is subject to His divine control. However, to distinguish the Christian doctrine of divine providence from fatalism, CT distinguishes between primary and secondary causes of most happenings. In other words, CT conceived that most events that happen have two causes: God is its primary cause while humans are the secondary causes. For every action to take place, these two causes may be taken into account.

Classical theologians right from the early period of the Church have wrestled with the *paradox* of divine providence, human freedom and the existence of moral evil in particular. For Augustine, if we admit that there is a creator, it follows from an inescapable logic that a divine actor is governing creation. Denying this fact can only lead to the denial of the fact that there is a creator. "Anyone who doubts the existence of this divine Providence, for the sake of coherence, will also have to admit the irrationality of the creative action of God and recognize that God, both at the moment of creation and previously, did not know what He was doing because He would have

been deprived of reason, which is the criterion of his work" (*Retract.* 1, 3, 2, Cf. Gwebuike, 24).

Augustine in his *Dē cīvitāte Deī contrā pāgānōs* expounds that the providence of God originates in His act of creation, to His constants gifts of life and happiness, His reconciliation of man to Himself after the Fall, the giver of all good and evil things. God, according to Augustine orders everything and gives everything to all that exist according to its species, genus and type. Intelligence, beauty, memory, sense, will, appetite, fecundity, and health are all given by God. God did not only grant these gifts to humans and the entire creation and abandoned them; He guides everything by 'the laws of His providence' (5.11). On whether God as a result of foreknowledge is morally culpable, Augustine denied that it is so. He argued that there is a difference between knowing for certain that *M* will perform and action *S* and causing *M* to perform *S*. He states that: "If I am not mistaken, it is the fact that you would not necessarily be making a man sin because you foreknew he was going to sin." Augustine argues that just as no one can compel past events to take place by remembering them, so God does not compel the future to exist by His foreknowledge (*The Libero Arbatrior* 175).

Marylyn Adams states that in Augustine, the creation of free creatures serves as the consequent for the existence of evil. "By creating instead of omitting them [freedom], God introduces the possibility of evil into the universe, which free creatures in fact actualize" and since free creatures are responsible for the actualization of evil, it follows that evil originates from the activity of free agents who sin since evil was not in the original plan of God, but a side effect of freedom (Adams 34).

For Calvin, creation and providence cannot be separated. Calvin argues that conceiving God as a onetime creator who finishes the work of creation and abandoned it adds no value to the doctrine of creation and, in fact, it will be profanity to think in this manner. Instead, Calvin argues that we should conceive the doctrine of creation in such a way that God's presence is continually felt in the creation as it was in the beginning. Calvin sees it as an act of impiety to assert that God finished the work of

creation on the seventh day and abandoned it. God is actively involved in what goes on in this life (*Institute* I.16.1.). Calvin argues that 'there is no such thing as a fortune or chance.' He argues that divine providence as taught in the scripture expressly shows that despite that some events and happenings appear fortuitous; providence does not involve fortune or fate. Whatsoever happens, there is always an underlying divine providential finger of God. This understanding is contrary to what was obtainable in traditional ancient religions. To make it clear, Calvin gives an example of an unfortunate fellow in the hands of robbers:

> Suppose a man falls among thieves, or wild beasts; is shipwrecked at sea by a sudden gale; is killed by a falling house or tree. Suppose another man wandering through the desert finds help in his straits; having been tossed by the waves, reaches harbor; miraculously escapes death by a finger's breadth. Carnal reason ascribes all such happenings, whether prosperous or adverse, to fortune. But anyone who has been taught by Christ's lips that all the hairs of his head are numbered [Matt. 10:30] will look farther afield for a cause, and will consider that all events are governed by God's secret plan (*Institute* I.16.2.)

In our context, the man mentioned above will be regarded as being 'unlucky'. Calvin denies that it should be so. Instead, it should be understood from the point of divine providence in which God by His secret plan governs the universe including both goodness and adversities. Calvin rejects the idea of general providence. In dealing with the extent of providence, Calvin states that inanimate objects are governed by God's secret' decree so that nothing happens unless God willingly and knowingly decrees its occurrence. He further states that arguing for a general providence is an error and it makes no sense to states that divine providence is selective (*Institute,* I.16.3,4,5,6,7).

A few things to note from these two classical authors are 1. Everything is under divine providence including future contingencies 2. Humans are free 3. Human future contingent acts may not escape the divine eye. 4. God is not culpable for human immoral actions 5. Therefore, divine omniscience is compatible with human freedom (from 1, 2 and 3).

2. Divine Providence in Freewill Theism

FT argues that God exercises providence over creation not in a meticulous way by counting every detail of what is going to happen as understood in CT but, by applying *"general strategies"* for the good of His creatures. Details on how future contingencies will occur are not planned before their occurrence. Applying this understanding to prophesy, Hasker states that: "some prophecies are conditional on the actions of human beings; others are prediction based on existing trends and tendencies, while others are announcements of what God Himself intends to bring about" ("Philosophical Perspective" 153).

Creation according to FT is God's project in which He has what it takes to accomplish it yet, He created others with freedoms that are ontologically distinct from Him. He lavished His love upon them with the hope that they will, in turn, respond in love. He endows them with freedom and invites them to participate in His project. In this contract, God's relationship with His associates is contingent; hence these associates often affect God because He has chosen to invite them into the project. Because of this invitation, at some times He experiences frustration despite being "supremely wise, endlessly resourceful, amazingly creative and *omnicompetent* in seeking to fulfil His project [italics added]" (Sanders *The God Who Risks* 174). At times God unilaterally decides what happens to the project but at others, He accepts suggestions from His partners who reflect the Trinitarian love in all their relationships. God, according to Sanders is a risk-taker because a risk-taking attitude is "one by which we cope with uncertainty in the acceptance of potential losses but in the experience of an overall positive outcome" (Sanders *The God Who Risks* 175). Sanders argued that God took a risk in the Old Testament by calling Abraham and Abraham too took the risk of leaving his land and following God to an unknown destination. Our Lord Jesus did the same and equally called His disciples to do the same (*The God Who Risks* 175).

The divine risk-taker model of providence in FT is a mirror of the character of the divine being. Sanders asserts that the divine being's character is, first of all, that of

love, and secondly; of rationality because "the tripersonal God is the perfection of love and communion—the very antithesis of aloofness, isolation and domination. God is no solitary potentate forcing His will on others" (*The God Who Risks* 177).

Sanders denied that God has a list containing what every person should do or be in life; as a result, some of the things that occur either come by chance or as we trust God to give us wisdom daily to become what He wants us to be. Not every specific event in this life has a 'specific divine intention' because just as God exercises general sovereignty, so in like manner; He exercises general providence. Even in this, God only specifically wants us to be like Jesus in this life as we love God and one another (*The God Who Risks* 225-226, 286-287). In his reply to Wood '*The Eternal Now*', Sanders argues that: "it is contradictory to suppose that God knows an event will occur and also to hold that God prevents that event from occurring" (79). This is because "it is logically impossible for God to know that an event will actually happen and that God will prevent that event from happening"…Yes "It does God no good to have either simple foreknowledge or the eternal now because God cannot change what God knows for a fact will happen. God cannot use knowledge of what we call the future to guide us in the best ways, or to prevent horrible events from happening or to give predictions about the future to the prophets" (Sanders *The Eternal Now* 78-79).

3. The Problem of Evil

The task of Christian philosophers and theologians to some extent involves providing answers to existential questions that threaten the faith of Christians especially the ones that revolve around the problem of evil. Several responses have been provided for the existence of evil. Because evil has been viewed from different perspectives, there are also different versions and responses to the problem. The freewill theistic version under examination fits in with existential or what is commonly called the religious problem of evil. Therefore, this section briefly looks at how free will theism responds to the problem of evil from the religious point of view. Both theodicy and defence seek to provide answers to the trilemma of evil first presented by Epicurus and captured by David Hume in his *Dialogue Concerning Natural Religion* where he wrote: "Epicurus's

old questions are yet unanswered. Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then is he impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?" (108-109).

This trilemma of the problem of evil may be schematized thus:

    a.   God is omnipotent

    b.   God is omnibenevolent

But,

    c.   Evil exists

Because of *c*, atheists denied the existence of God. This leads to the conclusion:

    d.   Therefore, God does not exist.

The argument is clear, no omnipotent being who is truly good will allow evil to exist unless it is not within His power to eradicate evil. Classical theists have made various attempts to reconcile the existence of God and the existence of evil. Some of the attempts include the soul-making theodicy of Irenaeus currently advocated by John Hick, the *privatio boni* of Augustine of Hippo and the lesser evil for the greater good of Richard Swinburne. All theists will want *d* above to be false. This is exactly what FT also does. Instead of accepting *d*, it re-examines and re-explicates *a* together with 4, 5, and 7 above:

        4. Because God is in time, He only knows past and present happenings

        5. Omnipotence is *omnicompetence* ably demonstrated only in persuasion as a result of love.

        7. Creation is an ongoing and open project with multiple goals

        We may arrive at a freewill theistic theodicy from 4, 5 and 7. Since God faces the problem of knowing the contingent acts of free moral agents willingly as a result of the freedom He grants them, it follows that there is nothing He can do about the exercise of this freedom. He does not know how and what humans will use their freedom to do, otherwise, they are not free. God does not coerce, rather through love; He persuades. The existence of evil, therefore; is a consequence of the re-explication of the attributes

of God as seen in 4 and 5 above together with the exercise of human freedom. The exercise of freedom, first of all, is the consequence of the nature of creation and secondly, the general strategies God adopts in His ruling of the universe. New things are being created that were not originally in the divine plan. One among such is the situation of sin in the Garden of Eden.

Hasker in this regard, argues that one's concept of theodicy is first of all grounded on her conception of divine providence. The one who holds onto a *risk-free* concept of divine providence will inevitably insist that there are good reasons why God permits evil. But she who holds the contrary, the struggle to show how a good, powerful and loving God permits evil will be eradicated. He argues thus: "In consequence, one is able to abandon the difficult doctrine of' meticulous providence and to admit the presence in God's world of particular evils God's permission of which is not the means of bringing about any greater good, or of preventing any equal or greater evil" ("Providence and Evil" 102)

From the foregoing, Hasker argues that there are two types of theodicy; namely: "a theodicy which relies on considerations of[...]a general- policy[...]; it justifies God's permission of certain evils as being the consequence of a general policy which a wise and benevolent God might well adopt" and "a theodicy of[...]a specific-benefit theodicy" ("An Open Theist Theodicy" 352). Hasker calls the former a '*risk-taking'* model of divine providence, while the latter he calls a '*risk-free'* model. The former is the model championed by freewill theism, while the latter is the traditional/classical model of divine providence. Hasker went further to argue that the nature of the world as created by God also determines the nature of the model of providence that God adopts in His dealings with creation. On this, he noted that: "first, *it is good that there should be a world*" (*The Triumph of God* 122). By the world, Hasker means all creation as freely created by God. The existence of the world is the first step towards the formulation of a theodicy. Secondly, "*it is good that there should be a complex, multileveled natural world*" (*The Triumph of God* 123). By complex, Hasker means that the world should contain different entities exhibiting different degrees of

complexity. Not only this, but the world should be natural. "To say that the world is natural is to say that the entities act, and interact, in accordance with their inherent causal powers, as opposed to being manipulated by some other, presumably 'higher', being" (*The Triumph of God* 123). This conclusion forms the basis for freedom and autonomy. As a result, Hasker argued that "*it is good that the creatures in the world should enjoy a considerable degree of autonomy*" (*The Triumph of God* 124). This degree of autonomy, however, Hasker argued is not a complete autonomy as such. The creator still exercises some level of control over the world. Not only autonomy but "*it is good that there should be an evolving world, a world in which the universe as a whole as well as its component systems develop from within, utilizing their inherent powers and potentialities*" (*The Triumph of God* 125) The capacity to utilize inherent powers and potentials is at the forefront for the explanation of why evil exists in the world and God cannot be held responsible for it.

Not only the above listed, but creation is also an open project with open routes. As a result, the future is open and unsettled. Because the future is not settled, we together with God decide how the future should be. Yes, creation is not "a one-time event in the past which God preserves, but also as a beginning with a dynamic structure that enables creation itself to produce new beings, events and relations" God has empowered creatures in such a way that He shares His power with them so that they can create that which was not originally planned by God; and since God has chosen to limit Himself, He cannot prevent them from doing such as in the case of sin ("Open Creation" 146). Sanders uses Jesus' experience in the Garden of Gethsemane to show that even the Son of God knew that it is not everything that is predetermined and that the will of God is dynamic and not a script which He was merely unfolding (*The God who Risks* 101-1-2). This openness of creation and the ability to *produce new beings, events and relations* point to the reason why a theodicy arguing that there is a purpose for the existence of evil as a result of divine plan does not make any sense to the freewill theists. Consequently, when moral evil and its effects are felt in our lives, it is because

God didn't plan it nor, is He aware that it will occur. And even if He knows beforehand, He may not do otherwise.

> Explicating the freewill theistic response to the problem of evil, Hasker wrote: God knows that evils will occur, but God has not for the most part specifically decreed or incorporated into his plan the individual instances of evil. Rather, God governs the world according to general strategies which are, as a whole, ordered for the good of the creation but whose detailed consequences are not foreseen or intended by God prior to the decision to adopt them. As a result, we are able to abandon the difficult doctrine of "meticulous providence" and to admit the presence in the world of particular evils God's permission of which is not the means of bringing about any greater good or preventing any greater evil ("A Philosophical Perspective" 152).

Deducing from the foregoing, a few things are worthy of note: 1. God knows from the inception of creation that at a point, His creation will be infected with evil. 2. Despite knowing that His loving and dear project will be infected with evil, He did nothing about it, hence; leaving it out of His plans. 3. Instead of deciding what to do with evil, God chose to focus on what He created. But even in doing so, He is not specifically concerned about anything in particular rather; He indiscriminately allows everything to freely operate for its good. 4. God does not know the details of what His project will become in the future. He has no fixed plans as to how or what He wants this project to become or to look like. 5. Because God has no specific plans for His project, contingent plans may be adapted to be part of the project. 6. This is the best explanation for the presence of evil in the world today. There is no reason to blame God for permitting evil, there is no greater good in any evil nor, is there any lesson to be learned. God is free from all moral evils and their consequences. This method of handling God's project permits creatures and especially humans to exercise their freedom. The exercise of this freedom can yield good or negative results. These negative results are never willed or planned by God. However, God has a way of handling every negative element in the project for the best of humanity.

Hasker argues that another reason why evil exists is because of the general policies adopted by God in governing the world with freedom at the top of the list ("Why Is There So Much Evil?" 328). Freewill theism argues that in death, we need not conclude that God 'took him home' probably for the best; "[…]rather, that God is often disappointed as we are that someone's earthly existence has ended at an early age or that someone is experiencing severe depression or that someone is being tortured." Even if good emerged from a tragedy as in the case of Job, we need not conclude that God allowed or caused such evil as a means to such supposed good (Basinger "Practical Implications" 170).

The freewill theistic theodicy may be summed up as 1. God is love 2. God does not control everything because He is not all-powerful 3. God is not all-knowing 4. Humans have libertarian freedom. This freedom is often misused and abused 5. Therefore evil exists. This conclusion clearly shows why God cannot be blamed for the existence of evil. The existence of evil does not serve any purpose; rather it is a product of human decisions.

4. An Evaluation of Freewill Theism

4.1 *The denial of exhaustive divine omniscience base on human freedom is neither authentic and coherent nor faithful to the Bible.*

The Bible makes several claims that everything is known to God including human free choices: "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless towards Him" (2Chron. 16:9), Ps. 139 shows that God knows everything concerning us including our thoughts, actions, plans and words before they are uttered. Job 28:24 substantiates this claim: "For he looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens." Augustine writing on the logic of the incompatibility of divine omniscience and human freedom states that God's foreknowledge of our will does not in any way deter our exercise of freedom. It only further affirms that since God foreknew it to be our will, it is within our power. This power is not taking away from us because God foreknew it (*De Libero Arbitrio*

193). Further, the Bible did not in any way teach the kind of libertarian freedom advocated for in FT. Freewill is overestimated here (Søvik *The Problem of Evil* 176). Besides, the claim that the nature of freedom advocated for in FT is a 'freedom within limits' is not only problematic but incoherent and contradictory. Hasker states that

> To be autonomous is to be self- ruled, and often this has been taken to imply freedom from all rule by another, even by the Creator. This is not the kind of autonomy advocated here. Each and every creature is totally dependent on the Creator for its very existence; not only for its original coming- into- being, but for sustaining its existence from moment to moment. And the right of the Creator to rule over His creation is not in question ("An Open Theist Theodicy" 291).

If this line of argument is valid, then God can eliminate anything or person that constitutes a threat to human existence. But if God does the contrary, then the question of why He allows the evil that He has what it takes to prevent evil remains. Worthy of note is the fact that we need to consider the contextual aspect of divine ignorance. It seems that it is not because God does not know human contingent actions, but He responds to situations individually. And because He did not preordain human free actions, He has also not predetermined His responses to such actions. This explains why He will respond differently based on the context. Christ did the same thing during His earthly ministry especially in the aspect of healing. At times, He commands, on other occasions, He either said your faith has made you well or your sins are forgiving and the sick person is made well. The disciples wanted to generalize elsewhere concerning the man who was born blind in John 19. Jesus corrected them and stated that it was in that manner *so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.* Here, it is a matter of context. The scripture does not teach us that there are some things that God does not know. However, it is apparent in the scripture that God does not respond the same way to every situation. At times, He allows mercy to prevail over judgement at other times He will not change. God's approach in dealing with creation is not *monolithic* but is

diversified based on contexts. To cage God in a box and claiming that this is the way He always acts or responds may lead to error.

4.2 Creation may be open, but not open in the sense advocated for in FT

Imagine that God leaves the most important things of His creation open namely: guidance, protection, salvation, or calling to vocation because of human freedom. This will do more harm than good. The idea that the creation is open and ongoing to show how God is '*endlessly resourceful*' in bringing order out of chaos is amazing. However, it's not true to scripture and not the best solution to the problem of evil either. The future must not be open as understood in FT to allow for the exercise of free will as argued by Augustine above.

4.3 Divine providence may involve some risks but not on the side of the providencier rather on the *providencee*[5]

The term 'risk' has not existed in the Church's vocabulary of providence from the beginning. The Church didn't need to think of providence in such a manner. The term gained admittance during the renaissance by sailors and then later into the business world. It has no basis either in the Church's vocabulary or the Bible. Of course, delegating a task involves some risk. But, does God risk in the manner of humans? The conclusion that divine providence is risky is too generalized and therefore does not take the contextual application of the term into cognizance. Because of our limitations, providence is *risky to us but not on the side of God.* This is because we do not know what the outcome of every decision we make will be. But because we are sure that the one we served can protect, guide and direct appropriately, all fears and anxieties are cast away and replaced with faith. In sum, it seems the doctrine of divine providence in free will is not *adequate for the demand of life.*

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[5] *Providencier and Providencee* are not truly English words. They are imaginary terms I use for the subject (God) and object (creation) of divine providence

4.4 *The assertion that creation is open and ongoing lacks strong scriptural backup.*

The continual sustenance of the creation is rather part of providence than creation. From the summary presented above, we've seen that both Hasker and Sanders extrapolate from their understanding of the nature of creation which is open and ongoing as the basis for the existence of evil. Because creation is open and ongoing, not everything is preordained by God. To them, it seems that God only selects a few things that are of special relevance to Him and left the rest open so that humans, as a result, can make a significant contribution to the process of creation which is ongoing. However, it seems the assertion that creation is not just open but ongoing has no strong biblical backing. It is merely a deduction that cannot point to several clouds of witnesses from the scripture. Contrary to this assertion, the bible shows that there were an eve and a close of creation as seen in Genesis 2:1-3. Even if one does not believe in the literal seven days of creation, she may not doubt that the Bible categorically states that the work of creation came to an end at a particular time and God rested having completed everything. This rest has been understood as a typology for our eternal rest after out pilgrim here on earth. Worthy of note also is that the language of creation both in the Old and New Testaments is mostly in the past not in the present or ongoing. Several scriptural passages depict creation as a one-time event that took place namely: Gen. 1:1, Exo. 20:11, Ps. 33:6, Isa. 45:18, John. 1:4, Eph. 2:11, Col. 2:16, and Heb. 11:3. There are also references to the present when God is about to do a new thing and also the future which is mostly eschatological. Creation may be open and ongoing. However, the new things that are being created are either an expansion or the wasting away of the whole. Of course, humans have the ingenuity to compliment and even to marred creation but, may not be able to create new things that can beat the imagination of God.

