

behaviors of individuals involve in religious activities. In the words of Idowu morality is the fruit of religion that God implanted in man during creation which gives him a sense of right and wrong (77). This sense of right and wrong is part of human nature. God demands that man should do that which is right. Thus, it is man's obligation to do that which is right.

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Contextualizing the New Testament Female Role in Leadership for the Growth of Nigerian Society

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Abstract

In the New Testament, women like Deborah a brave and courageous woman, she played the role of a captain in order to encourage male soldiers of Israel. Lydia, the seller of purple goods, and Priscilla, who worked alongside her husband Aquila in tentmaking, were economically independent and contributors to their communities. Phoebe, described as a "deacon" of the church in Cencreae (Romans 16:1), was involved in financial and charitable work, helping support the mission of the early Church. In Nigeria today, women have significant roles in economic growth, especially in agriculture, small-scale businesses, and the informal sector. Nigerian women, particularly in rural areas, play an essential role in food production and the preservation of local economies. However, despite their substantial contributions, women face challenges such as limited access to credit, land ownership, education and recognition. Much like the New Testament women who were involved in commerce and resource management, Nigerian women need policies and structures that recognize and support their economic empowerment. This study investigates the roles of women leaders in the New Testament and how these examples can influence the role of women in the growth of Nigeria society. Through qualitative and quantitative methodologies, this research examines how female biblical leadership such as Deborah, Phoebe, Priscilla, and Lydia can

inspire and empower Nigerian women to take more prominent roles in society and governance. The study is grounded in Feminist Leadership Theory, which advocates for the equal participation of women in leadership roles across all sectors of society. The research utilizes a survey of 1,000 Nigerian respondents to analyze attitudes towards women in leadership and their implications for Nigeria's social, economic, and political development. The study concludes that while there are barriers to female leadership in Nigeria society, using the New Testament's model of female leadership offers significant potential for societal change. The study provides recommendations for policy reforms, education, and social interventions to increase female participation in national growth.

Keywords: Female Leadership, New Testament, Nigeria society, Growth.

Introduction

Historically, women have been excluded from leadership roles in many parts of the world, specifically Nigeria, due to cultural, religious, and societal factors. However, the New Testament offers examples of women who held significant leadership roles within early Christian communities, challenging patriarchal norms. Women like Deborah, Priscilla, Phoebe, and Junia illustrate biblical models of leadership that are often overlooked but offer insights into the broader discussion of women's roles in governance and societal development. This study examines these biblical roles and investigates their implications for Nigerian women, exploring how biblical perspectives can reshape contemporary views on female leadership and involvement in national development.

The primary aim of this study is to explore the leadership roles of some female in the New Testament and assess how these examples can inform and inspire women's involvement in the development of Nigeria. The study aims to understand how

these biblical portrayals can influence societal attitudes towards gender equality and empower Nigerian women to actively contribute to the nation's development.

Methodology

This study uses both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Qualitatively, a content analysis of the New Testament is conducted, focusing on key women leaders and their contributions to early Christian communities. Quantitatively, a survey is administered to 1,000 respondents in Nigeria (both male and female), exploring their views on women in leadership, their participation in societal development, and the influence of religious teachings on these perspectives. The survey is complemented by statistical analysis to identify patterns and correlations.

Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded in Feminist Leadership Theory, which advocates for the equal participation of women in leadership roles across all sectors of society. This theory challenges traditional hierarchical structures and emphasizes a more inclusive and collaborative approach to leadership. Additionally, Social Learning Theory is used to explore how societal norms and attitudes towards women's leadership are learned and reinforced through cultural and religious frameworks.

Conceptual Clarification

Scholars such as Elizabeth Johnson (1992) emphasize that the Bible's portrayal of women is often misinterpreted in a way that subordinates them, while feminist theologians such as Rosemary Radford Ruether (1983) argue that early Christian texts contain significant examples of women in leadership roles that can empower contemporary women. Phyllis Trible (1978) further argues that a feminist interpretation of the Bible reveals

stories of strong women leaders such as Deborah and Junia, whose leadership challenges patriarchal structures. Additionally, John Hull (1999) explains how religious traditions often shape public perceptions of women in leadership, both positively and negatively.

Scholars' Perspectives

Trible (1978) and Ruether (1983) argue that biblical texts provide evidence of women in leadership roles, yet these examples have often been marginalized in traditional theological interpretations. In Nigeria, the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions is well documented. Omolara (2016) discusses how cultural and societal norms limit women's political participation, while Adebayo (2017) highlights the lack of educational opportunities for women in rural areas. However, Ogunyemi (2019) demonstrates that religious teachings, particularly those from the Bible, can be transformative in altering societal views on women's roles in leadership.

A. The place of Women in the New Testament

The New Testament presents a complex and multifaceted view of women, recognizing them as integral to the mission and development of the early Christian community. Although the societal context was patriarchal, the New Testament provides numerous examples of women who held significant roles in the church, offering a revolutionary perspective on gender roles during that time. The place of women in the New Testament can be categorized into several key areas:

1. Disciples and Followers of Jesus

Women played a pivotal role as disciples and followers of Jesus Christ. They were often present during his ministry, supported his work, and were key witnesses to his resurrection. Some notable women include:

Mary Magdalene: She is one of the most prominent women in the New Testament. Mary Magdalene was a close follower of Jesus and was the first to witness his resurrection, making her the first to proclaim the good news of Jesus' victory over death (John 20:11-18). The women who supported Jesus financially: Luke 8:1-3 mentions a group of women who provided material support for Jesus and his disciples, including Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna. Also, Mary, the Mother of Jesus: As the mother of Jesus, Mary holds a central role in the New Testament narrative, from the birth of Jesus to her presence at his crucifixion (Luke 1:26-38; John 19:25-27).

2. Female Leaders in the Early Church

Women were involved in leadership roles in the early Christian community, even though these roles were often informal or less visible compared to their male counterparts. Some examples of women who held leadership positions include:

Priscilla: Priscilla, along with her husband Aquila, was a key figure in the early church. She was a teacher and a co-laborer with the Apostle Paul, helping to instruct Apollos (Acts 18:24-28). Her role in teaching and guiding others in the faith illustrates an active and authoritative position in the Christian community.

Phoebe: Phoebe is mentioned in Romans 16:1-2 as a deaconess of the church in Cenchreae. Paul commends her for her service and leadership, showing that women were entrusted with significant responsibilities within the early church.

Junia: In Romans 16:7, Paul refers to a woman named Junia, calling her "outstanding among the apostles." This reference suggests that Junia held a prominent role in the early Christian movement, likely as an apostle or missionary, a position of great authority.

3. Prophetesses and Leaders of House Churches

The New Testament acknowledges the presence of female prophetesses and leaders of house churches, further highlighting their importance in spreading the gospel and providing spiritual leadership.

Anna: In Luke 2:36-38, Anna the prophetess is depicted as a devout woman who, upon encountering the infant Jesus in the temple, prophesied about his significance. She is an example of a woman who held a spiritual role in the early Jewish Christian community.

The women leading house churches: In the New Testament, many of the early Christians met in house churches, and women often played key roles in leading these gatherings. For instance, Lydia, mentioned in Acts 16:14-15, was a successful businesswoman who hosted Paul and his companions in her home and became a supporter of the early church.

B. Women's Roles in the Development of Nigeria

Women have played, and continue to play, a pivotal role in the development of Nigeria, contributing to the nation's social, economic, political, and cultural spheres. Although traditionally marginalized in leadership roles and decision-making, Nigerian women have been central to grassroots movements, economic activities, and political advocacy. Their roles have evolved over time, particularly with the growing recognition of gender equality and women's empowerment in Nigeria. This article highlights the multifaceted contributions of Nigerian women and examines how their roles can further impact the nation's development.

1. Economic Contributions

Women in Nigeria are significant contributors to the country's economy, particularly in rural areas where they are involved in agriculture, trade, and small-scale businesses.

Agriculture: Women make up a substantial portion of Nigeria's agricultural labor force. They are primarily involved in food production, processing, and distribution, particularly in the cultivation of crops such as cassava, maize, rice, and vegetables. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), women contribute to 60-80% of food production in rural Nigeria.

Entrepreneurship and Small Business: Nigerian women have been at the forefront of small-scale businesses, particularly in the informal sector. Many women run shops, sell produce, or provide services, contributing significantly to Nigeria's economy. Women's involvement in microfinance institutions also plays a key role in supporting small enterprises and local economies. Despite these contributions, women face significant challenges, including limited access to capital, land ownership, and education, which can hinder their economic potential. Policies that address these barriers could help unlock greater economic contributions from Nigerian women.

2. Political Engagement and Advocacy

Women's political participation in Nigeria has grown steadily over the years, although they remain underrepresented in formal political leadership positions.

Political Leadership: While women are still underrepresented in political offices, they have made significant strides. Prominent female political leaders such as Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (former Finance Minister and Director-General of the WTO), Amina J. Mohammed (UN Deputy Secretary-General), and Saratu Iya Aliyu (former president of the Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture) have broken barriers and paved the way for more women in leadership positions.

Advocacy and Social Movements: Nigerian women have also led significant advocacy and social movements. The Women in

Nigeria (WIN) movement in the 1980s advocated for women's rights and gender equality. In more recent years, women have been at the forefront of movements calling for better governance, justice, and the protection of women's rights. The Bring Back Our Girls campaign, which demanded the safe return of the kidnapped Chibok girls, is one such example where women were pivotal in galvanizing national and international support. Despite these achievements, women's representation in the National Assembly and other political bodies remains low, highlighting the need for policies that support women's political participation, such as affirmative action and gender quotas.

3. Education and Knowledge Development

Women in Nigeria have increasingly become central to the country's educational development, both as educators and students. However, challenges such as gender-based violence, early marriage, and poverty continue to impede full educational access for many Nigerian girls.

Educators and Knowledge Transmitters: Women serve as teachers at all levels of education, from primary schools to universities. As educators, they are essential in shaping future generations and contributing to the human capital development of the nation. Female educators are often more than just instructors; they are key role models in their communities, encouraging girls to pursue education and achieve independence.

Access to Education: More Nigerian girls are attending school today than ever before, largely due to the advocacy of women's rights organizations and the government's efforts to improve access to education. However, girls' education, particularly in the northern regions of Nigeria, continues to face challenges. Initiatives to increase female enrollment and reduce dropout rates are crucial for empowering the next generation of women leaders and workers. Educating women has a transformative

impact on society, as educated women are more likely to start businesses, invest in their families, and contribute to national development.

4. Social and Cultural Influence

Women in Nigeria influence social and cultural development in profound ways. Nigerian women have preserved cultural traditions, influenced contemporary art, and played vital roles in family structures.

Cultural Preservation: Women are often the custodians of traditional knowledge and culture. They play essential roles in passing down indigenous practices, languages, and customs. This preservation of culture strengthens the nation's cultural identity and promotes social cohesion.

Influence in the Arts: Nigerian women have made significant contributions to the arts, including music, literature, film, and fashion. Female writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Sefi Atta, and Ngozi Achebe have brought global attention to Nigerian literature. Women are also increasingly shaping the Nigerian music industry, with artists like Tiwa Savage and Yemi Alade gaining international acclaim. These cultural contributions help shape Nigeria's global image, boost tourism, and contribute to the creative industries' economic growth.

5. Women's Rights and Gender Equality Advocacy

Women's rights in Nigeria have made notable progress, largely due to the efforts of activists and organizations that advocate for gender equality.

Legal Reforms: Nigerian women's rights activists have pushed for legal reforms to protect women from discrimination, violence, and inequality. These include advocating for the passage of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act and the Gender and Equal Opportunity Bill, which seek to address

gender-based violence, child marriage, and unequal treatment in the workplace.

Empowerment Initiatives: Numerous organizations, both local and international, are working to empower Nigerian women economically and socially. These initiatives aim to increase women's access to financial resources, legal rights, and educational opportunities. Examples include the Nigerian Women's Trust Fund, which supports women's political engagement, and Women for Women International, which provides training and advocacy for women in conflict-affected areas.

Challenges Facing Women in Nigeria

Despite these significant contributions, women in Nigeria continue to face numerous challenges that hinder their full potential, including:

Gender-Based Violence: Gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, and trafficking, remains prevalent in Nigeria, preventing women from fully participating in public and private life.

Economic Barriers: Women often have limited access to resources, credit, and land, which hinders their ability to start businesses or improve their livelihoods. **Cultural and Religious Norms:** In many regions, traditional cultural and religious practices still limit women's rights and opportunities, particularly in rural areas where patriarchy is deeply entrenched.

C. Contextualizing the New Testament Women to the Socioeconomic System in Nigeria

The role of women in the New Testament, despite the cultural and historical differences from modern-day Nigeria, provides a rich framework for understanding the potential and power of women in society. While the New Testament is situated in a

first-century patriarchal context, it also introduces groundbreaking concepts of women's leadership, agency, and participation in the public and private spheres, challenging cultural norms and advancing the idea of gender equality in God's plan. Nigeria, with its unique cultural, religious, and socioeconomic challenges, has made strides in recognizing the importance of women's contributions to national development. However, cultural norms, economic structures, and gender biases still hinder women's full participation. Contextualizing the roles of women in the New Testament against Nigeria's contemporary socioeconomic system offers a powerful lens through which to envision the empowerment of Nigerian women.

1. Women in the New Testament and Nigerian Society

In the New Testament, women were instrumental in the spread of Christianity, and their involvement extended beyond domestic roles. They were leaders, apostles, deaconesses, prophetesses, and supporters of the early Christian movement. The lives and actions of women like Mary Magdalene, Priscilla, Phoebe, Lydia, Deborah, and Junia show that women were active participants in both the spiritual and social life of the early Church. These examples illustrate the transformative role women played, despite societal constraints. Comparing this with the Nigerian context, women have similarly contributed to the country's growth, yet they face numerous obstacles. While New Testament women were involved in both spiritual leadership and social change, Nigerian women often find themselves sidelined in political, economic, and even spiritual leadership. The roles that New Testament women played in the early Church offer a framework that can inform contemporary Nigerian women's potential to participate in all spheres of society.

2. Economic Contributions: From the New Testament to Nigeria

In the New Testament, women like Lydia, the seller of purple goods, and Priscilla, who worked alongside her husband Aquila in tentmaking, were economically independent and contributors to their communities. Phoebe, described as a "deacon" of the church in Cenchreae (Romans 16:1), was involved in financial and charitable work, helping support the mission of the early Church.

In Nigeria today, women have significant roles in economic development, especially in agriculture, small-scale businesses, and the informal sector. Nigerian women, particularly in rural areas, play an essential role in food production and the preservation of local economies. However, despite their substantial contributions, women face challenges such as limited access to credit, land ownership, and education. Much like the New Testament women who were involved in commerce and resource management, Nigerian women need policies and structures that support their economic empowerment.

3. Leadership and Decision-Making: New Testament Examples and Nigerian Politics

The New Testament features women in leadership roles that transcend traditional gender boundaries. Deborah, though from the Old Testament, was cited as a judge in Israel who led with wisdom and strength (Judges 4-5), setting an example for women in leadership. In the New Testament, Priscilla and Phoebe were leaders in the early Church, showing that women could serve as teachers and deacons, contributing to the leadership and teaching of Christian communities. In Nigeria, while women like Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (former Finance Minister and now Director-General of the WTO) and Amina J. Mohammed (UN Deputy Secretary-General) have broken barriers in high-level leadership, women are still vastly underrepresented in political offices, decision-making, and

governance. The leadership roles women held in the early Church challenge Nigeria's patriarchal structure and offer a model for increasing women's involvement in political leadership.

4. Spiritual Leadership: Lessons from New Testament Female and Nigerian Religious Contexts

In the New Testament, women played essential roles in the early Church, not only in serving the community but also in spreading the Gospel. Mary Magdalene was the first to witness the resurrection of Jesus and was commissioned to proclaim the good news (John 20:11-18). Priscilla, as a teacher, helped guide Apollos, an early Christian preacher (Acts 18:24-26), and Phoebe was entrusted with the letter to the Romans, showcasing her significant role in theological leadership (Romans 16:1-2).

In Nigeria, where religious institutions—particularly within Christianity and Islam—have long been male-dominated, women's spiritual leadership has often been restricted. However, women like Bishop Margaret Idahosa, Rev. Dr. Funke Felix-Adejumo, and Pastor Mabel Okojie are leading change in Nigerian Christian communities, proving that women can serve as influential spiritual leaders.

Practical Application: The examples of New Testament women can inspire Nigerian religious communities to expand the roles of women in church leadership. Promoting women's participation as preachers, deacons, and leaders in religious organizations can further empower Nigerian women and break down gender barriers in the church.

5. Social Advocacy: New Testament Women and Nigerian Women's Rights Movements

Women in the New Testament were often involved in advocating for justice and supporting the marginalized. Priscilla and Lydia

demonstrated a commitment to the welfare of the early Christian community, helping to provide for its needs. Additionally, Anna the Prophetess was an advocate for the coming of the Messiah, and Mary Magdalene's proclamation of Jesus' resurrection was an act of social and spiritual advocacy.

In Nigeria, women have been at the forefront of advocacy for women's rights, social justice, and political reform. The Bring Back Our Girls Movement is a powerful example of Nigerian women using social media and public demonstrations to advocate for the safe return of abducted schoolgirls. Other women's movements continue to challenge gender-based violence, child marriage, and other forms of discrimination.

6. Barriers and Challenges

While the New Testament presents a radical view of women's inclusion in leadership and ministry, the cultural and religious context of ancient times still imposed certain limitations. Similarly, Nigerian women face challenges such as gender-based violence, cultural expectations, limited educational opportunities, and legal inequalities.

D. Empirical Analysis

The empirical portion of the study is based on data collected from a survey of 1,000 respondents in Nigeria. The sample is divided evenly between male and female participants across both urban and rural areas. The survey includes questions on public perceptions of women in leadership, the impact of the New Testament on these perceptions, and the barriers to women's participation in Nigerian development.

Table 1: Gender Perceptions of Women in Leadership Roles

Gender	Agree (%)	Not Engaged (%)	Interested in Engaging (%)
Male	48	40	12
Female	70	20	10

Table 2: Influence of the New Testament on Women’s Leadership Perceptions

Biblical Example	Recognised (%)	Positive Impact on Leadership (%)
Deborah	60	50
Phoebe	45	40
Priscilla	55	45

Table 3: Barriers to Women’s Leadership in Nigeria

Barrier	Perception (%)
Cultural Norms	65
Lack of Education	50
Political Exclusion	55
Gender Discrimination	70

Table 4: Women’s Involvement in Nigeria Politics

Gender	Actively Engaged (%)	Not Engaged (%)	Interested in Engaging
Male	35	50	15
Female	25	60	15

Findings

The findings reveal that while a majority of women in Nigeria express support for women in leadership, a significant percentage of men still hold traditional views that limit women’s

leadership potential. The New Testament examples of women leaders, particularly Deborah, Phoebe, and Priscilla, have a moderate influence on public perceptions. However, societal barriers such as cultural norms, lack of education, and political exclusion are the primary factors hindering women's participation in leadership roles.

Discussion

The data suggests that while there is support for women in leadership, particularly among women, entrenched cultural and societal beliefs continue to limit the progress of gender equality in Nigeria. The New Testament's examples of women leaders present a theological basis for challenging these biases. However, practical changes in societal attitudes require more than theological argument—it requires targeted interventions in education, policy, and public awareness.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the leadership roles of women in the New Testament provide valuable lessons for advancing gender equality in leadership roles today. These biblical examples can serve as a model for Nigerian women aspiring to contribute to national development. While the societal barriers to women's leadership are significant, the integration of these biblical examples into contemporary Nigerian discourse on gender and leadership can facilitate change.

Recommendations

- **Policy Reforms:** Enforce policies that promote gender equality in political and leadership positions, including quotas for women in government.
- **Educational Initiatives:** Implement educational programs that encourage women's leadership from an early age, particularly in rural areas.

- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Launch national campaigns that highlight the biblical examples of women leaders, thereby shifting public perceptions.
- **Support Networks:** Create mentorship and support networks for women in leadership positions to help navigate institutional barriers.
- **Religious Education:** Incorporate teachings on the leadership of women in the New Testament into church teachings to encourage religious communities to support women's leadership.

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Beneficiaries and Benefactors of Practical Mission Work: An Exegetical Study of Luke 8:1-3.

Promise Arinze Godwin

Abstract

The paper argued that, as a beneficiary of the gospel ministry, every believer in Christ should in response, double also as a benefactor of practical mission work, through generous giving. The motivation for the paper is two folds, first, that effective mission work should be practical, deliberate, intentional and purpose-driven, ensuring that people's needs are met and problems are solved. Second, on the part of the saved, the willingness to contribute especially financial, for the purpose of practical mission work should not be negotiable. The paper attempted exegesis of the focal Bible passage, Luke 8: 1-3, in the context of beneficiaries and benefactors of practical Christian mission work, using the example of the women that are referred in the Bible passage. It examined biblical model of giving as demonstrated in the focal Bible passage, by the women who supported Jesus' ministry, emphasizing their transformation through discipleship, healing, and partnership in missions. Utilizing diachronic approach to historical critical exegetical method, the paper drew theological and missiological implications that are relevant to mobilizing present day believers in Christ for financial support to God's work. Key findings revealed that purpose-driven mission work precedes material generosity, as the women in Luke 8:1-3 became committed followers of Jesus before releasing their resources. Conversely, the women in the focal Bible passage also demonstrated the heart of gratitude to God on account of the

benefits they derived from Jesus' ministry. Hence, they saw the act of supporting Jesus' ministry as an extended grace, knowing well that they cannot give in equal measure of what they have received from the gospel ministry. Additionally, the paper underscored how missions serve as a platform for breaking cultural barriers, as Jesus elevated the roles of women in His ministry, providing a model for modern day Christian practice. It addressed the lethargic attitude of some Christians in the present time towards generous giving and its effects on Christian mission efforts. Practical recommendations included prioritizing discipleship as many believers act in ignorance, addressing specific believers' needs, promoting sense of belonging and partnerships among believers, empowering and challenging every believer in Christ to embrace their role as benefactors of practical Christian mission work.

Introduction

The event of Christ among human in the form and nature of man occupies a fascinating aspect in human history. Of all the stories that are credited to human history, no one is of more intense interest than this.¹⁹⁹ That Almighty and self-sufficient God dwelt among men in the nature of a man. He came and dwelt in the world of man, laid down His life and picked it up at will, all for his consuming love toward humanity. The grace to be part of the vehicles for carrying this historic event round the whole world means the greatest privilege that would be accorded to anyone. Sharing the message of the climax of God's salvific plans for humanity that is championed in the work of Christ on the cross, means the highest level of expression of love from man to a fellow man. Every other means of love expression among mankind would certainly depreciate with the change in the changing world. Only the love that is expressed

¹⁹⁹J. Rankin, *Great Commission Obedience*, Nashville: B and H Press, 2011, 67.

in sharing the story of Christ's salvific work on the cross does appreciate endlessly.

At this point, a mention of the place of financial implication to mission work accomplishment becomes imperative. Giving is an integral aspect of Christian service and stewardship. Giving in the Kingdom of God is one of the ways of acknowledging the blessings and faithfulness of God in believers' lives. Believers give, not just to receive blessing in return, but as a way of reciprocating the kindness of God in providing for human needs. While Jesus Christ was on earth, He enjoyed provision through the liberal attitudes of some women who were committed to meeting His financial and material needs. Those women defied all odds to give themselves to the services of Jesus and His disciples. The financial necessity to mission work actualization cannot be overstressed. Mission work, either in the sense of helping believers to remain in faith or reaching out to those that are without, requires fund.

Biblical Perspective of Mission Work

The concept of Christian mission has been a popular subject in the body of Christ, and it has been among the areas of keen research interest to biblical scholars. Biblical scholars have from various times and through diverse approaches, attempted to erect the foundation of biblical description on the nature of Christian missions. This section reviews few of such scholarly positions regarding the subject matter.

Rheenen pontificates that, God initiated mission from the beginning of creation and mission became significant since the time of Adam and Eve. God initiated and participated in mission activities that led to creation of the universe, and establishment of His relationship with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Immediately after they had yielded to Satan's temptation in the Garden of Eden, mission activities to reconcile God with the created man continued. God searched, called and requested for man's whereabouts. Some scholars have argued that this is

out-rightly against the omnipotent attribute of God. That He was probably ignorant of man's whereabouts. The question raised by God testified to His nature and attribute throughout all generations. He continued seeking, to initiate reconciliation between Himself and the fallen creation.²⁰⁰ He did not want man to be destroyed but to be saved. For mission activities, God raised many prophets and priests in the Old Testament, for reconciliation and to retrace the fallen man's steps back to God.

Mission Work in the Old Testament

This section takes a cursory look at what and how the understanding of mission work was projected in human history, before the first coming of Christ. It explores the roles of partnership with God played by Israelites' founding fathers and the whole nation of Israel, as mission figures in the Old Testament.

Wayne Oates submits that, starting from the day of man's fall, God had been searching and calling man, where are you? (Genesis, 3:9). The call was on repentance, unification of divided self, change of direction and act of surrender.²⁰¹ As God called Adam and Eve, He called everybody to be involved in relating with Him and carried on His assignment for His people. He wanted, especially, Christians to be involved in calling unbelievers to repentance and reconciliation. In the opinion of Rheenen, God initiated reconciliation between Himself and His fallen man.²⁰² He did not want man to be lost forever. Therefore, He initiated resolution to take man back to his initial position. It can be said that the whole Bible stood as a message of God, calling man to retrace his steps to Him because He wanted the initial relationship to be re-established. On the other hand, one

²⁰⁰G. V. Rheenen, *Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, 14.

²⁰¹W. E. Oates, *The Psychology of Religion*, Texas: Word Books, 1973, 92.

²⁰²G. Van Rheenen, *Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies*, 14.

can say that the Old Testament meant a missionary message to every man.

Palmer enthuses that, the magnitude of the rebellion of man resulted to God's punishment on every mankind.²⁰³ God, therefore, promised to destroy satan and sin through the seed of the woman (Genesis, 3:15), because satan deceived the creature of God. This was a good news of salvation called *proto-evangelism*, and in the view of Judisch Douglas, it meant, the first gospel.²⁰⁴ It was the starting point of the mission of God for man immediately after the fall of man. God engaged different people at different times for the success of mission work. Man's rebellion brought God's judgment in the form of a massive flood. Only Noah, his family, and selected animals (male and female) were left (Genesis, 7:23), to begin life again on earth. The destruction by the flood was done to make the earth become as it was at the beginning. After the flood came a similar command as in the beginning, be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, was pronounced again (Genesis, 9:1). This was said for the fulfilment of His word with the first man. God then established another mission work with Noah (Gen 9:8-17) for the sustenance and upholding of the *proto-evangelism*. Jacob opines that, God's choosing and loving of Israel was by grace.²⁰⁵ The book of Nehemiah tells one that God chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham (Nehemiah, 9:7). In Genesis, God said to Abraham, I have known you (Genesis 18:19). The election of Israel was a continuation of the election of Abraham, since Israel were Abraham's descendants.

²⁰³T. P. Palmer, *A Theology of Old Testament*, Jos: African Christian Textbooks, 2014, 56.

²⁰⁴J. M. Douglas, *The Proto-evangelism and the Seminary, Eleventh Annual Symposium on Exegetical Theology*, Fort Wayne: Concordia Seminary Press, 1996, 4.

²⁰⁵E. Jacob, *Theology of Old Testament*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1959, 207.

Mission Work in the New Testament

This section of the review looks into the dynamism of Christian mission. It reviews Jesus' mission efforts and the synergy he initiated to ensure that kingdom business of making disciples of all nations continues without his bodily involvement, after His eventual demise.

Fuller is of the opinion that, Christian mission was in the first instance, an effort to lead others to Christ. Mission engagement included the sender, along with the sender's purpose and authority in sending.²⁰⁶ There must be some on errand with the purpose of spreading the good news with authority that the sender has in Jesus Christ. Someone must surrender himself to the authority of Jesus Christ to be useful for the work of mission. Kaiseron postulates that mission involved commissioning or authorisation that led to movement towards mission work with obedience as an agent for applying blessing of salvation to humanity.²⁰⁷ He further argues that mission included task as in the New Testament, which focused primarily on the proclamation of words and deeds of God to save humanity. The mission concept had universal scope that involved how the kingdom of God advanced, how the church fulfilled her mission, and how were those successful mission's results accomplished?²⁰⁸ Fuller reasons that, as people came out of the kingdom of darkness to light, the kingdom of God expanded.²⁰⁹ He further states that believers came together to engage in witnessing to those who did not know Christ. Their coming together was to have potential in effective evangelism because there was no amount of work a man can do than a group of people. In group, there was encouragement for

²⁰⁶L. K. Fuller, *The Missionary and His Work*, Jos: Evangelical Institute Press, 1996, 11.

²⁰⁷W.C.J. Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 2000, 47.

²⁰⁸W.C.J. Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations*, 47.

²⁰⁹L. K. Fuller, *The Missionary and His Work*, 9.

sacrificial penetration of major human barrier to achieve communities of responsible converts, where there was none before.²¹⁰

Adna and Kvalbein postulate that, mission work means a conscious, deliberate, extensive effort to convert non-fellow-religionists to one's religion.²¹¹ Don reasoned that, approaches to totally get -man- back- to -God from the time of the fall in the Garden of Eden to the period immediately before Jesus Christ, did not work as God wanted it. Therefore, the coming of Jesus Christ was necessary at the time He came. As He came, the whole nature of God's approach to drawing men to Himself, changed with the advent of Jesus.²¹² Jesus took up the job with full force from age twelve and continued to the end of his life. Bultmann is of the opinion that, the theology of the New Testament was centred on Christ's mission.²¹³ The twenty-seven books of the New Testament were all mission - inclined to fulfill the purpose of His coming to the world.

Don agrees that mission of Christ was disclosed in the Great Commission. The classic and comprehensive commission was found in Matt 28:18-20.²¹⁴ The commands in the passage were *to go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things as commanded by Jesus Christ* (Matt 28:19-20). Williams reasons that, when one reads Matthew (10:23 and 24:14), the Great Commission places Christian mission in an eschatological perspective.²¹⁵ Christian

²¹⁰ L. K. Fuller, *The Missionary and His Work*, 9

²¹¹J. Adna and H. Kvalbein, (eds) *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles*, Tobingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000, 313.

²¹²F. Don, *Themes of Theology that Impact Missions: The New Testament and Missions*, Lynchburg: Liberty University Press, 2009, 2.

²¹³R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* Vol. 2, New York: Charles Scribner, 1951, 13.

²¹⁴F. Don, *Themes of Theology that Impact Missions: The New Testament and Missions*, 5.

²¹⁵L. J. Williams, and J. Williams, *Mission in the New Testament: An Evangelical Approach*. 4th edition, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001, 266.

mission was not only meant for the present time but till eternity and with perseverance. Therefore, Jesus sent out his witnesses to continue his mission. In all of this, God's sovereignty in mission remained guaranteed. The spreading of the gospel, led to the foundation of settled Christians.

In summary, the persuasion of current writer aligns with most of the reviewed authors who postulate that concept of mission is first introduced in the Old Testament where God calls Abraham to be a blessing to all nations (Genesis 12:1–3). It progressed to Israelites' election, where they were chosen to serve as light to the nations, embodying God's justice and righteousness (Isaiah 49:6). Mission theme continues in the New Testament, culminating in Jesus' ministry and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20). Jesus' ministry provides the clearest example of practical Christian mission. His mission statement presents Him as the one sent to preach good news to the poor, proclaim freedom for the oppressed, and bring sight to the blind (Luke 4:18–19).

Approaches to Christian Mission Work

This section of the review surveys methods or inventions to Christian mission. It looks at what and how the early missionaries in Nigeria did it. Borrowing certain leafs from what had been in a measure to improve what is being.

Adam views Christian mission as an organised effort to carry on evangelism or other charity activities, such as educational or hospital work, in the name of the Christian faith. To him, it involves sending individuals and groups across boundaries, most commonly geographical boundaries.²¹⁶ Sometimes individuals are sent and are called missionaries, and historically, they may have been based in mission stations. When groups are sent, they are often called mission teams as they undertake mission trips. There are a few different kinds of

²¹⁶D. Adam, *Understanding the Concept of Evangelism: The Nigerian Perspective*, Jos: Jang Publishing, 2006, 16.

mission trips: short-term, long-term, relational and those that simply help people in need. Some people choose to dedicate their whole lives to mission. Edward James notes that:

Mission work, also known as missionary work, refers to the act of Christian individuals or groups engaging in outreach activities to share their faith and provide assistance to communities in need. Missionaries dedicate themselves to serving others, often in unfamiliar or challenging environments, with the goal of promoting spiritual growth, offering humanitarian aid and fostering social change.²¹⁷

Turaki is of the opinion that Christian missionary service is driven by a combination of convictions. The first, and primary motivator comes from Jesus' own command which is known as the Great Commission.²¹⁸ Jesus issued this proclamation to the church before ascending into heaven: all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. *Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age* (Matthew 28:18–20). This command to create disciples from all nations inspires Christians to share the gospel and create opportunities for new converts to learn and grow.²¹⁹ Not all missionaries focus on the same part of this process. Some focus on sharing their faith and others might focus more on long-term ministry and helping local churches excel in the discipleship process.

Pentecost asserts that, alongside the *Great Commission*, some missionaries find themselves compelled by other factors, too.

²¹⁷L. James, *The Theology of New Testament*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 85.

²¹⁸Y. Turaki, *Theory and Practice of Christian Mission in Africa: A Century of SNC/ ECWA History and Legacy in Nigeria 1893 – 1993* Vol 1, Nairobi: IBS Press, 1999, 65.

²¹⁹Y. Turaki, *Theory and Practice of Christian Mission in Africa*, 65.

These include a desire to serve people and meet their needs, and a commitment to making a positive difference in the world. On top of that, many see Christian missions as integral to their own personal journey of self-discovery and growth.²²⁰ As it is with any sort of ministry, it can be challenging to make definitive statements about what missionaries do. They often end up doing all sorts of things, especially when they end up serving long term. But as one thinks about what missionaries do, there are some roles one can identify. These include sharing the good news of salvation in Christ Jesus, making disciples of all nations, providing humanitarian aid, promoting justice and advocacy, educating and training, medical and healthcare services.

Challenges Facing Christian Mission Work

This section takes a swipe at some of the challenges that confronted early missionaries in Nigeria. While the reading or approach informs a look into what had been, notwithstanding, it is arguable that, the same challenges are confronting present day mission work.

O'Brien opines that challenge of language and translation stand tall among ensuing issues of effective mission work. As a matter of need, to facilitate quick evangelism, church planting, and discipleship, every missionary was required to learn the local language of the natives where each was to serve as a missionary.²²¹ For the missionary to achieve that, the person was expected to devote, at least, two hours every day to learn the local language of the people. Fleck opines that, it was part of the orientation for every newly recruited missionary to make sure to learn the local language of the people in every district or region they entered and also to convert such languages into

²²⁰E. C. Pentecost, *Issues in Missiology: An Introduction*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982, 60.

²²¹P. T. O'Brien, *Gospel and Mission in the Writings of Paul: Exegetical and Theological Analysis*, Cumbrian: Paternoster Press, 2000, 45.

written scripts.²²² To Fleck, this was meant to make it easier to translate the Scriptures into those languages. This is not an easy task, for instance in a country like Nigeria where there were about three hundred different languages altogether.²²³ Cheesman agrees that the major task every field missionary was expected to accomplish was to make sure the Scriptures were translated into the local languages of the people.²²⁴

Tsoho considers language learning to be a serious concern because without understanding the local languages of the people, it would be difficult to communicate the Scriptures with the natives.²²⁵ Since missionaries felt that they could not accomplish learning the language and translating it into the written script on their own, they partnered with other mission agencies to help facilitate the printing of the Scriptures. These mission agencies were the Christian Missionary Society (CMS), the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) in Nigeria. They helped in translating the Scriptures into local languages.²²⁶ Through their efforts, literature such as *Annuals in Vernacular* was printed. The name of the committee was called the Standing Literature Committee.²²⁷ Crampton submits that Christian Missions contributed a lot towards the printing of Christian literature that had a positive impact on the improvement of literacy in Northern Nigeria.²²⁸

²²²I. Fleck, *Bringing Christianity to Nigeria: The Origin and Work of Protestant Missions*, Bukuru: ACTS, 2013, 49.

²²³I. Fleck, *Bringing Christianity to Nigeria: The Origin and Work of Protestant Missions*, 49.

²²⁴G. Cheesman, *Mission Today: An Introduction to Mission Studies*, Belfast: Qua Iboe Press, 1997, 65.

²²⁵D. M. Tsoho, *Tullar Missionary to Kamuku Land*, Minna: Mustap Printer 2006, 13.

²²⁶D. M. Tsoho, *Tullar Missionary to Kamuku Land*, 13.

²²⁷D. M. Tsoho, *Tullar Missionary to Kamuku Land*, 13.

²²⁸E. P. T. Crampton, *Christianity in Northern Nigeria*, Bukuru: Africa Christian Textbooks, 2013, 49.

Authorship, Date and Purpose of Writing the Gospel of Luke

The authorship of the Gospel of Luke is traditionally credited to Luke, the beloved physician (Col. 4:14), a close associate of Apostle Paul. According to tradition, Luke was a Gentile writing to a Gentile audience.²²⁹ It is generally agreed that the author Luke is to be identified with the writer of Acts of the Apostles. The preface of Luke (1:1-4) is addressed to Theophilus, and Acts 1:1 appears to be a kind of secondary preface which is addressed to the same recipient. Both the internal and external evidences can be applied to assert Luke as the author of the Gospel. Internal evidences support the fact that Luke was not an eye witness to the events recorded in his Gospel. He is the only one of the Gospel writers who did not know Jesus physically.

Bock argues several possibilities as to when the Gospel of Luke was written but notes that certain possibilities set the outside limit for a possible date. He observes that the latest event in Acts took place in AD 62 thus establishing the earliest possible date for the completion of the two-volume work.²³⁰ Also, some scholars suggested that it might have been written after the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, because Luke made reference to it (Luke 19:41-44; 21:20-24).²³¹ This agrees with the assertion that it is later than Mark (AD 65-70), and it would take some time for the document to be available for Luke to copy. Since Luke makes no further remark on the prediction of Jerusalem's fall but only clarifies that in the Temple's collapse the city is not spared, a date between AD 70 and AD 85 would be suitable which the current writer chooses to agree with.²³² Different places have been proposed by modern scholars. Luke, being a coworker of Paul, all the places proposed have a connection with Paul. The

²²⁹M. C. Parsons, *Luke*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015, 5.

²³⁰D. L. Bock, Luke in *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994, 5.

²³¹O. Olagunju, *A Concise Introduction to the New Testament*, Ogbomoso: Ogunniyi Publishers, 2012, 89.

²³²C. H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes and the Genre of Luke-Acts*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992, 102.

place one chooses depends on the date chosen for the work.²³³ Possible places include Caesarea (60s), Rome (60s-80s), Antioch (any date), Greece (any date), or Corinth.²³⁴ The Gospel was originally meant for many communities regardless of the place of writing.

The Gospel of Luke is one of the books of the Bible that states the purpose of the writer. The prologue of the Gospel (1:1-4), informs that the intention of Luke was to present a historically accurate account about Jesus Christ. It is observed that Luke is selective in what he records, and this presupposes that he targeted his Christian readers to have proper understanding and the certainty of their faith (cf. 1:4).²³⁵ The subject of his writing is those things which have been fulfilled among us (1:1). Luke makes efforts to project a comprehensive and accurate account to the life and ministry of Jesus in order to strengthen the faith of the Gentile believers.

Exegetical Analysis of Luke 8:1-3

Luke 8:1: Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ καθεξῆς καὶ αὐτὸς διώδευεν κατὰ πόλιν καὶ κώμην κηρύσσων καὶ εὐαγγελιζόμενος τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ οἱ δώδεκα σὺν αὐτῷ. 2: καὶ γυναῖκες τινες αἱ ἦσαν τεθεραπευμέναι ἀπὸ πνευμάτων πονηρῶν καὶ ἀσθενειῶν, Μαρία ἡ καλουμένη Μαγδαληνὴ ἀφ' ἧς δαιμόνια ἐπτὰ ἐξεληλύθει, 3: καὶ Ἰωάννα γυνὴ Χουζᾶ ἐπιτρόπου Ἡρώδου, καὶ Σουσάννα, καὶ ἄλλαι πολλαὶ αἵτινες διηκόνουν αὐτῷ ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐταῖς.

After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The

²³³D. L. Bock, Luke in *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 18.

²³⁴P. T. Gaudenz, *The Gospel of Luke*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018, 18.

²³⁵R. H. Stein, Luke in *The New American Commentary*, Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1992, 23.

Twelve were with him, 2 and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; 3 Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

Beneficiaries of Jesus' Ministry..... Luke 8:1-3a

The passage under consideration introduces a phase in Jesus' ministry where he is constantly on the move (8:1-9:50). It opens with the characteristic Lucan transitional phrase, *Kai ἐγένετο*, *and it came to pass*, a stylistic feature in Luke-Acts that conveys a narrative shift. I. Howard Marshall notes that this phrase has special significance in Luke's Gospel, often marking a new development in the narrative.²³⁶ The phrase signifies a significant alteration in Jesus' way of life, he ceases to make Capernaum his base and instead embarks on an itinerant ministry.²³⁷ The phrase *καθεξῆς*, *afterward or in order*, suggests a purposeful transition rather than a mere chronological sequence. Jesus was carrying out his mission to proclaim the gospel universally (Luke 4:43). The verb *διώδευεν*, an imperfect active indicative of *διωδεύω*, *to travel through*, underscores the continuous and expansive nature of his missionary activity rather than a journey with a fixed endpoint.²³⁸ His travels consistently drew crowds (cf. 7:11, 24; 8:4, 18, 40, 45), reinforcing the widespread appeal of his message. The itinerancy

²³⁶H. I. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on Greek-Text, New International Greek Testament Commentary*, Grand Rapids: WB. Eerdmans, 1978, 315.

²³⁷D. Spence and J. S. Excel, *The Pulpit Commentary: Mark and Luke*, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011, 200.

²³⁸L. Morris, Luke in *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999, 164.

reflects Jesus' unwearied diligence in doing good, even in the face of disbelief.²³⁹

The primary actions in verse 1, κηρύσσων καὶ εὐαγγελιζόμενος, *preaching and bringing good news*, define Jesus' purpose. These present active participles indicate that his preaching and proclamation of the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, *kingdom of God*, occurred simultaneously with his travel. This kingdom represents both God's salvific activity in the present and the eschatological reality to be fully realised in the future.²⁴⁰ Although it appears as if Luke focuses more on the message of the kingdom rather than its immediate realization.²⁴¹ It can be further argued that Jesus' ministry dismantles barriers, particularly the legalistic divisions between the righteous and sinners, emphasizing the inclusivity of God's kingdom.²⁴²

Two groups accompanied Jesus on his missionary journey: οἱ δώδεκα (the Twelve) and γυναῖκες τινες (certain women). The Twelve, introduced in Luke 6:12-16, are identified here as companions and witnesses rather than active participants in preaching.²⁴³ Their role was primarily one of apprenticeship, preparing for future missionary work (Luke 10:2-3). The phrase σὺν αὐτῷ, *with him*, conveys their close association with Jesus, emphasizing their role as learners. Verse 2 introduces the second group: καὶ γυναῖκες τινες, *and certain women*, highlighting their significant roles in Jesus' ministry. Unlike certain of the contemporary rabbis who excluded women from theological instruction, Jesus welcomed them into his circle.

²³⁹J.C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on Luke*, Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1997, 243.

²⁴⁰H. I. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on Greek-Text*, *New International Greek Testament Commentary*, 195

²⁴¹E.C. Ellis, *Eschatology in Luke*, *Biblical Series 30*, Philadelphia: Fortress Publishing, 1972, 1965.

²⁴²H. Hendrickx, *The Third Gospel for the third World*, Vol. 2B, Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998, 110.

²⁴³J. B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1977, 316.

Luke, more than any other Gospel writer, underscores the prominence of women. Jesus' teaching elevated women's status, making them συγκληρονόμοι, *co-heirs*, in God's kingdom and challenging their traditional subordination.²⁴⁴ Luke devotes substantial attention to these women, emphasizing their transformation through Jesus' ministry. The phrase αἱ ἦσαν τεθεραπευμέναι, *who had been healed*, affirms that they had personally experienced his healing power.²⁴⁵ The perfect passive participle τεθεραπευμέναι implies that their healing was a completed past event with enduring effects. Although it was highly unusual for women to travel with a rabbi,²⁴⁶ yet, their gratitude for Jesus' ministry overrode cultural constraints.

These women had been delivered from πνευμάτων πονηρῶν, *evil spirits*, and ἀσθενειῶν, *infirmities*, Luke frequently associates afflictions with spiritual oppression, particularly in reference to women (cf. 4:38; 13:11; Acts 16:16). The δαιμονισμός, *demonic possession*, in the Gospels is not limited to mental disorders but encompasses broader afflictions affecting one's entire well-being.²⁴⁷ Moreover, those with unclean spirits were often ostracised, further highlighting the social impact of their healing. A particular focus is given to Μαρία ἡ καλουμένη Μαγδαληνή, *Mary, called Magdalene*, from whom ἑπτὰ δαιμόνια ἐξεληλύθει, *seven demons had gone out*. The pluperfect ἐξεληλύθει signifies that her deliverance was a past event with lasting consequences.²⁴⁸ The number ἑπτὰ, *seven*, is symbolically significant, often representing completeness or

²⁴⁴D. Spence and J. S. Excel, *The Pulpit Commentary: Mark and Luke*, 200.

²⁴⁵D. L. Bock, Luke in *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 713.

²⁴⁶D. L. Bock, Luke in *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 713.

²⁴⁷G. Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983, 129.

²⁴⁸R. Summers, *Essentials of New Testament Greek*, Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1995, 115.

severity.²⁴⁹ Mary's prominence in the resurrection narratives explains why she is singled out.²⁵⁰

The passage also mentions Ἰωάννα γυνὴ Χουζᾶ, *Joanna, the wife of Chuza*, a woman of high social standing. The name Ἰωάννα means Yahweh has been gracious, fitting her role as a benefactor of Jesus' ministry.²⁵¹ Chuza, described as ἐπιτρόπου Ἡρώδου, *steward of Herod*, likely held a significant administrative position in Herod Antipas' court.²⁵² Luke mentions Joanna's connection to Herod's household for multiple reasons, the most important being her financial contributions.²⁵³ The third named woman is Σουσάννα (Susanna), about whom little is known. Her mention alongside Mary Magdalene and Joanna suggests she was a notable figure, yet Luke provides no further details.²⁵⁴

The phrase καὶ ἕτεροι πολλοί (and many others) affirms that Jesus was accompanied by a significant group of female disciples. The feminine form of πολλοί confirms that these were all women. There should be caution against overlooking this larger group, as Luke's emphasis on women's financial and personal support is unparalleled in the Gospels.²⁵⁵ It is of note that in male-oriented literature like the New Testament, women are typically mentioned only when they are exceptional or

²⁴⁹E. Otto, Seven in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Vol. 14, Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2004, 351.

²⁵⁰H. I. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on Greek-Text*, *New International Greek Testament Commentary*, 316.

²⁵¹W. A. Elwell, Symbolic Use of Numbers in *Baker's Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 2, Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1988, 1561.

²⁵²H. Balz and G. Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 2, Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1981, 44.

²⁵³R. Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002, 119.

²⁵⁴C. Meyers, *Women in Scripture*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2000, 103.

²⁵⁵R. A. Tucker and W. Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987, 28.

problematic.²⁵⁶ Here, their exceptional nature is clear: they defied societal norms to support and accompany Jesus. Their participation in Jesus' mission prefigures the inclusive nature of the kingdom of God, where οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ, *there is neither male nor female*, in Christ (Galatians 3:28).

Benefactors of Jesus' Ministry..... verse 3b

The final section of this peri-cope highlights the financial and material support that women provided for Jesus' mission. Their role as benefactors is underscored in the phrase: αἱτινες διηκόνουν αὐτοῖς ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐταῖς, *who were ministering to them out of their own means*. The main verb διηκόνουν, an imperfect active indicative, third-person plural of διακονέω, is crucial in understanding their role. Its noun form, διακονία, is a broad term in Greek, whose meaning depends largely on context. Luke is aware of the various nuances of this word and employs it differently in Acts 6:1-6, where διακονία refers both to serving tables (v. 2) and serving the word (v. 4).²⁵⁷

In Luke 8:1-3, another dimension of διακονία emerges; ministering through financial support. The term διακονία appears thirty-seven times in the New Testament, with frequent occurrences in Luke-Acts (seven times in Luke, two in Acts), as well as in Matthew (five times) and Mark (four times). Sometimes, it retains its original sense of waiting on tables (Luke 17:8; John 12:2). For example, after Jesus healed Simon's mother-in-law, she immediately began to wait, διακονέω, on him (Luke 4:39). Her ability to resume service signified her restored health. However, Jesus' concept of διακονία extends beyond this, encompassing acts such as providing food, shelter, clothing, and visiting the sick and prisoners (Matt 25:44; Luke 22:26; Mark 15:41). Thus, the term is not restricted by gender, occupation, or social status but embodies the broader concept

²⁵⁶H. R. Finger, *of Widows and Meals*, Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2007, 258.

²⁵⁷H. R. Finger, *of Widows and Meals*, 258.

of Christian service, characterised by selfless love and true discipleship.²⁵⁸

In Luke 8:3, διακονέω clearly refers to financial and material support, as indicated by the phrase ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων, *out of their possessions*. This phrase defines the nature of their service; it was economic rather than domestic. Like Simon's mother-in-law (Luke 4:39), these women had been healed and responded by serving. However, their διακονία was different: it went beyond table service to sustained financial contributions. It is considered that Luke 8:1-3 is not a healing narrative but a summary passage. Therefore, unlike Simon's mother-in-law, these women are not mentioned to demonstrate the immediacy of their healing but rather their ongoing role as Jesus' patrons.²⁵⁹ Traveling missionaries required financial support, and in this case, Jesus and the Twelve depended on these women's contributions because they had abandoned their means of livelihood to follow him (Luke 5:11). Furthermore, Jesus' family was unlikely to be supporting him, as they had previously rejected him (Luke 4:16-30). Thus, in the context of Luke 8:1-3, the women's διακονία primarily involved financial sponsorship of Jesus' itinerant ministry.

A closer analysis of the prepositional phrase ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐταῖς reveals the depth of their financial support. The word ὑπαρχόντων, a present active participle, neuter genitive plural of ὑπάρχω, meaning *to exist or to possess*, functions as a noun. It is frequently used in Luke's Gospel to refer to wealth or material goods. In Luke 8:3, it denotes personal financial resources, just as in Acts 2:45, where the early believers sold their property and

²⁵⁸K. E. Carley, *Private Women, Public Meals*, Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993, 85.

²⁵⁹K. Penner, *The Work of Wealthy Women: Female Discipleship in Luke 8:1-3*, an Unpublished M. A. Dissertation submitted to the Department of Religious Studies, University of Waterloo and Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, 2011, 96.

possessions, ὑπαρχόντων, to support one another.²⁶⁰ In addition, αὐταῖς, the final word in the sentence, possessive pronoun, feminine dative plural, meaning *to them*. This possessive pronoun clarifies that the resources belonged to the women themselves, rather than being derived from their relatives. The phrase ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐταῖς can therefore be literally translated as, *from the possessions belonging to them*. This construction suggests that these women were financially independent and had their own means of wealth, allowing them to provide for Jesus and his disciples.

Luke 8:3 presents a striking depiction of women in the role of benefactors; a position usually reserved for wealthy men in antiquity. Their financial and material support for Jesus' ministry demonstrates their commitment to his mission and reflects the broader inclusivity of the kingdom of God. These women were not merely passive followers; they were active participants, investing their personal resources to sustain Jesus' work. Their διακονία challenges traditional notions of discipleship, showing that service, to Jesus, extends beyond preaching to include material and financial support as an essential component of Christian ministry.

Inferences from Exegesis of Luke 8:1-3

First, Christian ministry must be targeted to meeting the specific needs of the people. The women that voluntarily accompanied Jesus in his missionary journey were said to have been healed by Jesus. Their dire needs have been met. Though, the particular passage where the healing occurred was not recorded in the Gospels, the soundness of their mind made them fit to follow Jesus through the journey. Thus they were emotionally fit to carry out their ministry of providing financial supports for Jesus' missionary activities.

²⁶⁰*Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Chicago: University Press, 1979, 838.

Second, discipleship should be the hallmark of Christian ministry. It is noteworthy that the women in the text were first committed disciples of Jesus before they released their resources to support his ministry. Ministry should first focus on the heart of people and not on their purse.

Conclusion

When people have the joys of the gospel, when they feel the consolations of religion themselves, they will somehow or other find means to contribute to the welfare of others. They will be willing to labour with reference to it, or they will find something which they can sacrifice or spare. Conversely, beneficiaries of the gospel ministry are also expected to be pertinent benefactors of practical mission works. The women, having being healed of their diseases became followers of Jesus. In some cases, Jesus would tell those that he had healed to go back put other things in proper place (Mk. 5:19, 42; 7:29-30; Lk. 5:14, 25; 7:9-10, 50; 17:14). Also, he would not hide from his followers what it would cost them in order to follow him (Luke 9:23-27, 58-60). Yet, these women defied all odds to meet Jesus requirements to follow him; and not only that, they made available their resources to Jesus in appreciation to what he had done for them. Effective Christian mission work thrives in an atmosphere of partnership. The women partnered with Jesus by using their resources to take care of His mission needs. Mission works will make tremendous progress when partnership is encouraged and embraced through generous contribution.

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Artificial Intelligence and the Pastor in Jeremiah 3:15: The Defense of God-Factor in Humanity

**Promise Arinze Godwin
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Abstract

The paper argues that uncensored dependence on Artificial Intelligence (AI) will have adverse impacts on humanity by depriving humans of their dependence upon their God - given relationship. AI, which is designed to allow devices to execute functions that ordinarily would require human intelligence, can aid in the interpretation of sacred religious texts, beliefs, and self-experiences. Therefore, it raises moral implications in terms of human companionship, confidentiality, and empathy. When robots are serving to displace human medical field, human Legal Counsel, and human gospel Preacher, it becomes a direct attack on God's laid down structure that champions all courses through human instrumentality. Utilizing an analytical approach, the paper offered insight into lexical and semantic analysis of the sampled Bible passage, with the evolution of AI, and the role of religion in AI discourse. Findings revealed that movements such as AI, feminism, same sex marriage, artificial procreation, cross-dressing, cross gender are structured to carefully attack whatever could be referred to as biblical standards in human operation, faith, and practice. Also, AI cannot bring effective communication between man and God. The paper recommended that religious leaders should learn to use basic computers, improve research on AI, and be able to set and enforce guidelines for its use. Governments should create policies and regulations that specifically address the use of AI

in alignment with religious and ethical principles, focusing on areas such as data privacy and the rights of humanity.

Keywords

Artificial Intelligence, Pastor, Jeremiah 3:15, God - Factor, Defense

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the reenactment of human insights formed by computer systems, particularly machines. It is a term coined by John McCarthy, who defined AI as the science and engineering of making intelligent machines.²⁶¹ The processes include problem-solving, perception, speech recognition, and learning that entails obtaining rules for applying knowledge and reasoning to arrive at approximations and firm conclusions. With its massive data sets, powerful computers, and cutting-edge algorithms, AI has risen as one of computer science's most exciting subfields.

The ability of a system to accurately read input, learn from it, and use that knowledge to accomplish particular tasks and goals through adaptable change is what Kaplan and Haenlein characterize as AI.²⁶² Artificial neural networks (ANN) were developed to mimic the way neurons work in the human brain or animal brain.²⁶³ Simply put, AI is any device or computer programs that mimics and carry out tasks that normally call for

²⁶¹J. McCarthy, *Proposal for the Dartmouth Summer Research Project on Artificial Intelligence*. Retrieved from <http://raysolomonoff.com/dartmouth/boxa/dart/564proposal>. Accessed on September 12, 2025.

²⁶²A. Kaplan and M. Haenlein, *Who is the Fairest in the Land? On the Interpretations, Illustrations and Implications of Artificial Intelligence*. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2018.08.004>. S2CID 158433736 Accessed on September 12, 2025.

²⁶³J. W. Joseph, Metaphysics, Meaning and Morality, in *Journal of Moral Theology*, II Special Issue 1, 2022, 157.

human intelligence.²⁶⁴ It is commonly understood by the general public to be the capacity of robots or computers to think and behave like humans.²⁶⁵ While AI promises unexpected breakthroughs, nevertheless, there are also significant risks associated with it. AI holds the potential to completely transform several facets of human existence including religion. As it develops further, significant moral and theological issues become more pressing and need to be taken into account.

Religion has continuously played a noteworthy part in forming peoples' lives and the morals of communities. Technological advancements over the years, especially with development of AI, has impacted on human ethical and religious behaviors. The exponential increase in AI-powered technology use has serious ramifications and raises questions about the meaning of life, the function of religion, the relationship between humans and robots, and the validity of customs surrounding religious observances. This study highlights the ethical and religious consequences of AI to curb the hazards associated with it.

Evolution of Artificial Intelligence

The connection between AI and ancient life is fascinating, though it is important to distinguish between the concepts. The AI, in the form we understand today, did not exist in the ancient world. However, some interesting parallels and early ideas helped in the groundwork for AI much later. The thought of making manufactured creatures with human-like insights can be dated back to old myths and legends, such as the story of Pygmalion and Galatea in Greek mythology. Ancient civilizations have long fascinated historians and archeologists, not only for their monumental achievements in architecture

²⁶⁴R. Reed, AI in Religion, AI for Religion, AI and Religion: Toward a Theory of Religious Studies and Artificial Intelligence, in *Religions*, 12:6 Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12060401> Accessed on September 12, 2025.

²⁶⁵S. Wartman and C. D. Combs, Medical Education Must Move from the Information Age to the Age of Artificial Intelligence, in *Academic Medicine*, 2018, 93:8, 1107.

and governance, but also for their innovations in technology, particularly in the realm of automata (self-operating machines that mimic human or animal actions) in ancient cultures like Greece and China, showcasing the ingenuity and technological prowess of these societies.

Ancient cultures, such as the Greeks and Egyptians, had myths about artificial beings, such as Talos or Hephaestus' creations (automaton robots). In Greek mythology, Talos was a giant automaton made of bronze, created by the Greek god of fire and craftsmanship, Hephaestus. He was designed to protect the island of Crete from invaders.²⁶⁶ This myth, recorded in various ancient texts, illustrates a profound blend of technology and mythology showcasing early human fascination with creating life-like machines. These stories explored the concept of machines mimicking life. Talos had a single vein running from his neck to his ankle that contained this ichor, sealed by a bronze nail. If the nail was removed, he would bleed out and become inactive, reflecting both vulnerability and strength. Bremmer further notes that, although Talos was made of bronze and protected by divine power, yet, his single weakness illustrates that even the most powerful creations are susceptible to failures.²⁶⁷ One of the most famous figures associated with the field of automata was Hero of Alexandria, a first-century engineer and inventor. Hero devised numerous mechanical devices, including a theatrical automaton and a steam-powered “aeolipile,” which is considered one of the first examples of a steam engine.²⁶⁸

In ancient China, automata were also prominent, with complex creations emerging from the Han dynasty (206 BCE - 220 CE) through the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE). The role of automata

²⁶⁶J. N. Bremmer, *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife: Divine Resurrection from Osiris to Lazzaro* (Routledge: Grace Press, 2010), 72.

²⁶⁷Ibid.

²⁶⁸R. Mason, Hero of Alexandria: The Inventions of the Ancient Engineer, in *the American Society of Mechanical Engineers*. 1994, 75.

in ancient civilizations transcended mere entertainment or utility; they often carried cultural and philosophical significance. In ancient Greece, automata were used in theatrical performances and religious rituals, serving as a bridge between the divine and human realms.²⁶⁹ Similarly, Chinese automata were not only technological wonders but also reflected the interplay between human creativity and nature. The construction of these devices often symbolized control over nature and the mastery of physical laws, which was an essential aspect of ancient philosophy.²⁷⁰ These are more philosophical seeds of the idea than actual AI. The root of AI can be traced to Mechanics. The ingenuity of ancient engineers is evident in complex water works, irrigation systems, and even early automatons that could perform simple tasks. These creations demonstrated the potential for machines to perform pre-programmed actions.

Role of Religion in Artificial Intelligence Discourse

Religion has long played a significant role in shaping moral and ethical values across various cultures and societies.²⁷¹ Religion plays a crucial part in moral talk encompassing different issues and, continuously been a directing force in forming the ethical and moral compass of human social orders. Distinctive devout conventions offer viewpoints and standards that impact how people and social orders approach moral situations. In Christian morals, the concept of stewardship emphasizes the obligation of people to care for and utilize the Earth's assets,

²⁶⁹R. Mason, *Hero of Alexandria: The Inventions of the Ancient Engineer*, in *the American Society of Mechanical Engineers*. 1994, 75.

²⁷⁰C. Cullen, *Science and Technology in Ancient China*, 67.

²⁷¹N. Bostrom, *Super Intelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies* (Oxford: University Press, 2014), 17.

using innovation, in a way that advances the common goal and regards the nobility of all people.²⁷²

Also, in Islam, standards such as equity, kindness, and moral decisions can offer insights into how AI ought to be created and utilized in a way that assists these values.²⁷³ By drawing on devout lessons and conventions, people and social orders can lock in moral talk from a point of view that values the well-being of all people, advances ethical values, and considers the broader societal effect of mechanical advancements such as Artificial Intelligence. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in exploring the intersection of religion and ethics, particularly in the context of emerging technologies and global challenges.²⁷⁴

With the headway of innovation, particularly within the field of AI, the areas of religion in moral discourses are becoming progressively important. AI has the potential to enormously affect human lives, both emphatically and adversely, and religion gives an ethical system to direct these talks and decisions. Religion, in its substance, is a set of convictions and values that control the actions and behaviors of people and social orders. It gives an ethical system based on the concept of the next control or divine specialist, which guides people towards a specific code of conduct. This code of conduct is regularly centered on advancing the well-being and welfare of all.

Religion plays a significant role in shaping attitudes towards specific ethical issues, such as abortion, euthanasia, and

²⁷²S. Garcia, The Importance of AI Ethics Education, in *AI and Society*, 35:1, 2020, 107.

²⁷³T. Sharma, Spirituality in the Digital Age: AI and Personalised Faith, in *Journal of Spirituality and Technology*, 12:1, 2021, 34.

²⁷⁴H. A. Campbell, and R. Tsuria, eds. *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in Digital Media* (Routledge: Grace Press, 2021), 86.

genetic engineering.²⁷⁵ Many religious traditions view human life as sacred and therefore oppose abortion and euthanasia. Religion can provide a sense of moral community and shared values, which can facilitate cooperation and consensus-building on ethical issues. For example, many religious organizations have played a key role in promoting social justice and human rights, particularly in the context of globalization and economic development. One of the key areas where religion can contribute to moral dialogues in AI is tending to the issue of inclination and separation. As advancement in AI has become progressively evident in human lives, there is a growing concern around the potential for these frameworks to propagate societal predispositions and separation. Religion, with its power on correspondence and equity, can provide profitable experience in handling this issue. For occasion the standards of sympathy and empathy, which are central to numerous devout convictions, can direct AI engineers in making frameworks that are reasonable and non-discriminatory.

Another noteworthy commitment of religion to moral dialogues in AI is its accentuation on the concept of human respect. Most devout convictions hold human life in tall respect and consider it to be sacrosanct. As AI innovation propels and gets to be more modern, questions emerge approximately the relationship between people and machines. Religion can offer insights into the significance of preserving human nobility and not permitting AI to decrease it in any way.

Moreover, religion can direct the capable use of AI in different businesses and sectors. For illustration, within the medical field, where the use of AI has the potential to spare lives, devout standards can offer assistance in adjusting the benefits of AI with moral contemplations such as regard for human life and the holiness of the doctor-patient relationship. It is fundamental to note that the role of religion in moral discourses

²⁷⁵A. Croker and J. Teichman, *The Moral Status of Embryos: An Ethical Dilemma*, in *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 37:3, 2011, 178.

in AI is not restricted to giving ethical direction. Religion can also encourage discourse and collaboration among people from differing foundations and conviction frameworks. In dialogues around the moral suggestions of AI, people with distinctive devout beliefs can offer special viewpoints and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the subject. It is worth recognizing that religion is not a solid substance, and different devout conventions have shifting ideas on AI and its moral values. Be that as it may, the common string among most religions is the conviction in advancing the well-being of humankind and making a fair and concordant society. The role of religion in technological discussions can be complex and contested. For instance, some scholars have argued that religious moral frameworks can be overly rigid and dogmatic, failing to account for the complexities and nuances of real-world ethical dilemmas.²⁷⁶ Others have raised concerns about the potential for religious extremism and fundamentalism to undermine technological discourse and promote intolerance and violence.²⁷⁷

Exposition of Jeremiah 3:15

וְנָתַתִּי לָכֶם רֹעִים כְּלִבֵּי וְרָעוּ אֲתֶכֶם דָּעָה וְהִשְׁכִּיל:

And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

The focal Bible passage, Jeremiah 3:15, revealed God's promise to provide spiritual leaders, Pastors or Shepherds, for the purpose of guiding His people with knowledge and understanding. This is the height of God's efforts to restore the broken relationship with His people. The passage underlines the importance of having leaders who embody God's love and

²⁷⁶M. Hastings, *Christianity and Technology: An Ethical Guide to Artificial Intelligence* (Cambridge: University Press, 2017), 17.

²⁷⁷S. Baker, Sentience in Artificial Intelligence: A Religious Perspective, in *AI and Society*, 36:2, 2021, 589.

wisdom, that is, civil leaders who will be obedient to God.²⁷⁸ The passage is a part of the larger context where God is reconciling with His apostate people. The promise of leaders as described by God in the passage is to ensure that His people have a divinely appointed means of finding their way back to Him, without further straying.²⁷⁹

The promised Pastors are further described as being after *God's own heart*, indicating the divine authentication of their appointment and the expectation of portraying godly character. Among other expectations, their job description is heightened in ensuring that God's people are edified and reconciled to Him.²⁸⁰ So, there is clarity in all aspects of the promise regarding identity and ministry. Knowledge and understanding are key elements in describing the promised leaders. Guiding the people of God with knowledge and understanding points to the enviable state of wisdom in leading the people through God's ways.²⁸¹ This focal Bible passage highlights the place of human spiritual leadership in relation to God. God's promise here offers hope and reassurance of his immanence in difficult times as the Israelites found themselves. It points to the need for leaders who are called, qualified, and ordained by God to provide spiritual guidance to God's people. Such leaders as described in the focal Bible passage will be conformable to God's mind in actions and in speech.²⁸² Feeding God's people with

²⁷⁸John F. Graybill, *The Book of Jeremiah*, in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979), 662.

²⁷⁹Gerald F. Kroll, *The Book of Jeremiah*, in *King James Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Press, 1999), 877.

²⁸⁰Issiaka Coulibally, *Jeremiah*, in *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi: WordAlive Press, 2006), 857.

²⁸¹Don Fleming, *Bridgeway Bible Commentary* (Brisbane: Bridgeway Press, 2005), 278.

²⁸²Carolyn J. Sharp, *Jeremiah*, in *Theological Bible Commentary* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2009), 230.

²³Wilbur Schramm, "How Communication Works" in Lee Richardson (ed.) *Dimensions of Communication*, (Prentice-Hill, Inc. Eaglewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1971) p.3

²⁴S.O. Abogunrin, *The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians*, (Daystar Press, Ibadan, 1991)

knowledge and understanding points to the need to ensure that God's people grow spiritually and not be tossed around in a very real and sharply antithetical world.

The AI will create gap in communication between God and Man.

Wilbur Schram enunciates that communication always requires at least three elements (source, message and destination). He postulated that source may be an individual (speaking, writing, drawing or gesturing) or communication organization²³. Here (Jeremiah 3:15), the divine is the source. In fact, this is the major and foundational source of religious communication. At the divine realm, the message is mostly in the form of inner voice, dream experience, or intuition. According to Wilbur Schram, the destination may be individual listening, watching, or reading. It may also be a devotee in the congregation of worshippers. Wilbur Schram explained that when the source builds up a "commonness" with his receiver, as follows. The source encodes his message (takes information or feeling he wants to share in a form that can be transmitted). The pictures in our head can only be transmitted when coded. When coded in spoken words, they are transmitted easily and effectively but cannot travel far without radio, but if coded in written words, they go slower than spoken words but farther and last longer. Indeed, some messages long outlive their senders. Once coded and sent, a message is quite free of its sender, and what it does is beyond the power of the sender to change. To complete communication, the message must be decoded by receiver²³. God does not include non-human objects in the communication process in Jeremiah 3:15. AI could be a means to an end and not the end itself. Moses parted the Red

²⁵Park, J., Kim, S. S., Jeong, Y. W., Yoon, S., & Park, N. S. (2017). Effects of inlet flow distribution evenness on outlet water quality from multiple parallel-arrayed sedimentation basins. *Desalination and Water Treatment*, 61, 120-125. <https://doi.org/10.5004/dwt.2016.1763>

Sea with his rod (Exodus 14:16). God communicated with Moses to use Rod.

S.O. Abogunrin opined that God, from the beginning, has used human culture (not Machine) as the milieu to reveal Himself to mankind. In communicating His revelation to man, God has often submitted to cultural limitations because human being cannot comprehend supernatural truth outside his own cultural understanding. Therefore, God has always revealed Himself in terms of human language and culture²⁴.

This phenomenon, described by Schram, is akin to, water supply scheme postulation that Inlet, conduit, and outlet configurations critically affect water quality²⁵. This means that the message source, message conveyance medium, and message receiver are all critical to the quality of both the delivered and received message.

Application of Inferences from Jeremiah 3:15 on Contemporary Church

The place or importance of godly and or spiritual leadership both in the church of today and the one tomorrow (next generation) cannot be overstressed. Jeremiah 3:15 underscores the crucial role of God – ordained leaders in guiding and nurturing the church at all times, as long as the present age lasts. God's commitment to the general well-being of His people cannot be doubted, even when situations of life suggest that He has abandoned, no, He cannot. The focal Bible passage highlights God's commitment to ensuring, continued nurturing of the church toward righteousness in all situations. In it all is the projection of Christian leadership as a sacred responsibility. Leading the body of Christ in all applicable understanding should not be by human ordination, but by divine appointment of people that are after God's own heart.

Conclusion

Unchecked dependence on AI will have adverse impacts on humanity, by depriving humans of using their God - given relationship. AI, which is designed to allow devices to execute functions that ordinarily would require human intelligence, can aid in the interpretation of sacred religious texts, beliefs, and self-experiences from medical, ethical and religious perspective, therefore, it raises moral and religious implications, in terms of human companionship, human empathy and man to man relationship. In the height of it are mind - blowing questions in relation to AI: can it replace clerics in providing spiritual aid and or guidance? How will AI affect God, to man relationship? Will it compromise personal religious experience by reducing human elements in their interactions with God? The AI system works based on data which are made available. If the facts are distorted, will it not have an impact on how religious data are used, stored, and or applied? Where is the place of confidentiality with AI, since everything is available online?

Recommendations

1. There is a need to establish inclusive forums that bring together technologists, ethicists, and representatives from various religious communities. This collaboration can foster a broader understanding of ethical implications and promote shared values in AI applications.
2. Religious Leaders should learn to use basic computers, improve on knowledge, research in artificial intelligence, and be able to set guidelines for its use.
3. Religious leaders should encourage members of the community to be a part of the development and deployment of AI. They can encourage workshops and seminars where increased awareness of ethical considerations in AI development will be shared.

4. Governments should establish independent monitoring bodies to oversee AI deployment, ensuring alignment with ethical guidelines and religious values.

5. Government should create policies and regulations that specifically address the use of AI in alignment with religious and ethical principles, focusing on areas, such as data privacy, and the rights of humanity and set out clear accountability protocols to ensure individuals and organizations are held responsible for the ethical implications of AI technologies.

The Bible is Generally Eco-Friendly: An Eco-Theological Reference to Genesis 1:29

Philemon Ibrahim

ABSTRACT:

The ongoing discourse among scholars regarding the ecological implications of the Bible centers on the tension between interpretations of Genesis 1:27-28, where God commands humanity to dominate and subdue the earth and its creatures, and the ecological ethos promoted by eco-centric theorists who advocate for viewing creation as inherently equal among all living beings. This paper seeks to critically analyze the rhetorical nuances of Genesis 1:27-28 in relation to Genesis 1:29, positing that the biblical text ultimately supports an eco-friendly paradigm. It asserts that while God declared creation to be "very good," the subsequent distortion of that creation is attributed to the fall. Prior to this event, animals were not intended as sustenance for humankind but were instead placed under humanity's stewardship. Although God provided seed-bearing plants and fruit-bearing trees as nourishment for humanity, this provision carries with it an implicit ethical obligation to refrain from exploitation. Consequently, the mandate bestowed upon humanity is construed as one of stewardship rather than outright dominion, reflecting a theocentric perspective that prioritizes divine glory over anthropocentric interests. Both the created order and humanity are intended to bear witness to and glorify God, functioning beyond mere utility for human benefit.

INTRODUCTION

The ethical relationship bestowed by God between humanity and the natural world constitutes the foundational objective of ecotheology. Within this framework, Christians engage with the Scriptures to articulate this complex relationship, as the Bible offers numerous teachings that serve to guide our ecological and ethical compass. These teachings encompass responsibilities for the protection of the environment, extending to the welfare of animals and the conservation of air, land, and water resources. Regrettably, the divine mandate for humanity to steward God's creation has frequently been misinterpreted, resulting in practices that lead to environmental degradation rather than fostering care. This phenomenon is primarily traced to the creation narratives presented in Genesis 1-2, which have been attributed to the Priestly writer. Both biblical scholars and eco-theologians contend that these texts have fostered harmful attitudes toward the environment. A central point of contention resides in Genesis 1:26-29, wherein humanity is granted "dominion" over animal life and instructed to "subdue" the earth, alongside the utilization of seed-bearing plants for sustenance. Critiques of this interpretation, notably articulated by Lynn White in his seminal essay "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," assert that such theological perspectives have contributed to ecological degradation. White posits that Christianity, due to its historical affiliations with science and modern technology, must bear a substantial "burden of guilt" concerning the contemporary ecological crisis. He argues that the biblical command of "dominion" has perpetuated exploitation rather than stewardship of the natural world.²⁸³ Moreover, Jürgen Moltmann addresses the implications of this issue, emphasizing the need to interrogate how the Christian belief in creation, particularly as it has been articulated within Western Christianity, has historically compounded ecological

²⁸³ L. White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis", *Science* 155, (1967):1207. White claimed that Christianity has encouraged humans to think of themselves as nature's absolute masters, for whom everything that exists was destined. White, "The Historical Roots", 1207.

crises.²⁸⁴ He underscores the necessity for a reinterpretation of these beliefs in order to forestall their complicity in environmental destruction, thereby advocating for a paradigm that fosters ecological harmony. Moltmann's inquiries bring forth critical considerations regarding humanity's obligations towards the environment, as well as the imperative for responsible interpretations of biblical texts that accurately convey the divine mandate for stewardship. Consequently, it is essential to reflect upon and diligently interpret Genesis 1:29, particularly with respect to its implications for contemporary ecological ethics and the ecclesiastical context. A careful exegetical approach to this passage is required to elucidate its ecological ramifications and to advocate for a biblically grounded, ecologically conscious praxis.

THE GENERAL CONTEXT OF GENESIS 1:29

This text provides an analysis of the primeval history as presented in Genesis 1-11, with particular focus on the theological implications of God's creation and the concomitant responsibilities assigned to humanity as His image-bearers, particularly in Genesis 1-2. It posits that the foundational premise for environmental stewardship is inherently rooted in the affirmation that God constitutes the creator of the cosmos, as articulated in Genesis 1:1.²⁸⁵ This understanding is pivotal for the correct interpretation of Genesis 1:29, which must be understood within the larger narrative of creation. In the narrative framework of Genesis 1-2, God emerges as the primary agent of creation, distinct from His creation, thereby facilitating the assertion that God's eternal attributes can be discerned through His creative works (Romans 1:20). The implication here is that every entity in the universe owes its existence to the creative acts of God, and nothing can exist

²⁸⁴ Jürgen Moltmann, "God's Covenant and Our Responsibility." In Berry, *The Care of Creation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 10

²⁸⁵ Steve Bishop, "Green Theology and Deep Ecology: New Age or New Creation?" *Themelios* 16 (3) (1991): 8-14

outside of this divine act as delineated in Genesis 1-2. Subsequently, God has conferred upon humanity the role of stewards over creation, furnishing all necessary provisions for human existence and flourishing. Genesis 1:29 delineates the dietary provisions that God has ordained for humanity, underscoring the significance of fostering an eco-friendly existence that is reflective of divine glory. Moreover, to fully comprehend the essence of humanity's ecological responsibilities, one must also engage with Genesis 2:7-28, which further reinforces the notion of humanity as stewards of the Earth. The text underscores that all of creation is deemed “good” by God, and the creation narrative from Genesis 1:1–2:4a presents an originally “very good” creation. This state of goodness is sharply contrasted with the disarray introduced by the Fall in Genesis 3, which disrupted the initial harmony and innocence that characterized the climax of creation as illustrated in Genesis 2:25.²⁸⁶

THE EXPLORATION OF ECO-FRIENDLY THEOLOGY OF GENESIS 1:27-28 FOR THE UNDERSTANDING OF GEN. 1:29

Genesis 1:27-28 serves as a foundational framework for interpreting verse 29; these verses must be analyzed within the broader context of creation and the divine responsibilities assigned to humanity. A failure to adhere to this contextual understanding risks misinterpreting verse 29 as granting humanity unrestricted license to exploit the universe for personal gain, devoid of any regard for stewardship. The text asserts that God created humankind in His image (v. 27). While various interpretations exist regarding the concept of the “image of God,” it is imperative to relate this notion to the ancient Near Eastern context, where the term connotes a representative role rather than being confined solely to attributes such as intellect, will, and emotion. In this context, the image can be understood

²⁸⁶ Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 181. See also Hulisani Ramantswana, “Humanity Not Pronounced Good: A Re-Reading of Genesis 1:26–31 in Dialogue with Genesis 2–3”, *OTE* 26/2 (2013):432

as a representation of a king; thus, the image serves as a symbol of royal authority.²⁸⁷ Wilfong posits that being created in the image of God positions humanity in a quasi-divine role over creation. Just as earthly rulers erect statues of themselves to assert their sovereignty in areas where they are absent, humanity is appointed to enact and perpetuate God's sovereign rule across the entirety of creation.²⁸⁸

Consequently, existence in the image of God implies that humans are designed to represent God within His created order. In this capacity, God has granted humanity the authority to govern the Earth. Jotham M. Kangdim underscores this idea, asserting, “Through God’s special relationship with him, He has endowed him and placed him over and above everything in His creation. At creation, man was given full charge of his creation” (1:27-28).²⁸⁹ Nonetheless, some scholars may interpret Kangdim's perspective as more anthropocentric than theocentric, particularly when he states that “the creation account, as reflected in Genesis 1 and 2, reveals that man was the main reason for God positing creation in the first place. God recognized that for man’s welfare and comfort, all elements of creation had to be in place prior to his arrival; moreover, even after the formal declaration of the completed creation, God

²⁸⁷ C. Westermann, *The Genesis Accounts of Creation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1992), 35. The ancient near east contextual interpretation of *imago dei* affirms that humans (male and female) being made the image of God (in *imago dei*) imply the ‘democratisation of the kingship metaphor’. The concept puts humans in a superior position to non-human beings. The concept clearly provides humans with the status of greater created beings as well as the ‘right to exercise power over nature and conquer it as might do any ancient king’ over his subjects or enemies. N.C. Habel, *An Inconvenient Text: Is a Green Reading of the Bible Possible?* (Hindmarsh: ATF Press, 2009), 4.

²⁸⁸ M.M Wilfong, “Human Creation in Canonical Context: Genesis 1:26-31 and Beyond”, in W.P. Brown, & S.D. McBride, (eds), *God Who Creates: Essays in Honour of W Sibley Towner*, 42-52 (Michigan: Eerdmans, 2000), 45.

²⁸⁹ Jotham M. Kangdim, “A Recitation of the Preliminary Phase of Salvation History (Heilsgeschichte) in Primeval History”, 102. In *Of Tradition And Traditions Essays In Honour Of Zamani B. Kafang* (Jos: Ade Printing Press, 2021), 87– 132.

continued to preside over it to ensure its ongoing survival and continuity.”²⁹⁰ This interpretation leads to the critical understanding that creation serves purposes beyond mere human benefit; it fundamentally exists to manifest God’s glory. While humanity is indeed integral to creation, the ultimate purpose of that creation is the glorification of God. This divine glory provides the foundational justification for the act of creation, wherein God appointed humanity as stewards. Thus, both humanity and creation should not be considered the final objectives of existence; rather, the ultimate goal is God, who is to be glorified. Any exploitation or mismanagement of creation constitutes an affront to this divine glory, which is inherently reflected within both creation and humanity. God alone deserves exaltation, with all created beings existing to glorify Him.

It is essential for humans to learn to respect non-human entities not merely for their utility but for their intrinsic value (Psalm 148:13). Humans should be viewed as integral members of the creation community rather than the central focus, with God alone as the ultimate aim of His creative work. As Bauckham notes, the Genesis 1 account possesses ecological significance, emphasizing the richness and diversity of living organisms while presenting creation—both animate and inanimate—as an interdependent whole. Humanity constitutes a vital element within this interdependent design. Although humans play a crucial role, the other parts of creation are equally significant.²⁹¹ The dominion conferred upon humanity reflects the divine rule of God and must be exercised within the framework of the created order, thus serving that order. However, several scholars have identified potential misinterpretations surrounding the two Hebrew terms used in Genesis, which could distort the biblical notion of

²⁹⁰ Kangdim, “Recitation of the Preliminary Phase”, 104-105.

²⁹¹ R.J. Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2010), 15.19.

environmental stewardship. Steve Bishop elucidates this concern, arguing that the concept of dominion is articulated in Genesis 1:28 through two central Hebrew terms: "radah" and "kabas." "Kabas" (to subdue) is a particularly forceful term, occasionally translated in a negative context as "rape" (Esther 7:8), while "radah" (to rule over) is similarly potent; Westermann interprets it as "to tread the winepress," and von Rad characterizes it as "to trample."²⁹² Clarifying these problematic terms is critical, necessitating further exploration of their implications.

The perspective of "dominion" in the Old Testament, articulated through the Hebrew verb traditionally translated as "to have dominion," denotes the sovereign authority of a king over his subjects.²⁹³ McDonagh posits that the term "dominate" should be understood as embodying divine kindness and love, thereby eschewing a framework of rule characterized by harsh authority.²⁹⁴ This perspective advocates for a reexamination of biblical narratives that encourages viewing the earth as a subject—a kin—rather than a mere object or pawn subjected to domination.²⁹⁵ In this context, dominion is framed positively, with a focus on the assurance of well-being for all creatures and the realization of their inherent potential.²⁹⁶ The sequential creation of humanity following the natural world suggests that "human dominion over creation" entails a responsibility of

²⁹² Bishop, "Green Theology and Deep Ecology", 10.

²⁹³ D Jobling, "Dominion Over Creation," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume*, K Creim, ed (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1976), 247.

²⁹⁴ S. McDonagh, *The Greening of the Church* (Maryknoll/New York: Orbis Books 1990), 119

²⁹⁵ Norman Habel, "The Origins and Challenges of an Eco-justice Hermeneutics", in Sandoval, T J & Madolfo, C (eds), *Relating to the Text. An Interdisciplinary and Form-Critical Insights on the Bible*, 290-306 (New York: T&T Clark 2003), 296.

²⁹⁶ W Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 32.

stewardship, acknowledging that nature is both finite and reliant on human care.²⁹⁷

This reciprocal dependency emphasizes that human dominion is not an exercise of isolated authority; rather, it is 'theonomous'—governed by divine regulation and profoundly informed by God's sovereignty.²⁹⁸ The primary function of human dominion is to emulate divine dominion, with the overarching objective of fulfilling God's purpose for creation. Conversely, the verb "to subdue,"²⁹⁹ as referenced in Genesis 2:5 and 2:15, should be interpreted within the context of stewardship, emphasizing the necessity to care for the land rather than exploit it.³⁰⁰ The intrinsic goodness of creation necessitates respect for and preservation of the divine order established by God.³⁰¹ The editors of the New English Translation Bible (NET) contend that interpreting "to subdue" from an anthropocentric perspective engenders a notion of exploitation, framing the act as one of harnessing the earth's potential for human advantage. This interpretation risks distorting the intended meaning of Genesis, promoting a view that reduces creation to a mere instrument for satisfying human desires, thus providing a problematic justification for

²⁹⁷ Rodriguez, *Stewardship Roots*, 22.

²⁹⁸ C. Beisner, *Where Garden meets Wilderness: Evangelical Entry into the Environmental Debate* (Grand Rapids: W B Eerdmans, 1997), 17.

²⁹⁹ "The occurrence of the feminine singular pronominal suffix on the verb *kbš* suggests that all of the earth is the object of subduing, not just the animal kingdom. Thus, we can conclude that the animal domestication suggested in *rdh* is only one part of the process of subduing. The twenty-five occurrences of *rdh* show that it concerns exercising authority that has been granted or acknowledged". John H. Walton, *Genesis: From Biblical Text to Contemporary Life* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2001), 130. Furthermore on this the "conclusion, then, is that "subduing" is associated (grammatically, not semantically) with the prior verb, "filling," and has the earth as its focus." Walton, *Genesis*, 130. "Ruling" is directed toward the animals and implies domestication or some other level of use or control.

³⁰⁰ Angel M. Rodriguez, *Stewardship Roots* (STW: A Department of Church Ministries publication, 1994), 22.

³⁰¹ Rodriguez, *Stewardship Roots*, 22.

the ecological harms perpetuated by modernity that contradict the foundational biblical intent.

The biblical narrative presented in Genesis 1:26-28 attributes a significant status to human beings within the creation framework; however, it distinctly refrains from designating them as absolute rulers of the universe.³⁰² Rather, humans are depicted as custodians operating under the authority of the ultimate Creator. This interpretative viewpoint informs scholars such as Lohfink, who render the Hebrew verb "radah" as indicative of accompanying, shepherding, or guiding creation to "pasture," drawing parallels with the Akkadian term for governance or guidance.³⁰³ A noteworthy initiative that foregrounds this interpretative lens is 'The Green Bible,' which selectively presents passages in green ink to highlight the interrelatedness of all creation. This edition includes texts that illustrate God's intimate involvement with the natural world, emphasizing the intricate dependencies among land, water, air, flora, fauna, and humanity.³⁰⁴ Bauckham's assertion that the directive to "subdue the earth" embodies a call for responsible stewardship, rather than exploitation, accentuates the necessity for humans to embody God's loving kindness and fidelity in their interaction with the non-human components of creation.³⁰⁵

In contrast, Habel critiques Genesis 1:26-28, characterizing it as a potentially ecologically harmful narrative that could be interpreted as granting humanity an unqualified right to dominate nature.³⁰⁶ However, a nuanced reading of the text suggests that it does not advocate for cruelty but rather encourages a model of leadership that reflects care and

³⁰² N. Lohfink, *Theology of the Pentateuch: Themes of the Priestly Narrative and Deuteronomy* (Augsburg: Fortress, 1994),17.

³⁰³ Lohfink, *Theology of the Pentateuch*, 11.

³⁰⁴ *The Green Bible* (New York & London: HarperCollins, 2008), 1-16

³⁰⁵ Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology*,19.

³⁰⁶ Habel, "The Origins,"2.

stewardship.³⁰⁷ Although the Hebrew verbs frequently associated with subjugation may convey connotations of violence,³⁰⁸ scholars such as De Pury propose that they be understood as expressions of "reigning" within a context of stewardship.³⁰⁹ It is imperative to contextualize Genesis 1:26-28 within the broader narrative of Genesis 2:15, which delineates humanity's role as one of "tilling and keeping the garden."³¹⁰ This framing promotes a view of stewardship that eschews exploitation, as humanity—created in the image of God—is charged with maintaining harmony within creation.³¹¹ This understanding aligns with the concept of ancient Israelite kingship, wherein kings were appointed not as absolute sovereigns but as viceroys of God, tasked with the responsibility of nurturing and safeguarding their subjects in a manner consistent with divine stewardship.³¹²

AN EXPOSITION OF GENESIS 1:29 THROUGH THE LENS OF ECO-FRIENDLINESS

Genesis 1:29 presents a perspective that diverges significantly from the ancient Near Eastern worldview, which posited that deities created humans primarily to serve their needs by providing sustenance.³¹³ In stark contrast, the biblical narrative asserts that God created humanity to whom He subsequently

³⁰⁷ McDonagh, *The Greening of the Church*, 119.

³⁰⁸ F. Brown, et al., *Hebrew and English Lexicon on the Old Testament* (London: Oxford University Press 1968), 921-922

³⁰⁹ A. De Pury, "Genesis 1 in its Historical Context and Today's Ecological Concerns", in Vischer, L (ed), *Listening to Creation Groaning: An Ecumenical Reflection on Creation Theology*, 61-74 (Geneva: Centre International Reformé John Knox, 2004), 69.

³¹⁰ D. G. Horrell, "Biblical Vegetarianism: A Critical and Constructive Assessment", in

Grumett, D & Muers, R (eds), *Eating and Believing: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Vegetarianism and Theology*, 44-59 (London: T&T Clark. 2010),34

³¹¹ Wilfong, "Human Creation in Canonical Context", 46-7.

³¹² Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology*, 99.

³¹³ John H. Walton (G.eds), *Genesis: Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan), 72.

provided nourishment. The act of God planting the Garden of Eden symbolizes His profound care and provision for His creation, accompanied by established guidelines for appropriate interaction with the trees and resources within that environment.

This biblical framework introduces both descriptive and prescriptive statutes regarding dietary practices, as God delineates permissible consumption for humanity. This notion embodies a shared responsibility between the divine and human agents for the preservation of life. God equipped Adam and Eve with all necessary provisions for their sustenance while articulating a specific diet in Genesis 1:29.³¹⁴ Certain interpretations, notably from a vegetarian standpoint, assert that the early chapters of Genesis do not contain a divine mandate for the consumption of animals by humans. Rather, it is posited that God initially intended for plants and fruits to be the exclusive source of nourishment. This interpretation hinges on the belief that death, particularly among animals, was an anomaly that emerged only after the entry of sin into the world, suggesting that the original divine design did not encompass the consumption of animal life.