4.5 *God cannot be morally culpable for creating a predetermined world.*

The argument has always been that whatsoever God foreknows, it will necessarily come to pass because God does not hold a false belief. It also means that humans are not free; therefore God will be morally culpable for their immoral actions. To solve this paradox, FT believes that it is better to deny that God foreknows everything and as a

result does not control everything; hence humans are free. This freedom is the reason for the existence of evil. As stated above, it is not that God lacks the knowledge of all future contingencies but; His responses to such contingencies are also contingent. Let us further clarify by the use of two examples viz.:

1. By a natural corollary, contingent actions will align with contingent responses while predetermined actions with predetermined responses. Since God does not predetermine contingent actions, His responses to them are also not predetermined. In other words, God responds to contingent actions contingently.

2. The assertion that a predetermined world makes God culpable for the existence of sin is misleading. People today do many evil things as a result of several *influencers* be it ideas from others or consumables. But, no one to our knowledge escapes being culpable because she acted based on certain influence and not willingly. Even people under the influence of drugs are morally culpable and no one charges the drugs for their misgivings. Rather, they are held responsible for their actions. This can be applied to divine providence. Moreover, what if God decides to create a world where He knows all future contingent actions and places humans at the appropriate places where they will act freely?

4.6 *That there are no reasons whatsoever for the existence of every Evil is generalized*

FT argues that even if good emerges from evil, the existence of such evil was not meant for any good in the first place, rather; it's because of God's resourcefulness that He brought out such good. Admittedly, not all evils lead to any good. Also, not all evils are meant to purify our souls as advocated by the soul-making theodicy just as not all evils are products of the exercise of human freedom. However, it cannot be denied that some evils lead to some good. Vaccinating someone against a virus may be evil since it constitutes pain at the time of injection, but it's for the overall good of the person's

health. Also, as a result of some evil, we may learn to do things the right way. From the foregoing, no single theodicy is sufficient to answer the problem of evil. All the theodicies have their contextual applications. I advise that all Christian philosophers and theologians should exercise epistemic humility in our conceptions about God.

5. Conclusion

This article set out with the aim of analysing FT to find out how freewill theists conceived divine providence taking their understanding of divine omnipotence, divine omniscience, and creation as a starting point. The author found out: 1. that FT believes that 'Love' is important than 'power' and as such, the power of God is limited. That if humans must be free, God must not know the future exhaustively. 2. That because God does not know all future contingent actions for the fact that He cherished human freedom, He no longer exercise meticulous providence. As such, He is a risk-taker in granting humans the ability to express themselves in a manner in which He can no longer control everything they do 3. Therefore, the presence of evil in the world today is a consequence of human freedom. God is grieved with the presence of evils both natural and moral including pandemics but, He cannot do otherwise. This is because He is not aware of such actions before it occurs. He is not responsible for bringing every form of calamity; therefore believers are comforted amidst sufferings. The researcher believes that Love itself is power. The questions for both divine omnipotence and omniscience shouldn't be about the *'cans'* and the *'cannots'* of God or the *'how much'* of God's knowledge, rather it should be about the "why." The paper has shown that the perceived value of the semi-retired God of FT in the loci of providence is not sufficient. The paper has also argued that God does not need to leave many important aspects of this life open before humans may be free and that God responses in the scripture should be understood from a contextual point of view. Lastly, the researcher wishes to conclude that we may not be able to answer accurately why God allows or permits evil; yet, we cannot give up on God. He is still in control despite the glaring presence of evil. The general triumph of God over evil shall take place at the consummation.

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Ethical Analysis of the New Age Movement and its Implications on the Christian Faith

Joshua Aondowase Ajim, *PhD,*

Department of Religious Studies, Federal University of Kashere, Gombe State
Email: ajimjoshuaa@gmail.com ;
Phone: 07035849406

&

Rose Yangu Amah

Department of Religion and Cultural Studies, Benue State University, Makurdi, Benue State; Phone: 08034350733; roseamah.ra@gmail.com

Abstract

The emergence of the neo—religious and political/economic order known as the New Age Movement or New Age spirituality in the recent years is a source of concern. This pluralistic movement seeks universal truth in its advocate about the oneness of humanity and God. It is a conglomeration of spiritualism, esotericism, Gnosticism, alternative medicine, various other religious practices etc. It is characterized by an eclectic but general rejection of mainstream dogma and religion. There has been a great conversion from other religions to this movement worldwide, due to its attractive "peaceful" propaganda and economic product such as music, medicine and literature. The movement might have positive impact on the society through its proclamation of peace and unity through an all embracing tolerance, however, it has the potentials of destroying the established religions especially Christianity; thus the need to understand and come to terms with this New spirituality in the light of Christianity becomes imperatives. This work therefore exposes the teachings of the New Age Movement and its implications on the society in general and the church in particular, using historical and descriptive approaches. The findings revealed that, its influence in Nigeria can be seen as been responsible for immorality and moral decadence in Nigeria in 'spite of the high level of religious participation by Nigerians. Nigerians Christians are warned in this work to be careful with New brands of Christianity and not be carried away by every wind of doctrine from the new generation churches, in order to preserve the Nigerian Christianity from the corruption that already characterized western expression of Christianity due to the corrupting influence of the New Age Movement.

1. Introduction

The quest for the truth which leads to the salvation of mankind has been the concern of most religions of the world such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Shintoism and African Religions among other Religions in the world. In recent times, the world has witnessed the emergence of an enormous movement known as the 'New Age Movement which is understood as a neo religious and socio-political economic order. The movement is also referred to by other names such as the Aquarian Age or New Age spirituality. This socio political and religious -economic collective phenomenon seeks universal truth in advocating for the oneness of humanity. It is a conglomeration of spiritualism, Gnosticism, theosophy, esotericism, neo-paganism eastern pantheism, alternative medicine and various other religious and occult practices. The movement is characterized by an eclectic and individual approach to spirituality, with a general rejection of main stream religious dogmas, especially Christianity (Lewis Gorden 30).

The movement seen to have something positive to offer to humanity through its proclamation of peace and unity. However, it has the potentials of destroying the foundation of morality in the established religions, especially Christianity. This work seeks to expose the teachings of the New Age Movement and points out the religious-moral implications of such teachings on Christianity, so that Christians will understand and recognized the New Age beliefs and practices as well as the challenges they posed to Christianity. New Age Movement as a new form of Gnosticism is silently infiltrating into Christendom especially through the new generation churches. There is therefore urgent need to prevent the Christian Religion from been rapped of its moral and spiritual values by the New Age Movement which greatly undermine biblical teachings through false interpretation of scriptures and outright rejection of the salvation story in Christianity.

2. Brief History of the New Age Movement

The modern version of paganism and Gnostic religions unites in the New Age Movement, and makes its first appearance in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, gained momentum on the 1960s and 1970s, and got strengthened in the late 1980s with the Harmonic Convergence (Langon 50). New Age practices and philosophies are found among diverse individuals among different people with diverse cultural and religious traditions around the world (20). The movement, have roots in transcendentalism, Mesmerism, Swedenborigianism, Gnosticism, neo-paganism and various earlier eastern esoteric or occult traditions, such as the hermetic arts of astrology, Egyptian magic, alchemy and Kabbalah (51).

Some of the popular figures behind these ideas have roots in works of early 20th century writers, such as D.H Lawrence, and W.B Yeats (Ann Ardis 10). The British Neo-Theosophist, Alice Bailey, published a book titled "Discipleship in the New Age" in 1944 and had used the term "New Age" in reference to the transition from the Astrological Age of Pisces to the Age of Aquarius (45). Following Bailey, Tom Williams, a priest of the church of all worlds, calls Christendom "The Christian interlude", this Christian interlude the Age of Pisces (the *fish),* fuelled by masculine Yang energy is now at an end. It is being superseded by the feminine Yin energy of the Age of Aquarius (Maclame 189).

There exists in the world today an incredibly huge and well organized network consisting of thousands of groups, trust foundations, clubs, lodges, and religious groups whose goal and purpose is to prepare the world to enter the coming Age of Aquarius. A small sampling of a few among the organizations involved would include: Amnesty international, zero population growth, California New Age caucus, New Age Alliance, World Goodwill, the church universal and Triumphant, the Theosophical society, planetary initiative for the world we choose, and the club of Rome (newage.htm 1 of 5). This list demonstrates the diversity of organizations operating with New Age goals in economic, political and religious spheres of influence.

3. Implications of the New Age Ideas on Christianity

The New Age Movement in its bid to bring about an entirely New World order with one and universal religion has undermined and misinterpreted the basic Christian beliefs and moral values. In order to achieve a systematic and syncretic form of religion in which ideas from different religions and world views are integrated into a unified world view that encourages pluralistic belief system. The New Age Movement attacks certain basic Christian beliefs that are very foundational to the Christian faith, they misinterpreted the Christian scriptures both from the old and New Testament thereby corrupting the Christian faith and encouraging heresy and unorthodox practices in Christianity as well as undermine her Spiritual and moral values.This section therefore, dwells on the spiritual and moral implications of the new Age movement on Christianity with particular reference to the Church in Nigeria.

4. The Spiritual and Moral Implications of the New Age Movement on Christianity

The New Age movement promotes erroneous teachings about God, creation, man and his relationship with God which has even entered biblical scholarship. The movement has a general, spiritual and moral negative implications on Christianity hence almost all their teachings and beliefs are ridiculous to the Christian Religion. However, the advice of Apostle John to Christians suffices here;

> Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the spirit of God; every spirit that confesses Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Anti-Christ, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world --- we are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error --- whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God 1John 4:1-3, 6:5:la (NW).

This scripture is obviously referring to this seductive movement (NAM) which is seducing Christians with false spirituality contrary to the teachings in the Bible. It is obviously a movement that seeks to replace Christianity and enthrone the anti-Christ. For instance, the New Age teaching about "Christ consciousness" is a denial that Jesus is 'The Christ". New Agers believe that Jesus received the Christ consciousness at his baptism, and that it left him at his crucifixion, (this is what was previously identified by the apostle John as the spirit of Antichrist), that he is just a master of wisdom, an ordinary man who equipped himself to receive the "Christ consciousness" during the period between his birth and baptism why travelling to India learning esoteric secret from gurus. However, if this is the case, Jesus of the New Testament knew nothing of it, for he said to his disciples;

> These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things might be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the prophets and Psalms concerning me. Thus it was written and thus it was necessary for "the Christ" to suffer and rise from the dead the third day, and that the repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Lk24:44-47).

Thus Jesus openly accepted and personally testified that he was the Christ, not a Christ but THE CHRIST. This fact alone should convince all true Christians that the New Age Movement is guided by the Spirit of Anti-Christ. Despite all these obvious indications, many supposedly Christians have used the scripture to support New Age Movement: like the Episcopal priest, Morton Kelsey who has been instrumental in reinterpreting scriptures and church history to support the New Age. For example, he claims; "you can find most of the New Age practices in the depth of Christianity. Clairvoyance and telepathy can be found in the book of Acts. There is the ecstatic experience that is described today as kundili (serpent force or universal energy, which flows through humans from the base of the spine). We have all these things in the New Testament which modern Christianity has blocked out and ceased practicing" (qtd in

Simpkinson 19).   According to Kelsey, even St Clement of Alexandria was a Gnostic teacher.

The New Age Movement has thus broken the ranks and files in Christianity such that, its adherents are found among professed Christians, who are preaching the messages of the New Age in the church of Christ or in the name of "Christ", they preach that all is one, that everything is part of the divine essence, that every person is intertwined with God. They therefore use the Bible to support their claims and one of the passages they are fond of is Luke 17:21 where Jesus said "the Kingdom of God is within you" (KJV). New Agers understand this verse to mean that each person has a divine spark since everybody is part of the divine essence, all is God (Maclaine,20). These so called Christians, refuse to recognize God as Supreme Being Distinct from creation; to them, there is only one essence in the universe and everything is part of that essence (monism); this doctrine is particularly preached by some groups known as Christian Science and unity school of Christianity both having predominant followers in USA. This group believes that pan is Theo or all is God (pantheism).   They preach that Jesus is one of their masters of wisdom who attained his Christ consciousness while travelling to the far East during the years between his birth and baptism, learning esoteric secrets of the orient from gurus in India (Shirley Maclame 233). Jesus Christ they say is now one of the "ascended masters" an elite guru who reaches across the astral plane to guide humans towards realizing their 'Christ consciousness (234).

This is how far the New Age Movement has attempted to destroy the spiritual base of Christianity, however, the Bible refutes this blasphemy against Jesus; the bible record is that "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and Man" (Luke 2:52), Against the insistence of the New Agers that Christ, like everybody else learnt the mysteries about life, and then advocates that everybody should awaken the god who sleeps at the root of the human beings. (Maurice smith 2). To support this claim, they quote John 10:34 where Christ quoted Psalm 82:6 which say "ye are gods", they conclude that man has unlimited potentials and that through positive thinking supported by constant affirmation, we can achieve any success in life. Thus, the New

Age rubbishes Christian spiritual values and has converted many unsuspecting Christians who are now New Age evangelists and still thinks in vain that they are Christians.

Regarding morals, the New Age Movement denies sin and evil that they do not exist, that the ultimate realities are just peace and love within the great brotherhood of all humans, where strife and war are absent and the absence of a one and personified God will not be felt and his existence not needed (Okoye 12). No wonder, Christians today behave as if their conscience is dead, pastors and priests deceive and cheat people abuse women and practically steal without any remorse. No wonder religion has failed in instilling morality among its adherents, obviously because of the influence of the New Age Movement which has permeated almost every segment of the society, its indifference to morality has very serious negative implications on Christianity and the society in general.

5. The Corrupting Influence of New Age Movement on the Nigerian Church

It is a tragedy to the Christian faith in Nigeria that people now open 'churches' with the purpose of making money; and thus unwittingly involved in the recruitment of innocent Nigerians into the New Age immoral society under the spiritual supervision of Lucifer. The level of moral decadence in Nigeria where almost everybody is committed in one form of religious activity or the other is an attestation to this fact. The Nigerian society is polluted with false teachings both from Christianity and Islam. The Boko Haram activities in the Northeastern Nigeria is an example of Islamic heretical teachings obviously inspired by the Devil. In Christianity, these false teachers have corrupted the Christian gospel and trivialized the Christian message to an alarming situation, which a catholic Bishop of Uyo in Obiora captured in the following words;

> False teachers breed in. such hibemations (churches). They abound
> everywhere. Self-made pastors, bishops, archbishops are today found in many
> communities. Seers, visioners, healers, are as present among us as the air we
> breathe, churches, prayer houses, and fellowship rooms are found in virtually

every available classroom, mechanic worship etc. in taxicabs, buses, trains, lorries- false gospel is sold, Sign posts and roofs of living homes and genuine companies hardly outnumber registered but fake churches whose proprietors brew noting but poisonous doctrines with which to enslave the unwary whom they profess and claim to liberate and save (xiii).

This is obviously an expression of the New Age 'Christianity' in Nigeria. Lucifer knowing the Nigerian problem is poverty and insecurity from real and perceived forces, has adopted materialism and fake spirituality as twin instruments to deceive many Nigerians and commit them into his own program of destroying orthodox Christianity and replace it with synthetic doctrines drawn from many sources which the New Agers called world Religion. Lucifer is thus bent on incorporating the whole world in to his own world government under his rule of terror and deceit. His apostles in Nigeria under the guise of radical Christians attack and disparage orthodox churches for been too conservative and unspiritual; they steal many believers from the orthodox churches with the prospect of material acquisition and an enhanced spiritual awareness to combat the forces of darkness. Thus these apostles of the New Age movement in Nigeria under the New Religious movements employ many gimmicks to fool their audience to draw them away from churches where Bible based doctrines are preached into their liberal materialistic churches where all forms of indecency is permitted. They also use gimmicks to fool their members into pulling out money even where they did not keep it. The sale of miracles-fake or real is one of such means. A journalist, who was a participant observer on one of such occasions reported on page 12 of African Concord, volume 9, number 26, that; "A preacher threw his empty hands into the air and told the congregation to catch "The spiritual keys" to the cars they would soon acquire; people dived for the keys. They were then ordered to empty their pockets and give thanks to God for the cars He has just given them" (12). The said journalist furthered revealed that, in some cases, olive oils and handkerchiefs are marketed at cut throat prices by the agent of the preachers, who insist that they must be bought for

magical healing and protection against evil powers in imitation of Paul's healing aprons (Acts 19:11).

Thus, many Nigerian ignorantly got themselves involved with the New Age Movement, Masquerading as Christian revival churches under different names and labels. These churches took advantage of the prevailing unfavorable socio-economic condition of Nigerians. Thus, the New Age influence in the Nigeria society has many negative Implications on Christianity as we can see today, in the name of modernization and Pentecostalism or revivalists. Pastors in most new generation churches encourage and permit women and youths to dress like Harlots, women go to church in trousers and without covering their hair. This is a direct violation of biblical teachings on dress code (Deut 22:5). The preaching on prosperity, money making, esoteric practices and other European and American counter culture influence has taken over in these churches. These are carefully contrived plans aimed at extorting money from members of the church, hence members provide favourable atmosphere for these 'New Age' pastors to operate, for some of these members do act the dumb deaf or cripple that are supposedly healed by these pastors. They also allow themselves to be hypnotized and indoctrinated. Desperate female members looking for the fruit of the womb sometimes offer themselves to these 'New Age Pastors who convince them that they (the barren women) need "holy sperm" from them (men of God) before they could conceive and bear a child. This is very much in line with New Age beliefs; the New Age practice what they called 'sacred sex', they revived the ancient fertility cults that practice temple cult prostitution to enhance the fertility of man, beast and the land. Dan Brown, a New Age novelist describe this 'religious' sex as Hiero Gamos; which means sacred marriage in Greek (308). Thus, the New Age movement has permeated the Nigerian society weather we are conscious of it or not, their ideas and beliefs are manifest in the religious and social lifestyle as well as medical practice of many Nigerians. The implication is that our society's religious institutions especially Christianity is corrupted to the point that while churches continue to increase every day, moral decadence is on the increase

proportionately. This is due to the New Age idea of an amoral society in which sin and moral questions are called mere illusions or condition of the mind which man must strive to liberate himself from all guilt of sin and attain a spiritual awareness called "Christ consciousness".

Christians and Nigerians are therefore warned in respect of this enormous movement that is aimed at destroying both Christian and traditional values under the guise of liberation from ignorance and guilt; calling Christians and traditional values obsolete in the New Age of Aquarius. We must guide ourselves from this moral perversion and spiritual confusion.

6. Summary and Conclusion

The threat posed by the New Age Movement to Christianity suggest that at some time in the future, even quicker than we think, true Christianity could well be reduced to a small minority. Christian ministry in the New Age of Aquarius will not be for the faint hearted. The defeat of ancient pagan Gnosticism was only gained by deep spirituality, hard theological work, and often by physical martyrdom. Even today, for Christians to overcome the challenges posed by the New Age Movement, they must stand, even if it does involve similar kinds of personal sacrifice. The orthodox Christian church needs courageous leaders, not clerics of leisure and compromise, leaders who go to the seminary not for the highest grade point average with the least possible amount of work, and who, upon graduation, seek a financially and personally rewarding career with rich churches with the least amount of suffering and difficulty. Without an extra-ordinary degree of prophetic commitment and self-sacrifice from a new generation of Christian leaders, the church of Jesus Christ is no doubt headed for a period of more significant corruption. If we do not speak out now, speaking out later would be very costly in the Age of Aquarius. The average Christians, so often consumed by materialistic dreams and nurtured by prosperity preachers, would be no match for the New Age vegetarian highly spiritual, well-read conspirators of the Aquarian Age, driven by occult powers. The New Age agenda is simple: remove from the human scene faith in the true Biblical God, the Lord of heaven and earth, by the rejecting Him both

as creator and redeemer. Paul so clearly points out in Romans 1:18-31. When people "go within" and worship the creature rather than the creator, creation's structures and strictures will be jettisoned and bestiality will result. God the redeemer is effectively rejected by denying both the reality of sin and the historicity, of Christ's cross and resurrection.

Nigerian Christians are unwittingly following New Age prosperity preachers, who preach not the teachings and resurrection of Christ but on prosperity and deliverance from spiritual bondage. We are certainly ill-prepared and spiritually weak. But the Lord, through the apostle Paul, reminds us that "for Christ's sake we can delight in weakness, insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties (2cor. 12:10). But only those aware of and willing to take up the struggle against these spiritual forces of evil manifest in the New Age Movement, will be able to stand. And standing is only possible if we have the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, feet shod with the Gospel, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:13-18). For us in Nigeria, the sword of the spirit or the word of God will be a more powerful and precious weapon for the church's survival in the Age of Aquarius. Unfortunately, many church leaders in Nigeria today are blunting this weapon by buying New Age agenda and emphasizing prosperity and materialism at the expense of the true word of God. Rather than blunt this weapon, we should be using it with all our might. The New Testament writings, and Paul's in particular have already faced and defeated Gnosticism and thus give us radical and potent answers and a methodology for our struggle against present day Gnosticism in the New garb described as the New Age Movement.