David L. Clough propounds that while Genesis 1 confers dominion over other creatures to humanity, it concurrently specifies plants as the designated food source for both humans and animals, implying that such dominion should not entail the taking of life.³¹⁵ Additionally, Genesis 2 reinforces this notion of harmonious coexistence between humans and non-human creatures, furthering the argument for a form of dominion that eschews killing. The discourse surrounding Genesis 1:29 incites considerable scholarly debate, particularly in light of Pope Francis's encyclical, *Laudato Si*. This document articulates a vision of interconnectedness among all of God's

³¹⁴ Rodriguez, *Stewardship Roots*,19

³¹⁵ David L. Clough, "Consuming Animal Creatures: The Christian Ethics of Eating Animals" *Studies in Christian Ethics* (2016):9.

creation and advocates for a perspective wherein all creatures are recognized as part of a divine kinship deserving of compassion and care.³¹⁶ Nonetheless, the vegetarian interpretation faces challenges due to the absence of explicit prohibitions against the consumption of animals within Genesis chapters 1 and 2. This discussion is further complicated when considering Genesis 9, which emerges in the aftermath of the flood narrative. Within this context, humanity receives renewed directives from God, echoing the original commandments bestowed upon Adam. In this instance, Noah and his sons are positioned as representatives of humanity, reaffirming God's earlier commandments regarding stewardship and dominion. In summation, this examination of Genesis 1:29 and its pertinent texts invites a reevaluation of humanity's role and responsibilities toward creation, advocating for a balance between stewardship of all living beings and adherence to biblical provisions.

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³¹⁶ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home* (Vatican City State: Vatican Press, 2015), 11, 77

³¹⁷ John H. Walton (G.eds)., *Genesis: Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan), 72.

Genesis 1-2	Genesis 9
<p>1v26 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 bird of the ear, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground”.</p>	<p>v.2 The fear and dread if you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, upon every creature that moves along the ground, and upon all the fish of the sea; “they are given into your hands”.</p>
<p>Verse 28a. God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.</p>	<p>Verse1. Then God blessed Noah and his sons saying to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.</p>
<p>Verse 30. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for “food” (see verse 29).</p>	<p>V.3 Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.</p>

This biblical framework introduces both descriptive and prescriptive statutes regarding dietary practices, as God delineates permissible consumption for humanity. This notion embodies a shared responsibility between the divine and human agents for the preservation of life. God equipped Adam and Eve with all necessary provisions for their sustenance while articulating a specific diet in Genesis 1:29.³¹⁸ Certain interpretations, notably from a vegetarian standpoint, assert that the early chapters of Genesis do not contain a divine mandate for the consumption of animals by humans. Rather, it is posited that God initially intended for plants and fruits to be the exclusive source of nourishment. This interpretation hinges on the belief that death, particularly among animals, was an anomaly that emerged only after the entry of sin into the world,

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³¹⁹ David L. Clough, "Consuming Animal Creatures: The Christian Ethics of Eating Animals" *Studies in Christian Ethics* (2016):9.

³²⁰ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home* (Vatican City State: Vatican Press, 2015), 11, 77

CONCLUSION

The Christian doctrine of eco-friendliness is fundamentally anchored in the biblical understanding of creation and humanity's role as stewards, made in the image of God. This theological perspective asserts that humanity exists both within and above the created order, providing a framework through which interpreters can navigate the potential pitfalls of biocentrism and anthropocentrism—both of which risk leading to the exploitation and degradation of the natural world. To fully engage with the biblical account of creation and the dietary directives given to humanity in Genesis 1:29, it is imperative to adopt a theocentric lens. As articulated by Bishop, “Subduing and ruling the creation, then, are to be done as God’s representatives: he is our role model.... One thing is immediately obvious: creation is not merely for humanity. The world exists for the glory of God: creation is not anthropocentric; it is theocentric. All things exist for and have their meaning in God.” This assertion underscores the necessity of perceiving creation not solely as a resource for human use but as a manifestation of divine glory and purpose. It is essential to recognize that following the narrative of the Fall, the terminology associated with dominion underwent a profound transformation, with the concept of stewardship giving way to domination, and the act of subduing evolving into exploitation. This shift marks a departure from the original divine intent for creation, wherein humanity was tasked with the care and cultivation of the natural world rather than its destruction. The biblical narrative strongly supports an eco-friendly ethos from its inception, a perspective that is critically undermined in Genesis 3, where the disruption of creation is depicted. Additionally, the work of redemption through Christ is intrinsically linked to the restoration of creation, echoing the themes of renewal established in the post-Flood narrative of Noah. Within this framework, creation is framed as an aspect of God's good work, and eschatologically, the biblical vision proclaims not the annihilation of the world, but its renewal. The

inherent goodness of creation, coupled with humanity's mandate to steward it responsibly, emphasizes a theological commitment to ecological stewardship that extends into the anticipated fulfillment of God's redemptive plan.

When Did the Serpent Become a Deceptive Satan? A Theological Reconsideration of Adam's Deceptive Narrative in Genesis 3:1-6

Philemon Ibrahim

ABSTRACT

In Christian theological discourse, Genesis 3 is frequently interpreted as the foundational narrative of human transgression, commonly identified as the fall. Many scholars approach this chapter through the lens of original sin, emphasizing its implications for humanity's relational dynamic with the divine. However, this perspective can inadvertently obscure the literary and historical context of the text itself. Systematic theologians may derive value from associating the narrative of the fall with overarching theological themes; nonetheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that the texts of the Old Testament, including Genesis, ought to be understood within their own contextual frameworks. Furthermore, the conceptualization of "ha-satan" evolving into the figure of Satan represents a later interpretative framework that diverges from the original context of Genesis 3. Analyzing the text through a literary-historical lens elucidates that the serpent is characterized as a cunning agent, positioned as an antagonist in a pivotal moment of decision-making for Eve. This serpent engages her in a theological discourse that ultimately precipitates the downfall of both Adam and Eve. However, it is essential to recognize that this figure does not embody Satan in the manner that later theological traditions would come to delineate. Rather, the serpent in Genesis manifests as a more nuanced entity, symbolizing the allure of deception and the temptation toward self-determination. The narrative progresses

beyond a simplistic moral injunction regarding obedience; it invites a deeper exploration of human agency and the resultant consequences of choice. Consequently, while engaging with Genesis 3, it is crucial to appreciate its literary context and the role of the serpent without imposing later theological constructs that may obfuscate its original intent.

INTRODUCTION

The Bible should be conceptualized not merely as a singular text but as a multifaceted library, encompassing a diverse compendium of books authored within various historical contexts, theological frameworks, and philosophical paradigms, all unified under the overarching theme of one God. Consequently, biblical scholars approach the interpretation of Scripture through diverse theological and philosophical perspectives, leading to the articulation of various methodologies for studying Genesis 3, including figurative, literal, and historical approaches. Each of these methodologies has been employed by scholars to critically analyze the narrative surrounding the serpent in this pivotal chapter. The account of the serpent and Eve constitutes a significant component of the theological primeval history,³²¹ which commences with the creation narrative and culminates in the dispersal at Babel, thereby encapsulating what is formally referred to as the Urgeschichte (Genesis 1:1–11:9).³²²

³²¹ Scholars argue that Genesis 1-11 presents a narrative encompassing the history of the entire world that transcends mere scientific or imaginative discourse, spanning a period of thousands of years. This section of Scripture is referred to as "primeval history," and it serves to contextualize the intended message for the people of God, revealing their own history within the scope of a broader, cosmic history. This perspective is articulated by Thomas L. Brodie in his work, "Genesis as Dialogue" (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 143.

³²² Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Literary Form of Genesis 1–11," in *New Perspectives on the Old Testament* (ed. J. Barton Payne; Waco, Tex.: Word, 1970), 48–65 and you can read further by looking at the works of these scholars: Michael A. Fishbane, *Biblical Text and Texture: A Literary Reading of Selected Texts* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1998), 38–9; T.C. Vriezen and A.S. van der Woude, *Ancient Israelite and Early Jewish*

Nevertheless, there exists a compelling need for both disorientation and reorientation regarding the relationship between the serpent and Satan in Genesis 3.³²³ Contemporary scholars often neglect the serpent's role, opting instead to emphasize the identity of Satan as the deceiver of Adam and Eve. An investigation into this theological disorientation and reorientation is essential, as it may challenge and confront existing beliefs and frameworks of understanding. Human proclivity to ascribe significance to elements lacking explicit clarity is evident in interpretations of the biblical text. For instance, the Hebrew term "peri" does not specifically denote an apple; rather, it signifies any fruit hanging from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Despite this, certain scholars advocate for the identification of this fruit as an apple, perhaps influenced by culinary preferences, thereby constraining the interpretive possibilities of the text. Consequently, within the purview of Genesis 3, "peri" could validly refer to any fruit, rather than being strictly limited to an apple. This raises critical questions regarding the interpretation of the serpent in Genesis 3: How is this craftiness imbued creature to be understood? Is the serpent to be equated with Satan, or is there substantial biblical evidence to support the identification of the Genesis serpent as the Satan recognized within contemporary Christian tradition? Furthermore, what if Satan merely exploited the serpent's cunning to deceive Eve?³²⁴ While myriad responses to

Literature (trans. Brian Doyle; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 183–98. For other opinions on the arrangement of the primeval history, see Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (trans. John H. Marks; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 22–3; Rolf Rendtorff, "Genesis 8:21 und die Urgeschichte des Jahwisten," *Kerygma and Dogma* 7 (1961): 69–78.

³²³ According to Brueggemann, "The serpent is a device to introduce the new agenda." He asserts

that "whatever the serpent meant in earlier versions of the story, in the present narrative it has no

independent significance. It is a technique to move the plot of the story." Brueggemann, Walter. *Genesis* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1982), 47.

³²⁴ The idea that Satan took advantage of the craftiness of the serpent to deceive Eve highlights a profound theme in the biblical narrative about the nature of temptation and human fallibility. The serpent, often seen

these inquiries may exist, this paper serves as a clarion call to reevaluate our convictions. Recent scholarship increasingly posits that the figure of Satan is conspicuously absent from Genesis 3 and, indeed, from the entirety of the Old Testament corpus. The understanding of Satan prevalent in later theological constructs does not align with the original narrative intent articulated by the early authors. These narrators appeared to conceive of a more anthropomorphized and angelic delineation of Satan, distinct from the divinized and demonic figure that emerged in subsequent theological traditions. Thus, discussions surrounding the existence of Satan in the context of Genesis 3 become problematic; a divinized, demonic Satan does not exist within the worldview or relationship with God as understood by the original narrators. Accepting the scholarly consensus that the serpent should not be construed as Satan presents a formidable challenge. Nonetheless, the imposition of erroneous concepts onto nuanced theological issues poses a risk of distorting broader theological tenets. Among the principal characters in Genesis 3—God, Adam, Eve, and the serpent—the latter has received considerable scholarly scrutiny and frequent misinterpretation. The serpent is not only the first

as a manifestation of evil or a tool of Satan, represents the seductive nature of sin. In this context, it's essential to recognize that while Eve was deceived, the responsibility for her actions ultimately lies with her choices. This dynamic mirrors our contemporary tendency to deflect blame for our misdeeds onto external forces, as if saying, "The devil made me do it." Such justifications reveal an important aspect of human nature: the struggle between our desires and the moral standards we are called to uphold. The biblical story doesn't just recount the events of creation and temptation; it also serves as a reflection on the complexity of human choice and accountability. The narrative suggests that while external influences, like the serpent's deceit, can play a role in leading us astray, we still possess the agency to choose between right and wrong. This dilemma has been a recurring theme throughout history, prompting discussions about free will, responsibility, and the various ways we seek to rationalize our actions. Ultimately, the tale of Eve also serves as a cautionary reminder that we must remain vigilant against temptation, recognizing the subtle ways it can infiltrate our thoughts and decisions. Just as Eve was confronted with a choice, we too face daily decisions that reflect our values and integrity, reminding us that we are accountable for our actions, regardless of the influences around us.

creature introduced in this narrative but also the initial entity to engage in the interpretation of God's word to humanity. Thus, the serpent signifies the inception of interpretative inquiries, representing the first instance of eisegesis rather than exegesis. When the nature of the serpent is misinterpreted, scholars inadvertently align themselves with its eisegetical tendencies, as it sought to entice Eve with the promise of divine transformation. To avoid such eisegesis or misinterpretation of God's word, it is imperative to correctly apprehend the serpent's nature as it is articulated in Scripture. A failure to adequately define this serpent may perpetuate the conundrum surrounding its interpretation and, consequently, lead to misinterpretations of its nature and identity in contemporary theological discourse.

THE DISORIENTATION AND REORIENTATION OF *THE SATAN* AND *SATAN* IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The perception of Satan as a distinct and malevolent entity in the Old Testament requires critical analysis, especially regarding whether ancient Israelites held a conception of Satan consistent with contemporary interpretations. It is plausible to assert that the Old Testament does not support the existence of Satan in the manner that later theological frameworks propose. Despite the numerous adversities and catastrophes experienced by the people of Israel, there is a notable absence of references to a devil or Satan as a primary causative agent. Instead, the sources of their tribulations appear to stem primarily from divine providence and human adversaries, as observed in texts such as Lamentations, Jeremiah, Job, and the Psalms. The Hebrew term "satan" often denotes human adversaries, as illustrated in passages including 1 Samuel 19:22, 1 Kings 5:4, 11:14, 23, 25, and Psalms 109:6. Additionally, the term can refer to an angel of Yahweh engaged in opposition to a false prophet, as seen in Numbers 22:22-

32.³²⁵ The texts of Zechariah 3:1-2 and Job 1-2 introduce “the Satan” (or the Adversary),³²⁶ but these references do not align with the later concept of Satan as the arch-enemy of God.³²⁷ Rather, they depict an earlier form of the figure. In the context of Job, “the Satan” operates as one of the sons of God within the divine assembly, carrying out a role that is coherent with God’s overall authority. Therefore, the figure designated as “ha-Satan” in this context cannot simply be equated with later portrayals of Satan as a rebellious antagonist. Moreover, the term “satan”³²⁸ appears without the definite article in only one instance within the Hebrew Bible: 1 Chronicles 21:1. Scholars have posited that the Chronicler intentionally reinterpreted this narrative to present an unblemished relationship between God and David. In this passage, it is noted that “a satan stood up against Israel and provoked David to number the people” (1 Chronicles 21:6-7). This modification reflects significant theological shifts in late postexilic Judaism, wherein there was an emerging tendency to externalize evil from God, coinciding with the personification of evil in the figure of a satan, influenced by the socio-religious and sociopolitical contexts of the time.³²⁹ The Chronicler’s alteration—changing the instigation for the census from “Yahweh’s wrath against Israel” in 2 Samuel 24:1 to “Satan stood up against Israel”—signifies a substantial theological realignment, emphasizing that evil

³²⁵ Heiser, says, “The Hebrew word *śāṭān*, commonly transformed into the personal name “Satan,” is actually no such thing: this Hebrew term is not a proper personal noun and therefore does not point to the specific figure we know from the New Testament as Satan.” Heiser, *Demons*, 62.

³²⁶ “There is no hint that this task or the obedience of the *śāṭān* is to be wicked or out of place at a meeting of the divine council. Report he does, but it is at that point the *śāṭān* challenges God’s assessment of Job (and, therefore, either God’s omniscience or his truthfulness), leading to the events of the rest of the book. God’s character must be validated.” Peggy Day, *An Adversary in Heaven: śāṭān in the Hebrew Bible* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988). In fact, the *nāḥāš* of Genesis 3 is never called *śāṭān* anywhere in the Hebrew Bible.

³²⁷ Heiser, *Demons*, 62.

³²⁸ Mark S Smith, *The Genesis of Good and Evil: The Fall(out) and Original Sin in the Bible* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2019), 27.

³²⁹ Jonker, “Satan Made Me Do It!” 357.

could no longer be attributed directly to God. This adjustment adeptly addresses the theological quandary of 2 Samuel 24, wherein Yahweh commands the census yet subsequently punishes David for its execution.³³⁰ Thus, 1 Chronicles 21:1 stands as the first and only instance in the Hebrew Bible where Satan is personified as a distinct entity.³³¹ This portrayal within Genesis 3 contributes to a broader narrative discourse surrounding temptation and the nature of evil. The depiction of the serpent in the Garden of Eden frequently aligns with subsequent narratives of temptation in the New Testament, especially the portrayal of the tempter during Jesus' wilderness experience (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13).³³² While there is discourse suggesting that the serpent's dialogue in Genesis 3 serves as a precursor to the New Testament understanding of temptation, it remains crucial to underscore that the Old Testament does not present an understanding of Satan as an adversarial force opposing God. In conclusion, it is essential for systematic theologians and contemporary scholars to acknowledge that the role attributed to the term "satan" within Old Testament literature does not equate to a distinct entity in opposition to God. The conception of the devil as an adversarial figure is largely absent from the understanding of the authors of the Old Testament. As such, it appears that the theological understanding of evil and its eventual personification underwent significant evolution, reflecting a maturation of thought within the Israelite community over time.

SOME CONSIDERABLE TEXTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF SATAN

What about Isaiah 14?

The Christian tradition frequently misinterprets the narrative surrounding Satan, particularly in its application of Isaiah 14

³³⁰ Jonker, "Satan Made Me Do It!" 357.

³³¹ Jonker, "Satan Made Me Do It!" 357.

³³² Smith, *The Genesis of Good and Evil*, 28

as a possible backstory that defines his obstinacy and malevolence. This passage presents considerable interpretative challenges. While it is commonplace for Christians to engage with Isaiah 14 through the prism of a divinized Satan or fallen angel, it is essential to recognize that the Old Testament authors did not possess the conceptual framework of Satan as understood in a Greco-Roman context. In contemporary readings, the term "Lucifer" is often equated with the devil, leading many interpreters to bypass critical contextual analysis. The Hebrew term "helel," typically rendered as "Lucifer" (meaning "light-bringer" or "morning star"), specifically pertains to the king of Babylon within Isaiah 14. The phrase "Helel ben shachar" translates to "son of the morning" or "morning star." The evolution of "helel" into "Lucifer" occurred in the Latin Vulgate, which significantly contributed to the prevailing misinterpretation. Isaiah 14:13 articulates an earthly monarch's ambition to ascend to heaven, reflecting the Babylonian king's aspiration to usurp divine authority. This aspiration culminates in his being cast down to "Sheol," a term that denotes the grave rather than a metaphysical hell. Verse 11 further illustrates the king's demotion by stating, "your pomp has brought you down to Sheol," and employs imagery of degradation akin to that assigned to Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4. Thus, this passage primarily critiques the hubris and obstinacy of the Babylonian king, who posed a significant threat to Judah, rather than serving as a commentary on Satan. Early church fathers, such as Tertullian and Origen, were among the first to assert that "Lucifer" referred to Satan; however, the historical context of Isaiah 14 centers around the specific fate of the Babylonian king.³³³ It is also pertinent to note that, while the text refers to the king of Babylon, there may be a historical correlation with Sennacherib, the Assyrian king who was overthrown by Babylon circa 689 BC. Some scholars might find the designation of "king of Babylon" to be perplexing; however, this title was occasionally conferred upon Assyrian rulers as a

³³³ Smith, *The Genesis of Good and Evil*, 28

mark of respect during Babylonian New Year celebrations, acknowledging the tribute these kings rendered to the Babylonian deity Marduk. In summation, a proper exegesis of Isaiah 14 necessitates a focus on its historical and literary context, rather than projecting retrospective interpretations of Satan onto the text.

What About Ezekiel?

The figure of Satan is conspicuously absent from the passage under examination; instead, the primary emphasis lies on the “prince of Tyre” (Ezekiel 28:1). Both Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel depict a human sovereign who aspires to dominion comparable to the divine, to the extent of perceiving himself as a god (Ezekiel 28:2). The expulsion language employed in these texts serves to underscore Adam’s removal from the Garden of God and his resultant loss of immortality, rather than alluding to the serpent’s descent to earth or the underworld (Isaiah 14:11, 15; Ezekiel 28:16).³³⁴ The argument presents an interpretation that considers Adam as analogous to the king of the garden, consistent with the portrayal of ancient Near Eastern monarchs, who were often deemed divine owing to their status as God’s representatives on earth. In this regard, the monarch of Tyre, and by analogy Adam, transgresses his role and seeks to govern as a deity (Isaiah 14:13–14) within the divine council.³³⁵ Diverse interpretative frameworks exist for analyzing these passages, including Adam-centric interpretations and those that align the text with a devil-centric reading in relation to the king of Tyre. The text makes assertions regarding the king’s “perfection in beauty” (Ezekiel 27:3-4, 11), his fullness of wisdom (Ezekiel 28:3-4), and his prideful claim to divinity (Ezekiel 28:6), while simultaneously affirming his humanity (Ezekiel 28:8-10) within the “garden of God” (Ezekiel 28:13).³³⁶

³³⁴ Heiser, **Demons**, 63-64.

³³⁵ Heiser, *Demons*, 64.

³³⁶ The ancient near easterners often considered their kings as gods. There, it is not a surprise thing the king of Tyre is thinking that he is a god. To understand why and how these ancient kings are viewed as gods, see John

The mere presence in the garden does not imply that this ruler is Satan, as it is not only Satan who resided in the Garden of Eden; Adam and Eve were likewise inhabitants of this divine space. Moreover, the characterization of the figure in question as a cherub who is “perfect in beauty” does not correlate with the biblical serpent or the figure of Satan. It is imperative to acknowledge that Ezekiel employs elaborate imagery throughout his prophetic writings; for example, he metaphorically depicts Pharaoh as a tree in Eden (Ezekiel 31:1-18) and as a sea monster (Ezekiel 29:3-5). Consequently, Ezekiel is addressing the arrogance of a human ruler rather than delineating the nature of Satan. The text also underscores that the prince of Tyre is, indeed, a man—a mortal—destined to meet a gruesome end, rather than facing the eternal torment associated with hellfire (Ezekiel 28:8-10). If Satan is conceptualized as an angelic being, this characterization does not align with the passage’s portrayal, which does not reference an immortal entity. Rather, this narrative reflects Ezekiel’s prophetic vision—a pronouncement of divine judgment anticipated through Nebuchadnezzar, aimed at Israel’s adversaries, among whom the king of Tyre is a primary antagonist. Furthermore, it appears that the understanding of Satan evolved within the Israelite tradition, resulting in a perception of Satan as a distinct, adversarial spiritual entity opposed to God and His divine will. This developmental trajectory suggests that the evolving theological perspective among the Israelites prompted reinterpretations of these ancient narratives, culminating in the characterization of Satan as an antagonistic spiritual being. By the third to second centuries, the notion of Satan as the proper name for the devil emerged, portraying him as a supernatural force opposing God, ultimately conflating with the identity of the serpent in the Garden of Eden. This transformation represents a pronounced

gray, “Canaanite Kingship in Theory and Practice,” *Vetus Testamentum* 2 (1952):193-200.

theological evolution concerning the conception of evil within the biblical tradition.

THE IDENTITY AND NATURE OF THE SERPENT IN GENESIS

3

In Genesis 3:1, the characterization of the serpent as "more crafty than any other beast of the field" has prompted various exegetical interpretations, particularly concerning the translation of the Hebrew term "aroum." While traditionally rendered as "crafty" or "cunning," some scholars contend that a more precise translation would convey "naked," highlighting a characteristic shared between the serpent and humanity in their primordial state.³³⁷ The term "aroum" is etymologically linked to the dual form "aroummim," which describes Adam and Eve's nakedness in Genesis 2:25. The serpent's nakedness may symbolize a form of vulnerability or exposure, thereby distinguishing it from other beasts adorned with fur or protective coverings. This correlation suggests a profound connection between the serpent and the human figures, indicating an inherent relationship between their states of being. Additionally, the Hebrew term "nakhsh," typically translated as "serpent," used LXX which is derived from a root that denotes brightness or shining.³³⁸ This characteristic has historically led some translators and scholars to perceive the serpent as more than a mere animal; rather, they posit it may represent a spiritual being of higher significance—an interpretation that finds resonance with the figure of Lucifer or Satan. However, such perspectives can engender contentious debate, as they risk bordering on eisegesis—the imposition of foreign meanings onto the text that are not explicitly present in the original narrative. The Genesis account intimates that the serpent, while laden with symbolic meaning, remains

³³⁷ Luc Anckaert & , Roger Burggraefe, "From Crisis To Meaning: Creativity In The Biblical Narrative Of Eve And The Inversion By F. Kafka", *Creativity studies*, Vol. 11(2018): 264.

³³⁸ Ethelbert William Bullinger, *The Companion Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 24.

fundamentally an ordinary creature within the created order. Its "craftiness" or intelligence should thus be contextualized within the narrative framework: the serpent employs its distinctive attributes, including its form and cunning nature, to engage with humanity and ultimately lead them toward disobedience.

The serpent has long presented as an enigmatic figure within Christian theology and scholarly analysis, with interpretations emerging from postexilic commentators as well as modern theologians that align this ancient serpent with contemporary conceptions of Satan.³³⁹ Gordon Wenham observes that early parts of the Old Testament exhibit no signs of a personal devil, suggesting that the identification of the serpent as Satan is a relatively recent theological evolution.³⁴⁰ Another scholar corroborates this notion, asserting, "even with the latest dating of the J-source (seventh century BCE), there is no evidence of interpreting the serpent as Satan prior to the second century CE."³⁴¹ Furthering this argument, John Day challenges the perception of equating the serpent with Satan within the Yahwist (J) source,³⁴² contending that the serpent is not

³³⁹ The rendering of serpent as satan is an editorial work of the later biblical narrators. John Collins postulates that "(The role of Satan in the tempting of the primeval couple is further developed in an extensive postbiblical literature on the life of Adam and Eve.) The figure of the devil, however, is a latecomer on the biblical scene. When Satan appears in the Hebrew Bible (in the book of Job and again in Chronicles), he is not yet quite "the devil"—in Job he appears among "the sons of God" in the heavenly court. Neither should the serpent in Genesis be interpreted as the devil....The snake articulates the voice of temptation, but it is not yet a mythological figure such as Satan later became." John j. Collins, *Introduction To The Hebrew Bible And Deutero-Canonical Books. Third Edition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018), 74.

³⁴⁰ Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (Waco, TX: word books, 1987), 72.

³⁴¹ Martin Emmrich, "the temptation narrative of genesis", *The Evangelical Quarterly* 73 (2001): 10.

³⁴² The Yahwist was introduced in the eighteenth century through the works of Henning Bernhard Witter (1711) and Jean Astruc (1753). Currently, the scholarly debate surrounding the Torah presents a paradoxical situation. On one hand, there is a growing number of scholars, particularly in Europe, who are moving away from the classical Documentary Hypothesis as a framework for understanding the

identified as the Devil in this narrative.³⁴³ Instead, the equating of the serpent with Satan notably appears in apocryphal texts from the third and second centuries BCE,³⁴⁴ signaling a significant interpretive shift that likely emerged during the Greco-Roman period.³⁴⁵ This development has since become entrenched in Christian theological discourse, reflecting its wider acceptance within the tradition. Many scholars posit that the extraordinary cunning and intelligence attributed to the serpent preclude it from being merely an ordinary serpent; hence, it must be interpreted as representing a diabolical figure. This perspective invites the notion of an "incarnated devil," drawing parallels to the Christological understanding of the incarnation, a key tenet within Christian theology. Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that the biblical text does not support the interpretation of a divine being possessing the serpent, as such a reading would constitute an unwarranted imposition on the text. The narrative explicitly indicates that it is the serpent itself that deceives Eve.³⁴⁶ Genesis 3:1 designates the serpent as "one of Yahweh's earthly creatures," identified as a "beast of the field." While it is recognized as the progenitor of contemporary serpents (cf. Gen 3:14-15), its status in the original pre-cursed state is characterized by an exceptional capacity for speech and a level of knowledge that surpasses that of ordinary animals,

composition of the Pentateuch. This trend includes skepticism about the existence of a distinct Yahwistic source or author (J). Notable works expressing these views include Antony F. Campbell and Mark A.

O'Brien's "Sources of the Pentateuch: Texts, Introductions, Annotations" (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), Richard Elliott Friedman's "The Bible with Sources Revealed" (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003), Otto Kaiser's essay "The Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic History" in "Text in Context: Essays by Members of the Society for Old Testament Studies" (ed. A. D. H. Mayes; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), and Ernest Nicholson's "The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century: The Legacy of Julius Wellhausen" (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998).

³⁴³ John Day, *From Creation to Babel: Studies in Genesis 1-11* (LHBOTS 592; London/New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 35-37

³⁴⁴ Day, *From Creation to Babel*, 35-37.

³⁴⁵ Smith, *The Genesis of Good and Evil*, 28.

³⁴⁶ Heiser, *Demons*, 266.

indicating attributes akin to a magical creature. This representation underscores that the serpent is not merely an ordinary animal; rather, it is endowed with intelligence that appears to exceed that of humanity. It represents the first instance within the Old Testament of an animal engaging in substantive intellectual and theological discourse with a human, preceding any similar encounter depicted by Balaam's talking donkey.³⁴⁷ Within this narrative framework, the serpent acts as an agent capable of misinterpreting and eisegeting the divine words conveyed to humanity, thereby exemplifying its inherently cunning nature prior to the imposition of the curse. Ultimately, the interpretation of the serpent in Genesis 3 as a manifestation of Satan reflects a complex interplay between textual analysis and the evolution of theological understanding. This narrative not only elucidates the serpent's pivotal role in humanity's fall but also underscores broader implications regarding temptation and the nature of evil within the context of the biblical creation story. The historical trajectory of this interpretation continues to enhance the rich tapestry of theological discourse surrounding the complexities of moral responsibility and the human condition within the Judeo-Christian tradition.

The New Testament articulates a cohesive perspective regarding the figure of the serpent, directly associating it with Satan or the devil. Authors such as Paul and John do not distinguish between the ancient serpent, the dragon, and the adversarial figure of Satan, as evidenced in passages such as 2 Corinthians 11:2, 14 and Revelation 12:9, 14; 20:2. This lack of differentiation invites examination of the serpent within a broader theological framework that identifies it as a

³⁴⁷ We may recall Balaam's donkey in Num 22:28-30 for the example of a talking animal in the Old Testament, with comparable supernatural awareness, a passage which has likewise been traditionally ascribed to the J source.

manifestation of evil.³⁴⁸ This raises the inquiry: should the devil be regarded merely as a zoological construct? In texts such as 2 Corinthians 11:14 and Matthew 4:1–11, the characterization of the devil transcends a biological classification, emphasizing the more supernatural dimensions of this being. If one accepts the New Testament's assertion that Satan tempted Eve not solely in the guise of a serpent but as a serpent, one may be inclined to explore the relationship between zoology and demonology. This inquiry risks delving into a realm of biblical mythology, wherein the distinction between the natural and the supernatural becomes increasingly obscured. As one navigates these interpretations, it is imperative to approach them with scholarly rigor, considering the symbolic and metaphorical dimensions present within the texts. The serpent functions not merely as a narrative character; it embodies temptation, deception, and the overarching struggle between good and evil that permeates biblical discourse. Engaging with this duality can deepen our understanding of the serpent's role and the nature of temptation within the theological contexts of both the Old and New Testaments.

GOD'S COMMANDMENT: EVE AND SERPENT IN GENESIS 3

The narrative surrounding the interactions among God, Eve, and the serpent in the Genesis account presents a multifaceted exploration of interpretation and misinterpretation, which significantly influences the identities and roles of the characters involved. An initial observation concerns the discrepancy in the articulation of God's command as conveyed to Adam versus its subsequent representation by Eve in her discourse with the serpent. In Genesis 2:16-17, God's directive is clearly

³⁴⁸ The translators of the nt, translated the phrase *ho ophis ho archaios* as "ancient serpent" (NIV, ESV, NET, CSB), the old serpent (KJV, DRA, ASV,NAU) or the primeval serpent. Most scholars prefer these translations but I hope you know that these translations do not give us room to ascribe this ancient serpent to the snake that talked to snake. Geerhardus Vos, *biblical theology: old and new testaments* (1948; reprint, Grand rapids: Eerdmans,1988),44.

articulated to Adam, allowing him to freely consume from any tree in the garden with the sole exception of one, the consumption of which would result in death. This command is issued in the singular form, underscoring a personal responsibility inherent in the divine instruction.

Conversely, when Eve responds to the serpent in Genesis 3:2-3, her interpretation introduces critical alterations. She shifts from the singular pronoun "you" to the plural "you," indicating a communal interpretation that deviates from the original divine directive. Furthermore, she appends an additional stipulation—prohibiting not only the act of eating but also the act of touching the tree—thus expanding the scope of God's command beyond its original parameters. This alteration raises pertinent questions regarding her comprehension and suggests possible underlying anxieties or reservations concerning the divine command. The role of the serpent in this interaction is equally significant and complex. Traditionally characterized as the initiator of temptation, the serpent's influence underscores a nuanced dynamic of deception. While the serpent introduces doubt, Eve's response reveals her own misunderstandings and complexities, thereby creating a scenario where both parties misinform one another. The serpent's function as a deceiver is complicated by Eve's misinterpretations, illustrating a reciprocal manipulation of the narrative. In examining Eve's motives, it is imperative to consider the contextual factors surrounding her engagement with the serpent. What influences might have prompted her to alter God's words, and what underlying fears or desires could be motivating her actions? Her inclusion of the prohibition against touching the tree may reflect a manifestation of anxiety regarding the potential repercussions or an assertion of agency in a conversation with a being perceived as lesser, despite its ability to speak. These discrepancies in communication invite a deeper contemplation of the implications inherent in the narrative. Such reflections challenge readers to consider the significance of interpretation and the complexities of relationships between humanity and

the divine.³⁴⁹ Rather than delineating a simplistic portrayal of the serpent as the sole deceiver or Eve as merely the deceived, the discourse reveals a more intricate interaction wherein both parties contribute to a breakdown of understanding, ultimately leading to consequential outcomes. This theme of misinterpretation resonates throughout the text, highlighting the inherent fragility of human comprehension in the context of divine command.

³⁴⁹ Several scholars propose that the temptations faced by Eve in the Genesis narrative can be understood through a three-fold lens that encapsulates the holistic nature of human desire: physical (nourishment), emotional (delight), and spiritual (wisdom). This perspective suggests that sin has the potential to infiltrate and corrupt every facet of an individual's being. For instance, Michael Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham observe in *The Moody Bible Commentary* that these dimensions of temptation are significant in illustrating the comprehensive impact of sin on humanity (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014, 42). Further supporting this interpretation, Devin Hayward Dunn in his work, "Exiled from Eden: An Exegesis of Genesis 3," explores the complexities of these temptations and their implications for understanding human nature, emphasizing the multifaceted influences at play in the narrative (OT 6603: Hebrew Syntax and Exegetical Method, 2018, 11-14). Additionally, Michael A. Grisanti, in *The Book of Genesis*, elaborates on the intertwining of these desires, highlighting how they reflect the fundamental struggles inherent in the human condition (in *The Word and the World: An Introduction to the Old Testament*, ed. Eugene H. Merrill, Mark F. Rooker, and Michael A. Grisanti, Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011, 172). This three-dimensional approach to temptation not only deepens our understanding of the text but also underscores the pervasive nature of sin, which seeks to exploit all aspects of human existence. The interplay of physical, emotional, and spiritual desires in Eve's experience serves as a cautionary tale regarding the vulnerabilities inherent in the human experience and the multifaceted nature of temptation.

Initial God’s version (2:16-17)	Woman’s version of God’s version (3:2-3)
God commanded	God said
Freely eat from every tree	May eat
Tree of knowledge of good and evil	Eve’s characterization of the tree as merely a “tree in the midst of the garden” effectively diminishes its distinctiveness and importance within the divine command. By reframing the tree in such a nondescript manner, she inadvertently strips it of its moral significance, thereby equating it with the other trees in the Garden of Eden. This linguistic choice is telling, as it reflects a tendency inherent in human nature to obscure the nature of evil when one is inclined toward it. By avoiding the specific description associated with the tree, Eve may be attempting to alleviate the weight of the command and mitigate the seriousness of the prohibition. In doing so, she inadvertently subverts the gravity of God’s warning and places the tree on an equal footing with all other trees in the garden, diminishing the ethical implications of her potential choice to partake of its fruit. This act of recontextualizing the tree reveals a broader theme within the narrative regarding the human inclination to rationalize or downplay the significance of moral choices. By minimizing the distinct nature of the tree, Eve’s words echo a pattern observed in human behavior, wherein individuals often shirk accountability or the gravity of their decisions by employing euphemistic language or by reframing their circumstances. Thus, the interaction underscores the complexities of temptation and the nuanced ways in which individuals grapple with moral command in the pursuit of personal desire.
You (singular)	we (plural)
Do not eat it	Do not eat or touch
surely die that day	lest you die

Eve's reinterpretation of God's command transcends mere recapitulation; it substantiates her underlying motives. This reinterperative act signals her premeditated intent to disobey divine instruction, facilitated by her misinterpretation and

misappropriation of God's word. In this regard, the role of the serpent can be viewed as one that assists in the realization of Eve's intentions rather than instigating them. Reuven Kimelman, in his article *The Seduction of Eve and the Exegetical Politics of Gender* posits that "the snake functions to extend the direction of Eve's thinking rather than to instigate it."³⁵⁰ This perspective serves as a foundational interpretation of the serpent's role within the narrative. Together, Eve and the serpent cultivate a climate of doubt regarding the veracity of God's command. Because God's directive to Adam regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil introduces a compelling discourse on the nature of truth and the implications of Eve's modification by adding the term "touch." The text does not provide an explicit rationale for her decision to alter God's command, yet this addition serves to illuminate the complexities inherent in the integrity of divine instructions and the potential for misinterpretation. In her interaction with the serpent, Eve appears to present a distortion of the original command, which could suggest that the alteration of truth may lead to greater confusion and misunderstanding. When the serpent counters Eve's assertion by stating, "You will not really die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened" (Genesis 3:4-5), this raises critical inquiries regarding the truthfulness of the serpent's claim. Notably, Eve's consumption of the fruit did not result in immediate physical death, prompting a reevaluation of the implications of God's pronouncement regarding death. Scholarly interpretations often grapple with the question of the nature of death as referenced in this context. While many posit that death must be understood spiritually, defending the validity of God's command, an examination of the Hebrew verb "to die" (*muth*) reveals nuanced dimensions to its meaning. The phrase *muth*

³⁵⁰ Reuven Kimelman, "The Seduction of Eve and the Exegetical Politics of Gender", *Biblical Interpretation A Journal of Contemporary Approaches* (2018.): 6. For systematic and fundamental understanding of this perspective of the woman's motive and the temptation of the snake, we have to look at the work of Nehama Leibowitz, *Studies in the Book of Genesis, [Hebrew]* (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1969), 23-24.

tamuth translates as “you shall surely die,” and the usage of the infinitive absolute underscores the severity of the action. This may indicate a more gradual process of dying rather than an instantaneous demise, suggesting a multifaceted understanding of death that encompasses both spiritual separation from the divine and eventual physical mortality. Moreover, the serpent's failure is evident in its omission of critical information regarding the repercussions of disobedience, particularly the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. While it is accurate to assert that Adam and Eve faced expulsion as a consequence of their actions, it is essential to note that their curses derive directly from their disobedience.³⁵¹

CONCLUSION

The interpretation of the serpent in Genesis 3:1-6 as an embodiment of the devil constitutes a significant example of eisegesis. This reading leads to profound misunderstandings of the text, particularly given that the narrative presents the serpent as a mere creature that God subsequently curses, without any explicit assertion in the Old Testament that designates it as a symbol of evil or malevolent forces. Such an interpretation often arises from an anachronistic reading, where the text is evaluated through the lens of later theological developments, thereby obscuring its original contextual meaning. Scholarly consensus indicates that the conception of Satan, as understood in contemporary discourse, is largely a later development within religious thought. Early writers of the Old Testament did not frame a dualistic figure representing evil akin to the characterization found in later Christian interpretations. The evolution of the Satan figure is suggested to have been influenced significantly by the dualistic worldview emerging during the Achaemenid era, which subsequently permeated Jewish thought and culminated in Hellenistic and Roman understandings. Accordingly, it is unlikely that any

³⁵¹ Devin Hayward Dunn, “Exiled from Eden An Exegesis of Genesis 3”, *OT 6603: Hebrew Syntax and Exegetical Method* (2018): 15.

credible scholar of the Old Testament would endorse the perspective that equates the serpent in Genesis 3 with Satan. Embracing such an interpretation not only misrepresents the text but also undermines the narrative's original intent. A more fruitful approach is to analyze the serpent within its immediate literary and cultural context, recognizing its role in the narrative without imposing later theological frameworks on the text.

The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers and its Implication for Contemporary Christian Living

Felicien Ngitnyu Mumbah

INTRODUCTION

Karl Jaspers February 23, 1883-1969. He studied law and medicine. He practiced medicine as a psychiatrist before eventually turning to philosophy, and he is now a professor of philosophy, of which Nietzsche and Kierkegaard were his influencers.³⁵² On April 1, 1922, he took over the full professorial chair for philosophy in Heidelberg; he was not originally a philosopher. He said, “But when the intellectual world is vacant of philosophy, it becomes the duty at least to bear witness to philosophy, to direct the attention to the great philosophers, to try to stop confusion, and to encourage in our youth the interest in real philosophy.” His primary aim was to teach the truth we live by. His life and work were at risk during the Hitler dictatorship. He was compulsorily retired in 1937. In 1938, the Publication of his works was banned.³⁵³

THE PROPONENT(S)/DEVELOPMENT OF THE IDEA

Existentialism grew up within the emptiness left by the decline of religion. Existential philosophers wanted to pull philosophy down from the academy and bring it to the real life of people in the streets. Philosophy attempts to understand the basic logic

³⁵² Joseph, Omoregbe. *A Simplified History of Western Philosophy: Contemporary Philosophy*. (Ikeja, Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers Ltd, 2012), 59.

³⁵³ Hermann Horn, “Karl Jaspers,” *International Bureau of Education* Vol. XXIII, No. 3/4, (1993): 721.

that motivates the way people think.³⁵⁴ Most scholars trace existential philosophy back to Soren Kierkegaard, a troubled Danish writer in the early nineteenth century. He protested against the prevailing church of his time, which he found to have lost the spirit of Christianity and become just a nonspiritual organisation with no soul, and also against the system's idealistic philosophy.

Another remarkable existentialist is Friedrich Nietzsche. He developed his thinking independently of Kierkegaard. Nietzsche's thinking was remarkably similar in spirit to that of Kierkegaard, even though Nietzsche was a fervent atheist while Kierkegaard was a Christian. Both thoughts prevailing religious and philosophical institutions to the spiritual needs of the new world.³⁵⁵

Karl Jaspers, one of the leading articulators of existential philosophy in the twentieth century, wrote in his book *Man in the Modern Age* that the rise of existential philosophy represents the struggle by modern man to lead an authentic and genuine life despite the contemporary drift toward mass, standardized society. He could be credited with bringing together the work of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche for the twentieth century and outlining the unified ground of the existential philosophers in his book *Existenz Philosophy*. However, he objected to the label "existentialism" when it arose later in France because it seemed to denote a school of thought, a doctrine, which he saw as a limitation.³⁵⁶ However, he prefers to use 'Existenz' to distinguish himself from others. To him, Existenz is what never becomes an object, the origin from which issues are thinking and acting.³⁵⁷ The notion that man not only exists but wishes to be himself was established by Jaspers in

³⁵⁴ David Cogswell, *Existentialism For Beginners* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Steerforth Press, 2008), 12.

³⁵⁵ Cogswell, 17.

³⁵⁶ Cogswell, 17.

³⁵⁷ Paul Arthur Schilpp, *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers* (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1957), xix.

1932 in his three-volume 'Philosophy', which is structured as follows: firstly, a worldly orientation as a study into objective truth; secondly, the clarification of existence as a plea for the individual to be himself; thirdly, metaphysics in relation to the transcendental.³⁵⁸

Existentialism focuses attention and concern on the individual over the group, mass type or category, on the specific over the general, actual events and experience over the ideas, theories, statistics or imaginary events. To achieve a reliable life, an individual must direct oneself and fight the pressure of mass society to create standardized human beings.³⁵⁹ Existenz philosophy is the way of thought through which man seeks to become himself; it makes use of expert knowledge while going beyond it at the same time. This way of thinking does not cognise objects but explains and makes actual the being of the thinker. Brought into a state of suspense by having transcended the cognitions of the world (as the adoption of a philosophical boldness towards the world) that fixate being, it appeals to its own freedom (as the illumination of Existenz) and gains space for its own unconditioned activity through conjuring up Transcendence (as metaphysics).

MAJOR CONTENT(S)/FOCUS OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL IDEA

Jasper's significant contributions to the development of existentialism contain his concept of two states of being: 'Dasein' and 'Existenz', 'Boundary Situations', 'Transcendence', and 'Encompassing'. Jaspers opens with worries and tries to find himself and these questions down on him, and he raises them as a concern, pointing out, "What is being? Why is anything at all? Why not nothing? Or who am I? Or what do I want"? These questions arise from a past situation in which he

³⁵⁸ Horn, 722.

³⁵⁹ Cogawell, 20.

finds himself.³⁶⁰ The main idea here is for him to find himself, but how can he become aware of himself in this world when he has taken things up and dropped them again, and still yet, he wonders and asks himself what it is? For all things pass away, and he was not at the beginning, nor is he at the end. Even between the beginning and the end, he asks about the beginning and the end. Jaspers seeks answers to all these, but he comes to a point where he realises that this world cannot help him understand his situation, nor can his situation enable him to understand the world.³⁶¹ Therefore, there is a need to search for a being; he stresses that to think of a being is to make it a distinct being. If we ask what being is, we have many answers to choose from: empirical reality in space and time; dead and living matter; persons and things; tools and material; ideas that apply to fact; rational constructions of ideal objects, as in mathematics; contents of the imagination in an objectiveness. Hence, whatever being I find in my situation is, to me, an object.

This being is my existenz, and I am Existenz if I do not become an object for myself. In existenz, I know, without being able to see it, that what I call myself is independent. The possibility of existenz is what I live by; it is only in its realization that I am myself. It is thus not my existence that is existenz; but, being human, I am possible existenz in existence. He continues that existence is fulfilled in mundane beings, so possible existenz thus sets itself off from the world in order to find the right way into the world. Existenz is never general and not a particular under a universal. The union of existenz and the world is an incalculable process that no one who is a part of it can be sure of.³⁶² Jaspers stresses the doubts of the being of existenz; once we divorce existenz from existence, from the world, and from a general character, there seems to be nothing left. So, he feels

³⁶⁰ E. B. Ashton, *Karl Jaspers Philosophy Volume 1* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1932), 43

³⁶¹ Jaspers, 44-45.

³⁶² Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 3-6.

unsatisfied if he reduces all things to mundane existence, either in theory or in practice. Nothing I know in this world can give me any reasons for my decision, but what I am to decide can be grasped in the medium of that knowledge.³⁶³

Elucidating Existential Communication. At this point, he then said when I come to myself, two things lie in this communication: my being 'I' and my being with 'another'. If I am not independent myself or upright on my own, I shall be lost entirely in the other. He now said communication is two people who come to each other out of solitude and yet know isolation only because they are communicating. So, I cannot come to myself without entering into communication, and I cannot enter into communication without being lonely.³⁶⁴ You enter the most profound communication when you are on your own. On this note, Jaspers expatiated that communication is the manifestation of the real you because what emerges from you reveals yourself to you. Since communication is about self-realisation and finding answers to questions, there should be some element of truthfulness to an extent because one needs to gain answers to his worries. Thus, for every contact, there must be content because communication without content is senseless and void, and in time, no man can ask for the perfection of another or of himself.³⁶⁵ Jaspers also emphasizes love in communication because love is the substantial source of communicative self-being. It can produce self-being as the movement of its own manifestation; it cannot perfect a self-being that would be conclusive, and communication is not to be project man.³⁶⁶

Jaspers again talks about the deficiency in communication. To him, since communication in existence is a process, not something complete, its reality is a sense of being deficient. The

³⁶³ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 8-9.

³⁶⁴ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 56-66.

³⁶⁵ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 56-66.

³⁶⁶ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 56-66.

deficiency may take the form of a mere desire, or it may turn into an indispensable link in manifestation or take the form of an incomprehensible boundary that shocks our sense of being. There is a default in communication when we are still young or when we die, and also when there is no absolute truth in communication.³⁶⁷ Jaspers stresses the importance of dignity in communication at any level. He also emphasized the part of loneliness. To him, loneliness is the irremovable end without which there is no communication. Solitude as the possibility of an empty I is a conception of core nonbeing at the edge of the void from which my historic decision to communicate brings him back to reality.³⁶⁸ Loneliness is the present lack of communicative ties to others and the uncertainty of whether this can be helped. Self-being in the polarity of solitude and communication called for the thesis that I cannot be myself unless another is himself with me. Even among the abundance of existence, loneliness may suddenly drag before me as the possible abyss of nonbeing.³⁶⁹ The certainty of having never felt any communicative ties will make me tell myself I haven't anybody. However, it is different if loneliness is due to rejection by another or if I did not happen to meet someone to communicate with over time. Jaspers then holds that if he feels doomed to a lonely death, it is in Transcendence alone that unfulfilled communication can be channeled.³⁷⁰

Another thing Jaspers talked about is the will. Looking at this, in an open statement, he said, I can say of something that at the time it is and is not my will; that I cannot will anything. I do not come to the resolution that is really me when I will be willing. So, the will that wills something can be described as a psychological phenomenon; the will that wills itself is the active assurance of being, which my volition of something derives from

³⁶⁷ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 67-73.

³⁶⁸ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 67-73.

³⁶⁹ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 67-73.

³⁷⁰ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 67-73.

the ground of freedom.³⁷¹ According to him, in the phenomenology of volition, volition itself does not exist until there is discriminating thought. Here, ends and means come to be objects of deliberation; I think about the means and whether they suit the purpose, and I think about the end and whether it is my true purpose.³⁷² Jaspers stresses here that there are always motives behind our choice, which is always in struggle and the most vital wins. He further states that when we think and plan for a long time, the will intervenes in existence, transcending the realm of our reality not just factually but knowingly, and the effect is based upon the point of action. All results will depend on mechanisms in psycho-physical existence that lie outside our consciousness and on given facts and contexts in the world that are unknown to us when we act. He also points out that the will can shape its psycho-physical existence slowly over time through habit, practice and training.³⁷³

Volition and involuntary acts, here, the struggle may lead to a permanent split; in that case, it remains sterile. Our psycho-physical nature stops obeying my will and defies it in involuntary processes. I cannot do as I will, cannot keep my mind on what I am reading, cannot make the natural moves unsought things befall me, and feelings and inner impulses that seem alien to me. I try to control myself, but it only gets worse. In the form of the will. Continues that when my will, my clear sense of purpose, wills a thing, both the item and the means to it must have been set before me by my intellect. When the pathos of the idea and existenz flags for a time, rationalistic volition may serve.³⁷⁴ The will may obey a passion rather than an idea. In the formal traits of discipline, there are clear relations between ends and means. The choice may come to be a habit. When we speak of a strong will, we talk about the

³⁷¹ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 133-138.

³⁷² Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 133-138.

³⁷³ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 133-138.

³⁷⁴ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 140-152.

intensity of the will, and it is the affect-conditioned strength of the moment. The tenacity of will is persistence over time. The power of will is the conduct of a man who does not notice and has no use for conditions prevailing within and without himself.³⁷⁵ In the aspect of free will, Jaspers holds that independence is the goal of his will to be free in the world, but I am independent to the extent to which I can determine the conditions of my existence.³⁷⁶

Jaspers again talks about his situation. When I imagine a situation, I see it as the relative location of things. Situations exist by changing, and there comes a moment when they no longer exist. It may be linked; one may arise from the other. Since existence means to be in states, I can never get out of one without entering into another.³⁷⁷ That you cannot live without struggling and suffering; I cannot avoid guilt; that I must die. Jaspers call them boundary situations, and we can prevent situations by closing our eyes to them.³⁷⁸

IT'S IMPLICATION(S) TO THE CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN LIVING/LIFE.

A. Weaknesses (How Have These Weaknesses Affected Christian Life and Belief and How We Can Respond To Them from a Christian-Biblical Orientation)

Jaspers holds that if he feels doomed to a lonely death, it is in Transcendence alone that unfulfilled communication can be channeled. For Jaspers to say the unfulfilled communication can be directed in death is like saying there will be repentance in the grave. This statement by Jaspers is profound to African Traditional Religion, which also believes in communication with the dead. This view can easily affect Christian life and belief

³⁷⁵ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 140-152.

³⁷⁶ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 140-152.

³⁷⁷ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 178-184.

³⁷⁸ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 178-184.

systems, especially in African Christianity. Contemporary Christians are to note that there is no communication in the grave. Death can only hear the voice of the Lord at the coming of Christ (John 5:28), in which judgment is followed (1 Corinthians 7:27).

He also holds that evil exists because there is freedom. The will alone can be evil. This statement or doctrine of Jaspers will make no sense in African Christianity because evil in Africa has nothing to do with the freedom of man. Evil in Africa, like the killing of innocent souls, rituals and many others, is not the freedom of the victims. There are also forces in Africa that push and pull people to do evil. Evil can be moral or physical. Rape, infidelity, suicide etc., can be seen as moral, while born blind, earthquake etc., is physical. Hence, evil is the absence of good.³⁷⁹ Therefore, evil should better be understood as the result of man's misuse of free will and a demonstration of his greed and ignorance of the good. In response to this, Jesus said in the book of (John 9:3) that "neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him." Physical evil is not the free will of man but the act of God to demonstrate his power by calling or punishing a people or a nation for his glory. Also (John 11:4), Jesus said, "This illness will not end in death, but it is for God to glorify the Son."

Another weakness of Jasper's philosophy is the view that we could avoid situations by closing our eyes to them. There is no way Christians can close their eyes to the conditions around them. This kind of thought affects Christian belief, especially in today's Christianity, where preachers tell members it is well when they know it is not well. Also, this view can discourage man from finding solutions to his problems by just closing his eyes and opening them and still seeing the situation. But the Christian response to this is that, instead of closing our eyes to

³⁷⁹ Agbor Paul Agbor, *The Path to Wisdom* (Cameroon, Buea: Concept Printers Buea, 2011), 189.

conditions, the Bible says in (Hebrews 12:2) “let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.”

Furthermore, Jaspers emphasizes that the basic fact of our existenz in existence is that neither without fear nor without the transition from fear to peace of mind can reality, the source of the destroying anxiety, be seen as it is. That man can simultaneously see truth, be a reality, and yet live without fading out in fear. What does he mean by existenz in existence? How can we draw implications when we don't understand what he says? The Christian response to what he talks about fear in simple terms is in the book of Proverbs 1:10, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is Understanding.” Only God can give us meaning in existence; what we need is found in Him.

Jasper's philosophical thoughts are sometimes very confusing. It is tough to understand what he means. He outlines that there is no solution for a truthful sense of being. There is no answer in the great silence. There is no justification for what it is and how it is; there is no tranquillization or unveiling in the cypher.³⁸⁰ The question is, where can we find a solution for our being? Where can we get answers? He has not given answers to all these. However, from a Christian perspective, man can only find answers to the worries of life in Christ Jesus through general and special revelation. The Bible have the answers to our being. “It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for” Eph. 1:11 (MSB).

Another misconception of Jasper's view, which is unhealthy for the Christian church, especially contemporary Christians, is that the road to peace is long-suffering. Passive suffering is empty, merely a form of resistless self-relinquishment, of letting things take their course. Still, active sufferance allows me to experience the foundering of all existence and yet to engage in

³⁸⁰ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol 3, 272.

realizations as long as a grain of strength remains.³⁸¹ Christ is the prince of peace (Isaiah 9:6). Therefore, true peace can only be found in the umbrella of Christ Jesus. Endurance or long-suffering is part of the fruit of the spirit, as stated in (Galatians 5:22).

B. Strengths (How Can the Strengths of This Idea Be Annexed to Improve Christian Living and Relationships in the Contemporary Society)

He expresses that there is nothing new that comes to be as well as there is no lasting and definitive objectivity, for there are not two worlds lying side by side; there is only one world in different dimensions that existenz comes to be articulate for us without being known.³⁸² A Bible student, teachers of the words, Christians, and theologians will agree with Jaspers on this view and in conjunction with the Bible in the book of (Ecclesiastes 1:11) in summary, it says, “what has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything one can say? Look! This is something new. It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time.” Hence, contemporary society should annex these Jaspers and Biblical views to improve Christian living.

He furthermore states that silence is another deficiency in communication; to him, silence is a form of inaction, the suspension of communication in mere existence. But it is not always in action. Silence is a function of communication itself, and the faculty of silence expresses a strong self-being’s readiness to communicate. There is a time to keep silent, and this silence is the continuity of communicative becoming. This is a great philosophical thought from Jaspers, which Christians can annex to improve Christian living, especially in this contemporary time. “Silence at times is the best answer,” even the Bible says in the book of (Ecclesiastes3:7b) that “there is a

³⁸¹ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 3, 272.

³⁸² Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 18.

time to be silence and a time to speak.” This is a treasure of biblical and philosophical wisdom from Jasper, calling on contemporary society to understand when, how, and where to be silent and to speak. He also emphasizes that when you keep silent at times, you gain knowledge and more insight for the next words that will come out of your mouth.

His understanding of being is so glaring that contemporary society cannot but bank from his fountain of knowledge to improve Christian living. To value Jasper’s views is to look at what other philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre said. To Sartre, “Existence Precedes Essence.” By this, he meant that things and people exist in the world before making meaning of their existence.³⁸³ However, a careful study of Jaspers emphasizes that “Essence precedes existence”; that is to say, the purpose of a thing must first be in the mind of its makers before it is produced. A laptop was in the mind of the producer before it was produced. “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you” (Jeremiah 1:5). We were in God’s mind before birth. Hence, Jasper’s views on existence should be adopted and developed for contemporary Christian living.

Jasper’s view about fulfilled absolute consciousness is that love is the only fulfilment of any quest, and conscience remains aimless without love. Love is infinite and clear-eyed; in love, there is exaltation and present satisfaction, motion, rest, betterment, and goodness. Love is self-becoming and self-yielding. In love lies absolute trust.³⁸⁴ This is another major strength of Jasper’s philosophy that should be encouraged for contemporary Christian living. Love conquers all things. The Bible also emphasizes that love is patient; love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrong. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, trusts, hopes, and perseveres.” (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). Love is a significant

³⁸³ Agbor, 154.

³⁸⁴ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 241-243.

theme in Jasper's Existentialism, which contemporary society can adopt for Christian living and the betterment of our community.

He also stresses the aspect of faith in which he holds that in faith, there are no reasons for it. I cannot will it, but I will on the grounds of it. I cannot prove it, but I understand it always in a specific objectivity of thoughts or images. Faith is how the soul, without sufficient concepts, is sure of its being, roots, and goal. This is another theme in Jasper's existentialism that contemporary society can annex to develop and enrich Christian living. The Bible also point out in the book of (Hebrews 11:1) that "Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."

Education is another theme in Jaspers' philosophy that cannot be ignored. Education consists of everything imparted to young people by communicating content, allowing them to share the substance of things and disciplining their conduct so that this knowledge continues to grow within them and enables them to become free. The process by which knowledge is imparted should lead young people progressively to the origins, the genuine, and the true foundations. This presupposes that young people will themselves come to terms with the surrounding reality whose many different wings they may experience through play, work and practical activities. The list of this experimental practice ranges from skills in methods of work through physical training, clear speech and disciplined discussion to the intellectual grasp of original contents in poetry, the Bible and art, and also to an understanding of history and familiarity with the basic techniques of the natural sciences.³⁸⁵ Children must acquire skills and learn knowledge. Children must be educated according to their own inclinations and abilities. Even the Bible says we should be diligent (study) to present ourselves approved to God. (2 Timothy 2:15). Also,

³⁸⁵ Hermann Horn. Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), *UNESCO: International Bureau of Education*, Vol. XXIII, No. 3/4, (1993): 3.

my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). Hence, contemporary society must seek knowledge and Education for Christian living.

Education is not a uniform process. It changes throughout history and assumes different forms in different societies. Jaspers observes that Scholastic education, which prevailed in the Middle Ages, is confined to the transmission of a fixed subject matter, compressed into methods, and dictated with an accompanying commentary. The teacher and his pupil are on the same level in relation to ideas. It helps to bring the student's hidden ideas into clear consciousness; the potential which exists within him is stimulated, but nothing is forced upon him from outside.³⁸⁶ Here, Education is understood as the element through which human beings come into their own through interpersonal contact by revealing the truth that is hidden in them. Consequently, Education should be encouraged in contemporary society, especially in African Christianity. Many African communities and Christians are suffering today because they do not have this basic knowledge that Jaspers is emphasizing.

CONCLUSION

Without any debts, Karl Jaspers is a profound philosopher with an excellent mind for reasoning and a great thinker whose philosophy has made a mighty contribution to contemporary Christian philosophers and philosophers, especially in his existentialism. This paper has tried to look at only a few of Jasper's philosophical thoughts on some selected ideals in his existential view, like communication, faith, love, Education, etc. Notwithstanding some of his weaknesses listed above, his strength overpowers his shortcomings. Hence, Jasper's philosophical view should be encouraged and practiced in society for Christian living.

³⁸⁶ Horn, 4.

The Role of the Church in Nation Building: The Current Experience in Nigeria

Abraham Olutoye Odeleye Ph.D.

Abstract

The church is the body of Christ on earth, and the church in every nation represents God. The role of the church in building any nation cannot be overemphasized. Nigeria, as a nation, is blessed with a diverse church community, and her contributions to the nation's growth are significant. The church's responsibility to the state is to serve as a voice for justice, advocating for the masses, supporting the vulnerable, and contributing to the nation's socio-political dynamics. However, current challenges bedeviling the nations, such as poverty, corruption, bad governance, unemployment, insecurity, and incessant killing of Christians, are destroying the reputation of the nation and weakening the church to effectively contribute to the growth of the nation. The paper is descriptive in nature, and the author employs a qualitative research approach that involves a combination of literature review, biblical analysis, reports of the brutality of Christians, churches, and Christian schools in Nigeria to address the subject of discussion. The paper identifies the following roles of the church in building the nation: Public Proclamation of the Sanctity of Life and Dignity of the Human Person; Developing Moral Principles of Beneficence in every Church member, sustaining the identity of salt and light in the world, and empowering members, among others. The paper submits that the church, Christians, and denominational leaders of the Christian community must rise to address all challenges confronting Nigeria with all available resources, as the church

is the last hope for the masses, innocent children, and citizens in the nation.

Keywords: Church, current Nigeria experience, nation building, Role

Introduction

The church is the body of Christ on earth, and the church in every nation represents God. The church should be the voice of the masses and the helpless. The role of the church in building any nation cannot be overemphasized. Nigeria, as a nation, is blessed with a church of many denominations, and their contributions to the growth of the nation are very significant. The church's responsibility to the state is to serve as a voice for justice, advocating for the masses, supporting the helpless, and contributing to the socio-political dynamics of the nation. However, current challenges bedeviling the nations, such as poverty, corruption, bad governance, insecurity, and incessant killing of Christians, are weakening the church to effectively contribute to the growth of the nation.

These challenges have brought confusion in the country, and Nigeria is at a crossroads. This is evident in a number of protests that are coming out in the nation. In the midst of this confusion, the Church, as the salt and light of the world, is the hope and solution provider to the myriad challenges facing Nigeria at such a time. The paper submits that in the midst of this turbulent problem that befell the church and Nigeria as a nation, the church has moral and spiritual obligations to the nation to foster hope, unity, and progress, and the church and her leaders must not keep quiet or fold their hands, looking at the destruction and shedding of innocent blood in Nigeria of the nation. The paper examines the current challenges facing Nigeria and the potential roles of the Church in nation-building. The paper is descriptive in nature, and the author employs a qualitative research approach that involves a combination of literature review, biblical analysis, reports of the brutality of

Christians, churches, and Christian schools in Nigeria to address the subject of discussion. The paper argues that the church, Christians, and denominational leaders of the Christian community must rise to address the challenges that bedeviled the nation with all available resources; the church is the last hope for the masses, innocent children, and citizens in the nation.

Current Challenges facing Nigeria

Nigeria is blessed with abundant human and natural resources; it is usually regarded as the giant of Africa. Apparently, every state of the nation has a rich deposit of mineral resources and human resources. Nigeria has a rich deposit of crude oil. However, since her independence from colonial rule on October 1, 1960, the socio-economic structure of the country has been declining and is not healthy for the citizenry. Over the years, Nigeria has faced many challenges, including political instability, economic hardship, and insecurity, among others. The current challenges facing the nation have deeply impacted its fabric and are tearing the nation apart. The nation is confronted by these identified challenges on every side. The paper identifies poverty, insecurity, corruption, bad governance and political instability, economic hardships and unemployment as major challenges that are tearing down the walls of development and peaceful coexistence in the nation. The challenges are discussed below:

Poverty: Poverty is an enemy of growth, and the poverty rate is increasing daily in Nigeria. According to the World Poverty Clock, as of 2025, seventy-one million, nine hundred and seventeen thousand, two hundred and twenty-three (71,917,223) Nigerians are living in extreme poverty. The poverty rate in Nigeria is 31 percent.³⁸⁷ Nigeria is the 6th

³⁸⁷ World Poverty Clock, 2025 Report. <https://worldpoverty.io.map> accessed November 8, 2025.

country that exports crude oil to other countries. This makes Nigeria a wealthy country.³⁸⁸ Similarly, Nigeria has other natural resources that contribute to its survival. Yet the citizens are living in poverty. Poverty leaves many citizens in despair and makes life a survival of the fittest. Where life becomes a struggle for survival, social vices are likely to increase. Poverty is causing the nation to stand in confusion.

Insecurity: Insecurity is a serious challenge confronting the nation and it is tearing the nation apart. Jesutunwase states that the insecurity challenge is prevalent in Nigeria because of the country's economic downturn.³⁸⁹ Lisa Zangarini reported in Vatican News on April 17, 2023, that insecurity has been a persistent problem in Nigeria since 2009, and “52,250 Nigerian Christians have been brutally murdered at the hands of Islamist militants, 18,000 churches have been set on fire, and 2,200 Christian schools have been set ablaze.”³⁹⁰ This report was issued in 2023, and it is now 2025; the number of lives lost and property destroyed by now is alarming. Although people of other religions are victims of insecurity in Nigeria, the effects on Christians and churches are very significant and destructive. The surge of insecurity has put the nation in disarray and has led several companies to relocate to other countries, putting several Nigerians in a homeless situation. A sizeable number of technocrats, professionals, and youth had travelled out of the country, while some youth embarked on irregular migration in search of greener pastures. The Boko Haram insurgency,

³⁸⁸ Udo N. Ekpo, “An Analysis of the Economic Consequences of Nigeria’s Dependence on Crude Oil Exports,” *International Journal of Development and Economic Sustainability* Vol. 10, No.6 (2022):49.

³⁸⁹ Jones Segun Jesutunwase, “Military and Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria,” *Anyigba Journal of History and International Studies (AJOHIS)* Vol. 1 No. 2 (2020):172.

³⁹⁰ Lisa Zangarini “Over 50,000 Christians Killed in Nigeria by Islamist Extremists” *Vatican News on April 17, 2023*, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2023-04/over-50000-christians-killed-in-nigeria-by-islamist-extremists.htm> accessed November 10, 2025.

banditry, Fulani herdsmen, and kidnappings are greatly affecting the growth of the nation, tearing apart the wall of development, peaceful co-existence, and security. There is killing of citizens in the country with the greater percentage of Christians, especially in the Middle Belt of Nigeria.

Corruption:

Corruption is evident in Nigeria and manifests as nepotism, bribery, and its variants, including mismanagement and contrived security threats to the state or the larger society, to obtain approval for the personal enrichment of public officers.³⁹¹ In the political sector, successive governments are becoming increasingly more corrupt than their previous counterparts.³⁹² Thus, corruption refers to the dishonesty of various kinds in governance and society, and unfortunately, some members of the church are not exempt. The language of money matters is pervading society, and this is also tearing the nation. The quick rich syndrome is causing some officers to compromise the standard, and their performance of their expected duty is based on a gift in cash or kind.

Bad Governance and Political Instability: Bad governance is evident in Nigeria. This leads to indiscipline in society, and this is evident in government officials conspiring with contractors to overcharge for government contracts.³⁹³ Sometimes the project will become an abandoned project. In the same vein, Nigeria's political system is experiencing instability due to a lack of

³⁹¹ Jones Segun Jesutunwase, Abubakar Audu & Barnabas Audu Ojile, "Church Responses to Security Challenges in Africa: A Study of the Nigerian Church," *Unizik Journal of Culture and Civilization* Vol. 2, No. 1 (2023):64.

³⁹² A. Onwumelu, "Corruption: Bishop Ezeokafor Warns of Repeat of End SARS Protests," <https://fidesnigeria.org/corruption-bishop-ezeokafor-warns-of-repeat-of-endsars-protests/> accessed on October 8, 2025.

³⁹³ Abdulrahman Adamu and Tativ Bem Elijah, "Bad Governance as the Bane of Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria" *Wukari International Studies Journal* Vol. 8 No. 10 (2024):232.

continuity in the project and policy of the incumbent government. During the campaign and election, one party will come up to raise the weaknesses of the government. When the party wins the election, the challenge of continuity with the project of the previous government will ensue. This manifests in political instability with attached consequences. This is responsible for several abandoned government projects in society. The political leaders are enriching themselves with different mansions and several material possessions at the expense of the masses and societal development.

Economic Hardships: This is a state of economic difficulty or struggle that manifests in high levels of poverty, unemployment, and inequality.³⁹⁴ On the very day of inauguration, May 29, 2023, the current administration announced the removal of subsidies on petroleum products. The removal of fuel subsidies leads to high inflation, unemployment, food insecurity, economic hardship, and a decline in living standards. The economic decisions of the current government in Nigeria are not friendly to the citizens and make life difficult for the people. Economic hardship has left many households helpless, going without food and other necessities of life. The health of some households has declined due to the lack of healthy nutrition, while some lives have been lost due to a lack of finances to seek medical interventions. Ikonne asserts that economic hardship is a significant decline in economic activity of the country, and it is one of the primary reasons for the constant migration of young people out of the country.³⁹⁵ The paper submits that the challenges of economic hardship in Nigeria affect the life expectancy rate of Nigerians.

³⁹⁴ Janfalan Yusuf Ishaya, Nanlir Kartim Napbut, Tolutope Oluwawole, and Rose Bulus Boyim, "Responses to Economic Hardship in Genesis 41:36: Lessons for the Nigerian State." *International Journal of Religious and Cultural Practice* Vol. 9. No. 4 (2024):26.

³⁹⁵ Ogadinna Ikonne . "An Inquiry into Governance and Economic Hardship in Nigeria: Implications for Migration," *African Journal of Social and Behavioural Sciences* Vol. 6 No. 3 (2024):761.

Unemployment: This is another serious problem that is confronting the nation. Unemployment in Nigeria is an issue of concern that is drawing attention from the government, religious leaders, and researchers because of the attached consequences. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the unemployment rate among Citizens is increasing, and the unemployment rate by 2024 is 15.3 percent.³⁹⁶ The challenges of unemployment include increased crime rates, violence, and social unrest. Akindoyin and Obafemi, assert that the overwhelming unemployment rate in the country is capable of causing panic, which leads the youth to be involved in all forms of crimes, such as kidnapping, banditry, and even Boko Haram.³⁹⁷ The youth population in Nigeria accounts for More than 65% of the country's population. This group, aged between 15 and 40 years, constitutes the active working population of the country. Nigeria is one of the countries with a large youth population in Africa. These enormous human resources, however, are not well planned for by the government at all levels.³⁹⁸ One of the types of evidence of this problem is unemployment. The government is creating more tertiary institutions of learning with inadequate provision of job opportunities for graduates.

The Role of Church in Nation Building

The church, as the body of Jesus Christ, has roles to play in building the current Nigeria as a nation. There are existing

³⁹⁶ Agnes Isoje, "Richest Pastors in the World" Pulse August 21. 2025.

<https://www.pulse.ng/articles/lifestyle/richest-pastors-in-the-world-2025082115442318155> accessed November 10, 2025.

³⁹⁷ Dare Isaac Akindoyin and Akintomiwa Olaniyi Obafemi, "Evaluating the Impact of Insecurity on Nigeria's National Development since the Fourth Republic," *African Journal of Stability & Development* Vol 17 No. 1 (2025):96.

³⁹⁸ Olawale Y. Olonade, Tayo O. George, David Imhonopi, Mathew E. Egharevba and Adamu G. Kasa "Youths' Socio-economic Well-being in Southwest Nigeria: What Role can Empowerment/Poverty Reduction Programmes Play?" *Cogent Social Sciences* Vol. 8 (2022):1.

efforts in addressing the challenges facing the nation from different perspectives. Some of them include the EndSARS protest, youth protests, Labour Congress, TUC, the quest for a Yoruba nation, and the Biafra movement, among others. All these reactions are evidence that the citizens are suffering and the nation is at a crossroads. In the midst of this confusion, the church has a role in building a nation that will be habitable for its citizens and a blessing to the global world.

In the history of Nigeria, the role of the church from the colonial period to the present day has played a significant role in shaping the educational, political, social, and medical sectors of the nation. Beyond spiritual matters, the Church in Nigeria has played a pivotal role in education, healthcare, and politics. Mission schools laid the foundation for Nigeria's modern education system, producing many of the nation's leaders. In healthcare, church-run hospitals and clinics serve communities nationwide, providing critical services in rural and urban areas.³⁹⁹

During the 1970s and 1980s, military regimes, church leaders such as Archbishop Anthony Olubunmi Okogie and Rev. Matthew Kukah were vocal in their advocacy for human rights, democracy, and good governance.⁴⁰⁰ In the present day, the Church continues to engage in social issues, addressing poverty, corruption, and incessant killings of Christians, particularly in the Northern part of the country, where several Christians have been killed. The role of the Church in guiding a nation at a crossroads is examined from the perspective of moral obligations.

³⁹⁹ Mark Onuwuba, "Poverty in Nigeria: The Role of the Church," *Journal of Positive School Psychology* Vol. 6, No. 8 (2022):1257.

⁴⁰⁰ Ebenezer Obadare, "Pentecostal Presidency The Lagos-Ibadan 'Theocratic Class' & the Muslim 'Other,'" *Review of African Political Economy* Vol. 33, No. 110 (2006):668.

The roles are spelled below.

Pray for the Goodness of Nigeria (Psalm 122:6): The situation of Nigeria is not beyond the control of God the Almighty. One of the major roles of the church is to provide spiritual support for the government. President Tinubu, at one time, asked the citizens to pray for the nation. The Bible, in Psalm 122:6, encourages citizens to continue praying for the nation. The responsibility of the spiritual dimension of the nation rests solely on the Church. As the Salt and Light of the world, the Church offers a sense of hope, purpose, and direction in times of national challenges. Through prayers, counselling, and guidance, the Church helps individuals and communities navigate difficult periods and foster resilience.

Public Proclamation of the Sanctity of Life and Dignity of the Human Person: The church as the body of Christ has a responsibility to proclaim the sanctity of life in the nation. According to Clark, the sanctity of human life is made in God's image (*the Imago Dei*), and human life is a gift from God.⁴⁰¹ The life of humans is sacred, and it is a free gift from God, and it must be jealously protected. The value of human life in Nigeria is declining, and this is evident in the number of innocent lives that have been killed for no reason. The killing involves innocent children, pregnant women, ministers of the gospel, and other valuable citizens who are supposed to be assets to the nation. The ministers of the gospel, leaders of churches, denominational heads, and every Christian in the church are to use every opportunity to condemn the killings of Christians in Nigeria.

Rev. Joseph Hayab, Bishop Ephraim Gongden, Pastor Enoch Adeboye of Redeemed Christian Church of God, Revd Dr Israel Adeleni Akanji, among others, at different times, have publicly condemned the lack of values for human life. Recently, Revd

⁴⁰¹ Steve Clark, "The Sanctity of Life as a Sacred Value," *Bioethics* Vol. 37 (2023):33.

Ezekiel Dachomo, the Regional Chairman for the Church of Christ in Nations COCIN, in Barkin Local Government of Plateau State, Nigeria, publicly condemned the Genocide of Christians in Plateau State. He called on the International community for intervention. This is generating a lot of issues on Social Media. The head of the denominations, pastors, Christians, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), and Christian Council of Nigeria at all levels are to speak out publicly to address injustice, bad governance, and violence against Christians and the Church in Nigeria.

For instance, Desmond Tutu, an Anglican Bishop in South Africa, fought apartheid through peaceful protest. Desmond Tutu believed that the best way to find peace is to strengthen your argument.⁴⁰² He used his religious position as a religious leader to protect the interests of his people. Desmond is no more today, but his active role in fighting against apartheid is still speaking. Thus, the religious leaders must not keep quiet in addressing the current challenges confronting Nigeria. The complacency of religious leaders in addressing the challenges confronting Nigeria contributes to the nation's indiscipline. The church must publicly proclaim the sanctity of life and the dignity of man in Nigeria. The paper submits that there is moral ground for any religious organization, Islamic extremist, terrorists and Boko Haram to dehumanize and slaughter fellow human beings. The dignity of every citizen must be well preserved in the nation. If the situation turns other ways round. The church and her leaders must rise as the hope of the masses and innocent citizens to publicly and peacefully address the matter. The church should use all platforms of media with integrity and professionalism to condemn marginalization, discrimination, and violence against the church and humanity.

⁴⁰² Vision of Humanity, "Desmond Tutu and the Triumph against Apartheid" <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/desmond-tutu-and-the-triumph-against-apartheid> accessed November 8, 2025.

Upholding Integrity for the Nation: Integrity is rooted in the biblical view of wholeness, consistency, honesty, and adherence to the law of God. It reflects the character of God in life all believers and Christian leaders. According to Trull and Carter, integrity sustains one in life and ministry, and it is essential for achieving success. It is evidence of Christlike qualities.⁴⁰³ Integrity makes actions and inactions show the identity of Jesus Christ in the lives of Christians. The Church should make additional efforts to instill in her members a strong value of integrity. This comes from the values of honesty, justice, love, peace, and compassion in private and public lives. This is believed to influence the nation's fabric. This can be achieved through the teachings and practices of integrity in the Church. When members of the churches embrace these values and practice them in their places of work, it will create a strong sense of responsibility, accountability, and mutual respect for developing a just and equitable society.

Developing Moral Principles of Beneficence in Every Church Member:

Beneficence is a fundamental ethical principle within various fields emphasizing the moral obligation to act for the benefit of others. Suhas Shetgovekar states that beneficence refers to actions related to mercy, kindness, and charity. It involves protecting the welfare and rights of others. It is the responsibility and duty of every individual to one another.⁴⁰⁴ The Bible provides a basis for this ethical principle, and this can be found in Matthew 22:39, where Jesus commands, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." This directive underscores the importance of caring for others and acting with compassion and kindness.

⁴⁰³ Joe E. Trull and James E. Carter, *Ministerial Ethics: Being a Good Minister in a Not-So-Good-World* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publisher, 1993), 15-16.

⁴⁰⁴ Suhas Shetgovekar, "The Ethic of Beneficence: A Critical Overview," *The International Journal of Indian Psychology* Vol. 6, Issue 4 (2018):121.

In Christianity, beneficence is a moral obligation, and this is evident in the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. This passage explains the obligations to help people in need, regardless of societal boundaries. Jesus died for all people, and in Matthew 9:36, when Jesus saw the multitude, he had compassion on them because they fainted and were scattered abroad. Every member of the Church should be taught and encouraged to treat other persons in an ethical manner, protect them from harm, and secure their well-being. Seeking the good of other people in the nation is capable of curtailing corruption, violence, and bad governance, which are the root causes of the current challenges confronting the nation.

Sustaining Identity of Salt and Light in the World (Matt. 5:13-14): Christians should not leave politics in the hands of some individuals who are using political power to extort the citizens, dehumanize the masses, and build financial walls for themselves. The consequences of leaving politics in the hands of some people are colossal and greater than participating in politics. Adeoye and Dauda state that Christians, as the light of the world, do not mean abandoning politics for some people, but Christians should participate in politics with a sense of responsibility to promote justice, compassion, and the values of the Bible.⁴⁰⁵

Church should sustain her identity as the Church of Jesus Christ in the World. The Church is the light and salt of the world, and the Church should reveal the moral standards of God to society. Thus, the Church should encourage and support its members to be responsibly involved in politics and governance. Bad governance in Nigeria has brought hardships to the people of God. An average Nigerian is hungry and finds it difficult to cope with the basic needs of life. Thus, the Church should encourage and commission her members to go into

⁴⁰⁵ Moses Adeleke Adeoye and Moses Aguma Dauda, "Biblical Injunction why Christians Need to Participate in Politics: An Exegetical Interpretation of Matthew 5:14-16," *ASEAN Journal of Religion, Education, and Society* Vol. 2 No. 1 (2023):27-28.

politics and clean the dirty nature of politics. Living governance in the hands of some people will add to the problem of this nation.

Avoiding Demands for Money from Politicians: The Churches and their members who make unnecessary demands on politicians should stop doing so. The Church should maintain her position as the spiritual body of Christ on earth. When the church and its members are free from the demands of politicians. They will have grounds for rebuking the corrupt politicians.

Advocating for Good Governance: To promote good governance, the Church needs to maintain a moral standing to encourage and promote good governance among the political leaders. Virtues such as accountability, transparency, and stewardship should be imbibed by the Church and advocated for by the various political leaders. The denominational leaders are to advocate for good governance, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN) are to strengthen their voice and skills in advocating for good governance that is free of ethnic bias and seek justice for the nation.

Empowerment of Members: The church should empower her members with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to cope with the reality of the nation. Going out of the nation through illegal migration is not a solution to the problem. Empowering them will make them participate actively in the nation's economic, political, and social life. The church must not exploit its members, but rather empower them for nation-building. For instance, in 2025, three of the ten richest pastors in the world are Nigerian pastors, with significant net worth.⁴⁰⁶ Yet, poverty is still evident in their congregations. The leaders of the church

⁴⁰⁶ Agnes Isoje, "Richest Pastors in the World (2025)- See the Nigerians on the List," *Pulse*. <https://www.pulse.ng/articles/lifestyle/richest-pastors-in-the-world-2025082115442318155> accessed November 12, 2025.

should empower the church members with every available resource for their well-being.

Promoting Social Cohesion and Unity: For any nation to progress, unity and harmony among diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious groups are required. The Church should emphasize love, forgiveness, and reconciliation, fostering social cohesion. The Church should be at the forefront of advocating for tolerance and helping to bridge divisions within societies by promoting a collective identity rather than individual differences. This sense of unity is crucial for maintaining peace and stability, which will have a resultant effect on the nation's security issues.

Conclusion

The church, as a family of God, has a responsibility to build the nation because the church exists in the nation, and a peaceful atmosphere in the nation determines a peaceful environment for church worship experience. The current challenges threatening national security are enormous, and the church has a crucial role to play in providing solutions to these problems. Members of churches are in various sectors of the government, and if all of them serve as the light and salt of the world in their respective areas of assignment, the problems of Nigeria will be solved. The paper submits that the church of God in Nigeria must rise and build her nation with all available resources at her disposal. The Church is the last hope of the nation, and she must rescue the citizenry and masses from bad governance, corruption, poverty, and violence against Christians and society.

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Socio-Rhetorical Analysis (SRA) – Inner Texture Analysis of Ruth as a Servant Leader

Dr. Devin Oten

Abstract

This study of the Book of Ruth focuses on the apparent love Ruth shared with her mother-in-law, Naomi. Or was it love or the social and cultural perspective of the age in which they lived? Was the author's intent to highlight the customs of Israel? How would the original audience relate to the content of the writing? And what was God's message to His people then and now? The writer of this paper intends to unravel and answer these questions using the Socio-Rhetorical Analysis – Inner Texture methodology as the primary resource for this study. The leadership theory applied to this research is the Servant Leadership Model. Was Ruth just a servant, or did she lead and honor God through leading as a servant of God and His people? The information gathered through the methodology reveals that Ruth was a servant leader. Ruth found her purpose in life by serving her mother-in-law's needs, with whom she shared not only the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship, but they were simultaneously grieving for their deceased husbands. The Socio-Rhetorical Analysis in the book of Ruth unveils the plan of God's future generations through the servant leadership model ascribed to the life and adventures of Ruth.

Key Words: exegesis, hermeneutics, leadership, purpose, relationship, audience, author, time

Analysis of Ruth 1:6 through 2:1-12

One of the more fascinating historical books in the Bible is Ruth. The author of Ruth fleshed out two apparent storylines and merged them as one: the roots of the Davidic Kingship and his descendants in the form of the Son of Man in Jesus Christ. Gladson (2013) states the need to merge the partnership between the author, text, and reader, as Ruth is only one of two books named after women, and Ruth is the non-Israelite (p. 9). Ruth is not the central figure in the book, even though it bears her name; Naomi appears nineteen times, Boaz appears fourteen times, and Ruth appears ten times, with all other actors in the book having some relationship to Naomi, not Ruth (Gladson, 2013, p. 10). Amos & Manetsch (2020) espoused that the writer of Ruth presents the story in metaphoric terms; Through the author, God teaches the book's audience to live with patience because the Father has a plan to deliver His people out of their circumstances (p. 457). The historical perspective gleaned from Ruth shows how Gentiles and Jews find a joint path through the kindred relationship of Ruth married and producing offspring with Boaz; Ruth a Gentile, and Boaz, an Israelite (Amos & Manetsch, 2020, p. 457). God made provisions to redeem the natural descendants of Ruth as a central theme in the New Testament through her blood descendant, Jesus Christ. not Ruth (Gladson, 2013, p. 10). Amos & Manetsch (2020) espoused that the writer of Ruth presents the story in metaphoric terms; Through the author, God teaches the book's audience to live with patience because the Father has a plan to deliver His people out of their circumstances (p. 457). The historical perspective gleaned from Ruth shows how Gentiles and Jews find a joint path through the kindred relationship of Ruth married and producing offspring with Boaz; Ruth a Gentile and Boaz an Israelite (Amos & Manetsch, 2020, p. 457). God made provisions to redeem the natural descendants of Ruth as a central theme in the New Testament through her blood descendant Jesus Christ if you will.

The pericope for this discussion starts with Ruth 1:6. While residing in Moab, Naomi gets word that YHWH has visited His people. Therefore, Naomi decided to leave this place of despair in Moab, where she lost her sons and husband to premature deaths, to return to her homeland of Bethlehem. McKeown (2015) points out how the narrator in the pericope repeats certain words to bring attention to the significance of a moment or aspect of the overarching message.

Moab and what God has done in Bethlehem find repetition in this portion of the pericope. Hence, the author draws the audience's attention to the significance of both places in completing the story. Repetitions are critical to how the author wants to influence the reader or readers to understand the passage (Henson et al., 2020, p. 85). Michael (2015) suggests proficient persuasion controlled the pericope of Ruth 1:6-18. Naomi uses repetitive patterns to paint a picture of life to the point in the pericope for Oprah and Ruth by stressing what the future may hold if they traveled with Naomi back to her homeland of Bethlehem, where no husband or children awaited them (Michael, 2015). This subject will find further research and clarification as the Socio-Rhetorical Analysis develops later in this paper.

Naomi asks, entreats, or instructs her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab and return to their families in the pericope on more than one occasion. One daughter-in-law leaves, Oprah, while Ruth is determined to stay with Naomi. Textual units appear in the pericope, for the themes are that Moab is the current situation; however, returning to Bethlehem may change the circumstance for the betterment of Naomi and, as the story unveils, for the advancement of Ruth. Henson (et al., 2020) posits that textual units assist the author in communicating the themes in the pericope (p. 85). When the author strives to impact the current or modern audience as the author influenced the original readers, the instrument utilized to accomplish the goal is dynamic equivalence (Anderson et al.,

2018). The progressive pattern identifies the connection between Moab and Bethlehem, despair, and hope, if you will.

The Opening-Middle-Closing Patterns (OMC) in the pericope to this juncture lead the reader on a journey of discovery. From Moab, a place of despair, to Bethlehem, this place of promise, are themes enhancing the purpose the writer intended to convey to the original audience.

Henson (et al., 2020) posits that the OMC contributes to the story's overall plot (p. 92). Moab offered impairment to peace, and Bethlehem extends hope as they search for peace.

As the journey continues in Ruth 1:9, Naomi declares rest for Oprah and Ruth. The word rest used in the pericope occurs twenty times in the Old Testament and refers to setting up camp and describes the land God promised to His people in Deuteronomy 12:9, and means still waters as referred to in Psalm 23:2 (McKeown, 2015). Naomi emphasized to Oprah and Ruth that in Bethlehem, she could promise neither of them sons to marry or arrange marriages once they reached their destination (Ruth 1:9-12). In this portion of the pericope, the author calls for faith in God from Oprah and Ruth, because how is that different from their current situation? Naomi's attempt to discourage her daughters-in-law from traveling with her demonstrated unselfishness because Naomi understood the journey could present danger, loneliness, and uncertainty (McKeown, 2015). Naomi demonstrates leadership qualities on many fronts, such as the difficult decision to leave home to return to her native country.). Naomi demonstrates leadership qualities on many fronts, such as the difficult decision to leave home to return to her native country.

As the pericope continues in Ruth 1:14-18, Naomi has convinced Oprah to return to Moab, and the author never mentions Oprah again after this juncture in the story. One question that probably deserves some research is what would have been God's blessing for Oprah had she decided to take this

next step of faith with her mother-in-law, Naomi, and sister-in-law, Ruth. McKeown (2015) postulated that Ruth has no glaring advantage at this stage of sticking with the plan to travel with Naomi to make Bethlehem her new home. However, for the original and future audience, taking steps toward God requires some level of risk. One question that probably deserves some research is what would have been God's blessing for Oprah had she decided to take this next step of faith with her mother-in-law, Naomi, and sister-in-law, Ruth. McKeown (2015) postulated that Ruth has no glaring advantage at this stage of sticking with the plan to travel with Naomi to make Bethlehem her new home. However, for the original and future audience, taking steps toward God requires some level of risk.