Our threatened "global village" is seeking global solutions, not just ecological but spiritual. In the words of Peter Jones, "as atheistic Marxism demon is being cast out seven more are rushing in, taking the form of a one world humanistic spirituality in its all- embracing tolerance" (24). However, only one form of spirituality will ultimately not be tolerated that which is very often accused of being the source, and perhaps one

day will be branded the scapegoat of humanity's present ill — the spirituality of orthodox, Biblical Christianity that believes in the exclusive truth claims of God the creator and redeemer and father of our Lord Jesus Christ who one day will come to judge the quick and the dead.

Christians especially Nigerian Christians are therefore warned to be careful so that they will not be led astray by the New Age preachers that have taken over most pulpits in the church, especially among the New generation churches in Nigeria, offering 'solution' to every problem both materially and spiritual.

7. Recommendations

The first step to finding solution to a problem is the discovery of the cause of the problem. There are a lot of problems in Nigeria today, ranging from social insecurity, fear of the unknown, frustration, unemployment, poverty, barrenness to various other ills like sickness. These problems are unaddressed by the so called democratic government. It is very likely that in the light of the above, people would embrace the New Age Movement which deceitfully claims to have all the solutions to their problems. However, if the following recommendations are taken seriously, we shall overcome the New Age challenges to Christianity at least in Nigeria.

i.   Christians in Nigeria should realize that, there are some natural basic truths of life that cannot be altered. One of them is that the world had always and will continue to be with problems. With this realization, people will not easily fall prey to the New Age preachers who promise total peace and solutions to all life problems.

ii.   Nigerian Christians must exercise genuine faith in God; This faith is man's conviction of things not seen (Heb. 11:2), not the ones seen. The things seen must be scrutinized before conviction, and this conviction is based on reasoning which strengthens the conviction of faith. To allow oneself to be led astray or deceived is no faith: genuine faith is blessed with the *Holy* spirit that recognizes and avoids cheats. Thus, informed practical efforts at solving human problems in addition to true faith in God

to bless our efforts is a sure way of staying away from the seductive arena of New Age cheats and charlatans who called themselves "great men of God" and claim to offer solution to all life problems.

iii.   As part of evangelism, genuine Christians should reach out to leaders of some of the so called Pentecostal churches, who are deceiving many Christians having being deceived themselves by the devil. We should also talk to our brothers and sisters who sustain the deceitful New Age churches to see the truth. Though this may not be easy if a person had already been brainwashed, but constant reasonable discussion can rescue them from the New Age deceit.

iv.   Nigerian Christians should always judge preachers and miracle workers to know if they are of God or not by comparing their style with that of Jesus; this is necessary because Christian religion in Nigeria today is lamentably being commercialized by the New Age preachers who masquerade as Pentecostals. All sort of evil are committed in the name of Christ. People are deceived and duped of their money, false prophecies are uttered in exchange for money, the Bible is misinterpreted to suit them, treasures not deeds are emphasized, and members collude with pastors to fake miracles. Fornication, adultery and other forms of indiscipline are the order of the day. True ministers of God are meant to feed their flock like Christ, but false ones dupe their flock. Thus when we compare Jesus' method and the method these so called 'men of God' used, we can see a distinct difference. Jesus never extorted money from any one, he never manipulates the masses with cheap emotionalism, nor advertise his miracles and wonders as it is done to day in the New generation churches.

v.   Scholars with research interest in the New Age Movement should be encourage with scholarship by the church, government and well-meaning individuals, to go to America where the New Age is more pronounced and

study all its ramified characteristics; so that such person in turn would come back and teach young people about the menacing danger of the movement.

vi. New Age Movement should be introduced as a course unit in Nigerian Universities, seminaries and other institutions of learning in the country to facilitate the knowledge about this dangerous movement. This kind of knowledge will help Nigerians to recognize the manifestations of the *New* Age Movement and denounce same.

vii. Christian Association of Nigeria should set up a committee to assess the activities and practices of all churches operating in Nigeria to find out whether they are operating with New Age beliefs or Bible based faith; in case of the former the churches should be cautioned, and if they correct their errors, fine, if not they should be excommunicated and denounce publicly so that people will keep off.

viii. Government in collaboration with CAN should made regulations against proliferation of religious sect in Nigeria to stem the tide of New Age cults spreading in Nigeria in the name of Christian denominations.

ix. Christians should stop the attitudes of moving from one church to the other or church prostitution, looking for miracles, but learn to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness so that every other thing will be added to them. This will help to avoid been deceived by the New Agers.

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Communalism and Contemporary Contradictions in African Society: An Examination of Perspectives of African Personality

Valentine Ehichioya Obinyan, *PhD*

Department of Philosophy and Religions,
Faculty of Arts, University of Benin,
Benin City. Nigeria.
Email: valentineobinyan@gmail.com
obinyan.valentine@uniben.edu
Phone: +2348034802766
&
Faith Gloria Ehiemua, *PhD*
Department of Religions, Faculty of Arts,
University of Benin, Benin-City, Nigeria Email:
fehiemua@gmail.com
Phone: +2348053262662

Abstract

It has been argued by Senghor's Negritude, Nyerere's Ujamma Socialism, Nkemkia's African Vitology, Okolo's What is to be African..., Odimegwu's Intergretive Personhood, Imafidon's and other scholars that Africans have a view of reality that is very essential to them. According to this view, reality is wholistic. From analyzing these philosophers, there is a conclusion that a unique communalistic quality of the African personality accounts for a radically unique interrelating attitude to nature. But from such conclusions, certain questions arise such as: What is the underlying imperative of such attitude? Is it essential to the Africans or to man in general? More so, considering the existential predicament of the contemporary African such as war and economic upheaval, other questions arise: Is this altruistic attitude a myth or a reality? Is it lost to acculturation or globalization? Why does it not make for pragmatic contributions, changes and development in the essential areas of contemporary African life? Sadly, discussions with scholars and students in tertiary institutions as well as local community sages and ethno-thinkers, affirm such wealth in the African mode of being. But from contemporary observation, between such wealth of the African personality and the contemporary challenges of Africa, is a gap between property, theory and praxis. With the hermeneutical Critical analysis methods, this study examines the works of Okolo, Senghor, Nyerere, Nkemkia and the Esan perspectives of African personality. It further affirms and crystallizes the implication of this African concept of being in the

contemporary world. This study aims at re-orienting the African on the knowledge of his personality, which is presently being threatened by brittleness and concludes with the affirmation that the state of Africa, is far beyond affirming a unique quality of inter-relativity in theoretical terms, to a responsibility of contributing pragmatically to human and infrastructural development of Africa in the contemporary world.

Key Words: *Black Skin; Personality; Commualism; African Development; Inter-relativity Responsibility; Pragmatic.*

1. Introduction

In defining the world-view of a people as, "the complex of their belief not attitudes concerning the origin, nature, structure of the universe and the interactions of beings with particular reference to man," Mettuh affirms the African cosmology ontology is, purely anthropocentric. (Wiredu, 1980:60). There is no doubt that this is the energetic force and spring point for Okolo's declaration of "*The African as 'being-with'*" (Okolo, 1993:1) which inspired "*Africanness as 'Being-With': A Critical Re-thinking in African Philosophy*". (Obinyan, 2012:4) Both works addressed the implication of the African conceptualization of the human person.

Many philosophers of African and non-African descent in form of appraisal, critique, recommendations among others, consider the essential characteristics of communal sharing inherent in the African traditional community an identity of the African as a human being in the world. There is no gain-saying that the most popular conceptual reference to being an African therefore, is the fact of inter-relatedness. However, ascertaining what makes this possible with the present African existential predicaments in integrity, value developmental policy collapse in health, economic, political, educational and religious sectors at public offices, private criteria and individual regard has become a function of several scholarly researches to which this is a contribution.

Presently, personhood which emphasizes rich communalistic foundation in African philosophy has attracted opposing appraisals. Due to the existential predicament of Africans, people query the claim as factual pointing out the implication for the African being. This work intends to examine the perspectives of certain African

Philosophers in this respect for a clearer view or understanding of the focal point of the African ontology of being; it is of outmost importance as the predicaments in the continent significantly imply a paradigm-shift deeply impacting the vitality of such loudly echoed wealth of communal consciousness and all-inclusiveness in the African being. In the overall, this study hopes that this new knowledge would guide further study of personhood in Africa, determine areas of possible evolution in the African mode of being and the factors engendering it and construct deeper research directions in all field of study on the contemporary African personality that would form better perspectives to human relations, religious dialogue, political choices, selection/participation, dimensions of social inclusions/involvement and notch on the epistemology of neo-African personality. Let us consider some conceptualizations on the African personality. We shall then proceed to examine the problematic, question its logicality, crystalize its implication for contemporary African development.

2. Conceptualizing African Personality as Communalistic

The communalistic nature of African personality has been theorized by different scholars in different ways. Here, we shall focus on the ideas developed about this by Chukwudumbi Okolo's *' in What is it to be African'? Essay on African Identity;* and Nkafu Nkemnkia's *African Vitology: A Step forward in African Thought*

Okolo emphasizes the need for Africans to engage in self-rediscovery for two main reasons (Okolo, 1993:4).The first reason for this progress of self-consciousness and self-rediscovery arise from the very contents which characterizes the dominant mood of the post-colonial African that is; modern African. Emerging from years of cultural slumber of a systematically 'white value' modeled psyche, ideas and ideal', the African ceaselessly undertakes effort to be first, self-conscious as an African and free himself from the shackles of estrangements. The second reason for this process in more recent times is African philosophy which constantly engaged the Africans in the search for who he is in his cultural characteristics and identity as an African. Forming the

ultimate objective for this doubled headed task of "self-discovery and recovery" which has remained a top priority value according to Okolo is that:

> If the African must win his current battle for progress and development or hopes to overcome his psychological, social and political predicament, he must, it seems to me, equip himself with genuine self-knowledge and self-understanding it however must be said of him that no race or culture group in modem times has taken the Delphic injunction '*know thyself'*, more seriously than the African. (Okolo,1993:I)

'What is it to be African?', therefore, forms the background of Okolo's definition of an 'African' and his introduction; usage and analysis of the phraseology 'being-with'. He declares:

> Whether the African is one people or many, is insignificant in this essay. We rather assert that the African is easily identifiable ontologically or as a being-in-the-African-world. *He is not just a being but a 'being-with'.* (He further noted) … the concept and full import of this uncommon phrase is the main theme and focus of this monograph which is an essay in African metaphysics whose deepest inquiry is the African man. It is indeed a search for African identity. (Okolo:2)

Owing to the second reason for this process of 'self-discovery and recovery', is African philosophy which has unlimitedly, in scope and force, never seize to examine by questioning, to arrive at the '*kpim*', quintessential or true nature of the African (human person) so as to ascertain his/her true identity as a being in the world. That a child is born black and becomes African is a straight-forward assertion of Jaques Maquet (Okolo:5). But what is to become an African? are questions that often eludes the African who is at ones both the asker and the asked. Hence in expressing his dissatisfaction in the disharmonious answer given by anthropologist as to what culturally speaking constitutes an African, Okolo noted that the African to a large extent is philosophically not just a human being as a subject in existence, but essentially, he/she

is a 'being-with' and this constitutes the very claim that he is an "African" and concretize the definition of man as a 'being-with'. This according to him has its place in major metaphysical discourses on the human person and his/her horizon of existence which essentially and practically is relational, that is, towards others in the community. This horizon of being according to Okolo, is self-in-relation-to-other', in fact, a 'being-with-others' and this fundamentally is his/her existence defined. Better put in his words is to note that:

> As a matter of fact, individuals become real only in relationship with others, in a community or group. It is the community which makes the individuals, to the extent that without the community the individual has no existence. Consequently the African is not just a being but a being-with, a being-with-others or as I said elsewhere the African self is "defined in terms of 'we-existence' just as much as 'we' in 'I' existence through social interactions. (Okolo:6)

Okolo's further expression of this intrinsic characteristics that forms the definition of the African as a '*being-with',* implies an hegemonic hold of connection and interrelations of beings whose nexus is deeply rooted in the extended family in which every member both living and dead are connected through a "complex net-work of spiritual relationship into a kind of mystical body"(Ruch and Anyanwu 1981:328) forming its micro dimension and in a relation that wells beyond human subjects of self to self to an ontological level of 'man-with-other' realities in the universe both visible and invisible or the material and the spiritual in a macro-dimension as affirmed by Okolo thus:

> Being-with we said, in short is the humane and socialist attitude to life which is the essential horizon of the African and his mode of being-in-the-world, his concern of man-for-man or an involvement of man-with-and-for-others. It may well be called African brand of humanism but it's not just mere humanism as in Marxism or in naturalistic or radical existentialist

philosophies which terminates its concern with man and for the sake of man and his material universe, so to speak. Whereas 'being-with' as humanism in African philosophy goes beyond the universe of man (and for the sake of man) to include God, spirit, (ancestors inclusive), nature or reality, in its essential extension and dimension. (Okolo 21)

This dimension of the African being, also takes a form of a humane social relation of interconnected existents in which each remains conscious of the other in his action or inaction which directly or indirectly affects the other positively or negatively and in-turn affects his world or community. According to Okolo, this African humanism entails the whole cosmic order or harmonious relationship of one creation with the rest as its ultimate priority; not just the concern of man but a vital one indeed as it constitutes man's good or ill, harmony or disharmony in African metaphysics and world-view. It is indeed being in harmony with reality.

Summarily therefore, this dimension of the African 'being-with', or man as a 'being-with' implies an essentially true and dynamic relation with God the Supreme Being who is the *Alpha* and the *Omega*; the Beginning and End of all things, who is not distant, uncertain or idle a God as noted by early European scholars, but close and accessible. Even though scholars have noted that the precise nature of the 'Supreme Being' and His relationship with other gods is quite elusive, the African has a constant and active relationship in fact an involvement in and with the Supreme Being. This dimension of 'being-with', also means an involvement with spirits especially the dead relatives or ancestors (living-dead) who are dead but yet alive with their particular families with whom the Africans enjoy a closer interaction and communication.

This dimension of the African 'being-with' does not conceived death as the absolute end and final separation of man from communal links like the Marxist and materialist outlook as a deep and continues relationship persists between the living and the dead. Another dimension of 'being-with' as a characteristic of the African mode of being-in-the-world takes the meaning of openness to the world in a form of positive and

sacred worship which solidifies an unlimited relationship between man and nature. Hence Okolo emphasized that:

> The African does not regard the universe or the nature 'out there' as merely thrown into being. Nature is the product of a good God. Nature is not there simply and solely to be exploited, subdued or absolutely conquered. But for the Africans it is to be venerated as the source of his material need, the tomb of his ancestors and shrine of his gods. He obtains his needed material goods not so much by conquering and mastering it as by submitting to it and venerating it as well. Injury or damage to nature is a breach of Cosmic harmony and order which attracts penalty from the gods and when venerated, good fortune and blessings, material and spiritual. (Okolo 24)

Okolo lastly examines 'being-with as a relationship between man and the other man that is, a relationship of 'inter-subjectivity', of individuals with one another, this human social and practically structured relationship, marks the basic distinctive characteristic of the African 'being-with'. But this man with man relationship has a metaphysical foundation. In the African metaphysical analysis, man is the center of all things in the universe, being the centre focus of all things in the universe, he is subjected to its laws which he must consciously obey or bear the pains of its consequences.

Nkemnkia presents man within the context of an African thought that is global. For him, in a society where everything is transmitted through the daily experience of life, the formulation of abstract concepts, is not so important what matters in such societies is the search and discovery of the meaning of life; to emphasize this, the participation of each member of the society/community in the collective experience of life is of great importance. It is on this consideration according to Nkemnkia that the question of man, the world and God can be asked.

Being faced with a difficulty in expressing a possible conclusive definition on man from the African perspective, Nkemnkia channeled a description of interwoven existence in this opinion that;

> The African life is characterized by an organic whole within which it is very difficult to distinguish clearly as the western classical conception does the boundaries of the different realities forming the whole universe of the living. It is difficult to differentiate clearly between man and the world, man and God, God and the world. (Nkafu 102)

Thus due to this difficulty in giving a direct definition of the person of man, Nkemnkia noted that from an anthropological and cosmological perspective, we can reflect on man within the African context by bearing certain existential questions in mind because the meaning of existence is an already given fact. He further stated that:

> Within an African mentality, one should not ask; who is the living "being?" but rather "why" "how come" "for what reason?" is he alive. Thus, the question of man is etiological in nature and tries to justify the present state of his life. Why does man live rather than dies? The question of man is therefore a question of life. (Nkafu 102)

Base on the above analysis, the meaning of life in the definition of man, lies in the category of a relationship centered analysis of man. In this dimension, Nkemnkia defines man in terms of the self and other (relationship) emphasizing that:

> Man is the most social being ever known on earth. This is because he is able to relate to others, with his own kind, with the surrounding world and with God, his creator. For this reason, he is always a member of a society without which he loses his value. Due to the multiplicity of the others, of the individuals, the meaning of life is hidden within the dialectic of the collective or the community. (Nkafu 102)

The human person therefore, can only be defined through his relationship with the other or other beings in the universe, it is therefore out of place to ask oneself 'who am I' without first of all delving into the knowledge of the other self from whom one

eventually discovers himself. Thus the idea that 'I' becomes the 'you' infers that the 'I' always becomes the 'other' who finally is oneself. In this human person dialectics, each person is a 'subsumer' of the other in such a way that any good done to the other is done to oneself. By this communal decorum, thoughts, words and actions of an individual towards another individual are moderated with a natural interrelation sense. From this analogy therefore, 'I' therefore loses itself in the 'you' and the 'you' in the 'we'. Thus in Nkemkia's position, the human person cannot be seen except in the dimension of a being-in relationship-with the other, the world and with God his creator. (Metuh 96)

3. Implication of the African Communitarian Conception of Person

From Okolo and Nkenkia's analysis, the African possesses a psycho-metaphysical understanding of the 'self' shaping especially the rational, spiritual, emotional and auto-transcendental aspects of his personality. Meta-ethical consciousness in the African relation with others would be a consequence of such knowledge therefore. However, the afore-mentioned aptly crystalizes that the personality of an African is essentially formed from a wholistic understanding that existence is inter-relative, participatory and collective hence it is all-inclusive pulling from religious, axiological, epistemological, moral, political perspectives. The ontological consequence of this is that inherent in the African is a deep sense of value for things in participatory existence; sense of meaning in daily pursuit; sense of purpose against given circumstances; sense of morality in thought, actions and words; sense of responsibility in representation and discharge of duty both in public or private offices; sense of sacredness for the spiritual and religious; sense of patriotism in the defense of community affairs and sense of involvement in contributions to the development of the community. Hence when a child is born black and becomes African, these and other qualities are expectations in his conduct everywhere with others, his disposition in public and private offices, his relation with peers, parents and elders, his respect for sacredness, commitment to social and human development, value for human life and other good quality .

Okolo and Nkenkia's analysis ontologically informs a fundamentally natural disposition to 'be-with–others' that is why from the Esan perspective, man is '*Oria no riwiusuagbon*' meaning man is the person who is in the community with others. Justifying this claim is Pantaleaon's position that there an African consciousness that the individual is not a substance rational and abstractly cut off from human and communal links, isolated and alone in an island of his own (Iroegbu, 2000:107b) but a being born into a human community from which he derives not only existence, but also value and identity, goals and capacities to realize himself in communion with-others. Existentializing this analysis Pantaleon introduces the African's ever increasing recognition and affirmation; "I am a 'being-with-other human beings in the community, with the singular and primary mission of communal flourishing in respect, solidarity and liberty"(Iroebgu 102b) and this is crystallized as 'I live in harmony with everything in nature even where there is no existential relation of life'.

From a purely religious dimension, this analysis infers that the African see the human person as a sacred being, possessing the spark of the Supreme Being translating into sense of value and dignity for human life and other lives forms. Mbiti's position is consequent of the above affirmation when he noted that the African "has a deeply religious spirit which is deeply expressed in sacrifice, worship, prayers, and other forms of rituals that ensures the link between him, nature and *super nature*". (Mbiti 39). Thus anthropologically, man is considered as the focus of the universal form with the singular duty to control, promote, protect and utilize nature according to the desire of his maker. In this light, sees the universe in terms of himself and endeavors to live in harmony with everything in nature. Hence even where there is no existential relation of life, African people attribute (mystical) life to it, in order to establish a more direct relationship with the world around them. In this way the visible and invisible parts of the universe are at man's disposal through physical, mystical and religious means. (Mbiti 39)

The analysis also shows a certain conceptualization of a sense of cosmic unity between everything that exist in the universe thus, the African neither sees colour,

shape, or sizes as a threat but a reality to adore and commune with. "From this perspective, there is no distinction between…"(Ali 18) With his/her sense of uniformity and unity in the diverse universe, the African sees himself/herself in terms of the 'other' as he/she relates with the world outside. He/she is neither scared nor arrogant but bold and calm: he cries only when betrayed and fights only when threatened. He/She possess a certain affective attitude towards nature especially towards his fellow man. No wonder for the Esan (African) people in Ali "man is a very complex being and he is mysterious as the earth he lives in, he is created by God". (Ali 18) This also informs Mbiti's idea of the African's cosmological view of reality hence it is true that they attribute (mystical) life to it (Mbiti,:39) in order to establish a more direct relationship with the world around them. In this way the visible and invisible parts of the universe are at his disposal through physical, mystical and religious means.(Mbiti 39) Hence the African is ontologically seen as the *'boostika'* of reality he is at the center and nexus of realities, he can tap their resources to protect, promote and develop his life and that of his community.

It should be borne in mind that there have been stern reactions to the over-emphasis of the 'black personality' and the question of whether it is uniquely identical to the black person. However, that man is a universal phenomenon is non-contestable; but that the Africans needs to be ever conscious of his potentiality not just as a human being and the implications of such communalistic emphasis in a challenging world, is an imperative as such forgetfulness accounts for the crisis of identity, confusions on belongingness and of course the lack of seriousness and resilience of the African youth upon whom the ambiguities of tomorrow await illumination.

4. Contradictions in Contemporary African Personality

Reflecting on the contemporary African predicaments, ranging from Boko-Haram insurgency, Herdsmen Bandit, Xenophobia and their after effect; COVID-19 pandemic, electoral and leadership insincerity, kidnapping, human trafficking and trade in human part, political instability and corruption in public offices, #END SARS# and

Post #END SARS# effect on government-masses relation and the cloud of distrust, total collapse of major sector especially health and education with recurrent ASUU strike action and government swindle etc., the fact that the Africa may not be essentially communal or have value for life might be yet crystalized. This purports us therefore to affirmatively posit that the emphasis of some nationalist scholars that Africans are communalistic and that this is essential to them as a definition of their personality might be illogical as contemporary predicament are incommensurable to the degree of such claims.

The cognates of communalism continue to exercise grips of our intellectual discuss and in the humanities, it arrests illustrations in ethics and religion especially in classroom discussions and instructions on multiple subjects, academic and public conferences on several themes and even family and church instructions on principles of living. But these are hardly rooted and practiced in practical life within societies not even from the instructors in churches and family, the lead speakers in those conferences or the presenters in public offices. Hence there is a divide between theorizing of communalism by Africans and the practice in existential terms. When we move away from these gathering, the individual is faced with a far different coordination in practical life. He finds a society far distant from ethics in conduct and he is suddenly confused and notoriously conditioned to be or not to be. He encounters students whose interest is to pass examination hence have double personalities with uniquely different standards. In this case, the class room instructions and illustrations is to pass exams but outside school, there is a different uploaded functioning personality, principles and dispositions. So also we find in the society, individuals with principles and mode of living far distant from the good instructions and admonitions within the family and church although this is not to say some families are lacking in this as they are already consumed with the harsh realities of a euphoric communalistic Africa. The academic, public officer in political offices-governors, senators, local government chairmen, chancellors etc., lives differently from what he professes all the display during presentations /speaking in

public and private echelons are 'acting' of pseudo conviction behind the scene is a different personality. Having been confronted with these realities, an individual possessing the right disposition, a good sense of patience, sense of believe in hard-work, sense of responsibility and sense of morality, bearing some little hope for a better future, begins to weight his conscience alongside what he wants, how to achieve it and what ways are conventionally available to achieve it. We can tell the result.

There are no longer distant reasons for us Africans to be surprised at why we linger in a blurred rail or vicious circle of underdevelopment, the problem is within, it is caused by enemies within. Consider Nigeria as a case in question. We have leaders whose interests are not for the development of the country but themselves. For this reason, they preach paper policies and paper development that are not transient in the sectors of the nation. The lingering collapse of the Educational sectors coupled with the ASUU strike, the COVID 19 experience which exposed a number of weaknesses in our health sector, economic sector and the inexperience of heads of government who engaged systematic looting as instrument of governance. This lead to spiral spread of knowledge of betrayal of trust between government-citizens due to share government irresponsibility to citizen's welfare and security resulting to an #END SARS# protest that awarded the country an 'internal historic embarrassment' with clash of reports from government, the military, the protesters, the citizens and CNN. To speak of the palliative conspiracy, citizen's response and the eventual shameful reaction from state governors is to manage the litany of issues. Our leaders are concerned about their families, stomach and bank accounts hence they do more of covetousness and other selfish practices distant from the ideals of communalism. Communalism is on paper and lips of government and this to a large extent confuses the remaining few moral and responsible individuals, retards the remaining few upright public servants and deconstructs the individuals believe in the objectives of patriotism.

Although we have leaders and Africans who still have a dint of communal spirit in them judging from their attitude to life and dispositions to development in both

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public and private offices such as a remaining few in the academic who have honorably passed on and a remaining dedicated few alive and sacrificing their time and professionalism whose list is unending Jonathan of Nigeria, Rawlings of Ghana, Kagame of Rwanda. However, we can argue that this is not due to the essentiality and fundamentality of communalism to the African personality as argues by some scholars but a humane desire for a better world and the commitment to make it. What could be the reason for the paradigm shift in African communalism of inclusion and unity to racism, sectionalism and tribalism; from sacredness and spirituality to desecration of human life social destructive ritualism/ritual practices and incantations as well as religious conflict and fanatic brain-wave manipulation of members; from high moral standards to highly cherished and legally protected immorality; from diligent and responsible public officers to professional public '*robbfficers*' who steal and transfer public funds to foreign accounts to improve foreign infrastructure and economic development; from politically organized committed and sensitive leaders to uncommitted and insensitive leaders who hide public funds in soak away, water tanks; moneys in different currencies from which a meager percentage can transform such communities into human habitable environment having at least the indexes of development. We at risk molding a generation of economic underdevelopment, irresponsible elders, violent and self-centered youth, mentally weak and 'give-up' adults should continue in this imaginary untrue 'communalism sea of dreams'.

In other climes the logic of change and development of human societies is a historical fact. A fact and a truth because it carries in itself the information that a society must necessarily go through certain stages of growth and development and a reality because major frontline societies have gone through these stages. May be from the primitive, to traditional, to agricultural, industrial and then to modern or contemporary society. This is a process common to many developed nations around the globe such as Europe, America, China, France and so many others who have developed from primitive states to modern contemporary metropolitan nations. If it is granted that these

nations have gone through these stages, then it is true that there was a time when they were primitive, traditional and at one time or another, would inescapably have engaged communal sense of living in their daily activities especially among family members at the nuclear level where numbers are few and commitment to each other was unavoidable, possibly a common lifestyle among all other families in that area and in this setting. Suppose this was the stage of the African before and during contact with the white hence thought to be communal? Suppose also in post-colonial time African societies experienced a certain level of exposure to the world around and discovered they were not the only existents in the world thus opening up need for communication and evolution. Other tendencies of sustainability and continuity or mode of living would therefore have been adopted, which upon application, illuminated their ideas and marked another climax of development and consequent demystification of their previous traditional/'communal' life styles as families would have extended, men would become internal and secretive, market system would have contacted advanced economic adjustment according to the standards of living, communal policies would evolved and many other changes and transformation would have taken place, touching fundamentally the traditional conditions and most interestingly, the idea of communalism. Would this not have redefined their characteristics and personality? If it does, will the society still be communal? Or is it the case that it is not essential to the Africans but to every traditional society in the globe? If it is, then scholars must be questioned as dynamism, change, evolution, transformation etc., are one of the many facts of human existence as man is a transcendental being but ontologically, a being with the quality of auto-transcendence.

While we bask in the euphoria of our uniqueness as communalistic people, we seem to forget the enormous responsibility we have to prove it and see it as a means towards contributing pragmatically to African development in a fast globalizing world. Thus we must put together all aspect of our personality especially the rational, moral and auto-transcendental as there is a lot to revitalize and we cannot do this except we

put together our ideas, potentials, constructiveness and originality as the development of Africa is now our project. In this dimension, there is no excuse to our historical past. We have far moved beyond our past and if there are any place in Africa we still have in-transparency and in-humane leaders, dehumanization, loss of value for life due to share blood spilling, corruption, human trafficking, human rituals, domestic violence and so many others, it is not because we are not communal but because we are developing from one stage of society to another and therefore measures for curbing or averting such must be invented and executed. Hence those charged with the responsibility of social stability must braze up their task to the recent demands. The ASUU strike and dialogue with government, post #End SARS# panel and several other measures social change/revolutions are steps in the right direction. Africa must wakeup and it shouldn't stop with the youth. It must move around the institutions of the society and sectors of nations in the continent. We must commit government and individuals to give account of service. We must become proactive to psychological and societal change as the African psych and society is totally bastardized, brutalized and dehumanized. We must wakeup values in the family, peer group, church and schools. We must work together to correct such age long conventional errors. We must put practically this attitude or the Afro-centric doctrine to translations of development from the human to our economic, social, cultural and political perspectives.

5. Conclusion

From our analysis so far, we can deduce that epistemic foundation of the emphasis that the African's are communalistic and its imports has essentially been the thrust of the preceding analysis. But there lies a lacuna which this ontological analysis essentially fills. Although 'black skin' ontology speaks qualities and characteristics such as familyhood, '*Usuagbon'*,or '*Ujamaa'* like other ontologies but in this dimension, it speaks a contract of solidarity between all nations, if we are to realize a

rational relationship not only between individuals, but also between groups and peoples. It goes beyond emphasizing a dignified and distinctive personal identity in theoretical terms to laying concrete in existential terms what it is to be so defined in living experience especially in our contemporary world.

It is even more problematic as these affirmations have been made by African philosophers. It is with all precision that we affirm that this conceptual analysis of man wells from the facts of traditional African way of life in the past but whether such should form the basis of their world-view is a fundamental problem in present scholarship to some measures. This work calls for consciousness and re-discovery of the African personality to ensure that our minds and attitude are transformed from insensitivity and self-centeredness to be more socially responsible as individuals (Obinyan 10), as parents, as leaders, as religious heads, family people, as a community as this would change our ugly picture for the better.

From all indications this study is a contribution to scholar advocacy for the continuous study of man and his nature. It also contributes to the study of man as a universal being even though present in different environmental conditions. Towards illuminating the essence of the African personality in the contemporary world the need to bracket communalism as an essentiality of the African person is a step in the right direction.

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Issues and Realities of Graduates Unemployment in Nigeria: What the Church can do to Solve the Problem

Alabi, T.

Department of Sociology, University of Abuja, Abuja Nigeria;
luckytope4j@yahoo.co.uk &
&

Adeola, K. A.

Department of Philosophy and Religion, University of Abuja, Abuja Nigeria;
08056517975
kehinde.adeola@uniabuja.edu.ng

Abstract

The problem of graduate unemployment has attained alarming proportions. Every year the universities in Nigeria turn out thousands of graduates into a labour market that can only absorb a fraction of the numbers. The vast majority of such graduates are unable to acquire any form of employment, either with the government institutions or the private sector. Graduate unemployment which has resulted to urbanization, feelings of security and exclusion from mainstream society, poverty, ill-health and suicide, disintegrated families, the alarming proliferation of crime such as armed robbery, prostitution, human trafficking, child and drug abuse etc, the resultant effect of graduate unemployment remains an ugly challenge before the government, the church and every right-thinking Nigerian. The current state of graduate unemployment in Nigeria requires shared responsibility to tackle it. It will take the "power of We" to bring it to a standstill, considering the fact that the government alone cannot solve the problem of graduate unemployment. This Study which is analytical in nature looks at the church as a social institution that has a positive role to play in curbing the problem of graduate unemployment in Nigerian society. The Study indicates that the church is taking a considerable percentage in the fight against graduate unemployment by providing job opportunities, entrepreneurship platforms, mentorship and moral support to ensure graduate self-reliance and resourcefulness. In conclusion, the study, therefore, urges the government to create an enabling environment for Christian organizations to strive in entrepreneurship development in order to generate the required workforce for graduate employability, self-reliance, and resourcefulness.

KEYWORDS: Unemployment, Graduate, University education, The Church, Workforce, Entrepreneurship.

1. Introduction

The problem of chronic graduates' unemployment is very evident in Nigeria. Every year thousands of graduates from various schools are turned out for whom there are no jobs. Nigerian streets and busy high ways are littered with hawkers (including graduates) who ordinarily should have found gainful employment in some enterprise. The self-employed are in quandary as scant infrastructure makes it impossible for them to ply their trade (Okafor 358 – 373).

Employment problems in developing societies like Nigeria have assumed different dimensions. There are underemployment cases in which people receive incomes that are inadequate to support their basic needs - food, shelter, and clothing. There are also cases of disguised unemployment where people, especially graduates take up jobs that are below their educational attainment and experiences. The worst case of all graduates' employment problems is that of a situation in which people are willing and seeking job opportunities but they cannot find either in the public or private sectors Some people are willing and ready to set up enterprises themselves and engage in one type of economic activity or the other but are constrained by the prevailing poor socio-economic and political environment. All these have contributed significantly to the high level of unemployment and poverty in Nigeria as well as other developing countries (Oni; Onwioduokit).

The information and data on employment are often obsolete or deficient which has made employment assessment either irrelevant or non-useful for policymaking. Because of the lack of commensurate employment opportunities to the ever-growing population of graduates in Nigeria, the direct and indirect effects have been felt in the society. Media reports, reports from security agencies, and day-to-day experiences in Nigeria have strongly established the truism of unemployed graduates as well as youths' involvement in highly and heinous crimes in the society as a way of responding to their problems. Such crimes include robbery, prostitution, restlessness and civil unrest, organized crimes, marital breakdown, fraudulent activities amongst others.

Employment problems confronting this Nigerian "intellectual reserved army" have also been linked to an increase in urban poverty and slum, oversea-green pasture syndrome, insecurity of life and properties, poverty, and social inequality in Nigeria (Oni; Onwioduokit). Based on these aforementioned issues, the authors are interested in examining the problems and implications of graduates' unemployment in Nigerian society.

2. Graduates Unemployment in Nigeria: The Trends

After the 1967-1970 civil war in Nigeria, the incidence of graduates' unemployment was suspected, rumoured, and feared (Fajana). In this regard Vremudia. P. Diejomaoh in a 1979 study conducted at the human resource unit of the University of Lagos found that the incidence of graduate unemployment between 1965 and 1972 was not a serious problem contrary to what is being dreaded. Similarly, (Gilbert 51 – 70) in his work released 2010, attributed whatever level of graduate unemployment (presumably small) during the period 1960s and 1970s to slow bureaucratic machinery for the processing of application for jobs and the influence system might have caused some graduates to remain temporarily unemployed for the first few months after graduation.

However, (Adebayo) observed that at a time there were shortages of medical doctors, graduate teachers and engineers, while agriculture graduates were under-utilized. He asserted the trends changed greatly from the 1980s to date. As a result, the number of universities has increased together with their curricular being expanded (Fafunwa). The motivation for the establishment of private universities was in part a response to unprecedented demand by Nigerians for higher education which has further increased the number of graduates in Nigeria (Adebayo & Ogunrinda).

From the available statistics, the problem of unemployment has posed a great challenge to many developed and developing societies as well. In recent times, it cuts across all facets of age groups, gender, geographical region and educational status. According to (Oni), the unemployment rate in Nigeria rose from 4.3% in 1980 to 8.4% in 1999. (Gbosi) linked this increase to the instabilities in the socio-political setting and

inconsistent economic policies experienced in Nigeria in the late 1980s and 1990s. As a result of these socio-economic and political conditions during this period, companies were closed down; the few that struggled to stay in operation were performing below capacity and were forced to retrench their workers. Furthermore, aside from disengaging over 24,000 persons from the Federal Civil Service during the period; Akintoye, asserted that the government also placed an embargo on employment. This aggravated the problem of unemployment in the country.

Below is a table showing the unemployment trend in Nigeria, this graphically shows that since 1974, unemployment has been on the increase and all attempt to abate it has failed. The situation looks like the nation is swimming against the tide because every year, our Universities keep producing new graduates when those on the ground are yet to be settled.

Table 1: Trend of graduate unemployment in Nigeria

Year	Graduate Unemployment rates	General National unemployment rate
1974	0.3*	
1983	0.2*	
1985	3.3*	
1990	4.0*	
1992	4.9*	
1993	4.0*	
1994	4.8*	
1995	5.8*	
1996	12.4*	
1997	13.9*	
1999	14.8	8.2
2001	12.6	13.6
2003	16.5**	14.8
2009	19.3**	19.7**
2010	21.1**	21.4**
2011	21.9**	23.1**

Source: (Obadan and Odusola), (Akinyemi, Ofem and Ikuenomore)

Analysis of the unemployment rate during this period suggests that unemployment is higher among people with no basic education. Persons without school education accounted for 76.8% of total unemployment rates in 1974. However, the incidence of unemployment among post-secondary graduates has increased over time. The rate decreased from 0.3% in 1974 to 0.2% in 1983. It increased to 3.3%, 4.0% and

4.9% in 1985, 1990 and 1992 respectively. The level of post-secondary unemployment rate increased significantly to 18.4% in 1996 and peaked at 20.9% in 1997 (Obadan and Odusola). As of 2003, graduate unemployment rate had increased to 16.5% and further to 19.3% in 2009 (Akinyemi, Ofem and Ikuenomore). This number increases annually with new sets of graduates. The high rate of graduate unemployment in Nigeria today has prompted the majority of recent graduates to find means to start postgraduate programmes, or look for opportunities to flee the country (K/Mata 16).

World Bank Reports (2010), reveals that wage employment declined by about 30% in Nigeria despite appreciable economic growth. This growth, according to (Vremudia), was described as jobless and unfruitful growth because it has not translated into jobs and real economic opportunities for its teeming young population. (Akingbemi et al) asserted that the high rate of graduate unemployment according to her has forced most graduates to take jobs that do not relate to their objectives. Moreover, the remunerations from these jobs are just means of subsistence and not enough to adequately take care of their needs and those of their families. This viewpoint was supported by *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Special Report* (2010) which posits that because of the problem of unemployment in the country, Nigerian graduates take jobs that are not related to their training.

3. Graduate Unemployment in Nigeria: An Overview

Several reasons have been adduced for the high rate of graduate unemployment in Nigeria by various scholars. These reasons as argued by (Fajana); (Ibeh); (Awogbile and Iwuamadi); (Adejobi); (Utomi), ranging from population growth, unbridled migration, stagnation in the manufacturing sector, poor funding of intervention efforts, business depression in the private sector, dwindling education standard, financial sector crisis, poor agricultural development, corruption, among others.

(Ibeh and Adejobi) argue that some of these factors included are not only limited to population growth, unbridled migration, stagnation in the manufacturing sector, poor funding of intervention efforts, business depression in the private sector,

ineffective government policies, dwindling education standard, financial sector crisis, poor agricultural development and corruption (Ibeh). (Awogbile and Iwuamadi) however contend that in recent times, emphasis is being placed on the employability of Nigerian graduates. Employers of labour and government officials have continued to question the ability of a typical Nigerian graduate to perform basic and elementary tasks as letter and proposal writing. They claim that most graduates are not properly positioned for a fiercely competitive labour market and disadvantaged to earn the confidence of employers (Dabalen & Oni, Adekola). This problem is further aggravated by the proliferation of mushroom institutions, inadequate funding, and frequent disruption in academic activities due to strikes and closure of schools, poor quality of teaching, inconsistent and poor education policies. (Fnae et al), contend that many factors have all contributed to the sharp decline in education quality in Nigeria and went on to highlight the causes of graduate unemployment in Nigeria thus: long period of initial unemployment among university graduates; faulty manpower planning; economic recession; increase in the number of expatriate workers; the institution of NYSC, collective bargaining process; relocation problems; capital intensive production system; formal-informal sector differentials; and rural-urban migration are jointly responsible for the high rate of graduate unemployment in Nigeria.

(Fnae et al) assert that the banking industry was one of the highest employers of graduates in the past decade. Every year, through graduate trainee programmes, the banks recruited a number of fresh graduates in response to their expansion strides. However, the crisis in the sub-sector as a result of the global economic downturn of 2008 has halted this trend and even led to some banks downsizing in recent times thereby increasing the number of unemployed graduates. Most banks that conducted graduate trainee programmes on annual basis have stopped such programmes. (Arugbenle & Iwuamadi), to save cost, most banks now engage the services of OND holders as contract staffs to perform tasks hitherto performed by graduates.