Ruth declares that only death will separate her from Naomi (Ruth 1:16-17). The book of Ruth unveils God's legal promise to Abraham through the loyalty of a young woman from a Gentile nation (Blevins, 2016). The sovereignty of God is on full display in this portion of the pericope. Lau (et al., 2016) refers to this as never-ending kindness. Every text in the Bible discovers narrative qualities within a broader context, which is critical to understanding a specific passage (Lau et al., 2016, p. 2). Therefore, loyalty is a worthwhile theme or plot in the pericope for this study. the loyalty of a young woman from a Gentile nation (Blevins, 2016). The sovereignty of God is on full display in this portion of the pericope. Lau (et al., 2016) refers to this as never-ending kindness. Every text in the Bible discovers narrative qualities within a broader context which is critical to understanding a specific passage (Lau et al., 2016, p. 2). Therefore, loyalty is a worthwhile theme or plot in the pericope for this study.

In Ruth 1:19-22, Ruth and Naomi arrive in Bethlehem. However, the author considered describing the journey from Moab to Bethlehem unnecessary, for the writer mentions nothing concerning the trip in the pericope. McKeown (2015) believes that how they made it is unimportant, but feels the vital part is reaching the destination. Once they arrived in

Bethlehem, the town stirred with excitement. There was delighted recognition of Naomi by the women in Bethlehem, and it had been ten years since they had seen her (McKeown, 2015). The author gave a sense of relief in that neither Naomi nor Ruth knew what the response would be from the people of Naomi's native country after they undoubtedly heard of her hardships. Did Naomi see Ruth as a burden at this point instead of as the one God would use to meet their collective needs? Taute & Potgieter (2020) espoused that the story of Naomi speaks to God's goodness to women in the story of two widows finding provision from a place of hardship. Maybe Naomi felt a burden to take care of the young Ruth, but God took care of them both through the young woman Ruth. espoused that the story of Naomi speaks to God's goodness to women in the story of two widows finding provision from a place of hardship. Maybe Naomi felt a burden to take care of the young Ruth, but God takes care of them both through the young woman Ruth.

Boaz's introduction to the story takes place in the pericope of Ruth 2:1-3. Boaz's name means "In him is strength," and Solomon named a pillar in the temple after Boaz, as he is considered one of the most decorated ancestors in the history of Israel (McKeown, 2015). After introducing the audience to Boaz, the story returns to Naomi and Ruth in Ruth 2:1. Ruth leads the charge to take care of herself and her mother-in-law by going into the fields of Boaz during the harvest season. The Argumentative Pattern of redemption emerges in the Ruth 2 pericope. The author is attempting to provide the reason for the outcome (Henson et al., 2020, p. 93) in the story of Ruth, and that belief involves the redemptive tale of two widows by a kinsman redeemer.in the story of Ruth, and that belief involves the redemptive tale of two widows by a kinsmen redeemer.

The kinsmen-redeemer, Boaz, makes an appearance at the harvest in Ruth 2:4-7 and greets the workers in the harvest with the "Lord be with you," and in-kind the workers say, "The Lord bless you (Ruth 2:4). In Moab, not much in the way of honoring God is manifest in the text by the author, but when he

introduces the reader to Boaz in the pericope, the honor of God is apparent. McKeown (2015) posits that the author uses the progressive chiasm pattern in Boaz's greetings to the harvest workers. Henson et al. (2020) postulate that chiasm utilizes various themes in bringing a resolution to the overarching theme (p. 89). Linafelt (2010) espoused that those little explicit descriptions of the qualities of the character in Ruth are a general narrative in the biblical text. Hence, textual analysis, hermeneutics, and exegesis are necessary for interpreting the author's original intent.

The first conversation between Boaz and Ruth takes place in the pericope of Ruth 2:8-13. Boaz's response to Ruth is respect, generosity, and favor, even though she is a stranger from a foreign land. According to McKeown (2015), when Boaz refers to Ruth as "my daughter" in 2:8, it demonstrates that she is welcome in the house of Boaz. In the following pericope of Ruth 2:14-17, Boaz's entire display of generosity extends to Ruth. McKeown (2015) discusses how in Jewish tradition, when a host provides food, it is well presented if the guest has leftovers to take home with them, insofar as there was enough food to feed everyone, then some, highlighted in 2 Kings 4:44 and John 6:12-13. Ruth took the leftovers to Naomi, which in turn represented a part of Boaz's generosity as a kinsman-redeemer. a part of Boaz's generosity as a kinsmen-redeemer.

Exegeting The Ruth Pericope

When reading any text, particularly a biblical one, the reader needs to consider resources and methodology to utilize when interpreting the author's original intent in the passage. DeSilva (2018) postulated that every paragraph in the Bible is a unique portion of the larger context and was written to be interpreted as part of the larger text (p. 197). To fully grasp and understand the Bible, one must interpret the meaning of the text within the larger context, then apply it to one's life (Duval & Hays, 2012, p. 116). BERMAN (2007) espoused that when Boaz commanded his servants to leave sheaves of wheat for Ruth and Naomi, he

was invoking the law in Deuteronomy 24:19, leaving sheaves for the less fortunate (p. 31). De Villiers (2019) postulated that the author of a text hopes to communicate something in their choices of linguistics and arrangement of words and content. De Villiers (2019) continued with the idea that in the ancient

world, culture determined values, ways of conducting oneself, and rules that governed society; however, Ruth and Boaz had the faith to transcend social norms by acting ethically. Women from Moab were considered loose and immoral, according to McKeown (2015). Therefore, Boaz and Ruth worked in such a way as to please the God of Israel.

Exegeting ancient texts like Ruth is vital to correctly interpreting God's message through a human author. Chan & Venter (2010) posited that an interpretive method of midrash provided social relevance to any ancient text. They determined that community interest, inherent meaning, surrounding background, and personal purpose are vital when exegeting text like Ruth, and the midrash method provides interpretive relevance. Roded (2015) espoused that those traditional commentators who stretched the original text to incorporate gender correlation to fit their own time, with opposing stances eclipsing the holy text, wrote from an ancient Jewish and Muslim perspective concerning women in religious texts and context. Therefore, students of the Bible should take the approach that Paul shared with Timothy to study the Word of God for themselves (2 Tim. 2:15). interpretive relevance. Roded (2015) espoused those traditional commentators who stretched the original text to incorporate gender correlation to fit their own time, with opposing stances eclipsing the holy text. Roded (2015) wrote from an ancient Jewish and Muslim perspective concerning women in religious text and context. Therefore,

students of the Bible should take the approach that Paul shared with Timothy to study the Word of God for himself (2 Tim. 2:15).

Ruth conjures up many interpretations, and the feminist movement deserves some mention in this paper. Blotz (2005) mentions that Ruth prominently features two women, Naomi and Ruth, who exemplify strength, character, and control of their situation and destiny. Blotz continues with the idea that Naomi and Ruth seek to solve their problems to overcome their tribulations eventually. Newhauser (1998) summons the relevance of Ruth as the great-grandmother of King David, and the Messiah descends from his family lineage. Hence, Ruth is a relevant text for modern-day readers. his family lineage. Hence, Ruth is a relevant text for modern-day readers.

Hermeneutics in Ruth

The book of Ruth's characters' experience warrants further investigation in interpreting the author's message in the pericope. Bauckham (1997) posited embracing the female actor's perspective and physical experience insofar as the book of Ruth adopts the overall feminine perspective. Notwithstanding, each is influenced by different cultural aspects, with Ruth hailing from Moab and Naomi from Israel. Bauckham (1997) posited another relevant point in interpreting the original meaning by stating that when Ruth decided to follow Naomi, her Moabite cultural perspective faded into the background. Sort of like in modern times, when someone moves to a foreign country, they begin to assume the cultural identity of the adopted nation., when someone moves to a foreign country, they begin to assume the cultural identity of the adopted nation.

There are layers to the understanding of context within a text. Marriage and wedding ceremonies in the United States are different from Aboriginal Tribes in Australia. For instance, in the time of Ruth, a wife accepted through the marriage nuptials love for in-laws and adopted her husband's cultural identity,

making his people her people (Odo, 2021). The type of devotion and love demonstrated in the in-law paradigm between the actors in Ruth is rare in modern society (Odo, 2021). Another layer to peel back is in chapter one, where the three main characters or actors are three females. The pericope, in this instance, reveals conversations or interactions of persuasion. The three women, Naomi, Ruth, and Oprah, are attempting to coerce each other into the next move in life after each has lost their husbands (Michael, 2015). Grätz (2007) describes the book of Ruth as the counter-story to societal norms of the time and the book that corrected the imagery of the Moabite women (p. 277). Construction of the narrative in Ruths cultural identity, and making his people her people (Odo, 2021). The type of devotion and love demonstrated in the in-law paradigm between the actors in Ruth is rare in modern society (Odo, 2021). Another layer to peel back is in chapter one, where the three main characters or actors are three females. The pericope, in this instance, reveals conversations or interactions of persuasion. The three women, Naomi, Ruth, and Oprah, are attempting to coerce each other into the next move in life after each has lost their husbands (Michael, 2015). Grätz (2007) describes the book of Ruth as the counter-story to societal norms of the time and the book that corrected the imagery of the Moabite women (p. 277). Construction of the narrative in Ruth gives insight into the author's message to the ancient audience.

Leadership Theory in the Ruth Pericope – Servant Leadership

As discovered in Ruth's analysis of the pericopes under review, Naomi and Boaz find more mentions than Ruth. However, Ruth's sacrifice for the betterment of her mother-in-law demonstrates leadership qualities worth delving into for this study. According to Northouse (2019), servant leaders are heedful of the affairs of their constituents (p. 227). One might argue that Naomi is leading Ruth, who she is, but Ruth is leading and creating a path of prosperity for Naomi in her humble way. Northouse (2019) calls this the leader-member

exchange theory of the leadership construct (p. 139). However, servant leadership theory best describes Ruth's impact on this study's author's story.

The leader-constituent relationship has a foundation in achieving common or shared goals. Lu (2017) calls the narrative in the book of Ruth cooperation. Lu (2017) continued with the idea that positive servant and mentor traits describe the book's characters, pointing the reader toward the weaknesses of Naomi and Elimelech. Throughout the book of Ruth, Ruth desires to serve. Servant leadership starts with the innate feeling to suit the needs of others above all else (Northouse, 2019, p. 228). Heyler & Martin (2018) espoused that servant leadership theory is unique compared with other leadership theories. Servant leadership's cornerstone is the singular aspiration to serve and develop others to serve as well (Heyler & Martin, 2018). Ruth has inspired countless generations of Believers in Christ to act with integrity and Godly character.

A key component of servant leadership is stewardship. The steward will place a higher value on cooperation than on self-interest, with the principal aim to ensure the organization's success over self-interest (Heyler & Martin, 2018). Ruth was willing to place the needs of Naomi above her aspirations of finding a husband and bearing children for her heritage. The servant-leader model represented in the book of Ruth hearkens to the issues of corporate greed in modern times. According to Parris & Peachey (2013), the study of servant leadership resonates with scholars and practitioners as a response to selfishness and greed in the C-Suite in the twenty-first century. Ruth ultimately prospered from a servant role to be one of the more honored Biblical women characters in Scripture. Heyler & Martin (2018). Ruth was willing to place the needs of Naomi above her aspirations of finding a husband and bearing children for her heritage. The servant-leader model represented in the book of Ruth hearkens to the issues of corporate greed in modern times. According to Parris & Peachey (2013), the study of servant leadership resonates with scholars and

practitioners as a response to selfishness and greed in the C-Suite in the twenty-first century. Ruth ultimately prospered from a servant role to be one of the more honored Biblical women characters in Scripture.

The Ruth pericope under review experiences the ebb and flow of the leader-follower construct. Davis (2017) postulated that the follower-leader connection or association is conjointly prominent in having the follower in an active role in the relationship. Ruth had the personality to succeed in her historical position. Engstrom (1976) espoused the importance of the essence of the leader by stating that the leader must have faith in God, in other people, and themselves (p. 83). Ruth chose to serve the God of Israel instead of the gods of Moab; she exhibited trust in Naomi by following her to an unknown land, and she believed in herself to provide for her mother-in-law.

For some, the servant leadership theory in Ruth may not fit the book's overall theme. However, according to Davis (2017), servant leadership is a follower-focused leadership theory that deserves more research. Ruth followed the instructions and lessons of Naomi, which led to Ruth becoming a matriarch in her family. Ruth demonstrated honesty, which is a critical component to modeling the way for others, according to Kouzes & Posner (2017, p. 32).

Keeping with the theme of modeling the way, Ruth modeled the way of hard work and determination as she worked in the fields to provide sustenance for herself and Naomi.

Leadership theory entails various components, and this next section considers some of those variables. According to Kouzes & Posner (2010), the most foundational validation of leadership is making a difference (p. 1). Successful leaders believe they can and will make a difference in the lives of their constituents. Ruth went to work in the fields, knowing she could make a difference in bettering the circumstances she and Naomi faced (Ruth 2:2). According to Kouzes & Posner (2010, p. 15),

credibility is critical to the bedrock of leadership. Trustworthiness is built by specific characteristics that people believe in and follow (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 15). Ruth demonstrated ethical behavior in the sight of Boaz, thus establishing credibility (Ruth 2:8). Most individuals commit to something that presents a value proposition (Ruth 1:16-17). Most people will not commit to something that is not salient to them, and whatever is essential to an individual will drive commitment (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 31). Ruth must have hoped for long-term success in making a move to an unfamiliar place, thus leaving the impression that she had a vision for the future. Leaders are concerned about what tomorrow will be like for those who inherit it (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 46). □The story of Ruth speaks to this visionary as she becomes the wife of the kinsman-redeemer, Boaz, which launches the lineage of the greatest king in Israel's history, David. Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 31). Ruth must have hoped for long-term success in making a move to an unfamiliar place, thus leaving the impression that she had a vision for the future. Leaders are concerned about what tomorrow will be like for those who inherit it (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 46). The story of Ruth speaks to this visionary as she becomes the wife of the kinsmen-redeemer, Boaz, which launches the lineage of the greatest king in Israel's history, David.

Ruth could not succeed on her own. The author of Ruth speaks about the coaching Ruth received from Naomi so that she may gain recognition and garner help from Boaz. The fifth truth about leadership is that leaders cannot lead alone because leaders are here to serve; leadership is about the leader-constituent relationship (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 61). □Ruth and Naomi had a symbiotic connection where they led and served each other's interests (Ruth 3:1-4). Ruth and Naomi had a symbiotic connection where they led and served each other's interests (Ruth 3:1-4).

There must have been an incredible level of confidence felt between Ruth and Naomi. High levels of trust outperform low

levels of trust when gauging organizational success (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 75). The characters in Ruth demonstrate guardianship towards one another. Trust governs trustworthiness, the ability to complete tasks, creates harmony, innovation and performance, identity, and everything else that matters to the leader-constituent relationship (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 76). The challenge facing Ruth and Naomi may escape the average reader of Scripture. However, it probably did not escape the original audience of Ruth. Kouzes & Posner (2010) posited that outstanding leadership takes place in the ordeals of life that create significant trials and tribulations (p. 91). The study of leadership reveals that leaders and followers discover success through circumstances of unpredictability, destitution, disturbance, transformation, changeover, redemption, new beginnings, among other challenges (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 93). With a number of these descriptive words on full display in the pericope of Ruth, such as Ruth changing her name to Mara, which means God has dealt bitterly with me (Ruth 1:20).

Leaders lead from the front, center, and rear. However, leading by example is crucial in comparison to where one leads. Leading by example is not anything new; as a matter of fact, it's an accepted rule of thumb worldwide (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 109). Ruth led by example, keeping herself as a chase woman with no money and few options for taking care of herself and her mother-in-law (Ruth 2:10). Ruth learned how to live in this new land from Naomi. In the end, Naomi's advice extended to Ruth led to favor with and marriage to Boaz. Kouzes & Posner (2010) postulated that the most exemplary leaders are the prime mentees (p. 119). Ruth is an excellent example of a servant leader because she was a great adapter and learner.

Conclusion

The Socio-Rhetorical Analysis in the book of Ruth unveils the plan of God's future generations through the servant leadership model ascribed to the life and adventures of Ruth. Ruth is not the central figure in the book, even though it bears her name; Naomi appears nineteen times, Boaz appears fourteen times, and Ruth appears ten times, with all other actors in the book having some relationship to Naomi, not Ruth (Gladson, 2013, p. 10). Naomi uses repetitive patterns to paint a picture of life to the point in the pericope for Oprah and Ruth by stressing what the future may hold if they traveled with Naomi back to her homeland of Bethlehem, where no husband or children awaited them (Michael, 2015). The Opening-Middle-Closing Patterns (OMC) in the pericope to this juncture lead the reader on a journey of discovery. From Moab, a place of despair, to Bethlehem, this place of promise, are themes enhancing the purpose the writer intended to convey to the original audience. Henson (et al., 2020) posits that the OMC contributes to the story's overall plot (p. 92). Moab offered impairment to peace, and Bethlehem extends hope as they search for peace. The Opening-Middle-Closing Patterns (OMC) in the pericope to this juncture lead the reader on a journey of discovery. From Moab, a place of despair, to Bethlehem, this place of the promise are themes enhancing the purpose the writer intended to convey to the original audience. Henson (et al., 2020) posits that the OMC contributes to the story's overall plot (p. 92). Moab offered impairment to peace, and Bethlehem extends hope as they search for peace.

God's redemptive promise reveals itself through the life and relationship of Ruth and Boaz. The book of Ruth unveils God's legal promise to Abraham through the loyalty of a young woman from a Gentile nation (Blevins, 2016). The sovereignty of God is on full display in this portion of the pericope. Lau (et al., 2016) refers to this as never-ending kindness. To fully grasp and understand the Bible, one must interpret the meaning of the text within the larger context, then apply it to one's life (Duval

& Hays, 2012, p. 116). Blotz (2005) mentions that Ruth prominently features two women, Naomi and Ruth, who exemplify strength, character, and control of their own situation and destiny. Blotz continues with the idea that Naomi and Ruth seek to solve their problems to overcome their tribulations eventually.

Leaders are concerned about what tomorrow will be like for those who inherit it (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 46). The story of Ruth speaks to this visionary as she becomes the wife of the kinsman-redeemer, Boaz, which launches the lineage of the greatest king in Israel's history, David. The characters in Ruth demonstrate guardianship towards one another. Trust governs trustworthiness, the ability to complete tasks, creates harmony, innovation and performance, identity, and everything else that matters to the leader-constituent relationship (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 76). The book of Ruth and the characters of her story exemplify servant leadership for an ancient audience with relevant messaging for modern audiences.

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Exegetical and Hermeneutical Analysis of Genesis 2 and the Relevant Accompanying Leadership Theories

Dr. Devin Oten

Abstract

This exegetical study on Genesis chapter two intends to provide information concerning God's original intent for creation in the form of human beings. In modern times, the creation account from the Bible portrays nominal value due to evolutionary tales or fictional research designed to remove God from the creation evaluation of how everything got started. The most pertinent research instrument used in this study is the Socio-Rhetorical Analysis, posited by Henson et al. (2020). The research analyzed textual units to uncover themes in the writing of the author of Genesis chapter two; 1) repetitive arrangement to discover potential influence or impact on the passage; 2) progressive patterns which detail the resolution, insights, development, and recognizable connection in the text; 3) opening-middle-closing practices help articulate the historical narrative and plot and how it contributes to the overarching passage; 4) argumentative patterns tell the story of how the author attempts to provide the rationale of certain discoveries of belief systems in the passage, and 5) sensory-aesthetic patterns which illustrate how one assimilates and discerns the overall text. The research found that a minor passage in the Holy Scriptures changes God's entire intended meaning if misinterpreted or misrepresented. God used human beings to communicate His eternal message to creation, and if misunderstood, chaos would be the order of the day. As Christian leaders to change the world, we cannot stand idly by and not help others exegete the Bible and understand the hermeneutics of the Scriptures.

Keywords: patterns, leadership theory, practice, resources, methods, exegesis, hermeneutics

Socio-Rhetorical Analysis

In establishing the importance of understanding the meaning of a Biblical passage, one should explore inner textual analysis. According to several text references in the Bible, Moses is the writer of Genesis, with God as the author (Deut. 31-9-11). Therefore, Moses was a scribe to the penman, God. Duvall (et al., 2012) postulated that the Bible is the Word of God via the words of human beings (p. 25), and Genesis is a significant case study in confirming the theory that the Bible is the message of God and the message of human beings (Duvall et al., 2012, p. 25). The language, culture, audience, and age are different than modern times. Therefore, exegesis – the critical explanation or interpretation of a text or portion of a text, especially of the Bible, and hermeneutics – the science of interpretation, especially of the Scriptures are foundational to the study of Genesis chapter two.

Textual Units

The textual units (Henson et al., 2020, p. 84) or markers appear using time indicators in the Genesis chapter two text. God finished the work of creation in verses one, two, and four. He formed man in verse seven, but this is different from the formation of man in Genesis 1:27 because at this stage of the story, God “breathed into the nostrils the breath of life: and man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7). God proceeded to plant a garden to the east of Eden and transported the man to this location in verses eight and fifteen. In verse sixteen, God gives man a commandment not to eat from the tree of knowledge of what is good and evil (vv. 16-17). The remaining portion of chapter two transitions to God creating all living things, with Adam naming each animal, and God making the woman for the man, Adam and Eve.

Repetitive Patterns

In Genesis chapter two, the repetitive pattern (Henson et al., 2020, p. 85) involves God placing man in the Garden of Eden, first in verse 8, then in verse 15. God made the heavens and the earth, which is repeated in verses one and four. Furthermore, repetitions of the creation of man repeat in verse seven from chapter one, verse twenty-seven. Therefore, it would appear that God is confirming that He created man by these common repetitions to influence the knowledge of Moses's audience and the modern-day audience, which removes the evolution theory.

Progressive Patterns

A progressive pattern (Henson et al., 2020, p. 89) that emerges in Genesis chapter two is that God wanted someone to oversee His creation. He had the man name all created things, and He set the man in the eastern location in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it (v. 15). Tend is the Hebrew word *Awbad*, which means labor, serve, and work (Strong, 1990). The word keep in this text is the Hebrew word for guard, protect, watch, preserve, attend to, beware, save, and observe (Strong, 1990). In chapter three of Genesis, a plot emerges as to why God needed someone to protect the Garden of Eden and creation, for that matter. The serpent or enemy of all things Godly emerges from the shadows or the darkness in the story. One of the distinct ideas found in Genesis chapter two is that man works for and protects God's creation.

Opening-Middle-Closing Patterns

The opening-middle-closing pattern (OMC) (Henson et al., 2020, p. 89) is not evident in the Genesis text under review. However, the plot of Shalom is damaged, and peace or reconciliation is pursued in chapter three and beyond. Moreover, God's desire for man and woman to live in harmony as the Godhead is relevant in Genesis chapter two as Adam prophesied that man and woman "shall become one flesh" (v. 24), "because the

woman was taken out of man” (v. 23). Unity, harmony, and togetherness are significant to leadership theory because reaching common goals is critical in the leader-constituent dynamic.

Argumentative and Sensory-Aesthetic Patterns

The argumentative pattern (Henson et al., 2020, p. 93-94) in Genesis chapter two is for human beings to work for God, adhere to His commandments, protect His creation, and live in harmony as the example provided by the Godhead, “The Lord our God, the Lord is One” (Deut. 6:4). Furthermore, the sensory-aesthetic pattern materializes when God speaks to Adam by commanding him to avoid the tree of knowledge (verse 16) and when Adam communicates the nature of his relationship with Eve once he wakes up from the first surgery in human history (vv. 23-24). The patterns of Genesis chapter two are relevant to understanding the nature of the relationship between God, human beings, and creation.

Leadership Theory/Practice in Genesis 2

Leadership is complex, with various degrees of meaning and definitions. Northouse (2019) posits that leadership is a mechanism by which an individual influences an organization or group of people to accomplish common goals (p. 5). In Genesis chapter two, either God or Adam is the topic of leadership theory because Eve does not communicate until Genesis chapter three. Furthermore, if leadership is influencing others, Adam had no one to influence other than Eve. However, an argument is possible that Adam influenced animal and plant life because God commanded him to care for and exert authority over His creation. Northouse (2019) espoused several theories on leadership, including the Trait, Skills, Behavioral, and Situational Approaches, the Path-Goal and Leader-Member Exchange Theories, the Transformational, Authentic, Servant, and Adaptive Leadership Theories, and Followership. For this study, attention will home in on the Trait Approach concerning

the leadership of the first human being, Adam. Bergant's (2013) commentary describes the social setting of Genesis as the "ancient household," whereby the patriarchal leadership system is the order of the day (p. 15). It would make sense that Adam started the patriarchal system since he is the first head of a household in the Bible, even though tradition teaches that the patriarchal system started with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Bergant continues that Genesis is a book of theology, not a historical account; God is the sole creator, creation demonstrates the integrity of God, sin-punishment and second chances, and covenant relationship between God and man, among other theological themes (2013, pp. 16-17). Bergant's discussion is interesting because it would appear that Genesis outlines critical historical information for the book's original audience.

Trait Approach

Now to the Trait Approach of leadership in Genesis chapter two. The Leadership Theory that most aligns with Adam is the Trait Approach. As defined, this approach emphasizes the inherent abilities, nature, and personality possessed by great social, political, and military leaders (Northouse, 2019, p. 19). Moreover, Adam was not a social, political, or military leader, yet he had off-the-charts traits such as intelligence, self-confidence, and determination as espoused by Northouse (2019, pp. 23-24). After all, Adam did name all the animal and plant life on the earth. It sounds like he was the computer before the invention of such commonplace devices in modern times. Without going on a tangent, sin caused innovation to take steps backward instead of forward. According to Northouse (2019), intelligence is a strength that positively contributes to leadership (p. 23). Self-confidence is the ability to be assured of one's capability and talent (Northouse, 2019, p. 24). Determination is the desire to complete tasks. This skill relies on drive, ambition, and persistence (Northouse, 2019, p. 24). To name every living thing as Adam did required intelligence, self-confidence, determination, strength, and leadership.

Intelligence 1. The intelligence factor is critical to the trait leadership theory and approach. Siegling et al. (2014) posited that people in leadership and management positions require high trait emotional intelligence. Villanueva (et al., 2007) postulated that intelligence is directly related to self-efficacy, one's set of beliefs to execute a plan of action. Kotzé (et al., 2015) determined that intelligence has a significant association and relation to high levels of authentic leadership. Therefore, Adam possibly exhibited authentic leadership, which according to Northouse (2019), is honest and original characteristics (p. 197). Moreover, Adam was honest with God in Genesis chapter three when he blamed Eve for the fall, "Then the man said, The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate" (v. 12). He threw Eve under the bus, but he was honest about what happened, and he had to be original, for he was the first human being created from the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7).

Self-Confidence 2. The self-confidence characteristic is the personal value or self-worth and the self-motivation to make a difference (Northouse, 2019, p. 24). García-Vidal et al. (2019, p. 317) posited that leadership performs well when self-confidence is vital in the decision-making process. García-Vidal continued with the notion that considering capabilities towards successfully completing goals is an essential aspect of self-confidence (p. 317). Axelrod (2016) quoted the ancient Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu, who wrote that self-confidence is the most significant attribute of leaders facing difficult circumstances. Axelrod (2016) also espoused in modern leadership theory that self-confidence was the most mentioned trait in research, even among those scholars who focus on leadership behavior. Adam stepped up to the plate under the watchful eye of God and gave a name to every created organism on earth.

Determination 3. Determination is devotion to completing an assignment. Determination takes the initiative, perseverance, assertiveness, and those who exhibit determination are proactive and willing to face difficult situations (Northouse,

2019, p. 24). The India Today Magazine published an article, *Step ladder to success: Determination, leadership traits and a strong work ethic ensure a successful career trajectory* (2015) and postulated that leaders must take charge of their circumstances without relying on others to make decisions on their behalf, determination. The New India article research focused its attention on women leaders for successful career pathways. Chen et al. (2014) posit that determination and self-management serve as behaviors that relate to personal self-consciousness. One truth about leadership is that greatness comes from challenges that lead to transformation and new beginnings (Kouzes et al., 2010, p. 93). All of which Adam faced in the creation process.

Strength and Leadership 4. Strength is a trait or characteristic of an individual that contributes to successful performance (Northouse, 2019, p. 27). Dametto et al. (2019) postulated that character strengths manifest through positive thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Hence, Adam must have exhibited character and strength, experiencing creation as a lone individual in a new beginning environment or atmosphere. The trait approach applies to Adam's leadership style because the approach theory focuses on the leader, not the constituents or the circumstances (Northouse, 2019, p. 29). Who was Adam leading before the introduction of Eve into his life? Hence, the trait approach makes the most sense when considering Adam's leadership style.

Followership

The approach to this subject initially predicated its findings on the leadership model, which caused some anxiety because the question kept arising: who did Adam lead? In the end, Adam followed God until he didn't. God commanded Adam in Genesis chapter not to eat of the tree of knowledge, and he and Eve decided not to follow those instructions in Genesis chapter three. Northouse (2019) postulated that without followers, there are no leaders, and in the process of becoming a leader, one

must learn to follow (p. 293). There is another point Northouse discussed that's worth mentioning in this discussion: becoming a constituent develops when an individual adopts or accepts the influence of another to accomplish common goals (p. 295). If this is the case, what was the common interest between God and Adam? Northouse articulates two categories in which followership falls: 1) role-based – when a constituent operates in a position within a hierarchical system, and 2) relational-based – created reality when two interact with each other (p. 295). Adam had a specific role in God's chain of command. He was to have dominion over the earth and to protect and care for the Garden of Eden. God would come down in the cool of the day to fellowship with Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:8); therefore, they experienced relationship interactions with God.

The Millennial generation and Generation Z have learned and understood leadership differently from their predecessors in modern times. Roundtree (2019) espoused that these new generational categories must understand the human qualities associated with followership in an active sense. By that sentiment, Roundtree determined that enthusiasm, smarts, and independence are the tools the upcoming generations will learn the art of followership.

Lessons For Christian Leaders

How can Christian leaders learn from Adam's successes and failures? Engstrom (1976) posited that New Testament leaders could learn from the ministry of Moses; Moses lived in faith, exemplified integrity, was decisive, obedient, and responsible (p. 30). Engstrom continued with the idea that remarkable Biblical leaders learned from their failures, repented, and God used them in more extraordinary ways for His glory (p. 26). Therefore, Christian leaders should practice humility and learn from the previous generations of leaders and followers, for that matter.

Additional characteristics or virtues of importance for Christian leaders are gratitude, honesty, strength, and talent. Cicero (106-43 BC) once wrote, "Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others." Dunaetz (et al., 2020) believes that the greater the motivation of a Christian leader, the more extraordinary grace and ability God will extend to accomplish greater service levels to human beings. PR Newswire (2015) discussed ten traits of successful CEOs, and honesty was at the top of the list. The article postulated that the right values create trust among followers from the beginning of the leader-constituent relationship when the CEO demonstrates honesty and integrity. The PR Newswire (2015) article continued with humility among leaders creates a sense that the leaders are teachable and willing to learn new ways of doing things. This attitude of exploration makes a learning organization, and only learning organizations develop and grow.

On the other hand, Akin-John, D. B. (2019) posits that weak Christian leaders tend to lead according to their authority instead of the authority that comes from God. In Luke 10:19, Jesus said I give unto you authority. They manage people and resources rather than showing, teaching, and being an example. Paul instructed Timothy to lead by example and serve the flock of God (1 Tim. 4:12). Instead of trying to become a leader like many in modern times do, let God do His work in developing leaders. Proverbs 18:16 says the gifts God gave us will make the necessary room for the skills to serve creation. Cogliser (et al., 2012) espoused that individuals become leaders as they complete leader-like work duties. In other words, leaders emerge through practical leadership responsibilities whereby others perceive their individual qualities to lead others.

Conclusion

This exegetical study on Genesis chapter two provided information concerning God's original intent for creation in the form of human beings. The most relevant research instrument used in this study came from the Socio-Rhetorical Analysis, posited by Henson et al. (2020). The research analyzed textual units to uncover themes in the writing of the author of Genesis chapter two; 1) repetitive arrangement to discover potential influence or impact on the passage; 2) progressive patterns which detail the resolution, insights, development, and recognizable connection in the text; 3) opening-middle-closing practices help articulate the historical narrative and plot and how it contributes to the overarching passage; 4) argumentative patterns tell the story of how the author attempts to provide the rationale of certain discoveries of belief systems in the passage, and 5) sensory-aesthetic patterns which illustrate how one assimilates and discerns the overall text. God calls leaders to care for His flock, and a significant part of the preparation for Godly leaders is understanding the true meaning of the Word of God. Therefore, exegesis and hermeneutics are of great value to the leader-follower relationship.

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The Relevance of Song of Songs for Marriage Sustainability in the Christian Home

Mayowa Stephen Thompson

Abstract

Marriage is a legal, formal, and social union that exists between a man and a woman. From the biblical perspective, this universal phenomenon is rooted in the divine plan of creation. There the book of songs of songs is widely known for its erotic nature. However, the book is embedded with much relevance to address conflicts, chaos, and related issues in marriage. Therefore, this research examines the book of Song of Songs as a manual on relationship and marriage sustainability in the twenty-first century. In other words, Song of Songs is the biblical framework of this discourse. This work shows relevant lessons drawn from the conversation engaged between a man and woman (The lovers). An analytical methodology is employed to analyze the book with the aim of depicting several viable themes which fosters marriage sustainability in the contemporary time. Among themes like, identity, race, feminism; it is noteworthy that love is spoken about tirelessly throughout the book; meanwhile, the lack of it repeatedly drives women insane with loss. The concept of love forms the theoretical framework of this discourse. Love is often confused for possession and ownership. From courtship to marriage to the assurance of love, Song of Solomon poetically presents a broad range of events and feelings in the days leading up to and during marriage, offering encouragement toward an enduring love amid the petty jealousies and fears sure to threaten even the strongest of relationships.

Keywords: Relevance, Marriage, Sustainability, Century.

Introduction

It is not an overstatement that people have diverse perspectives about Song of Songs. Some individuals have questioned the reason for its canonicity in the Hebrew Scriptures (Kinlaw, 1994). But reading through the lines of this book, it has much to say about God's purpose for marriage. No book has done justice and explores more of the joy, beauty, and sacredness of marriage in the scripture than the Song of Songs (Adeyemo, 2000). Notably, this is one of the oldest books in the Bible and the Song vividly and clearly open how the bridegroom and the bride delight in each other (Tenny, 1963). In the Song of Songs, God has given us a divine manual or guide on romantic relationships and sustainability of marriage, taking us from the first attraction between a couple through courtships, deepening intimacy, and the decisiveness which is marriage (Moraeu, 2000). Having established this, it is obvious that God's desire and purpose for husbands and wives is to have a wonderful and happy home. Therefore, this study delves into the book of Song of Songs and its Relevance to Marriage Sustainability in 21st Century.

Background to the Book of Song of Songs

It is generally held that the title designated for this book is "Song of Songs" which comes from the first verse 1:1. However, it has been debated whether it was part of the original composition or if it is a later addition. The Hebrew title "*shiyrhashiyrim*" - the Song of Songs implies that the song in question is the most beautiful, transcending all others (Vriezen, 2005). The Latin word for song is *canticum* from which we get the word *Canticles*, which is an alternative title for this book. The original Hebrew version of the book took its title from the book's first two words, *shiyrhashiyrim*, usually translated as "the song of songs" (Archer, 1974).

This latter title remained in Greek and Latin Bible translations in later centuries. The repetition of the word song indicates that

the writer considers this “the greatest of all songs (Kinlaw, 1994). Some English translations that today have preserved the title “Song of Songs” (NIV, TNIV), but many have changed it to “Song of Solomon” based on 1:1 (NASB, NKJV). Garrett (2004) postulates that the name may be a kind of double entendre: it is the premium of Solomon’s songs (in the superlative sense of ‘song of songs’), and it is also a single musical work composed of many songs.

Solomon composed the collection of love poems, but Solomon’s name was probably added later by the song’s editors, perhaps because of references within the text to the wise and prolific king. This attribution to Solomon led to the book’s inclusion in the Hebrew Bible and later, Christian versions of the Old Testament. The *Song of Songs* is a unique book in the Bible. There is no plot and no mention of God, but the piece says a lot about early Hebrew traditions surrounding marriage and love, using elaborate descriptions and complex relationships.

The overall message of the *Song of Songs* has been hotly debated, and possibly this is because of the nature of its assembly and the culture from which it sprung. The Song was most likely a collage of wedding songs sung across the Jewish world, and because the ancient Jewish community was widely dispersed and interpreted their beliefs many ways, the *Song of Songs* is thus able to make both the argument for the beauty of love and its possibility for danger.

Authorship and Date

On this note, it is imperative to explore about the writer which is quite important to validate the authenticity of the book. There has been some assertion that argued for and against Solomon as the author of this book .Many references to Solomon throughout the book confirm the claim of 1:1 that Solomon wrote this book (1:4-5, 12; 3:7, 9, 6:12; 1 Kings 4:33) who reigned between 971 and 931 B.C. Garrett (2004) also asserts that he believed that the book was written either “by Solomon”

or “for Solomon”, by a court poet of Solomon’s day (Gledhill, 1994).

On the contrary, Hess (2005) believed the writer is unknown and could have been anyone, even a woman, and that the female heroine viewed and described her lover as a king as a Solomon. Some scholars also have argued that the book is a collection of songs written by multiple poets, but that view is unsupported by the text. How could Solomon, who had 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3), be the same faithful lover this book presents? He could be if he became polygamous after the events in this book took place. That seems a more likely explanation than that, he was polygamous when these events occurred and just omitted reference to his other loves. Probably he wrote the book before he became polygamous. We do not know how old Solomon was when he married the second time. The history recorded in Kings and Chronicles is not in strict chronological order. The Shulammitte was probably not Pharaoh’s daughter in view of references in the book (1 Kings 3:1; Song of Sol. 4:8). Sasson (1989) posits that she was Pharaoh’s daughter. Another view also opines that “Shulammitte” is simply the feminine form of the name “Solomon”. So Solomon could have written this book in his youth. Perhaps he wrote most of Proverbs in his mid-life and Ecclesiastes in his old age. The contents of these three writings have suggested that order to many students of the book dating back to its earliest interpreters.

The Purpose

Robert asserts that probably God’s primary purpose in inspiring this book of the Bible was to give us revelation concerning the way love between a man and a woman should look (Laurin, 1962). The characters in the book usually behave towards one another the way men and women in love should conduct themselves in attitudes and activities. Solomon was a man of many lovers, and the Song of Songs is a record of one of the relationships that stood out above all others. Holmyard (1998)

posits that the Song of Songs harkens back to God's prototypical design in the Garden of Eden of one man and one woman, in marriage, a relationship God designed to be mutually special. This book presents a most relevant and urgent message for us today. The view of children is not necessary to justify sexual love in marriage.

Significantly, the Song of Solomon makes no reference to procreation or reproduction. It must be remembered that the book was written in a world where a high premium was placed on offspring and a woman's worth was often measured in terms of the number of her children (Diamant, 1985). Sex was often seen with reference to procreation, yet there is not a trace of that here in the book. The song is a song in praise of love for love's sake and for love's sake alone. This relationship needs no explanation beyond itself (Holmyard, 1998). The love relationship between a man and a woman is an illustration of the relationship within the Godhead, God and Israel and between Christ and the Church. The purpose of this book seems to be the revelation of those more basic love relationships for application by the reader. The use of the marriage metaphor to describe the relationship of God to his people is almost universal in Scripture (Lasor, 1982). Human love is thus a good pedagogical device to cast light on divine love. The book describes and extols human marital love. The love that exists portrays love at the higher and more perfect level, that between God and the objects of His grace (Dyer, 2001). In creating man, male and female in his own image and joining them together so that they become one flesh, God makes man copies both of himself in his Trinitarian unity and distinction as one God and three persons and of himself in relation to the people of his gracious election (Bromiley, 1980). Little wonder that this little book is in the canon.

The Literary Genre

The particular literary form of an author's work selects as the vehicle of his message can be the most important single clue to his true intention.

Love Song: It is being more and more recognized as archaeological discovery expand our library of ancient literature that the biblical Song was not a novel literary occurrence in the world in which it appeared. In its general framework and in numerous individual motifs and metaphors it is seen to be stylistically similar to what is found in ancient love lyrics. An Egyptian love poem, found on one of the Chester Beatty papyri dating about 1100 B.C., consists of seven cantos in dialog form with the lovers addressing each other as "brother" and "sister" (Pritchard, 1962). There are enough parallels to Canticles or song with words from a biblical text in structure, situation, and imagery in such love songs of the New Empire in Egypt. W. F. Albright was convincing that they "demonstrate the Egyptian origin of the framework of the Canticles (Albright, 1942). Other scholars are more impressed with parallels to the Song found elsewhere in the Near Eastern or in primitive love poetry. One variety of love song is the epithalamium or wedding song. From the time of Origen many have held that Canticles was composed for the occasion of Solomon's wedding to Pharaoh's daughter (I Kgs 3:1) and from the end of the sixteenth century expositors have tried to explain the character of the Song in terms of customs followed at ancient Jewish marriage festivals.

Glickman (1976) demonstrated that the Song was composed of seven parts, one for each day of the wedding week, but with little success. Critics of the epithalamium view have questioned both the existence of such "king's week" among the Arabs in Palestine and the reliability of modern Syrian practices as a guide of Judean wedding customs of the first millennium B.C. They also argue that some of the poetry in Canticles is clearly occurring before marriage and that even the type of song was not confined to wedding festivals. There is an obvious reason

for calling the hero “king” (1:4, 7:5) if he is “king Solomon” (3:9, 11) and his beloved, it must be noted, is never designated “queen.” Certainly, she is not a princess from Pharaoh’s court but a maiden from the village of Shunem. Gordis (1954) seeks to meet some of these criticisms of the relevance of the “king’s week” but he too joins the majority of those who regard Canticles or song from biblical text as love poetry in concluding that it was not composed for a wedding but is an anthology of various types of love songs.

Drama: In the eighteenth and especially the nineteenth centuries the view was developed and popularized that Canticles was dramatic in structure. The beginnings of this view were much earlier. Origen, for example, considered it “a wedding poem composed in dramatic form” and Milton called it a “divine pastoral drama.” Extremists treated the Song as a dramatic piece intended for the stage. In this they succeeded more in displaying a style for creating musical comedies than in manifesting a gift for exegeting ancient texts. But nineteenth century exegetes of the caliber of Franz Delitzsch, H. Ewald, and S. R. Driver also championed the dramatic view of the Song and this approach continues to enjoy some support in that century. The dramatists are divided over the question of whether the Shulammite’s true love is Solomon or a rustic lover to whom she remains faithful in a triumph of pure love over the seductions of Solomon’s royal court (Gledhill, 1994). The second plot obviously has greater dramatic tension and that perhaps is why it is more popular; but it has little else to commend it. Critics of the dramatic view correctly observe that fully fledged drama was unknown among the Hebrews or the Semites in general, some of them also protest, but incorrectly that the Song cannot be a drama because it is not also a literary unit. The real question in similarity with sober supports of the dramatic view is whether Canticles traces the love of Solomon and the Shulammite through a temporal sequence of scenes from courtship to their wedding and marriage life. The simple one teaches the wise man simplicity he wanders gladly over

mountain and field if he only has her (Keil and Delitzsch, 1950). Though not persuaded by Bentzen's argument that the many possibilities advanced to explain the book as a drama prove its impossibility the present writer is not convinced that the scene chronological structure has been satisfactorily demonstrated. The criticism that the dramatic view is almost as guilty of eisegesis as the allegorical view goes much too far, but it does seem to contain an element of truth. It is a virtue of the dramatic view that it recognizes the unity of the Song. That unity, however, is unfolded in recurring rather than sequential fashion. The divisions suggested by Delitzsch for his six acts mark the bounds of these cycles; observe, for example, the recurring opening and closing refrains of these divisions. Within each of these cycles the dominant love motif is that of longing and fulfillment. Each cycle closes with the satisfaction of consummation of love. Even though the Song is not structurally a drama, this repeat theme of seeking and finding does impart to it a certain dramatic quality (Keil and Delitzsch, 1950).

Poetic language: The indisputable difficulty in interpreting the Song of Songs is due not to the corruption of the Hebrew text but to the poetic character portrait of the book. Against a tendency, in the past, to consider the Song as a collection of popular songs, recent commentaries have increasingly underlined its refined language which, according to Muller sometimes borders on mannerism (Muller, 1992). The Hebrew text is an exquisite sonorous piece of work: for example, there are frequent uses of figures of speech such as paronomasia and alliteration, rhyme, and assonance, together with forms of onomatopoeia (Lasor, 1984). The meaning can also be deduced from the context or from similar vocabularies in the Oriental languages, but at other times the translation remains doubtful.

Marriage Sustainability in Christian Home

The message of the book of Song of Songs is relevant to our contemporary time which can be viewed as a divine manual or guide on romantic relationships and sustainability of marriage.

Therefore, this study will examine four fundamental principles from the book of Song of Songs that can aid sustainability in marriage in this 21st century.

Love should be Reciprocated: The dialogue that occurs in this book is between a man and a woman who has genuine affection with each other. Each plays its part to sustain the relationship so that it will not wreck. Their desire for each other is expressed and their love is reciprocal. Pope asserts that the lovers have an “alliance” and live in a “free and reciprocal face to face relation” where they “alternate taking initiative” (Pope, 1997). The man and woman describe each other and respond to these descriptions. They invite each other to enjoy and partake in their love; nothing can stand in the way of its fulfillment. And behind their words is a deep desire to build each other up.

The woman commences the dialogue by her keenness expression with the statement “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth- for your love is better than wine... (1:2) (Greenspahn, 1984). This woman has a level of desire and passion every bit as powerful as the man’s. He is the focus of all her desire and passionate longing. The man addresses her with a tender compliment, looking past her own perceived flaws to praise her beauty. Compliments foster love, but criticism impedes unity. This denotes, when there is a reciprocated enjoyment of shared interests it creates stability in a relationship. The wordplay of the couple’s admiration in 1:14-2:3 signals their growing intimacy between each other. She calls him “beloved”; he replies with “darling.” She describes herself as a “rose of Sharon” and a “lily of the valley.” In those days, both were common, everyday blossoms not especially noted for their beauty. She is modestly saying, “I’m not so pretty really kind of average.” After which the man lifts her up: to him she is like a lily among thorns; her beauty far outclasses that of all others. She then repays his compliment with one of her own: compared to all of the young men, he is like a refreshing apple tree that is far more desirable than all the trees of the forest. This scenario between the man and the woman unveils an

important part of a healthy marriage which is lacking in many marriages in our contemporary. It is on this note, that there should be constructive dialogue between a husband and a wife to aid peaceful cohabitation.

Love should be Exclusive: Sexual intimacy between a husband and wife is a beautiful experience that expresses their oneness and the love they have for one another. The Song of Songs communicates that love within marriage produces genuine sexual freedom not freedom from marriage, but liberation in marriage. The most explicitly erotic passage in the entire book, chapters 7:1-8:4, portrays the exciting sexual intimacy of the man and the woman as a married couple. Here they enjoy the fruit of their love: “I belong to my beloved, and his desire is for me. Come, my beloved . . . let us go early to the vineyards . . . there I will give you my love” (7:10-12). Continuing the verbal and physical foreplay, the man uses the images of a locked garden and a sealed fountain to celebrate his beloved’s virginity. “You are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride; you are a spring enclosed, a sealed fountain” (4:12). Sexual intimacy between a husband and wife is a beautiful experience that expresses their oneness and the love they have for one another (Holts, 1984). The Song of Songs teaches that love within marriage produces genuine sexual liberation not liberation from marriage, but liberation in marriage. The most explicitly erotic passage in the entire book, chapters 7:1-8:4, depicts the vibrant sexual intimacy of the man and the woman as a married couple. Here they enjoy the fruit of their love: “I belong to my beloved, and his desire is for me. Come, my beloved...let us go early to the vineyards...there I will give you my love” (7:10-12).

The garden suggests privacy, separation, sacredness, and security. A “sealed fountain” is protected; its water can only go to its rightful owner. Sex without marriage cannot compare with the joy of giving yourself completely to the beloved (Bullock, 1979). This language of exclusivity is expressed in something like a marriage vow: “My beloved is mine and I am his.” This phrase, often used by Jewish brides at weddings, is a statement

of possession. It represents an exclusive covenant between a man and a woman who are saying to each other. On this note, we are called to honor God, ourselves, and our future spouses by maintaining purity.

Love should be rooted in Companionship: Love is not theoretical; it calls for action. It is evident that the Song elucidate that the couple directly and explicitly call each other friends. The man calls the Shulamite “my friend” and uses the feminine singular Hebrew noun with the personal pronoun a total of nine times (Bosker, 1989). The woman also calls the man, “This is my beloved, this is my friend” (5:16). The two share erotic love, but they also share hopes, dreams, and aspirations as companions in life. The power of love requires more than the communication of feeling to protect it. Sexual expression is such as integral part of selfhood that needs the boundary of marriage to safeguard love. Marriage is the celebration of daily commitment between a husband and the wife (Moraueu, 2000). Friendship is a key ingredient in healthy relationship. It is the basis of biblical love and it is very vital for marriage sustainability. Marriage strives with companionship and together with the worship of God, is the foundation on which husbands and wives build intimacy.

In one study, couples were asked to rank a list of possible goals for their marriage. The single most important goal listed was to have a friend in one’s partner. This should not be surprising. God himself said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make a helper suitable for him” (Gen. 2:18). A spouse who is a real friend is a loyal companion who “loves at all times” (Prov. 17:17). This companionship is articulated by the man using different appellation for his lover such as “my sister, my bride” (4:9). It is explicit from this passage that she is not just a lover, she is also a friend. On this note, satisfaction in marriage can be achieved by efforts of both partners with the aid of friendship which makes marriage more meaningful.

Love should be Beautiful: Song of Songs as to do with the beauty of the marriage relationship. “My beloved spoke and said to me, ‘Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, come with me’” (2:10). The beauty of their relationship does not reflect only in physical outward beauty, but rather in the inward beauty of character and in the spiritual dimension of their relationship expressed in their commitment to God and his design for marriage. Each appreciates the other person as a beautiful gift from God. Like fine wine, beauty increases with age as God conform us more and more into the image of Christ and makes us beautiful. Ultimately, though the Song of Songs makes us yearn for Christ.

Conclusion

The *Song of Songs* is not weak for its contradictions and ambiguity. It is strong for being intriguing enough to be one of the most highly debated and contemplated books of the Bible. The *book* displays love, purity and intoxicating desire. The discussed themes don't come together to make a coherent whole, but in light of the widely dispersed culture it came out of, this is no surprise. To its audience, this can perhaps make the poem all the more illuminating. Each reader takes from the song a strengthening of the beliefs he or she already feels to be true. The book is a collection of love songs which evidently celebrate the joy of physical and intimate love. One of the distinctive messages is that ‘sex is God's gift’, and it should be enjoyed. It is a vital part of marital love, but it should be done in the context of marriage (2:7; 3:5) for outside marriage is fornication or adultery.

The Song boldly proclaims the value and beauty of love and devotion between a man and woman. The lovers' words portray a beautiful relationship expressed in the complete giving of themselves to each other in the marriage relationship. The book, therefore, is very helpful if it's rightly interpreted and properly used. It provides a guide for improvement and sustainability in marriage based concerning problems couples

face. Christians in the contemporary time should heed the Song's sublime words by continuing to value marriage as one of the bedrocks of society, appreciating the goodness and the beauty borne out of the union of two people in holy matrimony. With this book, God has given us a divine manual on romantic relationships, from the initial attraction between a couple through courtship, deepening intimacy, and marriage.

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An Ethnographical Study of the Ika People Group: Missiological Approaches for Witnessing the Gospel in Delta State, Nigeria.

Chinedu Evidence Ugbedinma, Ph.D.

Abstract

This research undergoes ethnographical study of the Ika People group of Delta State, Nigeria. Exploring missiological approaches relevant to witnessing the gospel of Christ to them. It is observed that Ika people understand God's existence in their religious worldview prior to the emergence of Christianity. The study adopted a historical, descriptive method. Primary and secondary sources were used to collect data. Primary sources are archival materials. The observation method was used to elicit relevant information for the study. Furthermore, interviews were also conducted. It investigated Ika's people group geographical location worldview, tracing the origin of the name beliefs and practices. The research provides missiological approaches to witnessing the gospel among the Ika people group. To enhance a practical, efficient, lasting impact that will help mission agencies, missionaries, gospel ministers, and anthropologists reach them. Findings revealed that for effective witnessing of the gospel, missionaries should be rooted in the knowledge of the word, speak and understand Ika language, discipleship cum discipline approach, authentic contextualization of the gospel, power evangelism, book publications, and translating to Ika language, relational missions approach, and empowerment program and sponsorship. The study recommends that missionaries and ministers representing Christ in Ika land should not compromise their faith for material gain.

Keywords: Ethnographical, Ika People, Missiological Approaches, gospel witnessing.

Introduction

Throughout history, Christians have lived in particular cultural contexts, varying degrees through acceptance and rejection. Not considering a positive or negative attitude toward their surrounding culture, Christians must respond to their immediate context to spread the Gospel to reach the people group. Therefore, this study examines the ethnographical study of the Ika people of Delta State, Nigeria. People's ways of life regarding religion, worldview, value system, norms, feelings, songs, and dress greatly influence how they respond to the Gospel.

However, the burden of the researcher is based on his observation as a one born and brought up in Ika land over three decades. Despite the modernization, civilization cum enlightenment through Christianity in the Ika nation, some still hold to a high esteem African traditional beliefs and practices resulting in an un-Christianized lifestyle, such as witchcraft, materialism, commercialization of the Gospel, and cultism. In an interview, prominent Ika minister Joseph Igbodo lamented that native doctors have taken over the Altar of God, deceiving people by pursuing vain things instead of spreading the Gospel of Christ.⁴⁰⁷

Micheal affirms that the ideology of the clergy more importantly of the Pentecostal brand, has contributed to the uncritical character of the church, with lack of cross-checking the teachings, theologies of their churches and their denominational beliefs.⁴⁰⁸ This challenges the land and

⁴⁰⁷ Joseph Igbodo, *Interviewed by Ika Weekly Newspaper* on December 7th, 2016, retrieved from Facebook 23rd, 2025

⁴⁰⁸ Matthew Micheal, *Christianity and the Church in Africa* In African Public Theology Eds, Sunday Bobai Agang , Dion A. Foster and H. Jurgens Hendriks HippoBooks Africa Christian Textbook Bukuru Nigeria 2020), 372.

Christian faith. A clear understanding of the people of Ika nations would help profess lasting missiological approaches to help re-evangelize them with the Gospel that this research proposes.

Conceptualizing the Gospel

The gospel originates “in Christ before the foundation of the world.” This was contained in the “promise” God made before the foundation of the world. (Tit. 1:2) The “gospel,” the “good news” or “good tidings,” is the declared fulfillment of that promise.⁴⁰⁹The Greek word “*evangelion*” is translated as “gospel” in the King James Version. This word, together with its rendering of “good tidings,” “glad tidings,” and “preach the gospel,” occurs some one hundred and eight times in the New Testament, none of which intimate anything less than “finished redemption” in Christ.⁴¹⁰ Ugbedinma posits that gospel is to be preached to all people and must be understood as the fulfillment of all people’s expectation of God’s divine intervention as the answer to the needs of humanity and nature across the universe in every time and space.⁴¹¹In the context of this study, gospel is witnessing Christ to the people of Ika contextually in a way manner that it will not lose its relevance.

Geographical Location of the Ika People Group

Geographically, the Ika dialect people are located northwest of Delta State of Nigeria. They share boundaries and language in the west with the Edo speakers, in the north with the Ishan speakers, in the East with the Aniocha tongue speakers, and in the south with the Ukwuani speakers. Politically, Ika speakers

⁴⁰⁹ <https://media.thegospelcoalition.org/static-blogs/trevin-wax/files/2009/09/Gospel-Definitions.pdf> Accessed 23rd of June 2025

⁴¹⁰ Ibid,

⁴¹¹ Chinedu Evidence Ugbedinma, “Impacts of Contextualizing the Gospel on African Christianity” *Journal of Religious and Culture (JORAC Uniport)*, Vol 22, No 1 2022), 166

are mostly found in two local government areas, Ika North East and Ika South local government areas, produced in 1991 from a single Ika Local Government Area in Delta State. Ika South and Ika North East local government areas inhabit a land area of 117.45 square kilometers with a total populace of about 240,000 people”.⁴¹² Other Ika-speaking people support outside the Ika Northeast and Ika South local government areas. The precise population of speakers of the Ika language or those with Ika as their mother tongue is not identified since this information was not included in the 1991 census result. Ika people do not have any shared physical uniqueness that is distinctive from other ethnic or language groups in Delta State.

In the Ika nation, there are some Ika language-speaking areas (i.e. Igbanke) outside these two local government areas.⁴¹³ The Ika people are made up of eleven self-governing groups, which the writer will refer to as clans and a metropolitan area. All eleven Ika clans speak a general language, the Ika language, with a collection of dialects belonging to the Igbo group. There are “no significant differences between these dialects but mainly phonological and lexical variation.”⁴¹⁴ The Igbo and Edo people greatly influenced the culture of the Ika people. The Igbo influence is evident, which may be due to the strong missionary and commercial role of the Igbo people, whose presence and impact were seriously and deeply felt among Ndiowa (part of the Ika people). The Edo influence had to do with the language and culture.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹² <https://deltastate.gov.ng/ikapeople> Accessed on March 26, 2022

⁴¹³ <http://www.nairaland.com/251901/ika-people> Accessed on March 26, 2022

⁴¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ika_North_ Accessed on March 26, 2022.

⁴¹⁵ Blessing Uenoson Okoh, “Contextualizing Ingratitude in Luke 17:12 – 18 Among the Members of Pentecostal Churches in Ika Land” *NIU Journal of Social Sciences Nexus International University* ISSN: 3007-1682; 9(2): 2023), 290

Ika People Origin, Structured, Worldview, Beliefs and Practices

Ika is an ethnic group in the Delta State of Nigeria. The area is made up of eleven major clans. Ika, Owa, Ute-OKpu, Abavo, Umunede, Idumuesah, Igbodo, Otolokpo, Akumazi, Ute-Ogbeje and Mbiri. Ika lies some 47 kilometers west of Asaba, the center of Delta State's operations. Ika has some common borders with her neighbors: the east Aniocha North and Aniocha South Local Government Areas, the North and West Edo State, and the South Ndokwa and Ukwuani Local Government Areas. Ika people are homogenous and speak the Ika language as their native tongue. The people are mainly peasant farmers; only a few are traders and civil servants.⁴¹⁶

The origin of the name Ika is embedded in obscurity and ambiguity. According to a colonial document written by Forde and Jones (1967:49), the present Ika group was used to represent inland parts of the four groups that make up the western Igbo group (Aniocha, Oshimili, Ika, and Ndokwa) found in the present Delta State away from the shores of river Niger. However, some people from the Agbor clan refer to the name Ika as an integrated kingdom of Agbor, the meaning and origin of the name Ika, and the present Ika community.

Within this Ika group, the present Ika community was classified as Northern Ika, along with Aniocha and Oshimili. In contrast, the Ukwuani group was classified as Southern Ika.⁴¹⁷ Nevertheless, the source and meaning of the name Ika and when only the current Ika community and their language began to be known and referred to by that name, which they keep hold off until today, is not clear. However, this dual origin or history was presented as the Bini factor and the Nri factor,

⁴¹⁶ F. A. Onyekpeze, *People, Culture and Socio-Economic Interest of the Ika Nation* Ika: Crisbec. (2003),

⁴¹⁷ Ifeanyi Joseph Onyeche, *Ika People Culture*2009.

<https://www.nairaland.com/251901/ika-people> Accessed April 16, 2022.

respectively.⁴¹⁸ This document shows that the Bini factor seems capital or dominant in the founding and forming a majority of the clans.⁴¹⁹

Still emphasizing that "Ika" is from the Bini language, "Eka," Onyekpeze notes that the name itself came to be. Its etymological essence is rooted in the sagacious remark by Oba Ewuare (1440) about his fleeing subjects, "Soghai Eka no," by which he meant, "Leave them, they are deserters". Oba Ewuare thus used the name "Eka" to refer to a group of deserters from his kingdom.⁴²⁰ This is the first place and time in history when Eka was used to refer to a group of people. This is, thus, the origin of Eka in Ika history.

The leadership structure of the Ika people is similar to that of most other African structures; Ika North is a patriarchal monarchy and has had a succession of rulers since the beginning. The traditional monarch of Agbor is known as Eze or Obi. The present Obi of Agbor is Benjamin Ikechuku, Keagborekuzi I, who goes by Dein, the identity of his ruling family, instead of the Obi or Eze. Dein is an Igbo word by tradition used to address older men as a mark of reverence. Dein is the dialectal alternative of "De" and "Deede" used in other Igbo areas. In Agbor and several other Igbo communities, the word "Dein" evolved to become a respected name for the oldest man in the community. In numerous areas of Igbo land, Umude or Umudei or Umudein means the lineage that produces the King, descendants of the King.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁸ Jane Anwuli Olomu, "Music in Osiezi And Igwe Festivals of Ika North East Local Government Area of Delta State: Potentials for Tourism" *Degree Of Master Of University Of Nigeria, Nsukka Department Of (Music 2014)*, 44

⁴¹⁹ Ibid, 44

⁴²⁰ F. A. Onyekpeze, *The origins and Bini/Igbo factors of the Ika people: Agbor: Royal Pace publishers. (2011)*, 6

⁴²¹ <http://www.ikaworld.com/index.php?mod=article&cat=IkaHistory&Tradition&art>

The drive to establish the Ogele Dynasty, the first "dynasty of rulers of Agbor and lasted between 8000BC and 1260 AD, essentially started in about late summer of 701 BC. The most recent was Ogele XIV".⁴²² The end of the Ogeles' reign leads in the period in office of Regents. With the transitory on of the last regent, Ebogie, the regency time ended, and monarchy returned, but this time with the royal title of Dein, beginning with Ebonka as the first Dein of Agbor. That is how the Dein family, which is on to date, started in 1260 AD.⁴²³

Economically, Ika people, according to Onyekpeze, have a maximum rainfall of 240cm.⁴²⁴ The dominant features of the vegetation are deciduous and evergreen forests. The forest used to abound with economic trees such as Iroko, Abura, afara, Opepe, Obeche, silk-cotton tree, and many others.⁴²⁵ All these beautiful trees have been destroyed due to farming activities. About eighty percent of the population produces root crops such as yam and cassava, and in Delta state, the Ika people are one of the greatest producers of yam and cassava. The cereal crop that has thrived among the people is maize.

Vegetables such as okra, tomatoes, fruited pumpkin, and melon are also cultivated. Even though the rainforest belts livestock such as cattle, sheep, goats, etc., local draft species of these animals resistant to the disease caused by tsetse flies have thrived. Due to the destructive nature of the local cattle on root crops, the people are gradually doing away with it. Birds such as fowl, ducks, and pigeons are allowed to range freely, thereby exposing them to severe danger. The people of the Ika ethnic

icle=207 Archived 2016-03-13 at the Wayback Machine. Accessed on March 28, 2022

⁴²² Obi Efazomor II fiamu Qiama, *Patterns of Growth and Development in Owa Kingdom*, (Agbor: God gift Press, 1979), 56

⁴²³ <https://critiquenewsdotcom.wordpress.com/2016/03/17/the-origin-of-agbor/> Accessed April 16, 2025.

⁴²⁴ F. A. Onyekpeze. *An outline of the Ika people, culture, and social-Economic Interests of the Ika Nation*. Agbor: Krisbec Publishers. 2008], 5

⁴²⁵ Ibid,

group are major farmers and the wealthiest people engaging in the palm kernel business with red oil extraction. The Ika boast of being the home to the sweetest African Palmwine or other forms such as palm wine tapping.⁴²⁶

Observably, the Ika people have also developed large areas of plantation agriculture. Palm plantations are found in large quantities across the various Ika clans. Uzuyem asserts that Palm oil, which was once the source of revenue in the southern part of Nigeria during the colonial era, was part of the contributory effort of the Ika people.⁴²⁷ Even rubber plantation was not left out. However, due to their low demand, it was left to concentrate on palm plantations, which is believed to be more economical. However, most rubber plantations have been destroyed due to the increase in the rubber trade. Even though urban drift and the nonchalant mindset of the youth and healthy men towards farming in current times, one cannot say that the whole agricultural possibility of the area is being strived nowadays.⁴²⁸ Ika people, to a large extent, is dependent on agriculture,

Culturally, Ika culture is vibrant. It contains the Odinali Ika, the rules and regulations handed down orally from generation to generation. Although the towns are not codified, they deal with the land laws as practiced by their ancestors. Observably, Ika culture, in general, has bowed so much to the influence of Western civilization and considerable changes. The indigenes of Agbor township who are of Ika descent and speak the Ika language, with some Bini and small Igbo influence, have a very rich cultural heritage. The different festivals experienced by the people provide an opportunity to showcase the various aspects of the people's culture. Some of these festivals, such as Igbose, which Dein, Ebonka instituted in 1270 AD to mark God's

⁴²⁶ <https://www.pulse.ng/lifestyle/food-travel/ika-tribe-a-brief-walk-into-the-lives-of-this-ethnic-group/zjh1dz9> Accessed April 16, 2025

⁴²⁷ John Ugbedinma Uzuyem, *Interview* by the researcher on June 23, 2024

⁴²⁸ F.C. Okoli, *Politics of Development And Underdevelopment: Theories of Development*. Enugu: Ingenious Creation Services; 2007), 3

appearance to him in Ozanogogo, are unique to the people of that area.⁴²⁹Meanwhile, Festivals that the entire people of Agbor celebrate are Igue, Iwagi (New Yam Festival), and the Osiezi. Igue and Iwagi are celebrated yearly, while Osiezi is celebrated every three years.⁴³⁰The culture of the Ika people is too broad that the researcher chooses to limit it here.

Religiously, Ika people groups Beliefs and Practices according to Onyeodu's observation that initially, the primal, primordial, native religious experience of the people of Ika before the coming of Christianity is African traditional beliefs.⁴³¹It was a collective heritage of the people from their ancestors. African tradition is polytheistic and culture-bound. It is an unwritten religion rich in rites and symbols. The adherents regard it as a part of their culture and way of life into which they are born. Traditional religion permeated the people's day-to-day activities, from the cradle to the grave.

Ika people believe in the Supreme Being and worship it through lesser gods or intermediaries; that is to say, the traditional religion in Ika combines the idea of one Supreme Being or God with the belief in the worship of many environmental deities in Ika traditional religion, God is given priority in all life endeavors. However, individual prayers are widely practiced, especially in times of exceptional necessity. God is in the resort of the desperate when all else has failed. Then, despite his greatness and distance, he can be appealed to directly without special

⁴²⁹ K. Williamson, *Development of Minority Language: Publishing Problems and Prospect*. In "Multilingualism, minority language and language policy in Nigeria" Ed; by Nolue Emenanjo, Agbor: Central Books limited, 1990), 21.

⁴³⁰ http://www.edoworld.net/Origin_Of_Agbor.html. Accessed on March 28, 2022.

⁴³¹ S.O. Onyeidu, *Christianity and Islam in Nigeria the Colonial Factor* Enugu (Pillar Publishers 2002), 220

formulas or intervening priests or godlings.⁴³² Continuing, he opines that the belief in prayers to names and myths about God shows clearly that all Africans do 'conceive of God' so do Ika people of Delta state.

Echinim asserted that the belief in life after death is also responsible for the second burial. So the departed parents may live well and be happy among our ancestors, there arose the need for a second burial".⁴³³He further opines that the people of Ika North have a strong belief in life after death; this is why great attention is paid to the burial of the dead. Because of this, "the children must shave their hair on the death of their parents."⁴³⁴

All these gods are symbolized in carved wooden or metal images and shine through which the chief priests and diviners venerate them. Each kingdom has a local deity in Ika land by which the community is known, feared, and respected. In Agbor, it is called Nwobu, Mbiri Alagba, and at Owa, it is Odele, Ute Okpu Aja, Owerre Qiubor it is Edofi while Qtilokpo Nze, and Umunede Akpai.⁴³⁵These divinities are regarded as protectors of the village as a whole and as a guardian of morality and oath. In the days of tribal warfare, they were carried like the Israelites' arks to war. The people attribute their creation and earthly existence to the Supreme Being or God. In his attributes, the Supreme Being is regarded as the creator, sustainer, ruler, and final judge.

In the context of marriage, Ika people believe in terms of marriage; they believe in procreation and respect for human dignity. Significantly, Ika people believe that for procreation,

⁴³² Ejime D Banwune, *The Interaction of Christianity with Ika Culture: A Reflection*. J. of Arts and Contemporary Society, Vol. 8, No. 1, (2016), 69

⁴³³ K. O. Echinim. *Ndiowa and their Monarchs*. (Benin: Mindex Publishing Company, 2009), 61

⁴³⁴ Ibid, 61

⁴³⁵ Ibid, 71

continuity of human/community, and or perpetuation of the family line, there has to be the union of two persons (man/woman) that is male/female in the Homo sapiens family. Different conditions guide the coming together or the union of man and woman; for both companionship and procreation. In all societies, the man in the union is the husband while the woman is the wife. This union of man and woman or husband and wife as spelled out by respective customs is known as Marriage is refers as Igi Okpohokwadi? (Nwunyen. Or I-luMgba ? marrying a wife.⁴³⁶

Marriage in Ika land is a rich cultural heritage that guarantees unity, joy, and peace among the people. Polygamy is cherished in some circles, especially those who can afford it. Earlier, before the advent of the missionaries, before the introduction of white weddings to the church in Ika, and colonial government, numerous wives to one man sustain a family. First Knocking at the Door Requires: Kola nuts (ogi Agbor) -9 Nos, Alligator Pepper -1No, Bottle of Gordon's Gin -1No, Bottle of Schnapps-1N, Palm wins -1Keg. Presently, their bride price is 10,100, though vary depending on the family, and they also give a certificate.⁴³⁷

Missiological approaches for Witnessing the Gospel among Ika people Group of Delta State Nigeria

As ethnographical in missions, research deals with the ability to immerse in new cultures; thus, this session will provide a possible missiological approach to how missionaries and ministers can witness the Gospel to the Ika people group. Schnabel's classification of missionary work sounds like an equal note: first, missionaries communicate the news of Jesus the Savior to people who have not heard or accepted this news. Second, missionaries should speak a new way of life that replaces, at least partly, the social norms and the behavioral

⁴³⁶ <http://ikaworld.com/319/> Accessed April 17th 2022.

⁴³⁷ <https://infoguidenigeria.com/traditional-marriage-process-ika-delta-state/> Accessed 17th April 2025

patterns of the society in which the new believers have been transformed. Lastly, missionaries incorporate the new believers into a new group of people.⁴³⁸ The following are the missiological approaches to reach the Ika people group.

Missionary must be rooted in the Word /Understanding Ika People Language

It is pertinent to note that anyone reaching a people group must be well-rooted in the word of God. The Word of God progressively transforms our minds as it reshapes our worldview. It transforms our affections as we grow to delight in the things that delight God and to hate the things God hates. It transforms our will as we learn to obey God's commands out of willing hearts.⁴³⁹ Language is one of any culture's most necessary and distinguishing aspects. The Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (UDLRs) held in Barcelona, Spain, in 1996, states that "Language is the key to the heart of a people; when one loses the key, we lose the people. UDLRs (1996) states, "A lost language is a lost tribe, a lost tribe is a lost culture, and a lost culture is a lost civilization. A lost civilization is an invaluable knowledge lost...the whole vast archives of knowledge and experience in them will be consigned to oblivion".⁴⁴⁰

Nigeria is a linguistically prosperous nation. Shows that Nigeria has about five hundred and twenty (520) distinct languages. Among them, three major languages command regional dominance.⁴⁴¹Therefore, the missionary sent and

⁴³⁸ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategy and Method* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 28

⁴³⁹ International Mission Board <https://www.imb.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Foundations-2022-FINAL-FILE-spreads-0623-opt.pdf> Accessed 23rd of June 2025.

⁴⁴⁰ UDLR. "World Conference on Linguistic Rights" Barcelona Spain <http://www.linguistic-declaration.org/versions/angles.pdf>, accessed April 5, 2025

⁴⁴¹ J. C. Eyisi, E. Omazu, O. Akaegbobi, "Language and National Development" (2012), pg 32

commissioned the Gospel to the Ika people must consider their Language. Language is not only the group's spoken Language but also its jargon, idioms, tone, written word, and dialects. Language is the most complex and most important hurdle when a missionary seeks to reach a culture for Christ.⁴⁴²In addition, the person should seek to identify himself as closely as possible with the people you serve to remove any visible and invisible hindrance from their attending to the Gospel and following it.⁴⁴³

Discipleship/Discipline Approach

The word discipleship, derived from the Latin word *discipulus* and the Greek *mathētēs*), is also made up of many facets that add to its meaning. At its uppermost level of definition, discipleship is a lifelong relational process authorized and modeled by Christ himself for the calling, gathering, developing, and equipping of his beloved followers throughout the world.⁴⁴⁴Jesus' last command to his disciples was "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"⁴⁴⁵ (Matt 28:19-20). The goal of the Great Commission is clearly to make disciples. Teaching and baptizing those who believe are the means of achieving this goal. Unfortunately, the baptism of new converts is generally perceived as the goal and the measure of success in many missionary engagements. Apart from focusing

http://www.nou.edu.ng/NOUN_OCL/pdf/SASS/ENG%20453-1.pdf, accessed April 5, 2022

⁴⁴² J. Farnham Mark, *Effective Cross-Cultural Ministry CBTJ 812* (Fall 1992), 59

⁴⁴³ Harold R. Cook, *Missionary Life and Work* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), 63

⁴⁴⁴ Richard J. Bosshardt, "The Case for Incorporating Evangelism Into Discipleship: Paul's Ministry to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 1:1-4:12)-" *MA Thesis*. (2009), 5

⁴⁴⁵ <https://surgeproject.com/blog/3-ways-to-fulfill-the-great-commission> Accessed April 16, 2022.

on the church's fundamental beliefs, little teaching is done after baptism to nurture new converts steadily.

At the cause of discipleship, there is a need to discipline anyone who fails to assimilate; three things are most significant: the truth dimension, cognitive understanding of biblical truth, and leading the people to specific knowledge of scriptural truth. Also, with the rigorous intellectual task of Bible study very often employed by the truth dimension, students of the Bible can easily fall into reliance on study rather than reliance on the Holy Spirit.⁴⁴⁶ As a result, if new converts are not well taught how to apply their intellectual knowledge to their day-to-day challenges, the discipleship has not achieved its goals; the missionary must sacrifice his time, to teaching Ika people.

Secondly, the Allegiance dimension with Loyalty to Christ is an ongoing process that starts at conversion and moves the translation into a closer relationship with Christ and other believers. The goal of this procedure is to grow in the similarity of Christ. Ellen G. White avows that unless believers choose only the disposition of Christ, that is, unless Christ's interests are identified with theirs, they are not fit to be called disciples.⁴⁴⁷

Thirdly is the power dimension. The Bible contains a series of divine power manifestations. Two famous Old Testament power demonstrations are found in Exodus 5-12 (Moses and Pharaoh) and 1 Kings 18 (Elijah and the prophets of Baal). Jesus' ministry also included power demonstrations to challenge and defeat the powers of Satan. His whole ministry was a power demonstration because he was at the center of the Great Controversy.⁴⁴⁸ A spiritual combat is and was a natural part of

⁴⁴⁶ John Wimber, and Kevin Springer, *Power Evangelism* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2009), 187.

⁴⁴⁷ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages Book 1* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 110

⁴⁴⁸ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1940), 257.

Christ's ministry.⁴⁴⁹ According to Luke, it was Jesus' usual practice to heal the sick and deliver people from demon possession soon after entering a new territory (Luke 4:33-35, 39; 5:13-15; 6:6-10, 18-19).

Therefore, the missionary must use this means to disciple the Ika people. Emmanuel Egbunu rightly observed that the neglect of thorough follow-up to conserve the fruits of evangelism has been the significant factor for the prevalence of untaught Christians whose ideas of Christianity are a travesty of biblical discipleship.⁴⁵⁰ For example, the missionary reaching Ika people can start up two-year discipleship. It should be a comprehensive discipleship curriculum.

Critical Authentic Contextualization of the Gospel

Critical Contextualization is a term coined by Paul Hiebert in his effort to answer the subsequent questions: What should an individual do with their old cultural ways when they become Christians, and how should the missionary respond to these traditional beliefs and practices.⁴⁵¹ Critical Contextualization calls for an exegesis of culture, exegesis of Scripture, critical response, and functional substitutes.⁴⁵² Contextualization involves transmitting or translating the Gospel message using local idioms, Language, and culturally recognizable methodologies.⁴⁵³ God's self-revelation will uniquely be linked to concrete history, the history of a select nation that belongs

⁴⁴⁹ Paul G. Hiebert, "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle," in *Perspective on the World Christian Movement*, 4th ed., ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: Institute of International Studies, 2009), 407.

⁴⁵⁰ Emmanuel Egbunu, "To Teach, Baptize, and Nurture New Believers," in *Mission in the 21st Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission*, ed. Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 25.

⁴⁵¹ Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 1985), 171.

⁴⁵² *Ibid*, 186-190.

⁴⁵³ David J. Hesselgrave, and Edward Rommen, *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2000).

to a particular culture, time, and geographical region. It was in the past and throughout times past that God showed himself. It was the history of God's enduring dealings with them for over a thousand years. God had to work with their ability to understand their Language and cultural background.

The biblical history of God's salvation work in Christ, the story of the evangelist, and those being evangelized: Songs, stories, drama, and dance are the best forms of communication. Visual aids like flashcards, flannel pictures, and film slides would help people understand the gospel message. Crossing cultures can help the missionary learn valuable lessons in principles such as honor, respect, relationships, love, discipline, work ethic, and more.⁴⁵⁴ Therefore, there is a need for the missionary to create a chance for personal and corporate growth by learning from each other, by evaluating.

Meanwhile, to reach the Ika people, the research believes that the missionary understands His own culture and others' culture. That is to say, for effective communication to take place, the deep knowledge of the Gospel, the sender, and the receiver is essential. In avows to that, cross-cultural communication must begin with understanding creation, culture, and worldview.⁴⁵⁵ Even cultural differences, such as language, food, dress, attitudes toward time, work habits, and social behavior, are rooted in worldview and can cause frustrating or successful intercultural contacts.

Relational Missions Approach

God is love (1 Jn 4:8), and love found a church through the missions. Mission belongs to God because the initiation and action come from him. The task is also what God is in his

⁴⁵⁴ Stefani Varner, 8 Guidelines for Crossing Cultures with the Gospel <https://www.imb.org/2017/01/20/8-guidelines-crossing-cultures/> Accessed, April 5, 2022.

⁴⁵⁵ Emmanuel Aye, "Christian Perspective on Intercultural Communication," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 35: No. 4, (2007),6.

deepest self: perfect love and affection, creating, healing, and redeeming. God gave his Son without holding back and kept pouring divine goodness into the world. Ugbedinma opines that the Son was the incarnation of the Mission that conveyed cum poured out His lifestyle to the disciples through the disciples, to the world.⁴⁵⁶ The Mission began to have a church, which extends who God is. The church fails to express its core being if it is not the matter. The proclamation of being founded by God himself then becomes a claim without essence or substance.⁴⁵⁷ The church is incarnational, and as the body of Christ represents the *missio Dei* in any community and culture it finds itself in.⁴⁵⁸

The Mission is fueled by nurturing relationships, driven by the Holy Spirit from the heart of God. God loved the world sufficiently to send his Son on a mission to build a redemptive relationship with his creation. The task cannot be successful without building relationships with those not living in a relationship with Christ or even opposing Christ's belief.⁴⁵⁹ The true and perfect relationship model lies within the Trinity and the Godhead, modeling and illustrating the Mission through the Trinity's life.⁴⁶⁰ The main thrust is for the missionaries or minister to build relational missions at achieve a positive result in the task of reaching Ika people, are relationship centered in order to redeem them to the saving Grace.

⁴⁵⁶ Chinedu Evidence Ugbedinma, "Missiological Approaches to Reaching Commercial Sex Workers in Umunede Kingdom Of Delta State" *M.Th Thesis Missiology* Submitted to the School of Postgraduate Studies, The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho 2021), 87.

⁴⁵⁷ B. Bevans, & R.P. Schroeder, *Prophetic dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission today*, Orbis, New York. 2011), 13

⁴⁵⁸ www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext=S2074-77052013000100037 Accessed 27th March, 2025.

⁴⁵⁹ N Cole, *Organic church: Growing faith where life happens*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco. 2005), 1496-1498.

⁴⁶⁰ D. Balia, & K, Kim, *Witnessing to Christ today*, Series, vol II, (eds.), Regnum Books International, Oxford. 2010), 20

Power Evangelism

Power Evangelism involves the manifestation of miracles, signs, and wonders in the name of Jesus Christ, who intends to win souls for the Kingdom. Power Evangelism Power evangelism is a presentation of the gospel message accompanied by a persuasive demonstration of the power/dunamis of God. Power evangelism combines the rational with the trans-rational.⁴⁶¹ White asserted that Power evangelism "is the idea that signs of God's power open the hearts of the unconverted to the Gospel, it is a sort of evangelism where the unsaved are compelled to pay attention by unmistakable evidence that a God of supernatural power is present."⁴⁶²

The missionaries must pray and seek God's power daily because some ministers in Ika land are commercializing the Gospel and are seekers of power in the wrong source, instead of hold to Christ. But, when the people discover a genuine manifestation of God's power through His word, Ika people will accept the Gospel. You have supernatural manifestations like healings, miracles, signs, and wonders at that moment. Signs, wonders, and miracles accompany evangelization and church planting when people see that.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶¹ George. Bama, *Evangelism That Works* Ventura, CA: Regal, 1995), 81

⁴⁶² John. White, *When the Spirit Comes with Power* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 178, 181

⁴⁶³ Jester, Stephen. "The Spirit's Role in Mission: Narrative Pentecostal Theology in West Africa." *International Journal of Pentecostal Missiology* 5 (2017), 101-102

Writing Books and Translating to Ika People Group Language

One way to reach Ika people is through writing because some are educated and can easily read. Then, please post it in their weekly newspaper, Ika, journal, and use their Agbor College/University Library. For instance, the dedication of the long-awaited Ika Bible Translation was on Sunday, March 24, 2019, as the people of the Ika nation witnessed the unveiling/presentation of the entire Holy Bible translated into Ika Language at the Cathedral Church of Ascension, Church of Nigeria – Anglican Communion, Ika Grammar School, Boji-Boji Owa, Delta State. The Ika Bible translation project started in 1999 that is about twenty years ago, through a medical doctor and his wife, Dr. & Mrs. C.O. Anya, who, in their tenacity to ensure the continuity of the project, sold their parcel of land when the financial situation became frightening as the printing was about to commence.⁴⁶⁴ Missionaries must ensure to learn, speak and write books in Ika language, looking at the effort of this medical doctor and his wife.

Empowerment programs and Sponsorship

Empowerment is generally accepted as a multi-dimensional concept, although all its dimensions need not necessarily correlate to the same set of determinants or outcomes. Empowerment implies giving authority, enabling a person or group to gain power over their limitations or overriding circumstances.⁴⁶⁵ One of the major problems affecting Ika people is the desperation to make money and be relevant, which has laid most of the youth in internet fraudsters (Yahoo Yahoo)

⁴⁶⁴ The complete Bible now in Ika Language
<https://www.ikaweekly.com/complete-bible-now-in-ika-language/>
Accessed April 5, 2022

⁴⁶⁵ Oghenekohwo, Jonathan E., and Young D. Tonunarigha. "Empowerment Programmes of Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) and Socio-economic Well-being of Members in Yenagoa Community, Bayelsa State, Nigeria" *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies* 7, no. 4 (2019): 193.

youths are no more ready to work, be involved in farming in Ika land. So, for the missionaries to reach them, they must be empowered. Patrick Okoh affirms that empowering Ika people may not be easy. However, it requires intensive financial Sponsorship.⁴⁶⁶ Sponsorship is the act of supporting a person's organization or activity by giving money, encouragement, or other assistance.⁴⁶⁷ This empowerment cut across health, education, trading, agriculture, skill acquisition, computer centers, and opening ball holes for the people.

Conclusion

This study has examined the ethnographical study of the Ika people group by surveying their worldview, value system, norms, beliefs, and practices. It investigated the origin of the name Ika: Language, political structure, leadership development, economic life, cultural life, religious life, and marriage life. It is a reality that the Ika people understood God's existence in their religious worldview before the coming of Christianity. The study finds that despite the civilizations and the emergence of Christianity, some people still believe and practice syncretism, even among ministers. Also, the study reveals some missiological approaches to witnessing the Gospel among the Ika people group.

The researcher submits that adopting and applying these approaches, which include missionaries, ministers, and anthropologists being rooted with the word of God, and understanding Ika language and speaking, discipleship and discipline, critical authentic Contextualization of the Gospel, power evangelism through writing book and translating to it to Ika language, relational, missions approach, and empowerment programs and Sponsorship it will bring a lasting impact on the people; It recommends missionaries, ministers should contend

⁴⁶⁶ Patrick Okoh, *Interview Online* by Researcher April 17, 2022

⁴⁶⁷ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sponsorship>
Accessed March 18, 2022

for the Christian faith and not compromised the Gospel amidst changing world.

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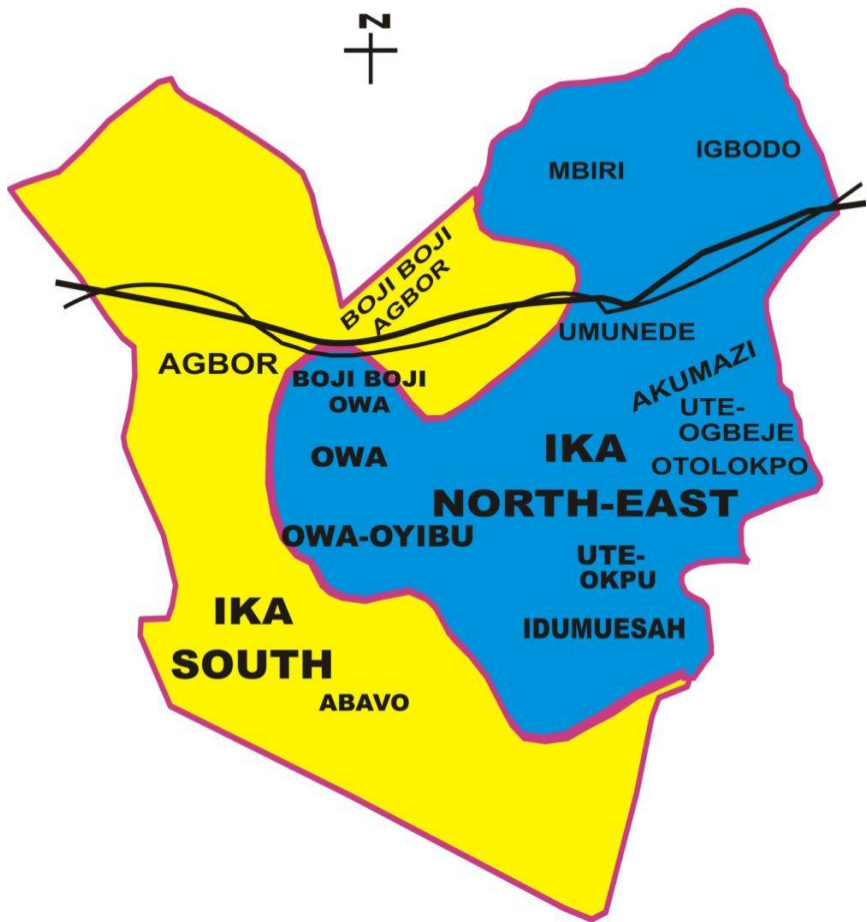
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Appendix I⁴⁶⁸

MAP OF IKA LAND



⁴⁶⁸ Evelyn Onwaniban Ika: Igbo or Edo
https://www.academia.edu/42798338/IKA_IGBO_or_EDO accessed April 5, 2022.

Missions Activities of the Early Church and its Implications for 21st Century Missionaries

Chinedu Evidence Ugbedinma

ABSTRACT

The early Church missions were fundamental in the spread of Christianity worldwide. This research explores a biblical overview of the mission activities of the early Church, the strategies used by early missionaries, the challenges they faced, and the implications of these activities for contemporary missionaries. The researcher adopted a historical and descriptive method. Hence, there is a need to explore the early church missions, which began with the commissioning of the apostles by Jesus Christ in 30 AD–100 AD and were characterized by the preaching of the Gospel, church planting, and the establishment of Christian communities. The missionaries employed various strategies, including contextualization, local language use, and forming partnerships. However, the study identifies the early church missions' three main challenges: persecution. Despite these challenges, the early missionaries persevered and successfully spread Christianity worldwide. Therefore, there is a need for Contemporary missionaries to learn from the early Church's example by utilizing effective strategies, such as contextualization and forming partnerships with local communities. 21st Century missionaries must be aware of the role of the Holy Spirit in their missions work and be open to the prayer, signs, and wonders that may accompany their preaching of the Gospel, and the researcher gives an elegant conclusion.

Keywords: Early Church Missions, Contemporary Missionaries

Introduction

The early church missions refer to the efforts and activities of the early Christian Church to spread the message of the Gospel beyond Jerusalem and throughout the world. The early Church was

characterized by its zeal for evangelization, through holding solely to the Bible, and this led to the establishment of many communities of believers in different regions. The early church missions were inspired by the Great Commission given by Jesus Christ to his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. Various mission models, including itinerant preaching, church planting, and social engagement, marked the early church missions. The early Church recognized the importance of contextualizing the Gospel message to the cultural and religious contexts of the people they were evangelizing.

Hence, it burdens the researcher that the above principle is still relevant today for 21st-century missionaries, who will reach the unreached group and re-evangelize society with the Gospel in a meaningful and relevant way. The early Church also faced many challenges and obstacles. Some of those challenges faced by the early must be highly related to what the present missionaries face today in their missions endeavor. However, they persevered and remained faithful to their mission, ultimately spreading the Gospel message worldwide. This paper investigates the early Church's holistic missions and their implications for the 21st-century missionaries who are saddled with the responsibility of world evangelization.