Fnae et al assess the poor state of the agricultural sector in Nigeria has been significantly contributed to the problem of graduate unemployment in Nigeria. In the 1960s, the agricultural sector contributed over 60% of GDP and employed over 70% of the labour force. The sector has experienced a slide in its fortune as a result of the emergence of the oil sector. By 1998, the contribution of agriculture to employment had declined to 32.5%. (Izukchukwu) opines that between the periods 2003 and 2011, the contribution of agriculture to employment had plunged significantly.

Fajana notes that the high rate of graduate unemployment was more as a result of constant government engagements of foreign companies in handling major projects in the country. He added that these foreign firms bring their workers as expatriates, who are less qualified than jobless Nigerian graduates, to compete for jobs that ordinarily are meant for Nigerians. He cited the example of Brazil and Mexico whose oil industries are manned to a large extent by their indigenous companies. However, this claim has been countered by (Arowolo) who argues that the presence of expatriates in jobs is not the cause of graduate unemployment. Nevertheless, this factor is important when addressing the problem of graduate unemployment in Nigeria.

Fnae et al also observe that lack of basic infrastructures such as electricity, good roads, security, contribute to the high rate of graduate unemployment in Nigeria. Small and medium scale industries, as well as light manufacturing companies which would have employed teeming graduates, are gradually going into extinction due to lack of these basic infrastructures. Others are relocating to countries such as Ghana, Togo and Benin Republic where the business environments are more favourable, cost of doing business is less expensive, security of lives and assets are assured and appropriate infrastructures are provided (Fnae et al). From these scholars, it is observed that they addressed the causes of graduate unemployment from the structural point of view.

Omobola in her view traces the nation's graduate unemployment problem to three root causes which include graduates' definition of a job, expectations, and competitiveness. She stressed that graduates should be made aware of what a job is.

According to her, graduates see a job as an air-conditioned room with a computer on a desk, and a car attached to it. She maintained that graduates need reorientation concerning what a job entails, saying that there is a general awareness that recent graduates overestimate their capabilities and as a result, they expect high rewards from their employers.

This, she explained, is swiftly brewing into a problem of under-capacity as people are promoted faster than their capabilities. "As graduates settle to work, their expectations must be managed" as graduates are not competitive both at getting and keeping jobs, emphasizing that unless they are able and ready to compete on their own merit, graduates cannot succeed in the employment market. It was opined that the mindset of parents and employers' vis-a-vis certificates must be reversed as more graduates are not skilled for industries that have skill gaps. She advised educational institutions to carry out a survey that could beam the searchlight on industries with skill gaps and what the skill gaps are intending to fill them with the right employees.

People's attention was drawn to the pathetic situation of the nation's education system when she asked anyone present at the forum who is presently practicing in the field he/she studied in the university to indicate by raising their hands; to the amazement of participants, only four out of the forty members of the audience were indeed practicing what they studied in the university. This development, she affirmed, indicates that certificates only show we went to school, further de-emphasizing the role of certificates in choosing a career. Therefore, an appeal was made to members of the audience to contribute to national development by investing in people as such investments would reduce the level of insecurity presently witnessed in the country.

4. The Effects of Unemployment

Numerous claims have been made about the effects of mass unemployment on society. Usually, the effects have been seen as detrimental to society. (Omobola), (Alabi and Alanana) argue that unemployment devalues or debases the standard or quality of life in society. They believe it does so in the following way: Those remaining at work

feel less secure and may have their standard of living threatened. This is partly because of short-time working and reductions in the amount of overtime working and partly due to the reduced bargaining power of workers, which leads to downward pressure on wages.

Fajana however, asserted that general unemployment makes the workforce become less willing to leave unsatisfactory or unsatisfying jobs because of their fear that they will not be able to find new employment. It becomes less mobile and the number of frustrated and alienated workers increases. Divisions within society grow. The employed and those in unsatisfying work may blame weak groups in the society for their problems.

Onvioduovit believes high unemployment reduces the chance of equality of opportunity being achieved. With a surplus of labour, employers need no longer make an effort to recruit women, ethnic minorities, the young and the old, the disabled or former inmates of prisons or ex-mental disorder persons.

Alabi & Alanana argue that unemployment among the youths leads to alienation of some members of the society. Those who have never worked feel that they have no stake in society. Since they are not members of unions they lack the institutional means to express their discontent. According to (Okafor), this helped to create subculture of violence in some inner-city areas of Nigeria and contributed to the urban riots in recent time.

Many social problems have been linked to unemployment. (Sheila and Alan) argued that the links between unemployment and a wide range of social problems have been made by academics, politicians and journalists. Ill-health, premature death, attempted suicide, marriage breakdown, child battering, racial conflicts, and football hooliganism are a few of the examples that have been cited.

Many of these can be seen as the effects of unemployment on the individual rather than on society. However, they also have implications for society. If

unemployment does cause or contribute to these problems, then it may threaten the stability of society by undermining the family and causing racial tension and crime. Solving these problems also has economic cost. For instance, greater expenditure may be required in the National Health Insurance Schemes (NHIS) to finance the treatment of those who become ill due to unemployment. Unemployment had direct economic cost as well. (John Maclnnes) points that government expenditure on benefits rises with increased unemployment. The government also loses the tax revenue it would have received if the unemployed had been working.

Graduate initial unemployment and idleness have an adverse psychological, social, occupational and financial effect on them (Fashoyin and Fajana). Unemployment has serious effects both on their present living conditions and their outlook in the future and on the society in which they are supposed to be part. In particular, young people in this situation feel that they must find work, no matter what. At the beginning of the search period, they look for jobs suited to their qualifications, training or trade but later on they look for any kind of work (Hayes and Nutman, Hawkins) and any kind of pay (Kay) Unemployment and under-employment may cause people to flee the rural areas, move about or migrate. Research findings by Hayes and (Nutman) indicated that in a period characterized by a permanent stable high unemployment situation, there will be considerable increase in deaths due to cardiovascular diseases and cirrhosis of the liver and murders too.

In summary, (Fajana) opined that unemployment can lead to the following: loss of status, loss of prestige and economic strength or power as a result of the loss of wages and benefits of job, infliction of psychological injury as a result of the breakdown in social contacts and isolation from the world of work. Also, loss of responsibility, identity and respect which the position at work ensures, loss of purchasing power, loss of union check-off dues, loss of production and stunting of gross national product, reduction in the payroll tax revenues of the state.

The high rate of graduate unemployment in recent times is not without implications. (Adejumobi) concludes that the 2011 crisis in Tunisia is a typical example of what mass unemployment could cause. Unemployment can lead to frustration and suicide. It can also result in political thuggery, crime, high profile scams, prostitution, drug trafficking, kidnapping and youth militancy, among others.

Despite the strength of many of these claims about the negatives of unemployment, they should be treated with some caution. (Allen and Watson) suggested that each problem linked with unemployment may be caused by a complex of interrelating factors. However, it can be difficult to isolate the effects of unemployment from other variables.

5. Efforts Made by the Church in Solving Unemployment Problem in Nigeria

There is hardly any doubt that the church in Nigeria is very much aware of the problem of graduate unemployment in the nation. Both African and Christian traditions enjoin work and abhor laziness. In a similar vein, the Bible teaches that God mandates humanity to work for the domination and beautification of the world. (Genesis 2:15), and that it is from the sweat of man that he will feed (Genesis 3:19). Marx Weber underscores the unique role of Christianity in the growth of capitalism in his book titled: The Protestants Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism. When he asserted that Christianity emphasized disciplined work ethics, and rational orientation to life which when consistently pursued leads to accumulated savings useful for future investments.

Apostle Paul in his second letter to the Thessalonian church asserts that anyone that will not work should not be allowed to eat (Thessalonica 3:10). To buttress the importance of work, the Lord Jesus is quoted as saying "my father goes on working and so do I" (John 5:17)

The foregoing indicates that the church in Nigeria is very much aware of the problem of graduate unemployment, poor condition of service and prevalent misery in the country. The following measures under listed are means which the church has used

in curbing graduate unemployment in Nigeria. These include: Role Modelling/ Moral support; Job opportunities; Financial support and Entrepreneurship etc.

5.1 Role Modelling/Moral Support

The church in Nigeria is known for constantly providing modelling/moral support for its unemployed graduates in the pew. As noted earlier on, the Christian church encourages work or labour at all cost and abhors idleness. Unproductiveness equals sin because he that is unable to cater for his household is worse than an infidel (1Timothy 5:8). Idleness is also forbidden because an idle man the Bible refers to him as the devils' workshop (Proverbs 19:15). Apostle Paul blatantly opined that "he that does not work should not eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Bearing in mind all these scriptural moral principles, the church encourages its unemployed graduates to be resourceful by all means thereby enhancing their productivity and self-reliability.

5.2 Job Opportunities

The church organisation in Nigeria has provided job opportunities for millions of Nigerians at present. This among others include the "Clergy Profession" which comprises of Priests, Pastors, Presbyters, and Reverends to mention but a few. Practitioners of this profession earn a living on it and it reduces the number of persons that would have being unemployed. Also most church organisations require the services of professional career men and women like Accountants, Medical and Legal practitioners, professional Musicians, Architects and Quantity Surveyors, Engineers etc. for administrative purpose and conveniences.

Worthy of note is the educational sector that has been untaken by Christian organisations. There is a high percentage of church organisations in Nigeria that owns one form of school or the other, ranging from nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. Living Faith Church aka Winners Chapel for example has Kingdom Heritage Model School for nursery and primary education, Faith Academy for secondary education and Covenant/Landmark University for degree programmes. Likewise the Baptist Church, with numerous Baptist Nursery and Primary Schools,

Baptist Secondary schools all over Nigeria. Two schools of Nursing and Midwifery, Baptist Hospitals, Teaching Hospitals, and Bowen University.   These schools in turn provide job opportunities for career men and women ranging from resource instructors, accountants, administrators and so on. Without doubt, a lot of Churches have accounted for millions of employments especially for the youths in Nigeria. At present, there are over twenty-five (25) universities owned and controlled by church-based organizations in Nigeria which provide millions of job opportunities to the unemployed graduate youths and other professionals in Nigeria.

5.3 Financial Support

Another medium by which the church has served as a rescue force to unemployed graduates is by providing monetary support to its challenged/ unemployed graduates. This financial support is rendered basically as a form of empowerment to ensure self-reliance and productivity. Mostly the system or mode in which these churches render this financial support is basically to its local members, these notwithstanding, non-members too often benefit from their benevolence. They give seed money to businesses just starting and revolving loans to already existing business owners within the Church. Some churches go the extra mile to establish cooperative societies for members of like minds this cooperative group serves as backbone for members in times of financial difficulties because the interest at which the loan is given is relatively low compared to the banks. The easy access to the loan and the flexible repayment plans make the cooperative society very attractive to members. Some churches provide 'seed money' also for their youths to start small businesses. Since this is not a loan to be refunded, a lot of youth, actually started businesses like recharge card retails, phone repairs, etc using the seed money provided by the church.

5.4 Entrepreneurship

It is becoming necessary to highlight the importance of religious groups, particularly Christian church organizations in spreading not only the gospel of Jesus Christ but also of business formation or simply put entrepreneurship.

Drawing inferences mainly from Christian denominations in Nigeria, the key role they play in the arousal of entrepreneurial appetite include education, creation of social and business networks, contribution to literature bank, business seminars and role modelling.

Despite the lack of conclusive data on the entrepreneurial orientation of church organisations in Nigeria, it is not negotiable that the individual characteristics and structural conditions of church organisation favours entrepreneurship development. For example, there are over 25 universities owned and controlled by Christian churches in Nigeria, there are business networks like printing press e.g. Dominion printing press owned by Living Faith Church, entertainment industry e.g. Mountain of Fire football club, Mount Zion movies to mention but a few. From the foregoing, it is crystal clear that the church in Nigeria through entrepreneurship platforms has been able to provide relief to the challenges of graduate unemployment in Nigeria.

Emmanuel Baptist Church, Ilorin, got a vast land in Tanke area Ilorin and built structures housing equipments for the training of youths in various entrepreneurial skills. Tailoring (fashion design) cake and confectionaries, photography, cinematography, computer training (hardware and software), tie and dye, etc. The training are offered free of charge to all interested youths, besides, mentorship is also provided for those youths after the training. Small capital by way of take-off grants is also made available to those with a good business proposal (Adeola).

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

The deliberate efforts made by different religious groups' particularly Christian church organization to stimulate entrepreneurship development and studies cannot go unnoticed by present-day researchers and those interested in the field of entrepreneurship. Some of the interventions are in the educational sector, creation of

social and business networks, preaching of the prosperity gospel, contribution to literature bank by Christian authors, business seminars and role modelling among a host of other contributions. The government, civic groups and development partners must seek ways to complement the church organisation to do more in venture creation in order to create the necessary workforce required for graduates' employability, self-reliance and resourcefulness.

Given the high level of unemployment in Nigeria, the development of entrepreneurship skills and initiatives should be of paramount importance especially in the higher education sector to facilitate the employability of graduates who will increasingly be called upon to be not only job seekers but above all to be job creators. Nigeria is at its lowest ebb in human capital development and utilization because of its inadequate educational system which tends to produce more of those who lack job skills for employment than those the economy requires to remain vibrant. In view of this, to attack unemployment then, there is the need to restructure the educational system in respect of manpower production for the collective needs of Nigerian society. Vocational skills should be given high priority, as it is capable of generating self-employment. The technological institution in the country should be properly funded and equipped to ensure efficiency. Prior to entrance into higher institutions. College students should be made to understand the implication of the large number of people acquiring academic certificates without practical skills in the present Nigerian society. This would motivate the young people to opt for training (inform of entrepreneur education) that would earn them job independence afterward.

Also, for entrepreneur education to make the required impact in our economy, the Ministry of Education, and the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) should work together with all other relevant institutions and agencies to design new curricula on entrepreneurship education. Also, Government should create Institute of Entrepreneurship Education that would from time to time review the curricula and ensure standard and quality control in implementation and in providing

financial and technical assistance to graduates of the Nigerian higher institutions. The institute could focus on four main areas:

Providing a strategic framework that will include the vision of entrepreneurship education.

Reviewing and redesigning entrepreneurship education curricula in line with the Nigerian peculiar developmental needs. Implementation of the programmes and providing technical assistance to entrepreneurship education graduates who want to go into some businesses.

Assessing and evaluating the success of the programme. There is need to provide jobs because when people are unemployed, they still survive somehow, devising dubious means and involving selves in nefarious activities like armed robbery, pickpocketing, prostitution, car snatching among others; there is a need to make our school system functional. Anyone that has spent four years in a school should be able to do something to help himself.

In conclusion, therefore, for Nigeria to reposition her graduates and young people in general for the eradication of unemployment, there would be need to transform them into confident, aggressive and purposeful individuals. The ideal profile for emerging professionals (products of our ivory towers) with respect to entrepreneurial education, would include a strong scientific, technical and factual base with good background information and research skills. Government alone cannot take on the challenge, religious organizations because of their close affinity with the people at the grass-root should be encouraged and motivated to train young people.

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The Gbagyi/Gbari People of Nigeria: Social and Religious Life

Adeola Kehinde Adedayo,

Department of Christian Religious
Studies, University of Abuja;
08056517975;
kehinde.adeola@uniabuja.edu.ng
&

Umaru-Abdullahi Esther Vinze,

Department of Religious Studies, Kaduna
State University (KASU); 08060174171
& Noah Salasi Hassan, Department of
Christian Religious Studies, University of
Abuja, 08133299101
&

Noah Salasi Hassan,

Department of Christian Religious
Studies, University of Abuja,
08133299101

Abstract

Gbagyi/Gbari ethnic group have a unique language and culture, they are known to be peaceful and loving. Spread over five states in the middle belt of Nigeria. The Gbagyi tribe is one of the largest groups in the north, in population (next to the Hausa, Fulani and the Tiv's). An estimate of their population is about 4-5 million. Despite the numerical strength and strategic location in the central part of Nigeria, and with a robust religious and social life, the Gbagyi people, remain relatively obscure. This work, therefore, seeks to bring to light the activities of the Gbagyi people leaving in the middle belt of Nigeria. The Gbagyi's are religious and their social life and actions are guided by the way they relate with themselves and their neighbors, therefore, the socio-cultural and political ties among the Gbagyi's, religious and social ties and inter religious interactions is of major interest in this paper. Sociocultural approach was adopted because of the way the internal workings, of the cultural values of the Gbagyi people, has affected their society; to achieve this, deskwork which will deal mainly with literature search, and drawing of conclusions was adopted. The social, religious, political and economic life of the Gbagyi people in the face of modernity, has adjusted well bringing out a beautiful blend between the ancient and modern. The people are

known to be lovers of peace, they should continue as peace-loving people but should evolve means of uniting each of the federating units scattered all over the middle-belt of Nigeria, so they can speak with one voice because a people united can never be defeated.

1. Introduction

There are different religions in the world, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam to mention but a few. Scholars of religion have given themselves to the study of these religions. In the case of the Gbagyi social life and religion which we are considering in this paper, very little is known about it. One reason this is so is that like any other African traditional religion the source of information available is mainly oral history, which is stories passed down from one generation to the other. Another reason for this could be the fact that they do not have any written scriptures unlike religions like Christianity and Islam that have the Holy Bible and the Glorious Qur'an. As a direct consequence of the aforementioned facts, the information we have about the Gbagyi religion are those given by foreign investigators, who do not have first-hand information and therefore know little or nothing about the religion of the Gbagyi people. This could be the reason why Gbagyi religion has been misinterpreted, misrepresented and misunderstood by so many people in so many quarters. No wonder different derogatory terminologies were used to describe the religion of the Africans in time past, such as fetishism, idolatry, Animism, Primitive (Awolalu and Dopamu 18). Today, Gbagyi scholars who know more about the social life and religion are now trying to give the correct interpretation of the social life and religion of the Gbagyi/Gbari people. The Gbagyi people celebrate a number of festivals and initiations that serves as an avenue of socialization: arts and crafts, marriage rites, music festival, and leisure activities like hunting, fishing, cloth weaving, soap making, etc., Our concern in this paper are to shed more light on who the Gbagyi people are and a glimpse into some aspects of their social and religious life.

2. Who are the Gbagyi people?

The name Gbagyi was the original name of the people, not Gwari as they are

being called by many Nigerians. The name Gwari as they are called by the Hausas is an adulterated form of the word Gbagyi. This came about because of the difficulty they encountered whenever they want to pronounce the word "Gbagyi". Some also use the word 'Gwari' in derogatory terms that is why the Gbagyi people quickly assert that they are Gbagyi and not Gwari. The name Gbagyi according to Koce, was derived from a popular tree called "Gbayi" in the native language. The tree, however, produces fruits that attract some blackbirds to it. At the same time, the fruit has some black ants that reside in it whenever it was ripe. To this end, the tree was conceived to represent the Gbagyi race, the blackbird as external exploiter and the black ants that reside in it as exploiters living among the Gbagyi (Koce 7). According to Adeola and Ayuba, they were also known either as Gwaris or as Gbaris "Matayis" or "Yammas," (Adeola and Ayuba 77-92) however, they prefer to be addressed as Gbagyi people.

The Gbagyi are a group of people whose language belongs to the branch of Niger-Congo family. The language is closely related to Nupe, and they also share some common words with Igbira, Idoma and Twi (of Ghana). These ethnic groups were identified by their unique language and culture, with a tremendous experience that surrounds its culture over the years, which were responsible for its evolution. The Gbagyi are the largest group in the north, in population, next to the Hausa, Fulani and the Tivs. (Bakare 1 – 5). M.A, Filaba gave an estimate of their population to be between 4-5 million (Filaba 2-3). History has it that, many ethnic groups left their homes, and headed to the rich natural resources area of the Gbagyi people. Also, in 1917, Lord Lugard shifted the colonial capital to Kaduna, another Gbagyi location, (Oyedele 5-7), No wonder then that today, the Federal government of Nigeria finds no other suitable place to site the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria than the suitable settlement of the peace-loving Gbagyi people and because geographically on the map of Nigeria, the Gbagyi speaking people are located right in the center.

Today, at the mention of the Gbagyi, what readily comes to mind is the image of people whose women carry load on their shoulders and people who generally keep

themselves away from strangers. To a Gbagyi woman, the head was regarded as her crown and her beauty (Koce 8). To this end, she adores her head by not carrying load on it. In spite of long years of contacts with tribes like Fulani, Hausa, Igbira, idoma and others that does not carry load on their heads, the Gbagyi women still retain that tradition of revering the head thus it has become their identity and it is this identity that made most Nigerians identify them easily from the others. Interestingly even in this 'modern' era of science and technology, era of computer and fashion, the Gbagyi women still carry loads on their shoulders. Anyone traveling along the Lokoja – Abuja express road will testify to this fact. This goes to show that the Gbagyi people hold their culture in high esteem and will not let go easily even in the face of modernity.

3. Geographical location of Gbagyi ethnic group

The Gbagyi people are found in four states of central Nigeria also known as the "middle belt." These include Nassarawa, Kaduna, Niger and Kogi states and the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) (Koce 10). J.A Shekwoyi provides a good description of where they can be found:

> They are found in the area immediately north of the Niger- Benue confluence that is from Lokaja and Kotan-Karfe areas of Kwara State (Now Kogi State). Lafiagi area in the vicinity of Niger river in the west to the Umaisha area of River Benue in the east extending from Keffi, Abuja, Igabi, Giwa are of Zaria region (Shekwoyi 6).

So, the Gbagyi people are strategically located in the middle belt of Nigeria making them invariably the center of attraction, a peep into their social and religious life of the people as we shall see later in this paper.

4. The Origin of Gbagyi People

There are different versions about the origin of the Gbagyi people. One of it was tied to the wave of migration from Saudi Arabia through Egypt, Borno and Hausa land before they finally arrived at their present abode- Zaria, Birni Gwari down to the Niger Benue confluence (Morgan 3). Some local historians were however influenced

by the colonial view about the Gbagyi origin, by accepting the fact that they migrated from Saudi Arabia before they finally arrived in Africa. However, M A Faliba, an historian argued that the colonialists only wanted us to think that the whole of the central Nigeria area was empty until these groups started occupying it about 1750 A.D (the speculated date for the migration). However, Filaba in his M. A thesis submitted that some sources pointed to the fact that the Gbagyi people have lived in the north-central part of Nigeria for long therefore it is strongly believed that the north-central part of Nigeria may as well be the original home of the Gbagyi people, even some colonial histo-graphs especially those edited by O Temple, P.F Gunn and Conant supported this tradition (Filaba 1-5)

5. The socio-cultural and political ties among the Gbagyis

The Gbagyi cultural values are the cherished traditions and ethos, which the society desired. Some of these values are obedience, selflessness, love for others, cooperation, honesty, patience, meekness, politeness, hard work and so on. These values were practices that made them responsible, initiative, and in total make life meaningful to them (Jarumi 35). Umaru added that the Gbagyi people value submissive character, discipline, and obedience to constituted order and fulfilling responsibilities. This was however reinforced by favoring those who behaved well and meting out deserved punishments to deviants (Umaru 8). Again the Gbagyi's have the attitude of sharing what they have. This was influenced by the fact that all community members engage in production and no member, not even elder have the right to claim or squander the wealth created by the whole Community. In fact, nobody was allowed to accumulate more than others but where such was found, the selfish and the greedy were treated like wizards, or witches Guzyenyi (9)

Chastity and moral discipline were encouraged. It was a taboo and disgrace for a family, clan and whole community to find a member involved in pre-marital and extra-marital sex (10). For this reason, the singles that were ripe for marriage were encouraged to marry on time so as to shun pre-marital sex. For the married men, they were allowed

to marry as many wives as they can cope with; this was allowed so that the men will be prevented from chasing other women outside their homes. The idea is that sex is allowed only within the institution of marriage as sex outside of marriage is not a virtue as far as the Gbagyi people are concerned.

Also, self-reliance and self-respect were among other things the Gbagyi people cherished. In Gbagyi society, a person will prefer to starve to death than to rely on others for his daily bread. Relying on others for daily need suggests that one is lazy. There is no room for laziness in Gbagyi land. Everyone, be it a man, woman, child and even the disabled, are expected to have some form of handwork and craft in addition to whatever profession one chooses to engage in. For the disabled, they are expected to learn how to weave mat, basket and cloths, etc. Women have their firewood industry (Ashniwanaba), pot bakery and cloth weaving industries (agunuba). Because of this, it becomes very difficult for one to find a Gbagyi man begging on the street (9). In addition, festivals and initiation were cherished as an avenue for socialization, entertainment, display of riches and status. Each family or the whole community was expected to organize festivals to entertain members of their community and neighbouring villages. Cults also have their festival and ceremonies to entertain and to protect the community spiritually (9). Furthermore, The Gbagyi people respect privacy and independence (5). They are individualistic in nature, in the sense that they keep themselves away from people, especially strangers. The reason for such behavior was to keep themselves from foreign influences.

Politically, the political unit of the Gbagyi varies from society to society, whether big or small towns the unit of authority starts with the household (Pibwa) who was under the house heads (piubwada). The household heads were under the clan heads (Ebe-tuko) or ward heads (Sepada). The ward heads also were under the village heads or King (Osu). The 'Osu' was recognized as the supreme, his palace (Galako) was regarded as the court of Justice, attended by the title holders (Atukoda) who had the power of passing judgment on their subjects. Title holders' assembly (Atuko–da Bokun) and elder's assembly (Azakwoi Boknu) are in charge of giving counsel to the Osu (6-

7). Though the system of leadership looked similar to that of their neighbours. Before their contact with the Hausa, the Gbagyis had a well-organized system of government but as they interacted with the neighbouring states their polities became influenced.

6. Gbagyi Religion

Gbagyi religion like any other African religion emanated from the Gbagyi environment. That is to say, the religion was not preached neither was the Gbagyi people converted to it, but it came through their experiences of the things created by "Shekwoyi" (God). This however suggests that the Gbagyi religion does not have a founder as we have in other traditional religions. We can relate this to what Awolalu and Dopamu said about the West African religion generally.

West African traditional religion is a revealed religion but no founder. It is revealed in the sense that it came into being as a result of human experience of the mystery of the universe (Awolalu and Dopamu 26 – 27). Again, the origin of Gbagyi religion cannot be traced to a specific date. What most Gbagyi people know about the religion is that it has been the belief and practices of their forefathers handed down from generation to generation. No wonder it is called 'Adinin Gargajiyana Gbagyi' meaning Gbagyi traditional religion. Awolalu and Dopamu gave us a good description of the term "traditional". To them, it means: "Religion that evolves from the people's experience and thereby links the forebears with their descendant who now live it and practice it" (29)

Also, there were no records of Gbagyi beliefs and practices in form of "Holy Scriptures" as we have noted earlier, unlike Islam and Christianity. In spite of that, Gbagyi people are still able to keep their religion intact and are able to pass it on from one generation to the other through liturgies, myths, adages and names of persons. Apart from the oral source, the Gbagyi traditional religion was preserved through their sacred spaces and places e.g. the Zuma Rock (Znumwape) regarded as Gbagyis' spiritual

heaven. Again, the designs, marks and tattoos which they make on their bodies are other ways Gbagyi religion had been preserved from generation to generation, (Gwamna 2). Religion was part and parcel of their day to day life; it was expressed in their daily verbal communication. At the apex of the Gbagyi religion, is the belief in the existence of the Supreme Being called Shekwoyi. This is believed to be the source of all things; they adore and worship him in truth and purity by offering sacrifices through their carved images (gods or divinities) popularly known as "Ashna". Ashna to the Gbagyi were beyond the carved image. To them, Ashna "Azokwoyi" (ancestors) and Zafna (spirit) serve as intermediaries between them (the Gbagyi) and Shekwoyi (God). To this end, the ancestors provide success, protection and guidance to anyone that depends on them (Shekwo and Filaba 22).

7. Some Other Religion that exists among the Gbagyi people.

Apart from the Gbagyi indigenous religion, there also exist some other religions among them today. One of them is Islam; Islam first came to Gbagyi land in the 19th century, during the Sokoto Jihad of 1804 led by Usman Danfodio. Christianity on the other hand came in the 20th century through the influx of Christian traders and missionaries from the southern part of Nigeria. Worthy of note is the fact that Islam got to the northern part of Nigeria first.

Islam and Christianity were able to gain converts from adherents of indigenous religion because what they preached was not new from what the Gbagyi, already knew. For example, the concept of the Supreme Being (God), cut across the three religions, God was regarded as the highest being and the creator of all things. The only noticeable difference is the different methods and manners of approach. Islam teaches that God can only be approached directly without any intermediary but Christianity teaches that God cannot be approached directly but through a means. To them, Jesus Christ was the only medium of reaching God. Gbagyi religion definitely recognizes and reaches out to the Supreme Being just like any other religion of the world. To the adherents of Gbagyi religion, whether directly or indirectly, God who is the important figure of all religions of the world could be reached and accessed by the Gbagyi people.

However, Islam was able to gain more converts than Christianity. The reason for this was because first, they came early and secondly practices like polygamy, divination and the use of rings and amulet were part of the Gbagyi religious practices and the fact that Gbagyi religion also encouraged the use of such, many of them received the religion wholeheartedly. Christianity, on the other hand, stood against such practices so it has only a few converts. Another reason adduced for the Muslims winning more Gbagyi convert is put forward by Adeola and Ayuba thus:

The Christianity preached to the people did not adequately address the issue of metaphysical forces so real to the Gbagyi man, yet trivialized by the Christian missionaries. How could they challenge the people's beliefs and yet want them to accept theirs without resistance? It kept lots of Gbagyis from fully responding to the gospel and the flourishing of (agunzheyin) for a long time (Adeola and Ayuba 77 – 92).

8. Interactions that exist among the Christians, Muslims and Gbagyi Traditionalists

The diverse religions that exist among the Gbagyi's till date, ensured unity because brotherliness was regarded above all things. The Gbagyi people, most importantly, did not allow differences in religion to divide them. In fact, Gbagyi people relate well with each other as if they share the same religious beliefs. Though in the past, adherents of the two religions (Islam and Christianity) regard adherents of the Gbagyi indigenous religion as idol worshippers. (Gwamna 2). This disdainful attitude could be traced to the various teachings emanating from both the Muslim and Christian teachers, preachers and converts. The claim that Jesus Christ is the only way by Christians and the claim by Muslims that Prophet Mohammed is the only true messenger of God just to mention a few came through their inclusive and exclusive teaching or claims of having the right view or perception about God (Awolalu 459).

With time, as they (Christians and Muslims) interacted with adherents of the indigenous religion, they were able to have the correct interpretation of some of the religious beliefs and cultural practices which they never recognized (Dopamu 109) Today, Gbagyi Christians and Muslims, together with adherent of the Gbagyi religion,

recognize and participate actively in their traditional and cultural festival such as Amwamwa festival. (Olubitan 11)

Furthermore, adherents of the three religions are found in the same family, this is made possible through intermarriages. Father, mother and the children that make up the family have no choice but to live together in peace. That is why they can be found living in the same house and relating well with each other. In fact, it was the brotherly love that exists that prevented them from partaking actively in the various destruction of lives and properties in the various Moslem and Christian riots recorded in Kaduna and other places where the Gbagyi people live predominantly. It's rare for example to read about Gbagyi people clashing with Fulani cattle rearers who constantly clash with farmers.

Again we can find scholars among Muslim and Christians relating well with the Gbagyi traditional religious adherents, elders, craft men, hunters, farmers and traditional healers. Their quest for knowledge has made this interaction possible. Through their interactions, Gbagyi scholars gain wisdom and knowledge about their traditional beliefs which they try to promote today (Kato 35 – 36).

Furthermore, Gbagyi students within tertiary institutions organize excursion visits to shrines, traditional healing centers, bringing about an avenue for meaningful interaction with these people and from there, they get to know more about their indigenous religion. Also, they were encouraged to continue to practice their values, customs and traditions. Again, so many foundations that promote Gbagyi culture and values are springing up. For example Ash ajebwa foundation aims at preserving the Gbagyi culture. In such foundations, Muslims, Christians and adherents of the Gbagyi religion meet and interact.

Lastly, Christians and Muslims interact with Gbagyi traditional medicine men when they are faced with a serious ailment that goes beyond medical science. In treating such a disease, they go into divination by consulting the oracle for diagnosis and come out with good results (Katarma 1).

9. Settlement of Crisis

The settlement of crisis is always done by the elders of the community or the chief (Esu) in his palace when the agreement is not yet resolved in their homes of feuding persons. Anyone guilty from the Esu's place is charged by paying a token amount to Esu and the kingmakers (Yamma 5).

10. Morality

It is not an exaggeration to say that moral discipline is part and parcel of Gbagyi people's everyday life from birth to death. In Gbagyi's concept, child discipline is never an individual's responsibility but rather a communal effort. The Gbagyi concept of child discipline compares well to the dictates of the Bible (Prov. 19:18; 22:6, 22:13-4 Eph 6:1 30).

Among Gbagyi people, various methods were used in instilling this disciplinary life and these include, the narration of past life stories, folk tales, legends, myths by parents. Juju is also used to discipline stubborn and heady-storing children. Gbagyi people have high regard for moral/sexual purity and abhor immorality of any kind. They frown at acts of incest, theft, witchcraft and the like and any break of moral or societal laws attract charges, fines, and sometimes the death penalty. Respect for elders is also considered mandatory. A child is to greet his parents and elderly people early in the morning and at other times of the day, kneeling to do so. He should also abide by the instructions handed to him by elderly people and should be ready to help them to carry their load, whenever they returned from the farm or on a journey.

Parental decisions are final for their children, even if the children become married. The reason is that every decision is for the improvement and progress of the entire family, nuclear or extended. In short, Gbagyi moral training starts from the cradle to adulthood and it affects all areas of life be it social-political, religious, or cultural.

11. Marriage

In the aspect of marriage, the parents would normally play a dominant role in the choice of the spouse of their children, who are mature for marriage. Sometimes they

consult oracles to ascertain the choice of the spouse of their children who are mature for marriage. (Ayuba 310) asserts that socially 'marriage reflects not in its integrative nature alone of uniting families, but served as an avenue to strengthen the marriage and communal coexistence'. However, women are viewed, by some people, as property or slaves. Polygamy was rampant among the people, although this has reduced drastically because of the influence of biblical teachings and economic realities.

12. Dressing

The dressing style of Gbagyi people consists of wearing crude cloths, hides (bache) and the practice of tribal marks inscrption. However, the present enlightenment from education has brought a lot of changes in this area. So, Gbagyi people wear good cloths today because many are now engaged in different societal affairs.

13. Occupation

An old Gbagyi adage Says: 'bwatoyi ta gyichacha', meaning, "a lazy man does not eat delicacies". This saying corresponds with biblical teaching (2 Thessalonica 3:10), which shows the hard work of Gbagyi people in every field of legal activities in life. However, the major occupation among Gbagyi people is farming crops such as yams, maize, rice, sugar cane, okra, pepper, garden egg (kunya), etc, and animals, such as sheep, goats fowls, pigs, ducks, dogs are raised by the people. Besides, like other Africans, they keep pets.

Gbagyi people take their agricultural work seriously, especially during the rainy season, in which they work from sun-rise to sun-set in order to be able to meet the domestic needs of their families, relatives and neighbors. They practice subsistence farming through shifting cultivation, following methods like crop rotation and mixed cropping. Their farming implement includes 'kalaku' (big hoe for heap-making), 'zukwoyakwo' (another big hoe for ridge-making), 'zukwobiyi' (a small hoe), 'azhe' (axe), 'ada' or 'gada' (cutlasss), 'luzheor limzhi' (sickle), 'ebe' or 'nyasanya' (knife) etc. To facilitate productivity, Gbagyi farmers adopt group farming system to help each other in their farm activities. These group farming systems include:- 'Fakwo' (Individual Family); 'Anugba' (Small Group); and 'Fwapa' or 'Gbodognu; (Large Group). There is

also a competitive system known as 'Fwapaand Fagbegyi'. In this, magical power is often used during these farming activities. Gbagyi women and girls contribute to farming work by helping during the season of harvest as well as in conveying the produce harvested home, using their shoulders and not their heads.

14. Music

As Music was pertinent to Jewish culture and religion, so it is to the Gbagyi people. In almost all they do, they love music. For example, music is used during farming activities, religious festivals, funerals, weddings and other social gatherings. Some of the musical instruments often used include, 'kabulu' (cello), 'mulo' (guiter) 'agaga' (drum of various kinds), 'amwayi' (flutes) and so on.

15. Arts and Craft

Gbagyi people have contributed greatly, and are still doing so, to national and African development through their arts and crafts. Gbagyi traditional house, rooms and barns (dobwi) etc., are carefully designed. The people are also good in basket-weaving, and in the production of hats and mats, among others, apart from the fact that they are knowledgeable in pottery and sculpture works. A typical example attesting to this is the modern-day Dr. Ladi Kwali clay products, found in and outside Nigeria.

16. Food and Preparation:

Most of the foods that are prepared are done by the women in Gbagyi culture; the popular food among the Gbagyi people is called 'ezhe'. It was taboo for a man to cook at home unless on the farm. Also, it is not applicable for a woman to farm and feed her husband. All kinds of food crops are produced by the male and domestic work like fetching of water, firewood, cooking and washing are female responsibilities.

17. Medication

In terms of medication, the Gbagyi people have their native doctors and nurses too. The 'Beyi' (Doctor) and 'Zokwushieyi' (Nurses) are responsible for curing and healing a patient. Whatever diseases or illnesses affecting the patients, they

recommended the leaves, herbs and other materials to be used for curing and healing (treatment).

18. Hunting

Hunting which is one of the occupations of the people is usually embarked upon during dry seasons when the people have very little to do on the farm. Hunting is therefore an activity that complements farming. There are various types of hunting expeditions embarked upon by the people. There is individual hunting whereby one or two people go to dig out rodents and shoot birds. There is also a hunting rally or community hunting known as 'Kase'. It was a hunting festival where a large game reserve is set aside by the community. A day is set aside whereby the surrounding communities come together for hunting in the bush designated for this purpose. Before the date for the game, no person is allowed to go for individual or group hunting in the designated bush, and any person that is found breaking such law is severely punished. All the games killed during the hunting exercise are gathered in one place in the village and shared among the entire villagers according to families. The main hunting instruments are 'Tayi' and 'knawyi' (bows and arrows), in short, there are professional hunters who are called 'Anagbeyi' whose main occupation is hunting.

19. Textile

In the textile industry, the popular activity was the weaving of cotton cloth known as 'Gbodo,' a thick traditional Gbagyi attire that comes in many colours. Cloth traditionally was woven of locally grown and hand-spun cotton. The textile industry is popular among women; this is because the men are busy with a lot of farm work as such they have no time for lesser work like the weaving of cloth. The women who are the weavers use a variety of looms. The looms are of two basic types, according to whether one or both sets of warp (the lengths of yarn mounted on the loom) are leashed to a heddle. Each type has more than one version, especially the single heddle, of which there are various upright and horizontal versions. Textiles are designed either as part of the weaving process-in which case colour, texture, and weave structure are significant-or by a range of techniques employed on the already-woven cloth.

20. Pottery

The Gbagyi people are popularly known for their artwork especially pottery. This is a widespread occupation among the Gbagyi women, and this is because clay is found in patches all over the areas occupied by the people. Most Gbagyi communities use pottery and many produce them themselves and the traditions of pottery making survive in many rural areas. The tradition involves the molding of fairly coarse-textured clay by hand, either building the clay up in rings or using some variation of the hammer-and-anvil techniques found in preindustrial technologies worldwide.

The pots so formed are then fired in open bonfires at a relatively low temperature. The variety of form and design is almost endless. After the pots are made at home, they are taken to 'Gnanuta' a place where the pots are fired into finished products. After firing, the pots are glazed with a black liquid substance from boiled locust-bean pods known as 'Eshi'. Pottery is part of their culture and the people have excelled in pottery because there are many renowned pottery centers scattered in many Gbagyi villages, no wonder they produced a classical world-renowned potter in person of late Hajiya Dr. Ladi Kwali. Probably she is the best known of the Abuja potters.

21. Fishing

Fishing is another important economic activity among the people most especially for those communities that reside near rivers. Fishing has assumed greater importance as a source of food and source of income. Fishing is carried out by using various instruments like 'ogo' (hook) and 'Esa' (nets). Also there are various fishing methods which are 'kari', 'foma', 'kala', and 'kpaga' etc.

There is 'aga' which is a special fishing method employed during the dry season in catching fish. A group of people go to a river and decide to collect water from one side of the river to the other thereby catching the fish found inside the mud. Another method is 'azufi' that is, poisoning of water for fishing purposes.

22. Blacksmithing

Oral tradition reveals that iron smelting and smiting is one of the important industries among the Gbagyi people. There is heavy consumption of iron since every person has at least a hoe, cutlass, knife, axe etc. This was because the various economic pursuits of the people influence their high demand for iron implement. For instance farming, crafts and hunting need heavy types of equipment like hoe, cutlass, and arrow etc., blacksmiths produce most of the wrought iron objects used in the communities.