Biblical Centrality of the Gospel as Basis for Early Church Missions

Early Church modeled their integrated mission through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, who, using the words of Isaiah, defined his holistic mission in Luke: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Luke 4:18-19ESV). Jesus was sent to preach the good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom from physical, sociopolitical, and spiritual bondage.⁴⁶⁹ His mission included a proclamation of the good news (Evangelism), compassion, and social justice. The four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John portray Jesus as the sent one. “Sending” was an important element in the Old Testament picture of mission.

⁴⁶⁹ A. Scott Moreau, *Introducing World Mission: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 47-48.

Jesus was sent by God with a purpose to save the world (John. 3:16), to do God's will (John 4:34), teach in synagogues, preach the good news, and heal people (Matthew 9:35-38), suffer on behalf of his people (Mark 8:31). God sent Jesus (John 15:26), after resurrection Jesus returns to God and sends the Holy Spirit to his followers (John 15:26). In the power of Holy Spirit Jesus sends his disciple into world to do what Jesus did on earth (John 20:21-22, Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-18, Luke 24:47). Therefore, it is evident that in His ministry Jesus both went about teaching and preaching (Matthew 4:23, 9:35) and went about doing good and healing (Acts 10:38). Early churches had implemented these missions. They lived with the same principle of integral missions. Therefore, the proper way to study the Bible should be "messianically and missionally."⁴⁷⁰ Throughout the history, one can see churches participating in mission of the One Triune God who desires "the healing of the nations" (Rev 22:2), with a new humanity "measured by nothing less than the full stature of Christ" (Eph. 4:13) and "wholly devoted to doing God's will" (Col 4:12).⁴⁷¹ The 21st century missionaries should emulate the early missionary in spreading Christ through making Bible the basis of her theology.

Strategies the Early Church Used in Their Missions Activities

This session will discuss five major strategies the early Church employed amidst several strategies in their missions work to spread the Gospel throughout the ancient world.

Personal Evangelism The early Church relied heavily on personal Evangelism, with believers sharing the Gospel with their friends, family, and acquaintances. This approach was particularly effective in the early stages of the Church's growth when no established churches or formal structures existed. Green argue that personal Evangelism was one of the most effective strategies used by the early Church in spreading the Gospel. He notes, "it is almost certain that the church

⁴⁷⁰ Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narratives*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006),30; Wright uses the word Missional rather than Missiological because Jesus was not only offering a fresh theological reflection on Scriptures but also committing his disciples to the mission.

⁴⁷¹ Gerald H. Anderson, in "Missiology," <http://mis.sagepub.com/content/1/1/3.full.pdf+html> Accessed August 21, 2023.

would not have grown as fast or as effectively as it did if individual members had not taken personal responsibility for evangelism."⁴⁷² Darrell Guder, in his book "Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America", emphasizes the importance of the early Church's personal evangelism strategy. Guder notes that the early Church's growth was largely due to the efforts of individual believers sharing the gospel message with others in their communities.⁴⁷³

House Churches The early Church often met in homes, with believers gathering for worship, fellowship, and teaching. These house churches provided a safe space for believers to grow and share the Gospel with others. Paul Pierson notes that house churches were particularly effective in reaching people in the early church context. He writes, "House churches provided an ideal setting for early Christian Evangelism and discipleship. They were small, personal, and flexible."⁴⁷⁴ John Mark Terry and J.D. Payne suggest that the Early Church had a holistic approach to missions that included Evangelism, discipleship, church planting, and social action. They state that "the early Church proclaimed the Gospel through preaching, teaching, miracles, and personal witness. They also planted churches, trained leaders, and ministered to the poor and needy."⁴⁷⁵

Traveling Missionaries The early Church also sent out traveling missionaries to establish churches and spread the Gospel in new areas. These missionaries often traveled in pairs, as Jesus had instructed the apostles in Luke 10:1-12. Ralph Winter emphasizes the importance of traveling missionaries in the early Church and their role in establishing new churches. He writes, "The traveling evangelist was a key factor in the initial spread of the gospel and the founding of churches."⁴⁷⁶ He further, notes that Paul's missionary journeys were

⁴⁷² R. Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?*. Wipf and Stock Publishers (2011), 93

⁴⁷³ Darrell L. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 49

⁴⁷⁴ Paul E. Pierson, *The Dynamics of Christian Mission: History Through a Missiological Perspective*. Baker Academic, 2009), 61

⁴⁷⁵ John Mark Terry and J.D. Payne, eds., *Missionary Methods: Research, Reflections, and Realities* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013), 1.

⁴⁷⁶ Ralph D. Winter, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*. William Carey Library, 2009), 81

characterized by his willingness to learn local languages and customs, and his emphasis on empowering local leaders.⁴⁷⁷ The researcher is of the opinion that present missionaries learn from the early missionaries and their methods for effective Gospel proclamation.

Contextualization: The early Church also sought to contextualize the gospel message to different cultures and languages. For example, when preaching at the Areopagus in Athens, the apostle Paul spoke to the Greeks about their own poets and philosophers (Acts 17:16-34). Kraft stresses the importance of contextualization in the early Church and suggests that contemporary missionaries should follow their example. He writes, "The early Christians effectively contextualized the Gospel into their day's religious and cultural systems. We must do the same."⁴⁷⁸ Hesselgrave avers the early Church's contextualization strategy was critical to its success. He argues that missionaries today must also strive to contextualize the gospel message effectively to communicate it to people from different cultures and backgrounds.⁴⁷⁹

Miracles and Signs: The early Church also used miracles and signs to authenticate the gospel message and draw people to faith. These included healings, exorcisms, and the speaking of tongues. McGavran suggests that the use of miracles and signs was a critical factor in the growth of the early Church. He writes, "The use of miracles as signs and confirmations of the gospel was a common and expected practice in the early church, and it continues to be so in many parts of the world today."⁴⁸⁰ According to Bosch, the Early Church's strategy was to "proclaim the gospel to all nations, baptize those who responded in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and then teach them to obey everything that Jesus had commanded."⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid,

⁴⁷⁸ Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Orbis Books, 1979) 31

⁴⁷⁹ David J. Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: North America and Beyond*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000),

⁴⁸⁰ Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*. Eerdmans, 1990), 78

⁴⁸¹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 96.

Challenges the Early Church Missions Encountered

There were several challenges that the early church missions encountered, for the researcher limits itself to summarizing the challenges they encountered. Persecution and Martyrdom Haykin, avers that the early Church faced persecution and martyrdom from both the Jewish and Roman authorities, making it difficult for them to carry out their evangelistic activities.⁴⁸² Kreider, asserts that the challenge of persecution and martyrdom hindered the Gospel's spread and discouraged many early believers.⁴⁸³ The next is the referred Cultural and linguistic barriers, The early Church had to navigate cultural and linguistic barriers as they took the Gospel to different parts of the world. Sanneh, affirms that the early Church had to learn new languages and adapt to new cultures to communicate the Gospel effectively.⁴⁸⁴ This made it difficult for missionaries to communicate the Gospel effectively to different peoples and nations.⁴⁸⁵

The early Church faced resistance from religious and political leaders who were threatened by the growth of Christianity. This often led to persecution and suppression of the Church. The challenge of opposition from political and religious leaders who perceived Christianity as a threat to their power and influence.⁴⁸⁶ The early Church did not have access to modern technology and transportation systems, which made it difficult for them to travel long distances and spread the Gospel to remote areas. The challenge of inadequate resources and support for missions work which limited the reach and impact of early missionaries.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸² Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Missionary Life: Saints and the Evangelization of Europe, 400-1050* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2001), 14-23

⁴⁸³ Alan Kreider, "The Early Church and the Mission of God," *Missiology* 34, no. 1 (January 2006): 9-22.

⁴⁸⁴ Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?: The Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 5-24.

⁴⁸⁵ Lamin Sanneh, "The Early Church and the Challenge of Translation," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 25, no. 4 (October 2001): 154-157.

⁴⁸⁶ Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

⁴⁸⁷ Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1996).

The early Church often had limited financial resources to support their missionary endeavors. This is evident in the apostle Paul's appeal for financial assistance in his letter to the Romans (Romans 15:22-33). Mark 6:7-9 - Jesus sent out the twelve apostles with no money, bag, or extra clothing, telling them to rely on the hospitality of those they met. Acts 3:6-7 - Peter and John encountered a beggar who asked them for money. Peter replied, "I have no silver or gold, but what I do have I give you." Acts 4:32-37 - transportation options, which made it difficult for them to travel and spread the Gospel. This is evident in the apostle Paul's frequent use of walking and sailing in his missionary journeys (Acts 20:13-38).

The early Church also had to deal with theological controversies and debates, such as the nature of Christ, the role of the Holy Spirit, and the relationship between faith and works. They also faced internal conflicts and divisions, such as the split between the Eastern and Western churches, which sometimes hindered their mission work. There was another challenge of syncretism, which is the blending of different religious beliefs and practices. This made it difficult for the early Church to maintain the purity of the gospel message. The challenge of syncretism which led to the blending of pagan beliefs and practices with Christian teachings.⁴⁸⁸ The early Church recognized that their mission work was not just a physical effort but also a spiritual one. They faced spiritual warfare and demonic opposition, which required prayer and spiritual discernment.

Missions of the Early Church its Implications to contemporary Missionaries

The missions of the early Church have significant implications for contemporary missionaries. The significance of contextualizing the Gospel: The early Church contextualized the gospel message to the various cultures and contexts in which they ministered. This approach is still relevant today, as contemporary missionaries should seek to communicate the Gospel in culturally appropriate ways.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁸ Ralph D. Winter, "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 12, no. 3 (July 1988): 104-110.

⁴⁸⁹ John R. Franke, "The Church in Mission: A Theology of the Missional Church," in *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, ed. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 33-50.

The early church missionaries effectively spread the Gospel by contextualizing their message to the cultures and languages of the people they were ministering to. Similarly, contemporary missionaries should contextualize their message and methods to the cultures and languages of the people they are evangelizing.⁴⁹⁰ As missionaries get involved in personal Evangelism and corporate evangelization of the world

The need for Effective cross-cultural Evangelism, The early Church was committed to taking the Gospel to all nations, which should also be a priority for contemporary missionaries.⁴⁹¹ The early church missionaries were effective in Evangelism because they were committed to sharing the Gospel, engaging with the culture, and living out their faith in word and deed. Perkins asserts that “Evangelism is not fast talk aimed at gaining converts; it is a ministry in *word and deed* that leads people to the place where they can activate their faith in the person of Jesus' for themselves. Jesus never put evangelism and social action at odds, so neither should we.”⁴⁹² Meanwhile, 21st-century missionaries should learn from their example and strive for the same level of commitment and effectiveness. One could see the early church missions adapting to the people's culture. Cultural Adaptation: As the early church missionaries did, contemporary missionaries must adapt their message and methods to the cultural and religious contexts they encounter.⁴⁹³

The role of the Holy Spirit in missions: The early Church relied heavily on the Holy Spirit for guidance and power in their mission work.⁴⁹⁴ 21st Century missionaries should likewise depend fully on the Holy Spirit's guidance and power as they engage in cross-cultural Evangelism. Christy quoted Harold Lindsell that the Two major

⁴⁹⁰ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 55-63.

⁴⁹¹ Michael Goheen, "The Church's Mission and Ours," in *Introducing Christian Mission Today: Scripture, History and Issues*, ed. Michael W. Goheen (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 59-74.

⁴⁹² J Perkins, *Beyond Charity: The Call To Christian Community Development*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 83.

⁴⁹³ Roland Muller, *The Messenger, the Message, and the Community: Three Critical Issues for the Cross-Cultural Church Planter* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2000), 31-42.

⁴⁹⁴ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 159-181.

obstacles facing those who seek to reassert the Holy Spirit's role in missions are the human tendency toward self-reliance and ecclesiastical bureaucracies, which inhibit one from following any guidance of the Holy Spirit, which breaks policy.⁴⁹⁵ These two obstacles must be overcome so that missions, empowered by the Holy Spirit, can occur. The early church missionaries relied heavily on the power of the Holy Spirit in their evangelistic work for authentic conversion and harvest of souls for the Kingdom.

The importance of community: The early missionaries recognized the need to learn the language, customs, and values of the people they served to effectively communicate the Gospel's message.⁴⁹⁶ By showing respect for the community's culture and traditions, the missionaries were able to build trust and establish credibility with the people they were serving. Another lesson is the importance of meeting the physical needs of the community. The early missionaries recognized that people's physical needs often had to be addressed before they would be receptive to spiritual teachings. They, therefore, engaged in various forms of social and humanitarian work such as providing medical care, education, and economic empowerment. This approach not only helped to improve the well-being of the community but also helped to create an environment in which the Gospel could be shared more effectively. The early Church placed a high value on community and fellowship, which was evident in their mission work.⁴⁹⁷ Contemporary missionaries should likewise prioritize building relationships with the communities they serve.

The need for Perseverance: The early Church faced significant challenges in its mission work, including persecution and opposition.⁴⁹⁸ Contemporary missionaries should likewise be

⁴⁹⁵ Mark W. Christy, "The Role of the Holy Spirit In Missions from a Biblical Perspective" Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary *Ph.D Dissertation*. 2009), 6

⁴⁹⁶ A. F. Walls, *The missionary movement in Christian history: Studies in the transmission of faith*. Orbis Books. (1996),

⁴⁹⁷ Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen G. Burnett, eds., *Christians in the Twenty-First Century*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 45-63.

⁴⁹⁸ Everett Ferguson, *Church History, vol. 1: From Christ to the Pre-Reformation: The Rise and Growth of the Church in Its Cultural, Intellectual, and Political Context*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 160-185.

prepared to face challenges and endure difficult times. The early Church faced significant opposition and persecution from religious and political authorities. Contemporary missionaries in Africa may also face opposition and persecution, but they can take heart from the example of the early Church and persevere in their mission work.⁴⁹⁹

Need for Indigenous Leadership: The early church missionaries empowered and trained local leaders to carry on the work of Evangelism and discipleship. Contemporary missionaries in Africa should also prioritize the training and empowerment of indigenous leaders, as they are key to the long-term sustainability of the Church.⁵⁰⁰ Paul argues that this requires the involvement of indigenous leaders who deeply understand their own cultures and contexts. He believes that indigenous leadership is critical in helping to bridge the gap between the gospel and local cultures.⁵⁰¹

Discipleship: The early Church emphasized the importance of making disciples, not just converts.⁵⁰² This call to discipleship is still relevant today; as contemporary missionaries seek to not only evangelize but also disciple new believers. Bosch, asserts that discipleship is key to the growth and maturity of new believers, and is essential for the establishment of healthy, sustainable churches.⁵⁰³ The contemporary must seek to disciple the people they are contacting; otherwise, their efforts may yield no result.

Partnership: The early church missions were sustained by prayer and support from the sending churches and their communities. Contemporary missionaries should seek to establish partnerships

⁴⁹⁹ Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 36-48

⁵⁰⁰ John Mbiti, *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background: A Study of the Encounter between New Testament Theology and African Traditional Concepts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 97-105.

⁵⁰¹ P. G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*. Baker Academic. (1985).

⁵⁰² Darrell L. Guder, "Missional and Evangelical: A New Partnership in Evangelical Theology," in *Evangelicals and the Challenge of World Religions*, ed. Timothy C. Tennent (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 225-240.

⁵⁰³ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 361-72.

with churches and communities to sustain their missions.⁵⁰⁴ Alawode, argues that the early Church was successful in its mission work because it could form partnerships with other churches, individuals, and organizations to support its work.⁵⁰⁵ He further suggests that contemporary missionaries can learn from the early Church's partnership approach by cultivating relationships with local communities, empowering local leaders, and collaborating with other organizations. He further argues that partnerships are essential for sustainable and effective missions and that missionaries must intentionally build these relationships.⁵⁰⁶

Prayer, Signs, and Wonders The early church missionaries were often accompanied by praying together. Ryken says, "The first Christians were always getting together to pray, especially in times of uncertainty or persecution. Prayer was part of their daily routine, privately and in public worship at the temple. They prayed because they understood that they could accomplish nothing without the work of God's Spirit."⁵⁰⁷ Signs and wonders is an authentication of the message of the messengers. While this is not always the case for contemporary missionaries, they can still seek to demonstrate the power and truth of the Gospel through their lives and ministries.⁵⁰⁸ However, it is essential to note that signs and wonders should never be the sole focus of Christian missions. The message of the Gospel must remain central, and signs and wonders should serve as a confirmation of the message rather than a replacement for it.⁵⁰⁹ Furthermore, signs and

⁵⁰⁴ Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2010), 255-63.

⁵⁰⁵ Akinyemi O. Alawode, "Challenges and prospects of partnership among local and foreign Christian missionaries in Nigeria." *HTS Theologese Studies/Theological Studies* 76, no. 3 (2020) 1-9

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid,

⁵⁰⁷ Philip Graham Ryken, *City on a Hill Reclaiming the Biblical Pattern for the Church in the 21st century*. (Chicago, Moody Publishers, 2003), 27

⁵⁰⁸ Craig S. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 270-78.

⁵⁰⁹ Paul G. Hiebert, *Missiological Implications of Epistemological Shifts: Affirming Truth in a Modern/Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999), 152-153.

wonders should never be used to manipulate or exploit people. They must always be exercised in love and humility to glorify God.

Conclusion

This work has attempted to investigate the missions of the early Church and its significant implications for contemporary missionaries. By looking at the example of the early Church, their concept of missions, and the strategies that empowered them to carry out their missions activities, coupled with the challenges they encountered at the cause of evangelizing the Gospel message and implications to contemporary missionaries. The research argued that the early missionaries prioritized mission's effort in training and empowering local leaders, holding to the Biblical tenets as they contextualized their message and methods to the cultures and languages of the people they were ministering to, and relied on the power of the Holy Spirit for guidance and empowerment. As they face opposition and persecution, missionaries can take heart from the example of the early Church and persevere in their mission work, knowing that God is with them. Therefore, contemporary missionaries can work towards establishing healthy, sustainable churches that will continue to grow and thrive long after they have left through following the footprint of the early Church's mission in reaching all nations.

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Am I a Good Neighbor? An Exegetical Study of Luke 10:25-37

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Johnson Emmanuel Ochaje
Philemon Ibrahim**

Abstract

The narrative found in Luke 10:25-37 has long served as a significant reference point for preachers and biblical scholars. This passage has been subject to countless interpretations, addressing various themes ranging from ritual purity to personal safety, and extending to contemporary issues such as advocacy for freedom fighters, universal healthcare, and the ethical obligation to support the marginalized within society. The diversity of these interpretations often reflects an intention to connect the parable with current societal concerns and the evolving needs of the audience. However, many of these analyses risk misinterpretation, underscoring the importance of a contextual approach to the text through the exegetical method inherent in biblical scholarship. Such an approach necessitates an examination of the genre, translation, historical context, and principles of textual criticism, ultimately fostering a clearer theological understanding that facilitates appropriate applications of the passage. Researchers propose that the primary objective of the parable of the Good Samaritan is to prompt self-evaluation, encouraging the question, "Am I a good neighbor?" rather than merely inquiring, "Who is my neighbor?" This parable serves as an ethical exhortation to lead a life characterized by the treatment one seeks to receive, emphasizing the importance of caring for and supporting the neighbors we encounter in our daily lives.

INTRODUCTION

The parable of the Good Samaritan is one of the major parables, well-crafted and the most quoted parables in the entire Bible. This parable has been referred to by both Christians and non-Christians. This is where English men got their concept of a Good Samaritan. When a person receives a favour from a random stranger, that “very stranger” is been referred to as a Good Samaritan, for this reason, the parable is attractive and fictional but truthful in its moral lessons and message. Notably, the parable of the compassionate Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) has been among the most famous narrative portrayals that were exemplified by Jesus. In the parable, Jesus is abruptly interrupted by an expert in the law who intends to test the Lord (Luke 10:25). The expert asks, “Who is my neighbour?” (Luke 10:29b). The paradigm of the good Samaritan parable serves to demonstrate that the demand to love God has to be complemented with the command to love a fellow neighbour beyond personal biasness and affiliations. The question of being a neighbour and knowing a neighbour is the thrust of the parable and the fundamental argument of this paper. The interpretation of the parables ought to be accomplished with the connection with Jesus’ ministry in first-century Palestine and then ask the following question especially when it comes to the parables of the Good Samaritan; what connection would the hearers have made? What would have given them an unexpected shock, given their social and cultural assumptions and relations? Two things require attentiveness, such as structure and parallelism, as well as the investigation of the cultural and social realities that appear in the paragraph.⁵¹⁰ There is something so very important that Dodd rightly notes that the parable has the character of an argument, in that it entices the hearer to the judgment upon the situation depicted,

⁵¹⁰ David A. Desilva, *New Testament: Contexts, Methods And Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2004), 340

and then challenges him/her, directly or by implication, to apply judgment to the matter in hand.⁵¹¹

THE PREVIOUS STUDIES ON GOOD SAMARITAN

The narrative of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 warrants a thorough study that considers the contributions of various scholars who have approached it through different lenses and methodologies. One notable work is by Moses N. Mwangi in *"Who Is My Neighbor? A Challenge In Our Modern Society. A Study Of The Parable Of The Good Samaritan (Lk. 10: 25-37)"*,⁵¹² where he delves into the theological implications of this passage. Mwangi emphasizes that the choices readers make can indicate their alignment with Jesus' teachings. He advocates for a methodology that is descriptive, comparative, and exegetical, enabling the Gospel message of Good News to resonate with Christians committed to biblical study. In another perspective, Chandra Han and colleagues in *"Solidarity in Christianity to Foster 'Bhineka Tunggal Ika': A Biblical Analysis of the Good Samaritan"*⁵¹³ aim to leverage the Good Samaritan narrative to promote unity within the nation. Their work underscores the importance of fostering solidarity among diverse groups, drawing directly from the text of Luke 10:25-37.

Furthermore, J. M. Darley and C. D. Batson⁵¹⁴ conducted a fascinating simulated field experiment examining the behavior of seminary students in response to a real "victim." Their findings revealed that those primed to reflect on the Good

⁵¹¹ Desilva, *New Testament*, 340-350

⁵¹² Moses N. Mwangi, "Who Is My Neighbor? A Challenge In Our Modern Society. A Study Of The Parable Of The Good Samaritan (Lk. 10: 25-37)," (Long Essay, Bachelor of Arts Degree in Religious Studies, Catholic University of Eastern Africa, 2021)

⁵¹³ Chandra Han et al., "Solidarity in Christianity to Foster "Bhineka Tunggal Ika": A Biblical Analysis of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37," *Pharos Journal of Theology* Vol. 104/ 1 (2023):1-14

⁵¹⁴ Darley, J. M and Batson C. D. "From Jerusalem to Jericho": A Study of Situational and Dispositional Variables In Helping Behavior." *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 27 (1973):100-108.

Samaritan parable were not more likely to help than those who discussed unrelated topics, highlighting complex interactions between faith and action. Additionally, the author of "Implications of Good Samaritan Laws for Physicians"⁵¹⁵ discusses how such laws incentivize the provision of emergency care by protecting medical professionals from civil liability, thereby reinforcing the spirit of the Good Samaritan in a legal context. Yong Lu's study, "The Good Samaritan Parable Revisited: A Survey During the COVID-19 Pandemic,"⁵¹⁶ explores the motivations of the priest, Levite, and Samaritan through the lens of regulatory focus theory. It reveals the interplay between goal pursuit and prosocial behavior during crisis situations, specifically in the context of the pandemic. Despite the varied approaches to the text, there remains a significant gap in scholarly work regarding a reflective, exegetical study of the Good Samaritan within the context of ethical living, particularly in Nigeria and Africa as a whole. Addressing this deficiency is crucial for fostering a deeper understanding and application of the parable's teachings in today's world.

EXEGETICAL STUDY OF LUKE 10:25-37

Greek Text

²⁵ Και ιδου, νομικος τις εσηκωθη πειραζων αυτον και λεγων· Διδασκαλε, τι πραξας θελω κληρονομησει ζων αιωνιον;

²⁶ Ο δε ειπε προς αυτον· Εν τω νομω τι ειναι γεγραμμενον; πως αναγινωσκες;

⁵¹⁵ Timothy J Paterick, et al., "Implications of Good Samaritan Laws for Physicians," *The Journal of Medical Practice Management* 23(6) (2008):372-5

⁵¹⁶ Yong Lu, "The Good Samaritan Parable Revisited: A Survey During the COVID-19 Pandemic," <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9043862/> accessed 13 December, 2025

27 Ο δε αποκριθεις ειπε· Θελεις αγαπα Κυριον τον Θεον σου εξ ολης της καρδιας σου και εξ ολης της ψυχης σου και εξ ολης της δυναμεως σου και εξ ολης της διανοιας σου, και τον πλησιον σου ως σεαυτον.

28 Ειπε δε προς αυτον· Ορθως απεκριθης· τουτο καμνε και θελεις ζησει.

29 Αλλ' εκεινος, θελων να δικαιοση εαυτον, ειπε προς τον Ιησουν· Και τις ειναι ο πλησιον μου;

30 Και αποκριθεις ο Ιησους ειπεν· Ανθρωπος τις κατεβαινεν απο Ιερουσαλημ εις Ιεριχω και περιεπεσεν εις ληστας· οιτινες και γυμνωσαντες αυτον και καταπληγωσαντες, ανεχωρησαν αφησαντες αυτον ημιθανη.

31 Κατα συγκυριαν δε ιερευς τις κατεβαινε δι' εκεινης της οδου, και ιδων αυτον επερασεν απο το αλλο μερος.

32 Ομοιος δε και Λευιτης, φθασας εις τον τοπον, ελθων και ιδων επερασεν απο το αλλο μερος.

33 Σαμαρειτης δε τις οδοιπορων ηλθεν εις τον τοπον οπου ητο, και ιδων αυτον εσπλαγχνισθη,

34 και πλησιασας εδεσε τας πληγας αυτου επιχεων ελαιον και οινον, και επιβιβασας αυτον επι το κτηνος αυτου, εφερεν αυτον εις ξενοδοχειον και επεμεληθη αυτου·

35 και την επαυριον, οτε εξηρχετο, εκβαλων δυο δηναρια εδωκεν εις τον ξενοδοχον και ειπε προς αυτον· Επιμεληθητι αυτου, και ο, τι συ δαπανησης περιυλειον, εγω οταν επανελθω θελω σοι αποδωσει.

36 Τις λοιπον εκ των τριων τουτων σοι φαινεται οτι εγεινε πλησιον του εμπεσοντος εις τους ληστας;

37 Ο δε ειπεν· Ο ποιησας το ελεος εις αυτον· Ειπε λοιπον προς αυτον ο Ιησους· Υπαγε και συ, καμνε ομοιος.

English Translation

25 Behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read it?"

27 He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself."

28 He said to him, "You have answered correctly. Do this, and you will live."

29 But he, desiring to justify himself, asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbour?"

³⁰ Jesus answered, "A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

³¹ By chance a certain priest was going down that way. When he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

³² In the same way a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

³³ But a certain Samaritan, as he travelled, came where he was. When he saw him, he was moved with compassion,

³⁴ came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. He set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

³⁵ On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii and gave them to the host, and said to him, 'Take care of him. Whatever you spend beyond that, I will repay you when I return.'

³⁶ Now which of these three do you think seemed to be a neighbour to him who fell among the robbers?"

³⁷ He said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

THE GENRE'S ISSUES OF THE TEXT

Identifying the genre of a written work clarifies some of the shared expectations both the author and audience bring to a text. In the case of Luke's gospel, two items have influenced the scholarly consensus concerning genre. Luke's gospel, as a single work, could be classified as an ancient biography.⁵¹⁷ However, because the Gospel is considered to be the first volume of a larger two-volume work (Luke-Acts), critics have used the composite two-volume work to determine genre.⁵¹⁸ Talk about Genre in a simple term is a literary classification that describes the broad contours and features of a particular literary work. There are several represented within the biblical text and the following are inclusive; poetry, letters, apocalyptic, proverbs and psalms some of the books that are classified as

⁵¹⁷ David Aune, *The New Testament in its Literary Environment* (ed. W.A. Meeks; LEC 8; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 77

⁵¹⁸ Aune, *Literary Environment*, 77.

narrative are Gospel and Acts.⁵¹⁹ This narrative is often a story in which characters are followed through various events that are connected to form a plot with an initial conflict and eventual resolution, and this narrative genre often retells history, that is, events that occurred and people who lived within space and time⁵²⁰ and sometimes fictional parables to communicate truth for practical living.

The text of a Good Samaritan is our consideration in this narrative genre. The ethical impulse of this good Samaritan's narrative style is very important to give careful attention to the narrative genre of the text. The periscope is categorized into the so-called 'example narratives', a genre of parable, differentiated from 'similitude' and 'parable'.⁵²¹ This kind of narrative is explained by Jülicher who understands this type of figurative speech to be "narratives that demonstrate a general set of religious-moral character in the clothes of a particularly impressively designed isolated case" and "that confirm the general truth through the evidence of the action".⁵²² The narrative is anything but unambiguous. It provokes questions, and it offers alternative actions. The listeners are prompted to enter into various roles, to experience mixed emotions.⁵²³ These are all criteria that identify the narrative as a parable, which is not less appellative and action-oriented than the narrative example but denies a simple ethical application. The implicit

⁵¹⁹ Michael H. Burer, "Narrative Genre: Studying the Story", 197-219, in Darrell L. Bock and Buist M. Fanning, (eds.), *Interpreting the New Testament Text: Introduction to the Art and Science of Exegesis* (Wheaton, Illinois: Good News Publishers, 2006), 1 98

⁵²⁰ Burer, "Narrative Genre", 199

⁵²¹ R Zimmermann, "The Etho-Poietic Of The Parable Of The Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37). The Ethics Of Seeing In A Culture Of Looking The Other Way", *VERBUM ET ECCLESIA JRG* 29(1) (2008): 274

⁵²² A. Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu I und II*, Tübingen 114f (1910): 585-641

⁵²³ D. Dormeyer, Die Parabel vom barmherzigen Samariter Lk 10,25-37 oder die Kunst, dem anderen zum Nächsten zu werden. Erzählen und interaktionales Lesen als katechetische Arbeitsweisen der Bibel, in Terbatz F.-P v. Elst (Hg.), *Katechese im Umbruch. Positionen und Perspektiven* (1998): 100-116.

ethics of the parable are – this much is now clear – more than the application of an example, a general rule of action. It becomes a challenge.⁵²⁴

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

The lack of original manuscripts of the New Testament led to the issue of textual criticism that involves even the text of Luke 10. What we have today is trusted copies of copies which are handwritten copies and no two of these copies have exact agreement in most passages. We have misunderstood the formation of books during the New Testament because of our understanding of the production of books today through the printing press that was invented in the 1400s. However, the books of the New Testament were not produced during this printing press era.⁵²⁵ The only way to get a copy of a letter or book was for someone to copy it with his hand which took a long and was not even a cheap issue. They did not have copy machines, but they have professional hand writers called scribes and so textual criticism studies this manuscript evidence to determine the original text's exact wording.⁵²⁶

The textual criticism often deals with the variant reading that is acknowledged from the text which other translators have taken note of. This variant reading calls for our careful examination of the original Greek text and other English versions for careful interpretation of the text for application. This variant is based upon the fact that the pericopes found in Mark 12:30b, "...thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength...(emphasis mine)" and Luke 10:27b, "...Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy

⁵²⁴Zimmermann, "The Etho-Poietic Of The Parable Of The Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37)", 275

⁵²⁵ Andrew David Naselli, *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2017), 36

⁵²⁶ Naselli, *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament*, 36

soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind...(emphasis mine)” are the only ones that give the fourfold predicate of Deuteronomy 6:5: heart, soul, mind, and strength.

This writer will consider the variants of the entire periscope utilizing the English variants found in the Nestle-Aland Greek-English New Testament. The first variant is found in v. 25b. The King James Version (KJV) and the English Revised Version (ERV) follow the variant, “...a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him...,” the American Standard Edition (ASE) follows the variant, “...a certain lawyer stood up and made trial of him,” and the Nestle-Aland variant says, “...a lawyer stood up to put him to the test.” Also, in v. 25 the KJV and the ERV have the Lawyer call Jesus, “Master,” while the Nestle-Aland and the ASE call Jesus, “Teacher.” In v. 27 the Nestle-Aland drops ‘said’ from the KJV, ERV, and the ASE, “And he answering said...” In v. 29 the Nestle-Aland, ERV, and ASE replace the KJV word ‘willing’ with ‘desiring.’⁵²⁷ There are many variants found in v. 30. The KJV uses “And Jesus answering said...”, the ERV and the ASE translation reads, “Jesus made answer and said...,” and the Nestle-Aland reads, “Jesus replied...” Again, as in v. 25, the Nestle-Aland drops “certain” from “A certain man...” as redundant, that is found in the KJV, the ERV and the ASE. The Nestle-Aland, ERV, and ASE use the words, “...was going down...” and the KJV merely states he “...went down...” The same split among scholarly texts replaces the KJV ‘thieves’ with ‘robbers.’ In v. 36 the ASE, the ERV, and the Nestle-Aland remove ‘now’ from the KJV’s “Which now of these three...” and changed “...was neighbour unto him...” to “...proved neighbour unto him,” with the exception that Nestle-Aland changed ‘him’ to ‘man.’ Also in v. 36, as before in v. 30, the ASE, the ERV, and the Nestle-Aland change KJV’s ‘thieves’ to ‘robbers.’ Finally, in v. 37, the Nestle-Aland reads, “He said, The one who showed...” and the rest read, “And he said, He that showed...”⁵²⁸ While

⁵²⁷ Barbara Aland and Kurt Aland, *Nestle-Aland Greek-English New Testament* (Stuttgart, Germany:Deutsche Bbelgesellschaft, 2001), 193

⁵²⁸ Aland and Aland, *Nestle-Aland Greek-English New Testament*, 193-194

there are a multitude of small minor variants throughout this pericope, none of them are of any substance and there seems to be no disagreements among mainline scholars as to any of its inclusion in the earliest manuscripts.

GRAMMAR

Some scholars have identified some grammatical connotations and intentions within this parable that call for proper examination within the context. The first understanding lies in the Torah scholar calls Jesus *didaskale* a vocative form of the nominative *didaskalos* which is a normal koine translation of Hebrew rabbi.⁵²⁹ The usage of *didaskale* or rabbi is an honorific that stands for a particular respected religious status. The usage of the teacher here is more of a mockery than an actual intention to learn from a respected religious leader. The narrator makes it plain to us that The Torah scholar interrupted, “wanting to test Jesus” (ἐκπειράζων αὐτὸν-*ekpeirazōn auton*). *Ekpeirazōn* signals hostile intent.⁵³⁰ And it is not just the grammar to test Jesus that calls for our reflection on this issue but it is also the fact that he asked Jesus the question of who is my neighbor for self-justification. The grammar that was used is de *thelon daausai* which connotes self-justification in connection with the question, who is my neighbor? The narrator wants us to connect the grammar of the “test” that he first noted and the “self-justification” to show us that the intention of the man is not really to know but to test Jesus who he thinks does not know much compared to him the teacher of the law.

When it comes to the issue of the identity of the neighbour who was a Jew, the narrator used a Greek word πλησίον - *plēsion* “near” – certainly did apply literally to someone living in the immediate physical vicinity. But of course, the meaning is not

⁵²⁹ J.B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 427

⁵³⁰ Luka Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2006), 172.

in the word, all by itself. The literal spatial orientation frame evoked by “near” becomes (via frame metonymy) a social-relational one, and it is a reciprocal Relationship. Three terms are used γείτων, περίοικος, and πλησίον, the last is somewhat broader in meaning. At least πλησίον is used in Luke 10:27 in a somewhat extended sense of ‘fellow man,’ The translation of πλησίον as singular in Luke 10:27 may pose a problem in understanding, since the singular may be understood in a specific rather than in a generic sense, that is to say, ‘love your neighbour as yourself’ might immediately give rise to the question ‘which neighbour?’ therefore, one must often translate Luke 10:27 as ‘you must love your neighbours as you love yourselves’ or ‘you must love other people as you love yourselves’.⁵³¹

HISTORICAL AND LITERARY CONTEXT

According to the Bible, the Samaritans were descendants of Assyrians who settled in the former kingdoms of the land of Northern Israel in the Sargon time (cf., 2 Chronicles 28, Ezra, 2 Kings 17, Nehemiah).⁵³² A large number of research regarding the Samaritan Pentateuch, papyri, inscriptions, archaeological discoveries, and others indicate that the Samaritans assembled as a small communal group and resided in certain, locally bounded places near the temple on Mount Gerizim.⁵³³ Moreover, the Samaritans preserved their seemingly self-rooted religious kinship systems, as mostly represented by a surrogate form of worshipping venerated YHWH, the God of Israel.⁵³⁴

⁵³¹ Johannes P. Louw and E. Nida (eds), *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd edn, 11.89 (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988, 1989), 1:135

⁵³² F. C. Fensham, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, , [1982](#)), 67

⁵³³ Fensham, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, 18

⁵³⁴ R.T. Anderson and T. Giles, *The Keepers: An Introduction to the History and Culture of the Samaritans* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 24-34

According to Tanaitic sources, “The ways of the Cuthites are sometimes like idolaters, sometimes like Jews. Most of them are like Jews” (Tractate Cuthim 1,1), the Cuthites/Samaritans are classified neither as Jews nor as idol worshipers. Besides, the Second Temple Jews syncretized that the Samaritans were antitheses between Israelites and pagans concerning their collective identities, politics, and religious interests (Matthew 10:5; John 4:9, 8:48, 9:51-56;⁵³⁵ for conjectural employments of the Samaritans and the historicity and socialization of relevance to the Second Temple period.⁵³⁶ Nevertheless, the Samaritans remained faithful servants of Israel's God. More recently, Chalmers argued against the conventionally scholarly exclusion of the Samaritans in first-century Palestine from Israelites—they were nevertheless understood by Jews as enmities; rather, the status of the Samaritans was presumably situated as an interactive inclusion of Samaritan Israelites rather than non-Israelite “others.”⁵³⁷ Compared with Jews, due to a lack of knowledge of the ritual precept, the Samaritans were occasionally suspicious of their strictness of abiding by the legal system of impurity and purity.⁵³⁸ Even though there existed many rebuttals in late antiquity against the Samaritans by the Jewish tradition,⁵³⁹ the Gospels show sympathetic perspectives on the ostensibly “alien” Samaritans (e.g., Luke 10:25-37, 17:16; John 4:39-42).

This narrative of Luke 10 provides a specific geographical location: somewhere along the road from Jerusalem to Jericho

⁵³⁵ M. Kartveit, *The Origin of the Samaritans* (Leiden: Brill, 2009)

⁵³⁶ M.P. Knowles, “What Was The Victim Wearing? Literary, Economic, And Social Contexts For The Parable Of The Good Samaritan”, *Biblical Interpretation*, 12 (2004):145–174.

⁵³⁷ M. Chalmers, “Rethinking Luke 10: The Parable Of The Good Samaritan Israelite”, *J. Biblical Literature* 139, (2020): 543–566.

⁵³⁸ Y. Amit, “ The Samaritans—Biblical Positions In The Service Of Modern Politics”, in *Samaritans—Past and Present: Current Studies*, eds Mor M., Reiterer F. V., Winkler W. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 263

⁵³⁹ M. Schreiber, *The Comfort of Kin: Samaritan Community, Kinship, and Marriage*, Volume 51 of Brill's Series in Jewish Studie (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 112

(the only other instance of a geographical reference for a parable is the Pharisee and the tax collector in the Jerusalem Temple in Luke 18:10). This geographical reference may have historical plausibility. Jericho was known as a place with a high population of priests and officials dedicated to serving the Jerusalem Temple. These officials were attracted by “the fertility of the Jericho region as well as its administrative importance.”⁵⁴⁰ There existed a “close connection between the Temple in Jerusalem and the priestly city of Jericho.”⁵⁴¹ Priests and Levites were a regular feature on the Jerusalem-Jericho road as a consequence of their regular rotations to undertake service in the Temple.

Therefore, the avoidance of the man because of impurity has been a major issue in the interpretation of the text. However, John Meier observes: ‘If the wounded person in Luke’s parable is ‘half-dead’ ... he therefore posed no immediate danger of corpse impurity to a Jewish priest.’⁵⁴² No Torah prescriptions exist concerning priestly care for a person who is “half-dead.” And if the argument is alluding to Leviticus 21:1 (“no one shall defile himself for a dead person”) for guidance on contact with a corpse, the law applied only to priests, not to Levites. Therefore, there seems not to be an excuse for the Priest and Levite not to help a dying man within their religious and cultural obligations. Consideration of the reversal of expectations from all actors in this drama leads us to consider what motivated the actions of the priest and Levite in their decisions to avoid the injured man. Significantly, the story itself provides little indication of the motives for their actions. This has left Gospel readers to fill in the blanks, commonly to the detriment of Christian attitudes towards Jews and Jewish religion. Martin Luther King, Jr. once preached a sermon where

⁵⁴⁰ Joshua Schwartz, “On Priests and Jericho in the Second Temple Period,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 79, no. 1 (1988): 23.

⁵⁴¹ Schwartz, “On Priests and Jericho,” 36.

⁵⁴² John Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus: Probing the Authenticity of the Parables*. Volume 5 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 227.

he offered an alternative perspective to the majority view to account for the actions of both: King Jr gives us the following reasons below:

So it is possible that the Priest and the Levite were afraid that if they stopped, they too would have been beaten; for couldn't the robbers still be around? Or maybe the man on the ground was just a faker, using a pretended wounded condition to draw passing travelers to his side for quick and easy seizure. So I can imagine that the first question which the Priest and the Levite asked was: "If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?" Then the good Samaritan came by, and by the very nature of his concern reversed the question: "If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?"⁵⁴³

It is obvious that looking at the literary context and historical context of this parable, there are no religious reasons that stop the religious leaders from showing compassion. Meanwhile, we have to understand that the literary context of the parable is offered as a response to a very specific question from expect of the Law. Placing it back into its context we find a narrative structure (the parable itself) inside a wider narrative; that of the questioning lawyer who was arrogant and unreachable. The deliberate nature of the parable itself is noteworthy: we can ask 'why' about every feature it contains.

There is a need to acknowledge that Jesus drew his message from the Old Testament and the reason was simply because that was the only available Bible in his time and the only

⁵⁴³ Ben-Zion Rosenfeld, "Innkeeping in Jewish Society in Roman Palestine," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 41, no. 2 (1998): 136.

available for the lawyer who was challenging him. On this note we can see that verse 27 is a direct reference to the commandments drawn from Deuteronomy (6:5) and Leviticus (19:18). In Matthew and Mark, the response comes to the question about “the greatest commandment” in Jesus’ public ministry in Jerusalem. In Luke, the commandments to ‘love the Lord your God’ and ‘love your neighbour’ are collapsed into one. Some characters need proper explanation within the literary context of this text:

WORD STUDY

Throughout the New Testament the word ‘neighbour’ is translated from the Greek word *ἑσθέρῳ* (*pleôsion*). *Pleôsion*, when used as an adverb, is translated as ‘near’, and, when used as a noun, is translated as ‘neighbour’, meaning one who is close by.⁵⁴⁴ Considering the commandment to love those who are close by as oneself, and also the commandment to love even one’s enemies, changes entirely the common thoughts on such relationships. Jesus answered the question, “Who is my neighbour?” with a parable that answered the question from the perspective of the man in the ditch, which made havoc on all the accepted modes of thought both then and now. “Your neighbour is not your blood-relation only, not the circle of your acquaintance only, not your countryman or co-religionist only; but he or she whom you can help in any way whatsoever – the wretched tatterdemalion from the slightest contact with whom you shrink; the besotted and degraded; even your enemy, who hates you and despitefully uses you; him, her, mankind, you are to love.”⁵⁴⁵ , a significant part of the meaning of the joint commandments is to expand on the meaning of neighbour

⁵⁴⁴ H.D. M. Spence, ed, *The Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 15 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdman’s Publishing Company, 1950), 366.

⁵⁴⁵ H.D. M. Spence, ed, *The Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 16 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdman’s Publishing Company, 1950), 283.

beyond “...simply one’s own ethnic, social, or religious group.”⁵⁴⁶

THEOLOGY AND APPLICATION OF THE TEXT FOR CONTEMPORARY AUDIENCE

There are many levels of understanding for this parable, and it is sad to note that our church fathers have employed the allegorical sense to the understanding of the text. They avoided the plain meaning which has to do with our own need to be compassionate and care for those who are hurting. It is very possible that the church fathers considered the plain meaning as anthropocentric and wanted to be Christocentric and not just allegorical in their interpretation of the Good Samaritan.

Because writers like Irenaeus, Clement, Ambrose, Origen, and others taught that Jesus was the Good Samaritan and that the wounded man represented each of us individually, and also all of mankind entirely. The priest (“the Law”) and the Levite (“the prophets”) did not (or could not) save mankind in their sins. It was the “outcast” (Jesus) that bound his wounds, “anointed” him with oil and wine, and carried his burden to the inn (the Church) where he would be safe (literally saving the man from spiritual death). In the end, he left the man in the innkeeper’s care, and promised to come again to his “church”.