23. Soap Making

One of the sources of money-making ventures among the womenfolk is soap-making. The black soap known as 'Sabulun Solo' among the Hausas is what is known as 'GbagyiCheko' among the Gbagyi's. It is a cleansing soap for the face and indeed the whole body. This is made from a mixture of palm kernel oil, potash solution extracted from soaked ashes from burnt firewood. Its astringent nature makes it a popular cure for rashes and pimples. 'Gbagyi Cheko' is prepared based on age-old beauty secrets and its cleansing power is adapted to suit certain occasions. For example, after childbirth, it is used to bathe a mother and her child but mixed with cam-wood (Eza) to achieve maximum effect and a glowing complexion. The soap is still popular among women and is widely used today with new additives of natural honey, lime, cam-wood to achieve a clear smooth complexion that is every woman's dream. The production of 'Gbagyi Cheko' is purely women affairs; a sole responsibility of the womenfolk. The soap is black in colour, the well-packaged and modernized version is popularly called Dudu-Osu.

24. A word of advice

In concluding this write up, our advice for the Gbagyi people will be that of Unity. Unity among the various Gbagyi groups scattered over the five states in the middle belt remains a challenge to be faced by the Gbagyi community worldwide. Many attempts at unity of the Gbagyi race are ongoing at the state and local government level, seminars, workshops, and meetings are orchestrated to achieve this lofty goal. See: (Filaba, Umaru, Gwamna, Jarumi, Muhammad, Usman et.all and Isaac). Activities of groups like the Gbagyi Students Association of Nigeria (GBASAN), and others are

noted but all these moves to unite the people are highly localized, there is need for the unity envisaged to have a national outlook. The Gbagyi/Gbari controversy should be a noon issue. With a united front, agitation for their rightful position in the scheme of things in Nigerian politics and polity will become relatively easy. For example one would naturally expect that the FCT ministerial slot be reserved for the 'sons and daughters of the middle belt' of which the Gbagyi's are prominent, but to date, no Gbagyi son or daughter has been so appointed. Unity is achievable however, prominent men and women of goodwill among the Gbagyi race should take the lead and see if others, especially the youths will not follow.

25. Conclusion

The Gbagyi people are known to be peace loving, accommodating and honest, no wonder they have been able to host Nigeria, as the Federal Capital Territory. Abuja is not a no man's land, the Gbagyi's and the other middle belt tribes have lived and thrived on this geographical space called the Federal Capital Territory for hundreds of years, practicing their religion, arts, culture and socializing with themselves and their neighbours. In spite of the wave of modernity and the influx of other cultures, they've being able to maintain and preserve their religion and social life. We have been able to describe who the Gbagyi people are, their origin and where they can be found. Also we have seen some of their cultural, social religious set up and their political system of governance. Again we discussed why the Gbagyi people behave the way they do and their kind of religion. We talked about their belief and other religions that exist among them (Islam and Christianity). We look forward to efforts at unity, that will transcends local governments and states but will have a more national outlook such that the Gbagyi man or woman from all the five states will first and foremost see themselves as members of the Gbagyi race regardless of state of origin.

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A Comparative Study of Women in Ordained Offices in the Mainline Denominations and Pentecostal Churches

Abraham Mbachirin, Ph.D. &
Salama J. Gandu
Department of Religious Studies,
Nasarawa State University, Keffi

Abstract

The discourse on women in leadership positions in churches has occupied a significant space in theological debates in the Church today. Things like feminism, womanist movements and human rights have compelled discussions on the position and role of women in every aspect of human endeavour. The cultural and religious practices and beliefs that suppress women are been attacked and some are already giving way. In the Church today, the main issues revolve around ordained offices and leadership positions. A cursory survey reveals that most Pentecostal Churches have no problem ordaining and giving leadership positions to women. Today, there are many Pentecostal Churches and ministries manned by women only. Further, most Pentecostal pastors have their wives as co-pastors or assistant pastors. There are however, fewer mainline Churches that have ordained women. The issue of women-ordination encounters a greater struggle in the mainline denominations than in the Pentecostal Churches. The reason for the difference lies in the theological and ecclesiological foundations of these two groups of Christians. The mainline denominations hold to well-defined traditions and have an elaborate administrative structure. To critically analyze the issues involved, this paper will adopt the historical and theological methods.

Key Words: Women, Ordained Offices, Mainline Denominations, Pentecostals.

1. Introduction

The undeniable fact is that this world is dominated by men. This is still the experience of many communities, though to no human advantage. Without regrets this happens in all areas of life. In many communities, women are still relegated to slavish roles. Man takes the leadership position at home, in government and in the religious realm. The Church which professes that all humans are created in God's image and are equal in the sight of God stands mightily opposed to women leadership. In the history of the Church, women never occupied recognizable leadership positions. When they

did, it was accidental. The Church from the apostolic age never assigned leadership roles to women but rather, preached submission of the women and demanded the silence of women in religious gatherings. Whatever hermeneutical principles adopted, the qualifications for leadership positions in the church were masculine. For a long time, the door was completely shut to women. In addition, women have received moral, spiritual and physical abuses in the Church. In the Medieval Church, women were branded evil, responsible for illicit sexual acts, and in the era of witch hunting, women were accused of been the main vehicles of witchcraft and suffered more in the hands of the Church. The only opportunity open to women was to play secondary roles as helpmates. They were condemned to be assisting their husbands in mission work as Sunday School teachers and teaching other women domestic roles.

The opening of the door to women-leadership in the Church has been a blood battle. Some mainline denominations have overcome this through decades of struggle while others still remain adamant and do not even think such a thing will be possible. In an attempt to open doors for women leadership, many Churches have experienced schism. The Christian Reformed Church of North America is a recent example. Usually, the group that does not accept women-leadership considers the other heretical and unfaithful to the word of God. The divide is in most cases uncompromising and irreconcilable. Statistically, a greater number of mainline Churches in Nigeria still oppose women leadership and shun association with those on the other camp. Generally, the two major things that work against women-leadership are culture and religion.

On the other hand, most Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria are open to women leadership even to the level of ordination to various positions. Pentecostalism is generally more open to women leadership and it is done with less resistance than with mainline Churches. Obijole also acknowledges that women leadership is a problem in Nigerian Christianity. However, Pentecostal Churches have created more opportunities and are more open to women leadership (258). The Redeemed Church is one example of these Churches where women have equal status as men.

This paper seeks to discover the reasons for the sharp differences. It contends that the differences are rooted in the theological background, creedal, cultural affirmations, the administrative structures and nature of these two branches of Christianity.

2. Clarification of Terms

2.1 Mainline Churches

This study is comparing Mainline and Pentecostal denominations on the issue of women- leadership. By mainline denominations, this paper is referring to what is called Mission Churches, Historical Christian Denominations or Established Churches like the Roman Catholic, Methodists, Baptists, Anglican, Presbyterian, Reformed Churches, to mention but a few. These are Churches that are a result of foreign missionary activities in Nigeria. Many of them maintain strong fraternal relationships with their foundering Churches. Quoting Omotoye, Gabriel defines Mainline Churches as "European Christian Churches that were introduced to Nigeria in the 19th century" (69). Jake Otonko, coming from a Roman Catholic background, views Mainline3 Churches as those that broke away from the Roman Catholic following the 16th century reformation. His definition does not exclude the Roman Catholic Church. These churches come from the same source and share a common tradition (59). These Churches existed long before the coming of Pentecostalism.

2.2 Pentecostal Churches

On the other hand, Pentecostalism is traced to the beginning of the 19th century. It should be noted from the onset that the Pentecostal movement is not a monolithic movement. Apart from the dynamic nature of this movement, it acculturation nature and attempts to address itself to current social issues, it can be classified into many groups. As such, the movement has diverse characters. This paper will therefore, concentrate only on the characters that support its thesis. By 'Pentecostalism', we are referring to a branch of Christianity that is named after a Jewish festival Pentecost. Pentecostals consider what took place on that day to be the standard of their Church. At that time,

the Apostles received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. Livingstone defines Pentecostalism as:

> A religious movement whose members or adherents share a common belief in the possibility of receiving the same experience and gifts as did the first Christians on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2: 1-14. They emphasize the corporate element in worship often remarked by great spontaneity and lay special stress on speaking in tongues, prophecy, healing and exorcism (quoted in Kanu 6).

Another definition that is pertinent to our discussion goes:

> The term Pentecostalism refers to certain elements of Christian life often associated with the experience of the power of the Holy Spirit which manifested strongly at the feast of Pentecost in the Bible and the consequent gifts of the Holy Spirit by Christ. It also refers to the emphasis of the third person of the Trinity and his manifestations in the individual and corporate lives of the Christians (quoted in Kanu 7).

There is another Pentecostal group found in the mainline Churches known as Charismatic Movements. In the Anglican Church, it appears as Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion (Kanu 7). Many others attend both Pentecostal and mainline churches. They are mostly attracted to the programmes of the Pentecostals.

2.3 Women in Mainline Denominations

Mainline Churches have strong theological bases and have critical attitudes towards every issue. They are guided by inherited doctrinal standards and creeds to which they hold strongly. The long inherited theological tradition is very important in mainline denominations. Departing from such is not only difficult, but needs thorough studies historically, theologically and biblically. There is always a serious debate and study of such issues before acceptance. Mainline Denominations that have opened doors to women leadership have done so through what is called the New Hermeneutics. Those that oppose it consider the New Hermeneutic a departure from orthodox,

secularism and liberalism. The position of mainline denomination is that Christ is above culture and the Church must not follow current trends. Harris says that the arguments of the Churches against women-leadership are based on their strong subscription that the Bible is primal, the importance of Church tradition and experience (2). Feminists insist that the refusal to open the door to women is because of the gender-bias hermeneutics of men (Harris 3). Harris quotes Maloney saying, "The constant tradition (of the Roman Catholic Church), according to which only men are ordained priests, comes from Christ and the apostles, and the Church is bound to follow that norm because Christ intended it to remain permanently as a norm for the Church" (4).

The ecclesiastical nature of mainline denominations is more complex than that of neo-Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria. There are different levels of administrative structures, sometimes different levels of ordinations or ranks, and decision-making has to go through different hierarchical bodies and study-committees. In most Churches, we have the local congregation, the regional council, and the general assembly, while for others, like the Southern Baptists, Lutherans, Methods, Roman Catholic, the Reformed Churches, Presbyterians, and the Anglican, such issues have to go through their international ruling bodies. This kind of structure makes decision-making a difficult and something that takes long process.

Traditionally, mainline Churches have appealed to the Bible for their refusal to open leadership roles to women. Among some of the referencing issues include the fact that God first created Adam and Eve was created a helper. In the Old Testament cult, women were never allowed to enter the inner court, anointing was never poured on women, and Christ did not choose a woman among the apostles. Antipas Harris presents the argument of one of the leaders who said, "At creation man was created first. The man is the head of the woman. God created the man to be the leader…A woman should not be a pastor" (2). Established Churches insist that God is not a changing God and His order does not change. God did not create men and women equally. Stephenson quotes Bartleman saying, "A female ministry is naturally a weak ministry…God is not

changing His order by raising woman to equality with man in the ministry. The apostles were men. The early Church is our example. God created Adam first. Then the woman for his helper" (415).

Another very important quote that disagrees with women Church leadership and shows the position of mainline Churches comes from E. N. Bell which says;

There is no instance of any woman being put in a place of authority to rule, govern or teach in the authoritative sense, that is, by the authority of their office, anywhere in the New Testament…No woman has been known to have been appointed by the Lord as an elder or an apostle, or to any position where ruling with authority is inferred. It is not that God desires to withhold them from anything that would be a blessing to them, but rather to take these heavy responsibilities off their shoulders. While there can always be found exceptions to any human rule, it is still true that men are better adapted through their natural inheritance from the Lord than are women to rule and govern assemblies (418).

The above quote is biblically based but also introduces cultural and sociological reasons why women should not occupy leadership positions in the Church. Cultural factors play important roles in the established churches. Obijole says "established Churches, perhaps due to cultural factors give little or no recognition to women in contrast with the Nigerian Pentecostal Churches" (244). The issue of women leadership is connected to African patriarcharism. Generally in African society, men and women are not equal in status. Man is considered superior while the women inferior physically and intellectually (Obijole 257), and is restricted to demotic functions. One other fact that supports this these is that Mainline denominations have more respect for culture and it is partly because of this respect for African culture that opening doors for ordination of women is difficult in these Churches.

Mainline denominations strongly hold to Paul's injunction that women should be silent in the assembly. Some mainline Churches appeal to the fact that there are some

pastoral functions that are naturally not good for women such as burials and weddings. Since women cannot perform all the activities, there is no need ordaining them.

Mainline Churches have strong theological bases and have critical attitudes towards every issue. They are guided by inherited doctrinal standards and creeds to which they hold strongly. The long inherited theological tradition is very important in mainline denominations. Departing from such is, not only difficult but also needs thorough studies historically, theologically and biblically. There is always a serious debate and study of such issues before acceptance. Mainline denominations that have opened doors to women leadership have done so through what is called the new hermeneutics.

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John Oyewole of Adekunle Ajasin University, recently conducted a study on women leadership in the Catholic and Anglican Church. The study reveals the antagonist spirit of mainline denomination towards women-leadership. Even members of the Anglican Church which has officially opened its doors to women-leadership, does not fully accept women ordination. Out of the 43 members of the Anglican Church interviewed, 21 members representing 49 % did not see the need for women-ordination and only 6 members constituting 14% saw the need for women ordination. The reason advanced by those who oppose women ordination is that the woman was created from man and so she is not equal to man (17). Also 22 members representing 51% said there is no advantage in ordaining women while only 15 members representing 35% saw an advantage in the ordination of women (17). In the Catholic, among the 102 male

respondents, 97 constituting 95% were against women ordination, and out of the 61 women interviewed, 52 representing 85% were against women ordination (18). This study represents the sentimental spirit of the mainline denomination towards women ordination. The Roman Catholic Church worldwide opposes women ordination but the Anglican Church as a denomination accepts and permits women ordination but the Nigerian branch has not fully embraced it (Oyewole 13).

3. Pentecostalism in Nigeria

Pentecostalism in Nigeria is indeed a great stormy wave. We must confess that Pentecostalism has in different ways greatly influenced the mainline churches and in some ways some mainline churches are looking like Pentecostals. The influence is indeed alarming and unprecedented. One wonders whether in the near future, there will still be a gap between Pentecostals and Mainline Churches. Hollenwegeh notes that the gap between these two branches of Christianity is closing up (IXX). However, there remain some fundamental differences theologically, structurally, administratively and doctrinally. On the same note, he contends that in countries like Chile and Brazil, Pentecostals have more members than Protestants and in Nigeria, France and South Africa the Pentecostal movement is growing faster than Protestants (IXX). Mashau also contends that Pentecostalism is now the most dominant fellowship in Africa and its growth and expansion has brought a fair number of missiological challenges to mainline Churches (1). The reasons Mashau gives for the growth of Pentecostalism in Africa are relevant to the thesis of this paper and these include:

> (1) Emphasis on the 'flexibility of the spirit', which enables it to transplant itself easily onto any cultural context; (2) emphasis on the working of the Holy Spirit, especially the power to provide deliverance not only from sin, but also demonic attacks, demon possession, and poverty through healing and

prosperity promises; and (3) spontaneity and communal participation in worship (1).

Mashau also notes that Pentecostal Churches are pulling a large number of memberships from mainline Churches (1). Without any serious evangelism programmes, its membership is increasing unprecedentedly. It is attracting members with a strong magnetic force. Its adaptation to the   African way of life is one of the reasons for its growth. Pentecostalism has deeply Africanized Christianity and on this, Anderson writes, "Pentecostalism has fundamentally attained the character of African Christianity as a whole" (1). Anderson continues that   "Despite the forces of globalization, Pentecostalism has developed its own characteristics and identities in Africa while establishing transnational connections and international networks" (9).

This movement was from the beginning, simply built on the experience of speaking in tongues attributed to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Hollenwegeh contends that what characterized the Pentecostals was speaking in tongues, dreams, hymns, and spontaneous worship. He reiterates that the growth and expansion of Pentecostalism was facilitated by "enthusiastic spiritual manifestation" (1X). Mashau also insists that Pentecostalism should be understood as experiential Christianity (2). This refers to experience of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian. Thus, generally, experience is taken to be very important. The work of the Holy Spirit in all its operations is a strong character of Pentecostalism.

Pentecostalism is diverse. There is classic and neo-Pentecostalism. Classical Pentecostal Churches are planted by Pentecostals from Europe and America and these Churches are more reserved when it comes to women-leadership. Some still maintain fraternal relationship with their mother-Churches. Some of these include the Apostolic Faith Mission, the Assemblies of God and the Foursquare Gospel Church. Among these, it is only the Foursquare Gospel Church that has no problem with women ordination. Neo-Pentecostalism here refers to new generation Pentecostals. Mashau also calls them autonomous Churches (5). They can also be called African Indigenous

Pentecostal Churches. They came through the initiative of Nigerians and have no connections with foreign partners and have complete independent. Their leaders and a greater number of their membership are recruited from mainline denominations. There is a vehement cry on the drift of members from mainline denominations into the Pentecostal Churches.

4. Women Leadership in the Pentecostal Churches

Ordination of women in the Pentecostal denominations can be traced back to the beginning of the movement, the Azusa Street revival in1906 to 1908. Stephenson says, "The events of the revival and the theology emerging from it enable Pentecostals a certain amount of religious authority. This was the case primarily because Pentecostals believed that it was the Spirit of God ministering through the women and thus they should not hinder women" (414). According to him, Pentecostal women who demonstrated any type of ministering authority by way of preaching, teaching or evangelism were not only tolerated but also respected (414). Bartleman also appeals to the Azusa revival as a ground for women ordination in the Pentecostal movement when he writes "at the Azusa, the Lord was liable to burst through anyone ….It might be a child, a woman or man. It might be from the back seat or front row. It made no difference" (quoted in Stephenson 415). Hollenwegeh also attests that Pentecostalism has a long history of women leadership. According to him, it has always opened doors to women with theatrical talents. An example is that of Aimee Semple McPherson who later started her own ministry and many others (487-488).

Our study here mainly concerns the Nigerian Initiative Pentecostal Churches. Fatakun testifies that new generation Pentecostal Churches have no problem with women ordination (79). Oyewole also writes, "one unique aspect of the Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria is the increasing prominent of women-pastors, either as overseers of Churches or as power-wielding wives of overseers" (13). He continues correctly that most of the frontline Pentecostal pastors have their wives as co-pastors (14). There are also many women who have founded Churches and ministries and are operating them

successfully. Top on the list are Lady Apostle Hellen Okpabio of the Liberty Foundation Gospel Ministries. She has over 250 branches in Nigeria (14), and of course, Archbishop Margret Idahosa.

Another leading Pentecostal pastor writes, "We know of no movement where women of ability and filled with the Holy Ghost, have been much more highly honored or given much more freedom than among us" (quoted from Stephenson 411). Stephenson concludes that Pentecostal women operate with more religious authorities than in other denominations (411).

The task of this paper is to establish reasons why this is so. Lisa Stephenson brings another demission to the issue of women ordination. She differentiates between ministering authority and governing authority. She contends, in most Pentecostal Churches women are granted access to ministering position but not governing authority (410).

One of the major features of Pentecostalism in Nigeria is its openness and acceptance to all natures or classes of people. To this, Anderson says "One of the strongest appeals of Pentecostalism is its ability to accept and empower all people who embrace its way of life without regard to gender, social status or education…Everyone is made to feel at home and has the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the community" (7). Another statement to support this assertion is that "unlike older forms of Christianity, Pentecostalism is not dependent on foreign specialists and trained clergy and the transmission of Western Christian liturgy and leadership" (Anderson 8). What can be deduced from the above quotes is that Pentecostalism in Nigeria does not necessarily train in leadership in the western style and is not tied to tradition. Poloma also writes that Pentecostalism ignores historical tradition (1).

Another important nature of Pentecostalism is that it is practical. It addresses itself to issues of marginalization and the rejected (8). Women obviously fall under these groups. Mainline Churches usually neglect these groups and are prepared to go with the status quo. As noted above, not all Pentecostal Churches ordain women. This

happens mostly with Pentecostal Churches that have foreign roots and maintain ties with their foreign partners. This includes the Assemblies of God and the Apostolic Church of Nigeria. In the Apostolic Church, women are only allowed to be deaconesses. For a woman to occupy this office she must produce a valid marriage certificate and even, then she is assigned lesser duties compared to their male counterparts. The reasons given by the Apostolic Church include: women are the weaker vessels, Paul's injunction that women should teach and that in the Old Testament, women did not serve on the altar (Fatakun 70, 80).

6. Testimonies of Women ordination in Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria

Historically, in Nigeria, women have played leadership roles in African Indigenous Churches which have the same motives with and have in no small way influenced Pentecostal Churches. This goes back to 1918 to the story of Sophia Odunlami of Precious Stone or Diamond Society. This lady led a prophetic healing ministry that was well respected. As a healing evangelist, she ended the pestilence and plague in the Southern part of Nigeria through her prophetic talents and spiritual gifts (Obijole 258-259). Another recognizable historical fact has to do with the co-founder of the Cherubim and Seraphim Movement Christiana Abiodun Akinsowon. This was a woman of remarkable spiritual gifts and charisma. She played an important leadership role in the establishment of this Church (Obijole 259). Obijole thinks that African Independent Churches have influenced neo-Pentecostal ideals of women-leadership. "Today, many neo-Pentecostal independent churches took their cue from the African indigenous Pentecostal Churches that are liberal take women-leadership in the active ministry" (259).

5. The Nature and Characters of Pentecostalism that Facilities Women Ordination

Pentecostalism is movement that has moved away from traditional Christianity (Hollenwegeh 460). Particularly, Pentecostalism in Nigeria came out of a dissatisfaction with mainline denominations. The movement comprises people who seek deeper and closer experience with God. In Nigeria, the Pentecostal movement is more of a

schismatic movement. Almost all its pastors come from mainline denominations and 95% of their membership is drawn from mainline denominations. In this way Diara and Onah, other than calling them prophetic, healing and spiritual groups, also calls them schismatic movements, break-away groups and separatist Churches (395). In support of these, they quote Parrinder who said, "these are sects which have split away from or sprung up in relative independence of the older mission churches" (395). They continue that they are much freer in their teachings and practices (395). The decision and the resolve of Pentecostalism to move away from traditional Christianity, has allowed it to be more flexible on such issues like women leadership.

Another character of Pentecostalism is that it does not lay emphasis or teach people to think but to simply believe and live out their faith. The emphasis is on direct religious experience and living out one's Christianity (Hollenwegeh 463). Faith must be expressed outwardly. The implication is that there is no much room to question or seek reasons why some decisions are taken. Related to this, Pentecostalism insists that talents and gifts are more important than education. According to Hollenwegeh, the manifestation of talents is very important (490) and it accounts for major decisions and activities in Pentecostal Churches. Naturally Pentecostals do not engage in studies to take or defend a view. Appeal is made to the Holy Spirit, talents and spiritual gifts to take decisions including matters of leadership and ordination. One does not necessarily need theological education to be ordained. In fact among the leading Pentecostal pastors in Nigeria, none have any formal theological training before beginning their ministries. Some have acquired some theological education but only after they have established their ministries.

A leading Pentecostal pastor says:

> Education is killing Christianity. I can go back to my young days among the Peculiar People; I had an uncle who couldn't read or write, but he got saved, and after that God taught him to read the Scriptures. But now head knowledge

goes into religion. It makes young people query the virgin birth… The less education the more quickly you can accept salvation (qtd in Hollenwegeh 472). The above quote disagrees with probing the Bible and engaging in theological debates. Some Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria have established theological institutions but they are not engaged in in-depth theological studies.

Appealing to the Bible and the ministry of Jesus Christ, Pentecostals seek justification in Jesus' attitudes and affirmation of women. Pentecostals claim, Jesus accepted and approved women in ministry. This is then looked upon as the foundation for women leadership in the Church. Appeal is also made to the fact that women were among the disciples and in Gal. 3:28 Paul said that there is neither male nor female and this has roots in the teaching of Jesus (Obijole 451). This means that God can use any person he wishes.

Pentecostals believe in prophecies and God speaking through their leaders. Pentecostals pastors claim constantly receiving revelations from God and these revelations are not to be doubted by members. Major decisions and claims can and are usually backed-up by revelations and opposition to such is opposition to God's word. Revelations are also used to facilitate women ordination. Olesola Igbari reiterates that Pentecostals lay more emphasis on practical liturgy, belief and practices as well as depend much on the conviction of Church leaders (107). Church leaders, especially founders are autonomous, have the last voice and do not need to appeal to any other authority outside of them. Igbari also says, Pentecostal worship is "dynamic and it has to move with the trends, since humans are necessarily changing beings, they would like to move with time" (107). Pentecostals are more prepared to move with the trends and accept what is accepted by the society. Obijole also testifies that Pentecostal are opened to modern influence (258). The current trend in Nigeria is that women play important roles in all aspects of life and have occupied very important leadership positions politically and professionally. The Pentecostal characters of flexibility and adoptability to current trends constitute some of the reasons why it is easy for the Pentecostals to

open doors to women-leadership. If doors are opened to women-leadership in other areas of life why would the Church not also do so. Mashau also emphasizes the freedom and flexible character of Pentecostalism. This freedom allows it to open doors for women leadership also. He says,

> The main attraction of Pentecostalism in Africa is its ability to transform and adopt to the cultural context of the indigenous people. This is largely because 'freedom in the spirit' often allows them space to be more flexible in developing their own cultural relevant forms of expression (6).

Humans always aspire to achieve some innate desires. One of the strongest human desires is that of leadership. As a free movement women find Pentecostal Churches a place where they can fulfill their leadership desires. Notably, Pentecostalism is a movement that seeks to overcome spiritual and social deprivation. This can be fully achieved when women are permitted to occupy leadership positions. As mainline Churches close their doors to women ordination, women switch to Pentecostalism and some even establish their ministries to attain leadership positions. Hollenwegeh discusses a scenario which is highly relevant here. He says:

> Anyone who is deprived of nourishment, clothing, education, social recognition and the means of expressing himself has two alternatives. He may develop a system in which these things, or some of them, are seen as of little value or even harmful. Alternatively, he may develop a system which gives him possession of what he lacks (484).

The long deprivation of women and marginalization in mainline denominations has made women to look out for any alternatives that help them achieve this desire. The nature of Pentecostalism as seen by Hollenwegeh is that of spontaneous, free and independent (491). This nature warrants easy decision to be taken about women leadership.

Among the Pentecostals, calling is very important. They appeal to Jesus' calling people in the New Testament to serve him. Whenever one claims to be called to

serve, he or she has the justification to do so. Obijole affirms: "What was significant for the character of leadership in the early Church was Jesus' call to discipleship and its definition in terms of service and the fact that both men and women were among Jesus' followers as disciples and proclaimers" (252).

A current very important factor often neglected in the proliferation of women leadership in Nigeria is the issue of property inheritance and the heir of the ministry. If carefully reflected upon, this is the most important factor concerning women leadership in Nigerian Pentecostalism. It can be recalled that before the death of Bishop Idahosa, women leadership was not so pronounced and none of the leading Pentecostal pastors had his wife as a co-minister or assistant pastor. It is known fact that Bishop Idahosa had massive property and prospective wealth. After his death, it meant that the person who takes over the leadership of the Church also takes over the wealth of the Church. We are all aware of the struggle for leadership that took place in the Church of God Mission in 1998 before Margaret Idohosa emerged the leader. Behind the struggle and discussion was the issue of inheriting what Idohosa had acquired. Two important developments emerged from this struggle. One, that a woman can occupy a leadership position in the Church and secondarily that the pastor need someone close to them to inherit their wealth. It can be observed that following this all the leading Pentecostal pastors incorporated their wives as co-pastors. Incidentally, God no longer calls a man into the ministry without also calling his wife. The Pentecostal God now calls husbands and wives together.

Among the Pentecostals in Nigeria, the criteria for becoming a pastor is less strenuous. In the mainline Churches one undergoes theological education for a prescribed number of years and goes through rigorous ecclesiastical examinations and observation before ordination. In the Pentecostal Churches what determines who becomes pastor is a personal call. Pentecostals link the pastoral and preaching ministry to the prophetic ministry in the Bible. All prophets experienced personal calls from God (Stephenson 412). Example, Aimee Semple McPherson claims she was called just

like Jeremiah (413). Personal call is part of personal experience and personal experience is highly honored among the Pentecostals. Another important qualification for leadership is the demonstration of charisma. Anyone who demonstrates some level of charisma is eligible to play a leadership role. Charisma is taken to be the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Charisma or the anointing of the Holy Spirit is confirmation and legitimation of call to pastoral ministry. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is not restricted to men it is also on women (Stephenson 413). The emphasis on charisma goes way back to the Azusa Street experience.

One of the definitions of Pentecostalism is that it is a movement that claims its roots from the Pentecost event of Acts 2. Pentecostals claim that the prophecy of Joel was fulfilled at Pentecost. They appeal to the prophecy which says that in the last day the Spirit will be poured on sons and daughters to enable them prophesy. For Pentecostals, this prophecy opens wide doors to women pastoral ministry. The work of the Holy Spirit in someone is more important than theological training. The Holy Spirit can enable one to do any work.

8. Conclusion

Christianity is a religion that is closely associated with culture. In the biblical era it was associated with the Jewish culture. Foreign missionaries brought Christianity to us in their cultural garments. In fact Christianity makes more sense to a people when it is adapted to their culture. That is why we seek the present the gospel in people's languages and translate Christian literature in different languages. Mainline denominations have adapted many aspects of culture. There are also many attempts to go with the current trends in many areas of life. Culture is dynamic and today doors are open to women in all aspects of life and there is clear testimony that they have failed. Very important is that the aim of the Church is to propagate the gospel. Anything that does not militate against this primal aim should be permitted. Church administrative structures are human creations which can be changed to give way for gospel propagation.

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Contestation on the primacy of relevance between African Indigenous Religion versus Islam and Christianity

Terwase T. Dzeka PhD

History Department Benue State
University Makurdi.
Tel: 08068064043
Email:iorkyase@gmail.com
&

Mohammed Mamman

History and Strategic Studies
Department, Federal University
Dutsinma, Katsina State.
Tel: 08038862351
Mammanmohammed8@gmail.com

Abstract

The history of African cosmological experience depicts a picture of blatant assault. The source of this assault historically has to do with African contact with Islam and Christianity. The inadvertent permissive and liberal nature of the content of African indigenous religion rendered it supinely exposed to the onslaught of these two foreign religions. The two surreptitiously and belligerently invaded African indigenous cosmological space and totally situated their dominance with an air of utmost intolerance and intransigence thereby creating a scenario of culture shock. The psychology and religious worldview of the African peoples have been enslaved to the dictates and ululations of these foreign religions to an extent that violence and exploitations are openly visited on the people yet they find it difficult to vehemently resist this mental colonization. This experience can be discerned from the activities of the Jihads and radical political Islam as well as Pentecostalism. Against the backdrop of this development, this discourse has interrogated modernity in the context of the encroachment of these two Middle Eastern religions juxtaposed against the core values and tenets of African Indigenous Religion. The narrative has adopted a critical and polemical approach which has properly articulated most of the vestiges and nuances of the discussion. A few examples have been drawn from selected regions of the continent in order to give fair representation. It has also adumbrated the ethos of African

indigenous religion and through them shown how the African Psyche and cosmology can be effectively decolonized.

1. Introduction

The history of Africa in the modern era has clearly exhibited a picture of assault, depredation and malignment. The economic experience of slavery and colonization gave vent to a psychological disposition of helplessness where the continent has consistently remained docile and comatose. All the elements of her material and cultural attributes have been stunted and totally rendered ineffective to an extent that there is prevalent a spirit of self-doubt which tends to remonstrate against African self-confidence thereby leading to the denial of the African person by Africans themselves. This erosion of self-worth can be discerned in the craze for anything foreign while at the same time denigrating anything African. It would be tempting to excuse this disposition on the hegemony and dominance of the foreign forces that invaded Africa but it is equally important for Africa to creatively commence the process of reasserting her self-worth especially beginning with her cosmological worldview.

African Indigenous Religion (AIR) is a principal part of the people's heritage which according to John Mbiti "is a very rich reservoir of the people's thought, action and experience passed on from generations" (2). For this rich heritage to be of relevant utility in the modern period in Africa, creativity and innovativeness are necessary ingredients that must be brought to bear on the practical expression of the various notions of its application and AIR occupies a central position for the demonstration of this important engagement on account of the fact that religion is an inescapable involvement of every member of the human race (Bolaji Idowu 2). The centrality of this fact is further buttressed by the invidious way and manner Islam and Christianity have surreptitiously invaded the African cosmological space to dislodge AIR and gain more and more ground without much resistance.

2. Conceptual Clarification/Theoretical Framework

The key concepts clarified in this work are African Indigenous Religion, Islam, Christianity culture and cosmology. In order to give clear insights to the meaning of African Indigenous Religion, Mbiti asserts that African Traditional Religion (ATR) is made up of five interrelated components which are also inter-twined viz; (1) Belief (2) Practices, ceremonies and festivals (3) Religious Objects and Places (4) Values and Morals (5) Finally religious officials or leaders (11-12). All these five aspects put together constitute African Indigenous Religion. It is the foundational belief system handed down from generation to generation and which continues to be practiced by living men and women as the religion of the forbears (Idowu 104).

Christianity is an Abrahamic religion which believes in monotheism, it originated from Jesus Christ whose teachings form the fulcrum of what the faith professes. It advocates peace and harmonious relations. It came to Africa through proselytization, its adherent are known as Christians. Islam is also known as a monotheistic religion whose principal teaching is factored on peace. It originated from Arabia and its adherent are known as Muslims. It came to Africa through conquest, trade and proselytization.

Culture on its part connotes the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions, of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, material objects as well as possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual or group effort (http://www.tamu.edu/faculty..). Cosmology on its part is a set of knowledge, beliefs, interpretations and practices of a society or culture related to explanations about the origins and evolution of the universe as well as the role and meaning of human life and the world within the universe or cosmos (www.times.habla-blogspat.com.ng/2008/09/). These concepts give insights as to the thrust of the discussions of this essay.

The theory adopted as the intellectual foundation for the work is Clifford Geertz's Religion as a cultural system theory which rests on five key points: (1) Religion as a system of symbols (2) Establishes pervasive long lasting moods and motivations

(3) formulation of a general order of existence (4) clothing conceptions with an aura of reality (5) finally, moods and motivations seen uniquely realistic (www.Colorado.edu/ReligiousStudies).

3. Historical Representation Of Growth Trends Of The Three Religions 1900-2010

Growth of Islam & Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa Since 1900

● Traditional African Religions ● Muslims ● Christians
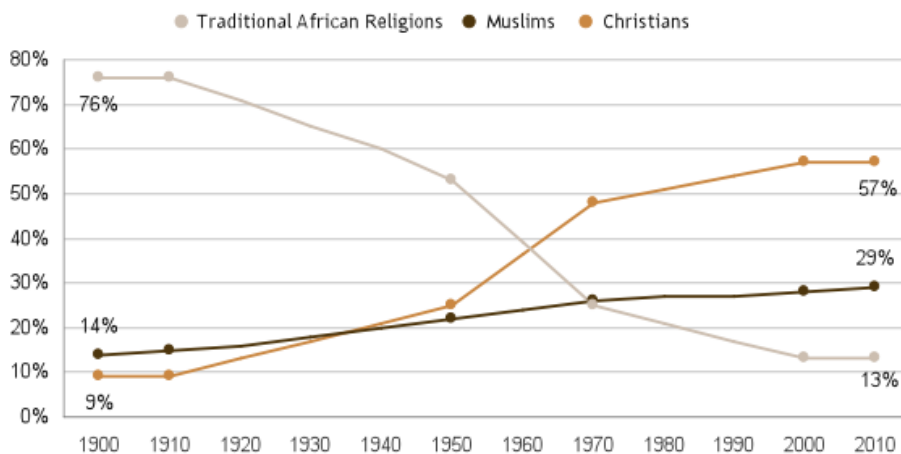
Source: World Religion Database. Historical data draw on government records, historical atlases and reports of religious organizations at the time. Later figures draw on U.N. population estimates, surveys and censuses.

Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, April 2010

It is clearly from the graphical representation above that although Islam came to Africa before Christianity in the modern era, at the beginning of the twentieth century, AIR was more recognized and also occupied a major part of the cosmological space of

the people of Africa than the other two religions. However, with the intrusion and entrenchment of colonialism, the overall picture began to witness fundamental changes due principally to the activities of Christian missionaries and colonial governments who introduced Christianity and western education. In areas where Islam was fully entrenched, the Europeans entered into agreements with them on how best to share the available space between them while in the case of AIR, it was wholly condemned by both religions as being idolatrous. This development coupled with the spiritual and physical alienation heavily brought to bear on the people through the process of colonization, the relevance of AIR slowly began to wane and these two religions carefully assumed dominance as apparently depicted by the graph shown above.

The pertinent question that arises from this scenario is, given the magnitude of the force brought to bear against AIR, why has it been able to withstand such assault? The answer to that question lies in the resilience and belief in one Deity which cuts across the content of the belief system of majority of the peoples of the continent. This is reflected in the names given to God by the various peoples such as *Nzembi* in Angola, *Na'amgmin* in Burkina Faso, *Modimo* in Botswana, *Nguleso* in Sudan among many others across the length and breadth of the continent. The subliminal position of AIR has allowed room for these foreign religions to hold sway and eventually condescend to the level of degeneracy (Mbiti 47-48).

A look at the activities of these religions ostensibly conveys the picture of misapplication of relevance. The following examples ominously show this fact. Beginning with Islam, under the guise of fundamentalism, mushroomed into groups such as *Al-Qaeda* in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), *Ansar-Dine al-Shabab,* as well as *Boko Haram* among others have wreaked havoc on the continent which have led to massive loss of lives and the destruction of huge quantities of properties as well as the displacement of people and creation of refugees in various portions of the continent where they operated (Terwase Dzeka 5). The activities of these people totally run counter to whatever any true religion advocates.

Within Christianity on her part, variants of it have degenerated to pseudo and peripheral capitalist cartels that prey on the psychology of the weak, vulnerable and gullible members of African society by economically exploiting them to the enrichment of the leaders of these houses of business. The overall impact of this development lies in the fact that while the former visits stupendous violence and violation on the physical existence of the people by way of killings, maiming, destruction of properties, as well as psychological trauma, the latter surreptitiously uses the economic angle to dispossess and pauperize the people of Africa. By this development, the ordinary person on the continent is hamstrung in a position where they have no room to negotiate.

It is only AIR that will necessarily step in to save her children from the claws of these two religions and the way to do this is to project the ethos, values, modes etc that undergird its content.
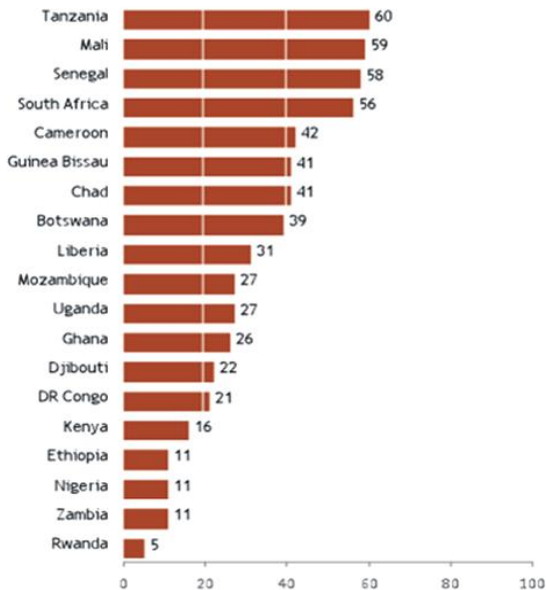
Belief in the Protective Power of Sacrifices to Spirits or Ancestors

% who believe sacrifices to spirits or ancestors can protect them from bad things happening

Median results:

All countries	27
Christians	25
Muslims	30

Among general population in...

Tanzania	60
Mali	59
Senegal	58
South Africa	56
Cameroon	42
Guinea Bissau	41
Chad	41
Botswana	39
Liberia	31
Mozambique	27
Uganda	27
Ghana	26
Djibouti	22
DR Congo	21
Kenya	16
Ethiopia	11
Nigeria	11
Zambia	11
Rwanda	5

Source: Pew Research Centre

4. Conclusion

Genuine adherents to the faith should be creative, proactive and innovative in order to inject fresh positive vibes into AIR so that its practice should conform to the growth level of the continent. There is need for codification and documentation. Modern African generations should bring to bear their intellectual acuity by infusing fresh ideas which are positive and constructive enough to attract genuine adherents in order to

broaden as well as deepen the acceptability and popularity of African Indigenous Religion.

Through Ingenious fervor the dark element associated with African Indigenous Religion would be jettisoned and discarded thereby making way for healthy growth totally devoid of the various accusations leveled against it by the two Middle Eastern Religion. African Indigenous Religion should be assertive, inclusiveness, accommodating, progressive, and development focused. The religion should fervently promote the African ethos of egalitarianism, communalism, as well as the general wellbeing of Africans in the spirit of Ubuntu. Finally African Indigenous Religion should promote peace on the continent.

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