In his book, *Be Compassionate*, Warren Wiersbe condemns such an allegorical approach to the scripture because to him, “the worst thing that we can do with any parable, especially this one, is to turn it into an allegory and make everything stands for something. Like the victim becomes the lost sinner who is half-dead (alive physically, dead spiritually), helplessly left on the road of life, the priest and Levite represent the law and the sacrifices, neither of which can save a sinner. The Samaritan is

⁵⁴⁶ Victor Paul Funish, “Love of Neighbor in the New Testament.” *Journal of Religious Ethics*: October 2002, 329.

Jesus Christ who saves man, pays the bills and promises to come back again. The inn stands for the local church where believers are cared for, and the “two pence” are the two ordinances; baptism and communion. If you take this approach to the scripture, you make the Bible say almost anything you please and you end up missing the messages God wants you to get.”⁵⁴⁷

Therefore, we must understand that parables often have plain meaning without any form of allegorizing for any reason. The passage gives us a plain teaching of how to care for our neighbours without giving any form of excuse. The Priest and the Levite lost far more by their neglect than the Samaritan gained far more by his concern.⁵⁴⁸ These Priest and Levites lost the opportunity to become better neighbours and good stewards of God because instead of becoming a good influence in a bad world, they chose to be a bad influence opposite to the Samaritan because there is no act of service in Christ’s name that will ever be lost. We must see people in need as neighbours to love and help and then make sure that we take care of them.⁵⁴⁹ We should all take the words of Jesus to the lawyer as a direct application to our lives, when he says, Go and do like a Samaritan. Help everyone who needs help without discrimination and segregation for any reason because in Christ every human being needs a fragrance of God’s presence of love and care.

CONCLUSION

The examination of the translation, genre, historical context, textual criticism and the rest of Luke 10:25-37 help in exploring the meaning of a text which should be faithfully interpreted as a literal text with a plain meaning of compassion towards fellow

⁵⁴⁷ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Compassionate: Let the World Know that Jesus Cares*, *Commentary Luke 1-13* (Eastbourne: David C. Cook, 1988), 136

⁵⁴⁸Wiersbe, *Be Compassionate*, 138

⁵⁴⁹ Wiersbe, *Be Compassionate*, 138

human beings in need. The parable is a warning to us that we should not let our power and prestige (priest and Levite) make us cold to the needs of others. We need to be humble, like a warefaring stranger despised and neglected (Samaritan). That is, we need to have compassion on others, as Jesus (represented by the Samaritan) does on us. One more thing. Do you notice that the innkeeper agrees to in effect lend his own money, relying on a promise from a travelling Samaritan that he (a total stranger and a foreigner), will pay him back? The innkeeper too is a good neighbor.

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The Effectiveness of Biblical Counseling in Addressing Mental Health Issues Among Christian Youth in Nigeria

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Abstract

Mental health is an essential part of a person's well-being. Whatever affects mental health of a person will directly or indirectly affect a person's general health. Substance addiction and non-substance behavioural addictions affect the mental health of the youths in several ways. Several other psychosocial factors, such as unemployment, anxiety, and peer group influence, negatively impact the adolescent. The alarming rate of addiction to drugs and social media among the youth in Nigeria has become a cause of concern to parents, families, government and society at large. What also remains relatively unexplored is the mental health disparity, particularly salient among Christian youths in Nigeria. Therefore, the existing literature on biblical counselling reveals a significant gap in understanding its effectiveness in addressing mental health issues among Christian youths. This study aims to address these gaps by investigating the effectiveness of biblical counselling in addressing mental health issues among Christian youth, with a focus on longitudinal outcomes and comparison with secular therapies. However, despite the prevalence of mental illness and the increasingly high need for mental health care, patients with mental illness continually fail to receive adequate or timely treatment. The study adopted a descriptive method. The purpose of this descriptive

phenomenological study was to explore and describe Christians' everyday lives with a family member who experienced mental distress. The findings of this study can inform counsellors' practice and increase their awareness of the unique challenges and mental health needs confronting Christian youths in Nigeria. Mental health counsellors can use the findings to help facilitate a counselling process that is biblically relevant to religious clients. There is a need for a re-appraisal of how we use Biblical counselling to address mental challenges among Christian youth in Nigeria.

Introduction

In recent years, mental health issues have materialized as significant challenges among youth, demanding effective interventions that cater for their exceptional necessities and beliefs. Many young individuals within Christian communities, experience anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders, but often resist traditional therapeutic approaches due to perceived conflicts with their faith. This resistance can lead to a lack of adequate support and exacerbation of mental health issues. In our churches today, there are young people who are in need of Godly counsel. And, upon seeing these needs, we must prepare ourselves to better serve our youths by helping to guide them Biblically through this crucial time in their lives.

The present research is therefore considered significant as it aims at drawing the attention of Christians and the world at large to the potency of this indispensable tool (Biblical counselling) made available for Christian success and maturity⁵⁵⁰. In particular, the findings of this study will benefit

⁵⁵⁰ Biblical counseling recognizes the interconnectedness of mind, body, spirit and integrates psychological principles with biblical teachings, providing a unique framework for addressing mental health issues particularly among Christian youth. It aims to address the whole person rather than just symptoms, which is crucial for youth facing mental health challenges. Therefore, integration of faith based biblical counseling methods present a unique approach to mental health care

the field of full-time pastors who have been achieving little or nothing in their counselling ministry due to improper education on what it takes to counsel for effective results. Teachers, armed with the findings of this study, will be in a position to remedy problems of the non-existence of counselling or poor knowledge gained from untrained counsellors in their world.

The findings can help bridge the perceived divide between secular mental health practices and religious beliefs. By demonstrating how biblical counselling can effectively address mental health issues, the study may encourage individuals to seek help without feeling torn between their faith and the need for psychological support. This study seeks to explore the effectiveness of biblical counselling in improving mental health outcomes among Christian youth.

The study recommends biblical counselling as a solution to eradicate mental health challenges among Christian youth in Nigeria. Biblical counselling uses the Bible as a guide in counselling individuals as opposed to psychological theories⁵⁵¹. Content in the Bible is studied as an exemplification of virtuous acts. Counsellors attempt to connect the Bible's meanings to the present world and personally relate its content to an individual's life. This form of Christian counselling is more often practiced in Protestant denominations within a religious setting or theological institution.

Techniques of Christian Counselling

Christian counselling techniques will be comparable to those of traditional therapy, but with the assimilation of Christian belief

that aligns with Christian beliefs and values. According to Adams the Holy Spirit operates through the Bible to change lives (*How to help people change: The four-step Biblical process*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 44.

⁵⁵¹ M. R. McMinn, R. C. Staley, K. C. Webb, W. Seegobin Just what is Christian counseling anyway? *Prof Psychol Res Pract.* 2010;41(5):391-397.

practices such as prayer and bible reading. Explicitly, Christian counselling can include the following approaches.

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) can be used in Christian counselling with a therapist. This type of CBT is known as Religious Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (RCBT), which helps an individual process irrational and unhelpful thoughts pertaining to religious matters, such as feelings of guilt or religious doubt⁵⁵².

In RCBT, religious concepts are used to facilitate healthier thinking and actions. The client is encouraged to utilise their religious beliefs to transform harmful feelings into a more positive view of the world. RCBT can also help with understanding your faith. It coincides with the notion of strengthening virtues such as hope, meaning, optimism and purpose.

Meditation

Meditation can be an impactful strategy taught during counselling that helps one to focus their attention on the grace of God and how He has blessed their life⁵⁵³. It may also be combined with mindfulness techniques that teach how to be more in the present moment with God and feel a deeper connection with Him. Meditation also targets destructive thinking that may distract from a person's relationship with God. Therapists often remind the client not to judge themselves for these thoughts but to instead acknowledge them and begin the process of understanding the thoughts a bit further.

⁵⁵² HG. Koenig. Religious versus conventional psychotherapy for Major depression in patients with chronic medical illness: Rationale, methods, and preliminary results. *Depress Res Treat* (2012), 460419. doi:10.1155/2012/460419

⁵⁵³ K. L. Hansen, D. Nielsen, and M. Harris. Meditation, Christian Values and Psychotherapy. *Relig Psychother*. 32 no. 1 (2008); 41-51.

Prayer

Clergy leaders may engage in words of prayer before and/or after biblical or pastoral counselling. During prayer, they can ask God for a successful session, as well as invite Him to provide spiritual guidance. Prayer is also used as a healing technique and meditation method that Christians believe allows them to communicate with God about circumstances that are burdensome. Prayer is a very sacred practice for those within the Christian faith that essentially connects believers to God.

Through prayer, a person is able to speak words of praise, gratitude, and humility to God but also ask for protection, deliverance, and intervention within their life and the lives of others. Clergy leaders providing counselling may partake in prayer to encourage and uplift the client, as well as help them feel the presence of God.

Bible Reading

The Bible is used during biblical counselling as a learning tool for studying theology while relating its stories and philosophies to everyday life⁵⁵⁴. It can also be utilized in other Christian counselling as a way of providing additional support to what is being discussed and worked on in counselling. Scriptures or chapters within the Bible may be referenced to clients as words of affirmation or encouragement. Christians also use the Bible as a way to connect to God since it is considered a guide that He left for believers to follow.

The Bible is known to be a book crafted by God from collections of letters and books written by multiple authors throughout biblical times. It conveys lessons about God's Will and uplifting messages. The Bible's teaching that the Scriptures are inspired by God and therefore are infallible, inerrant and authoritative on every subject they address. The Bible is comprehensively

⁵⁵⁴ McMinn, Staley, Webb, Seegobin *Just what is Christian.*

sufficient that is, the Scriptures include all that God deemed essential to understand man's design and purpose; man's inherent nature; man's fundamental estrangement from God; the divine plan for reconciliation with God; the divine standard for human thought, emotion and behavior; the divine remedy for human problems; and divine counsel for how men and women can flourish, even in adversity, through a maturing personal relationship with God. Scriptures help to address the mental health issues among Christian youth today.

Mental Health among Nigerian Christian Youths

There is alarming proof of the popularity of mental health disorders among Nigerian Christian youths. Collins perceived that one in four Nigerians has one form of mental health or the other⁵⁵⁵. Ngwu, Arop, Ekeng and Abuo opine that drug abuse interferes with the health and social function of an individual. Because of the depressing economic conditions in many countries of the world, there has been a sharp upsurge in social ills, crimes and drug use among youth, who are the building blocks of the nations⁵⁵⁶. The alarming evidence on the prevalence of substance abuse, its effects among Nigerian youths has raised concerns and challenges for all helping professionals. Drugs have taken centre stage in use. The greatness, suffering and burden in terms of incapacity and cost for individuals, family and society are astounding. They are consequently a major challenge to global development. No group is resistant to mental disorder, but the risk is higher among the poor, homeless, unemployed, persons with a low

⁵⁵⁵ G. A. Collins, *Christian counseling a comprehensive Guide* (United States, Thomas Nelson, 2007).

⁵⁵⁶ M. E. Ngwu L.O. Arop, L. O., Ekeng and Abuo, The Impact of Rehabilitative Counseling on Drug Abuse and Addiction, an Aftermath of Strategic Review Perspective. *Panache's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt Egyptology*, 19 no. 1 (2022): 805-814.

level of education, victims of migration and refugees, and adolescents, among others⁵⁵⁷.

Drugs such as cigarette smoking, marijuana, cocaine, heroin and other substances are consistent parts of teen culture and modern-day youths. Drug abuse damages the mental health and steadiness of adolescents. Wang, Liu and Wang cautioned that drug abusers who display signs of stress, anxiety, depression and behavior changes, fatigue and loss or surge in appetite should be treated by medical experts and counsellors to save them from lethal diseases⁵⁵⁸. He added that drug use by adolescents helps them cope with feelings of depression and insufficiency. Alcohol and drug use among adolescents is a kind of social evil, difficult to control because the use of these substances provides immediate and powerful reinforcers with very unfriendly departure symptoms.

Whatever the motives for abuse of alcohol and drugs, the use of this substance has hostile snowballing effects on the central nervous system's impoverishment of hormonal activity, memory, learning ability and reasoning. Drug addiction and reliance are one of the problems confronting the youth. Addiction is anything or conduct that is customary, repetitive and very difficult or unbearable to control⁵⁵⁹. He further perceived that addiction brings short-term pleasure, but with longer-term drawbacks in terms of one's health, relationships, psychological happiness and spirituality. Addiction has turned out to be a chief health deathtrap globally, especially among youths. Drug addiction has led to mental disorders, which result in antisocial personalities and conduct. The American Society of Addiction Medicine⁵⁶⁰ describes addiction as a chronic

⁵⁵⁷ Collins, *Christian COUNSELING*

⁵⁵⁸ J. N. Wang, Liu, L. and I. Wang, Prevalence and Associated Factors of Emotional and Behavioural Problems in Chinese School Adolescence, 19, Cross Sections Survey, Childcare, Health and Development, 40, (2019): 319-326.

⁵⁵⁹ Collins, *Christian counseling*.

⁵⁶⁰ *American Society of Addiction Medicine*, ASAM, 2019. www.asam.org.

disorder that affects the reward, motivation and memory functions of the brain based on the use of substances that have a psychoactive effect. This results in a change in behavior and emotional response to stimuli related to substance use, comprising inability to withdraw from drug use constantly, impaired control of other conduct, yearning for the substance of abuse, inability to identify the personal problems that have arisen with drug abuse, and dysfunction in emotional response to situations⁵⁶¹.

Addiction does not only refer to reliance on substances such as heroin or cocaine. Some addiction similarly includes an inability to stop participating in activities such as gambling, eating and social media. There are substance addiction and non-substance addiction or behavioural addiction, with both having similar symptoms like craving, impulse control problem, tolerance building, withdrawal mood swing, daily life disturbance, relapse and being engrossed with the addiction.⁵⁶² The addictive use could cause accidents in young people, resulting in death from a gas explosion via phones, psychological detachment, myriad negative effects on physical health and various types of mental illness. Smart phone addiction repeatedly arises along with medical conditions in

⁵⁶¹ Pressure on adolescent to take their toll as adolescents often act out their problems in socially disapproved ways, excessive drinking, substance abuse, lying, stealing crime, gang violence, other forms of rebellion or delinquency gives adolescent a sense of power, feeling of independence as means of gaining a retaining the attention and acceptance of peers. Often however, they lack the critical skills to differentiate between valid information and that which can be harmful and manipulative. Aware that they are no longer children, adolescence want freedom in large doses. During the time many older adolescents feel pressure to make decision about career, values and life styles, and what to do with their lives. Some adolescents' decision can have lifelong implications and affect their mental health.

⁵⁶² E. E. Okwaraji, E. N. Aguwa, G. C. Onyebuke, and C. Chinweobi-Eze, 2015. Assessment of internet addiction and depression in a sample of Nigerian University undergraduates. *International Neuropsychiatric Disorder Journal*, 4 no. 3 (2015): 114-122.

other mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety and cognitive disorders.

Ngwu, Arop, Ntui, and Ebuara opine that internet experience delivers information and materials that are detrimental to the mental health, socio-emotional development and safety of young individuals. Several factors are ascribed to mental Health disorders, which are classified under biological, psychological, social and spiritual⁵⁶³. Biological disposition, as stated by Collins, comprises the influence of drugs, toxins or pollutants, hereditary, physical Health and congenital effects, deficient sleep, among others. Psychological stressors consist of frustration, feelings of insecurity, inner conflicts, pressure, frustration, family tension, parental neglect or abuse, upbringing that was so stiff or demanding⁵⁶⁴.

Furthermore, Uche and Ngwu added that styles of parenting have likewise been exposed to have an impact on the adjustment and behavior of youths. Social stressors are easy to see, particularly in Nigeria, where the standard of living is becoming excruciating for the common man⁵⁶⁵. Unemployment for the young people, political instability, insecurity, and social class, among others. Sani exposed situations that exacerbate the mental health of individuals to comprise, prevalent hardship wrecking Nigeria, prompted by economic downturn, massive youth unemployment has given rise to all kinds of youth restlessness in the country; therefore, Nigerian youth are vulnerable to mental health challenges⁵⁶⁶.

⁵⁶³ M. E. Ngwu, L. O, Arop, A. N. Ntui and M. O. Ebuara, Risk Factors and Youth Suicidal Tendencies in Tertiary Institutions in South South, Nigeria. *Global Journal of Educational Research*, 22 no. 3 (2023): 281-292.

⁵⁶⁴ Collins, *Christian Counseling*.

⁵⁶⁵ R. D. Uche, and M. E. Ngwu, Background Variable and Prevalence of Bullying among Secondary School's Students in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Development*, 1 no. 9 (2016): 65-81.

⁵⁶⁶ A. L Sani, Psychotherapy and Counseling: Attitudes to Towards Mental Health Seeking Services among Secondary School Students, Kano State

Religion, as well, has a role to play, as every religion has magnificent ethical codes which should guide the attitude of adherents to life in general. Religion, for example, prohibits all kinds of vices and materialism and warns people of the hazards pending for them. Religion appears to be losing its control or grip on the moral virtues of society. There is a stark picture of secularization, materialism, and humanism as a negative outcome of globalization. Thus, the appreciated values which have given people direction have been battered. Robbery, rape, hard drugs, violence, shameless nudity, and glaring terrorism have taken over the moral values⁵⁶⁷. Parental and adult example moreover predisposes youths to drugs, because some adolescents grew up in a culture of drug takers, as most children become well familiar with drugs. Teenagers watch parents consume drugs, and adolescents follow the adult example, peers and other social influences.

Parents' Experiences of Children's Mental Distress.

The adverse impact of children's mental distress affects many areas of a parent's daily life, including personal, financial, and social⁵⁶⁸. These parents struggled with issues of identity, loss of self, confidence, and loss of control. For example, parents reported anger and guilt regarding their children's mental health conditions, which were exacerbated by the accompanying persistent grief over the loss of their child's selfhood, personality, and deferred dreams⁵⁶⁹. Also, Eaton et al. found that mothers of children with emotional and behavioral

Counseling for National Safety and Security. Conference proceeding for 47th International Conference of the Counseling Association of Nigeria (CASSON), (2023): 20-30.

⁵⁶⁷ E. O. Anyacho, Emensim and Inter-Religious Dialogue and Peace Algeria, Obudu, Education Kienjoel Business Enterprises, 2001.

⁵⁶⁸ M. M. A. Richardson, V. Cobham, B. McDermott & J. Murray, Youth Mental Illness and the Family: Parents' Loss and Grief. *Journal of Child & Family Studies*, 22 no. 5 (2013): 719–736.

⁵⁶⁹ Richardson, Cobham, McDermott, & Murray, *Youth Mental Illness and the Family*.

disorders viewed themselves as failed parents. They were doubtful of their ability to parent their children⁵⁷⁰.

As Moses stated, parents' attitudes towards their children's mental distress, their response to the challenges they confronted, and the treatment they sought reflected their causation beliefs about their children's mental health⁵⁷¹. Whether they viewed their children's mental distress as a temporary or permanent condition, rejected or embraced medical explanations to make sense of their experiences, all parents faced a range of feelings, including worry, sadness, guilt, and shame⁵⁷². Financially, the cost of treatment was a burden that disrupted parents' well-being and functioning⁵⁷³.

Mental Distress in the Family

The effects of mental distress on families are multidimensional, specifically, economic, social, and psychological. For instance, Fekadu et al. found that family affiliates of individuals suffering mental distress suffered job volatility, financial difficulties, worsening of physical health, and increased psychological problems such as depression. They likewise met dysfunctions in family and social relationships, as well as marital problems and poor family interconnection⁵⁷⁴. As such, distress in a person's life obstructs other individuals' running in the

⁵⁷⁰ K. Eaton, J. Ohan, W. Stritzke & P. Corrigan, Failing to Meet the Good Parent Ideal: Self-stigma in Parents of Children with Mental Health Disorders. *Journal of Child & Family Studies*, 25 no. 10 (2016): 3109–3123.

⁵⁷¹ T. Moses, Parents' conceptualization of adolescents' mental health problems: Who adopts a psychiatric perspective and does it make a difference? *Community Mental Health Journal*, 47 no. 1 (2011): 67–81.

⁵⁷² Moses, Parents' conceptualization of adolescents'

⁵⁷³ Richardson, Cobham, McDermott, & Murray, *Youth Mental Illness and the Family*.

⁵⁷⁴ W. Fekadu, A. Mihiretu, T. K. J., Craig, & A. Fekadu, Multidimensional impact of severe mental illness on family members: Systematic review. *British Medical Journal Open*, 9 no. 12 (2019), e032391.

family⁵⁷⁵. Mental distress in a family can break that family's identity. The disruption in family identity and members' functioning is acute if they live in the same home with the person experiencing mental distress⁵⁷⁶.

The Need for Biblical Counselling, sufficient for human problems

Biblical counselling is epistemologically biblical exclusivism. Welch describes biblical counselling as “a hybrid of discipleship and biblical friendship. It starts with God speaking to His people”⁵⁷⁷. Biblical counselling is based on the fact that “the triune God has spoken to us through the Scripture”⁵⁷⁸. Biblical counsellors believe that “Scripture contains within its pages all of the principles and data we need to know how to live godly lives”⁵⁷⁹. Biblical counsellors strongly believe that only the truth of Christ can correct all problems⁵⁸⁰. The Bible, as the special revelation to people, is sufficient for human problems and counselling.

Counselling has to do with the authority of the Bible since the Word of God is true⁵⁸¹. There is no inaccuracy in the Word of God. Clients must know the Word of God to be transformed.

⁵⁷⁵ A. Crowe, & K. P. Lyness, Family Functioning, Coping, and Distress in Families with Serious Mental Illness. *The Family Journal*, 22(2), (2014):186–197.

⁵⁷⁶ P. W. Corrigan & F. Miller, Shame, blame, and contamination: A review of the impact of mental illness stigma on family members. *Journal of Mental Health*, 13 no. 6 (2004):537–548.

⁵⁷⁷ E. T. Welch, “What is Biblical Counseling, Anyway?” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 16, no. 1 (1997): 2.

⁵⁷⁸ Welch, “What is biblical counseling”, 3.

⁵⁷⁹ J. R. Beck, The integration of psychology and theology: An enterprise out of balance. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, Vol. 22, No. 1. (2003): 24.

⁵⁸⁰ D. A. Powlison, Don't worry. *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, Winter. (2003): 54-65.

⁵⁸¹ Powlison, D. A. Questions at the Crossroads: The Care of Souls & Modern Psychotherapies, 2001. In M. R. McMinn & T. R. Philips (Eds.), *Care for the Soul* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), 30.

The issue is whether the clients follow the Word of God or not. It is up to the clients to obey the Word of God or not. Counsellors should inspire clients to read the Word of God. Biblical counsellors should similarly know the biblical passages that address the clients' problems. As a result, the Bible, which is a special revelation, has all the answers to the client's problems. Counsellors should make evident the capability not only to know the biblical passages but also to interpret the given passages in an apt way. Counsellors should be able to apply the passages and interpretations to the client's problems. There are some different elements in counselling. The first one is hope for the clients. Hope is "a self-assured expectation"⁵⁸². God made the promise of hope to people. Therefore, hope is very certain even though humans are suffering. Adams articulates that there are people who need hope in their lives: those with long standing problems, those with abnormally tough problems, those who have huge volume of problems, those who are harassed by fear, those whose hopes have been dashed recurrently in the past, those who have tried and failed, older people, depressed people, suicidal people, and people who have suffered life-shattering experiences⁵⁸³. If clients do not trust in God, they cannot have hope for their problems.

Welch recommends three significant steps of counselling for depressed clients. These are trust and worship in God, confession of sin, and obedience to God. This could be done when clients trust God. If they trust God and follow the way of righteousness, then they can have hope. The second is prayer. Prayer is continually the foundation for the counselling process from a biblical perspective. The counsellor should call the Holy Spirit to work through prayer throughout counselling. The counsellor begins the counselling session with a prayer. The issue of where, how, when, and who, and how prayer is used depends on the counsellors. They should adopt the use of

⁵⁸² J. E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1973), 39.

⁵⁸³ Adams, *The Christian Counselor's*, 41-46

prayer in the counselling session. The power of the Holy Spirit will work through the prayer offered by both the counsellor and the clients. The third element of counselling is reconciliation and discipline⁵⁸⁴. The drive of counselling is reconciliation with God, self, and others. The reconciliation process begins with the confession of sins. The Holy Spirit will lead the client in how to confess, what to confess, and when to confess. God and others will forgive their sins through confession. Forgiveness will lead the client to have a reconciled relationship with God and others. Based on the reconciliation, clients can build new relationships. Building new relationships continually necessitates discipline and training. The process of building relationships needs training the clients consistently with God's will. Nonetheless, the sinful nature of clients will hamper the new relationships.

The process of counselling has four different components: teaching, conviction, correction, and disciplined training in righteousness⁵⁸⁵. The most significant work for counselling is the regeneration of clients to the biblical level of character. The four steps sketch how to change clients in the counselling process. The first one is to teach God's standard because He gives accurate strategies for change. God's standard is revealed in the Bible, which consists of biblical principles. To transform clients, counsellors should know what the client's problems are and what kinds of biblical principles apply to resolve the problems. Biblical principles should be applied for instant outcome or change. A Counsellor should teach clients to learn something under pressure. Clients have to learn the truth from a disturbed environment since learning from such an environment is one of the most imperative elements of teaching. The second step is conviction. The role of conviction relates to the consciousness of God. When clients go to God, they need a conviction of their sinfulness before God. Once they have conviction of their sins, then they can know that God is calling

⁵⁸⁴ E. T. Welch, Words of hope for those who struggle with depression. *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, 18, no. 2 (2000): 40-46.

⁵⁸⁵ Adams, *How to Help People*.

them to be changed. Counsellors should be able to prove that clients are sinners before God through data collection. If counsellors display adequate data to clients, then clients can have conviction that they are sinners. Then they can be guided to an agreement with God. They became sinners because they defied God. Counsellors should be able to use the Scriptures that contain sufficient information and data for the conviction of sin.

The third step is correction, which includes repentance, confession of sin, forgiveness, and restoration. Repentance implies “a change of mind about one’s beliefs, attitudes, and behavior that involves regret about sin and issues in a change of lifestyle as outward of a desire to be different”⁵⁸⁶. To repent, clients should confess their sins. They ask forgiveness from God and others ostensibly, and then abandon their sinful lifestyle. They can start living to please God. The last step is disciplined training in righteousness. Christian life deals with sanctification, which is a gradual process of change. To be righteous before God means to adapt to God’s standards. To stand before God, clients should be able to deal with their old, sinful way of life. Training has to do with both sides. One side of training is to give up old sinful lifestyles; the other is to build a lifestyle that meets God’s standard. This training has to do with the way of God, that is, a disciplined training in and for righteousness. There are three different stages in counselling: getting started, breaking through, and finishing well⁵⁸⁷. The first deals with matters concerning one session counselling, counselling environment, data collection and counselling agreement, the authority of counselling, hope for counselling, agenda of counselling, problems of clients, homework assignment, and counselling involvement. In the first stage of counselling, counsellors need to comprehend clients and elucidate the policies and involvement of counselling to clients.

⁵⁸⁶ Adams, *How to Help People*, 144.

⁵⁸⁷ J. E. Adams, *Critical Stages of Biblical Counseling: Finishing well, Breaking Through, and Getting Started* (Stanley: Timeless Text., 2002).

The second stage tries to change clients actively. This stage comprises turning point, repentance, learning and understanding, homework assignments, crisis, and commitment. In this stage, counsellors use Scriptures for clients' problems that could result in self-discipline. Then, they have to deal with the opposition of clients by caring for them carefully. The last stage is the closure step that involves transition, follow-up, formatting termination, signs of termination, and the attitudes of the clients.

Crucial in Adams's system was the place of the Bible. The Bible contains all that is necessary for a life of godliness⁵⁸⁸. This is seen in the practical application of Paul's statement on the value of 'all Scripture' in 2 Timothy 3. Assisting others to transform is a four-step process made up of teaching, convicting, correcting and training in righteousness.

The Sufficiency of Scripture

The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture has long been a watchword within the biblical counselling movement. Most major biblical counselling organizations use the term in their doctrinal or methodological commitments to explain the relationship between Scripture and counselling⁵⁸⁹. Interestingly, Jay Adams infrequently used the term within his major writings. His landmark 1970 *work Competent to Counsel* never uses the term or its derivatives, and within *More than Redemption, A Christian's Counsellor's Manual, and Shepherding God's Flock*, the only use is a scant reference to the Bible being "sufficient" for understanding what we need to know about God's will. Adams first significantly used the term in his 1986 book *How to Help People Change*. Here Adams understands 2 Tim 3:17 to declare that a counsellor "need never

⁵⁸⁸ Adams, *How to Help People*, 29.

⁵⁸⁹ See Biblical Counseling Coalition, "Confessional Statement;" Association of Certified Biblical Counseling, "Standards of Conduct," I.A.; International Association of Biblical Counselors, "IABC Statement of Faith."

feel inadequate so long as he has the Bible. If he is inadequate, it is not because the Bible is inadequate but simply because he does not know his Bible adequately. The Bible has what he needs to meet all demands in counselling”⁵⁹⁰.

Any counsellor who desires to honor God and be effective must see the goal of his efforts as leading a person to the sufficiency of Christ. The view that man is capable of solving his own problems, or that people can help one another by “therapy” or other human means, denies the doctrine of human depravity and man’s need for God. It replaces the Spirit’s transforming power with impotent human wisdom⁵⁹¹.

John Murray draws the following conclusion from 2 Tim 3:15-17: “There is no situation in which we (as men of God) are placed, no demand that arises for which Scripture as the deposit of the manifold wisdom of God is not adequate and sufficient.”⁵⁹² Our sufficiency in Christ is found in a deeper, fuller, applicatory, life-changing knowledge of the glory and excellence of God and the magnificence and preciousness of His promises. According to Green, God has called us to share “something of His moral excellence in this life, and of His glory hereafter. . . . The triple agency of the promises, the power and the Person of the Lord regenerate a man and make him a sharer in God’s own nature, so that the family likeness begins to be seen in him.”⁵⁹³

When considering sin, reformational counsellors will also reflect on the noetic (mental) and cardiac (heart) effects of sin on the formation of the science of psychology. As Kuyper discussed, sin causes distortions in the thinking and evaluating of non-

⁵⁹⁰ Adams, *How to Help People*,.30.

⁵⁹¹ John MacArthur, Jr., *Our Sufficiency in Christ* (Dallas: Word, 1991), 27, 72.

⁵⁹² John Murray, *Collected Writings*, 3:261, cited by Michael Green, *Second Epistle of Peter and the Epistle of Jude* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) 64. 8

⁵⁹³ Michael Green, *The Second Epistle of Peter*, 64.

Christian scientists, leading to an antithesis between non-Christian and Christian thought and cultural activity⁵⁹⁴.

Perhaps the most significant theme of reformational Christianity is an abiding concern for the supremacy of God. Because of original sin, the human self is disposed to idolatry and to regard some aspect(s) of the creation as the center of the universe (in secular cultures, this is usually the Self). However, the triune God is the only fitting object of religious ultimacy since he is, in fact, the greatest, most glorious and beautiful being in the universe, and so the worthiest of human attention, devotion, and worship. Moreover, God made humans in his image, for these very purposes. Consequently, humans are the most psycho-spiritually healthy and whole as they center their lives on him, and have as the fundamental motivating principle of their lives, not the actualizing of their selves, but the furthering of his glory (which, in the Christian scheme of things, is really the only appropriate way to obtain fulfilment and genuine happiness)⁵⁹⁵. As a result, reformational counselling seeks to direct counselees toward a theocentric way of life and toward admiring, cherishing, participating in, and manifesting the glory of God⁵⁹⁶.

Effective Biblical counselling

Christian counselling is effective for spiritual enrichment, strengthening one's relationship with God, and overcoming or

⁵⁹⁴ Abraham Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology* (Wilmington, Delaware: Associated Publishers and Authors, n.d.).

⁵⁹⁵ Jonathan Edwards, "The End for Which God Created the World", in *God's Passion for His Glory*, edited by John Piper (Wheaton: Crossway, 1998), 125-251; John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah, 1986).

⁵⁹⁶ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960); Edwards, *A Passion for His Glory*; Richard A. Muller, *Post Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003).

managing mental health issues like depression⁵⁹⁷. It also helps individuals in enhancing positive traits and feeling a sense of purpose in life. Effective Biblical counselling depends on a Biblical anthropology and world view. A Biblical counsellor should promote holiness and a lifestyle in accordance with Biblical guidelines, thus shaping the counselee to the likeness of Jesus Christ. When a Biblical counsellor ministers the Word of God in a life-transforming way, then God himself changes the counselee from the inside out. The uniqueness of Biblical counselling is distinctly set forth by Meier et al⁵⁹⁸:

- The Bible is accepted as the final authority in the counselling process.
- The indwelling power of the Holy Spirit depends on.
- Biblical counselling deals effectively with the counselee's past by working with forgiveness and guilt.
- Biblical counselling is based on God's love.
- It deals with the person in its totality and takes cognizance of physical, psychological and spiritual aspects of human beings.

For Ganz, a point of departure for this kind of counselling is that an individual should become aware of their true nature. Only then is he able to acknowledge his sin-filled nature that needs a restored relationship with God through Christ⁵⁹⁹. Coe indicates that there can be no Christian plan for change apart

⁵⁹⁷ HG. Koenig. Religious versus conventional psychotherapy form Major depression in patients with chronic medical illness: Rationale, methods, and preliminary results. *Depress Res Treat.* (2012): 460419.

⁵⁹⁸ P.D., Meier, F.B Minirth, F.B. Wichern, & D.E. Ratcliff, *Introduction to Psychology and Counselling: Christian Perspectives and Applications.* 2nd ed. (Turnbrige Wells: Monarch, 1991), :292.

⁵⁹⁹ R. Ganz, *Psychobabble: The failure of modern psychology and the Biblical alternative* (Wheaton: Crossway Books. 1993), 56, 57.

from submission to Scripture. Biblical counselling goes beyond the alleviation of problems and personality change only⁶⁰⁰.

As stated by Crabb, most people cope with life by rearranging what they do. If a believer ignores what is happening in the inner person, he or she will be unable to effectively change what is happening to his/her overt behavior⁶⁰¹. The inner Biblical change and spiritual growth the believer strives for is not only effected through dishabituation, but also entails rehabilitation while focusing on what God demands in His Word. This aim can only be achieved and sustained through the work of the Holy Spirit⁶⁰².

Different Perspectives in Biblical Counselling

MacArthur and Mack are of the opinion that in the 19th and 20th centuries, the church lost its pastoral skills. In the 20th century, the practice of counselling became infused with secular perspectives of understanding and helping people⁶⁰³. Johnson and Jones regard the issue of psychology and Christianity as being on a continuum: the non-religious perspective at one end of the continuum and at the other, the viewpoint of “Fundamentalistic Christians”, who accept only Biblical perspectives⁶⁰⁴.

Meier et al. maintain that despite their oneness in Christ and their belief in the Bible, pastoral counsellors still differ in their

⁶⁰⁰ J.H. Coe, Beyond Relationality to Union: Musing Towards a Pneumadynamic Approach to Personality and Psychopathology. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 18 no. 2 (Summer 1999): 112.

⁶⁰¹ L. Crabb, L. *Inside out* (Colorado: Navpress, 1988), 32.

⁶⁰² J.E. Adams, *The Christian counsellor's commentary: Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*. Hackettstown: Timeless Text. Adams, 1994:103.

⁶⁰³ J.F. MacArthur, & W.A. Mack, *Introduction to Biblical counselling: A basic guide to the principles and practice of counselling* (Dallas: Word Publishing. 1994), 44.

⁶⁰⁴ Johnson, E.L. & Jones, S.L. A History of Christians in Psychology. In Johnson, E.L. & Jones, S.L., eds. *Psychology and Christianity*. (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 2000), 12.

views of counselling⁶⁰⁵. The following exponents are examples of the main positions held in Biblical counselling and their perspectives on change: 3.1 Nouthetic counselling. According to Adams, the word nouthetic is derived from the Greek noun and verb forms, *nouthesis* and *noutheteo* (Col. 3:16), indicating that all Christians should teach and confront one another in a nouthetic fashion⁶⁰⁶. Adams regards nouthetic counselling as primarily concerned with behavior, value, motivation, and attitude change at the inner core of the counselee's being. Counselling should address the heart of human difficulty, man as a sinner, who looks to God to give him a new life, with new goals and purposes. The counsellor is not mainly concerned with how people can be changed, but rather asks the question, "Into what?" The nouthetic counsellor's reply to the mentioned question will be: "Into the likeness of Jesus Christ"⁶⁰⁷. Adams argues that the Word of God is the standard for what the counselee must become and also indicates how to become it. The Bible contains answers to the problems experienced in life, but these answers are only available to the believer who is in a proper relationship with God. Four elements are interrelated in the process of change: the work of the Holy Spirit, the counsellor, the counselee and the Bible⁶⁰⁸.

Larry Crabb's Integrative Model

Crabb argues that psychological disorders are a product of a sinful pursuit of life apart from God⁶⁰⁹. The counselee needs to understand and be affected by the truth of the Bible. The following three assumptions govern Crabb's thinking:

⁶⁰⁵ Meier, Minirth, Wichern, & Ratcliff, *Introduction to Psychology*, 313.

⁶⁰⁶ Adams, *How to help people change*, ix.

⁶⁰⁷ J.E. Adams, Change them? ... Into what? *The Journal of Biblical Counselling*, 13 no. 2 (1995):17.

⁶⁰⁸ Adams, *How to help people change*, 61 ff.

⁶⁰⁹ Crabb, *Understanding people*, 21.

- The Bible is sufficient to provide a framework for counsellors.
- A relationship with Christ provides resources in resolving every psychological problem.
- The community of God's people functioning together in Biblical relationship is the intended context for understanding and implementing God's answers to life's problems.

Principles and ideas that are derived from psychology, according to Crabb, must remain consistent with Biblical teaching. He maintains that “where the Bible speaks, it speaks with authority, where it does not speak, counsellors must look to other sources of information to help”⁶¹⁰. Crabb concludes that real change has occurred if the counselee finds joy in God and becomes involved with others in an improved relationship. In his book *Inside Out*, Crabb stresses that sanctification is regarded as inner work with outward consequences⁶¹¹. In another publication, *Connecting*, Crabb emphasizes that the fellowship into which the counselee has entered with Christ should be of such a nature that it will spill over to other people with the power to change their lives⁶¹². Crabb's definition of connecting is: “Something that occurs when the life of Christ in one person is poured into another and awakens in the emptiest recesses of that person.

Faw contends that the brain has always been a focal point for psychologists because it exerts a strong influence on human behavior and mental life. The brain can respond to events in the environment based on information it has built up over an

⁶¹⁰ Crabb, *Understanding people*, 28 ff.

⁶¹¹ Crabb, *Inside out*, 42 ff.

⁶¹² L. Crabb, *Connecting. A Radical New Vision* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), 5 ff.

individual's lifetime⁶¹³. The problem concerning the mind-body is how to hold together the obvious characteristics of an individual and his overt behavior, and the characteristics of his internal mental state. It is expressed as the tension between the material and the immaterial, between brain and mind, between body and soul.

Biblical Counseling Addressing Medical and mental Issues

Biblical counsellors admit that the challenges of life often have a physical component. Many emotional and cognitive struggles are the result of chaotic bodies affected by genetics, disease, physical and emotional trauma, and lifestyle choices, including sleep, diet, exercise and so forth. Biblical counsellors, consequently, should seek to partner with physicians, especially those who are committed to understanding the patient's situation both physically and spiritually⁶¹⁴.

Many physicians, because of time constraints, struggle to offer the level of counselling they would wish to give their patients. Biblical counsellors longed for the opportunity to partner with physicians by assisting to meet the spiritual needs of these

⁶¹³ H.W. Faw, *Psychology in Christian Perspective. An Analysis of Key Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. 1995), 28.

⁶¹⁴ Though the remedies offered by biblical counselors are substantively different from secular remedies, this distinctiveness does not imply that biblical solutions are simplistic or instantaneously effective. The Bible presents spiritual growth in Christ through His Word as the means of change. God's own metaphor of growth implies time, attention, care and cooperation with God.

Furthermore, suffering and trauma are sometimes accompanied by complex physical, cognitive and emotional effects. While the biblical counselor helps the counselee see suffering through the lens of a biblical worldview that finds ultimate answers in the Scriptures, the counselor should not ignore the counselee's possible need for treatment from the medical community for physical needs. Counselees are fallen, complex people being helped by other fallen, complex people. Variables exist at every interaction as heart responds to heart and as both respond to or choose not to respond to God. By God's grace, the biblical counselor attempts to compassionately and skillfully point the sufferer to the only One Who can heal and restore wholeness as God works His change in the hearts of both the counselee and the counselor.

patients while the physician helps to care for their physical necessities.

Biblical counsellors, moreover, diagnose that there is growing neurobiological hopefulness among the general populace. Many medical and mental health professionals determine that if an emotional struggle cannot be traced to a definite measurable physical cause (e.g., brain trauma, endocrine malfunction, tumor, disease, infection, nerve damage), the problem is presumed to be a chemical imbalance or a genetic defect. Repeatedly, a psychiatric label is assigned to the difficulty, and commonly, a psychiatric drug is prescribed to ease the symptoms by chemically altering the patient's moods⁶¹⁵.

Variances of opinion proliferate among biblical counsellors concerning the use of psychiatric medication by a counselee. In some situations, medication may be appropriate. In most cases, however, medication is not the only solution, nor is it generally the final or lasting solution. Largely speaking, many disorders commonly treated by psychiatrists and physicians by means of medication also have spiritual components that can be treated only by appropriate scriptural remedies. If, after examining the possible side effects, a counselee opts for a prudent use of a prescribed psychotropic drug, the biblical counsellor should not advise dismissing or modifying its prescribed use. To do so would be unethical and hypothetically dangerous for the counselee. It would likewise be unethical, nevertheless, for the biblical counsellor to remain quiet if it seems that the counselee is not sufficiently informed about potential risks associated with the medication. In such situations, the counsellor should

⁶¹⁵ *Psychiatric Drug Withdrawal: A Guide for Prescribers, Therapists, Patients, and Their Families* by Peter Breggin, MD (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2013), *The Intelligent Clinician's Guide to the DSM-5, Second Edition, Revised* by Joel Paris, MD, Professor of Psychiatry McGill University, Montreal, Canada (New York: Oxford Press, 2015).

strongly encourage the counselee to seek additional medical opinion⁶¹⁶.

Equally, if a counselee chooses to suspend the use of a medication prescribed by the physician, the biblical counsellor should inform the counselee of the risk of stopping the medication apart from the care or advice of a physician. At last, the biblical counsellor should completely respect the counselee's decision and should seek to minister to spiritual needs in the power of God's Spirit for the glory of God, while the counselee looks to the physician to treat any medical conditions.

Biblical counsellors diagnose that, medical advances and developments in neuroscience arise swiftly. Such advances may result in data that, when assessed and construed from the perspective of the biblical worldview, may make available information that is useful in addressing the counselee's suffering. The biblical counsellor recognizes that no matter how physically or spiritually multifaceted the problem, a truly biblical worldview upholds that God never puts the believer in a position where he or she knows what is right to do without giving him or her the grace and the means to do so. The biblical counsellor similarly appreciates that in rare or severe situations, long-term medical care may be part of the grace and means provided by God, along with the biblical counselling process. The biblical counsellor, then, empathetically uses God's Word to reinstate the counselee's hope and to help him or her respond in a way that is pleasing to God and that

⁶¹⁶ Psychiatric Drug Withdrawal: A Guide for Prescribers, Therapists, Patients, and Their Families by Peter Breggin, MD (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2013); Will Medicine Stop the Pain?: Finding God's Healing for Depression, Anxiety, and Other Troubling Emotions by Elyse Fitzpatrick and psychiatrist Laura Hendrickson, MD (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2006), The Counselor's Guide to the Brain and Its Disorders, Revised Edition by Edward T. Welch (Glenside, PA: Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation,

2015), and Charles D. Hodges, *Good Mood Bad Mood: Help and Hope for Depression and Bipolar Disorder* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2012).

nurtures a relationship with and growth in Christ, even when the etiology for suffering is virtuously physical or as yet undiscovered.

In all, clergy members' engagement with congregants' mental health needs reflects their interpretation of the biblical text and beliefs about psychiatry and psychology's role in addressing human problems⁶¹⁷. The quality and level of their commitment depend on their mental distress causation beliefs. As such, clergy members can stimulate or deter congregants' access to mental health services⁶¹⁸.

Biblical Counselling Addressing Trauma and Sexual Abuse/Assault

The Scriptures recognize that both believers and unbelievers regularly face life-threatening, overwhelming and even protracted suffering because they live in the same world broken by sin⁶¹⁹. The Bible admits that not all suffering is equal in strength, extent, duration or effects. Military experiences, devastating life circumstances, or criminal assault and abuse can leave the sufferer distressed. In some cases, such trauma may induce long-term effects that make daily life difficult for the sufferer.

⁶¹⁷ S. Sullivan, J. M., Payne, A. M., Cheney, J., Hunt, T. F., Haynes, & G. Sullivan, The Pew Versus the Couch: Relationship between Mental Health and Faith Communities and Lessons Learned from a VA/clergy Partnership project. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 53 no. 4 (2014): 1267–1282.

⁶¹⁸ J. S. Payne, Variations in Pastors' Perceptions of the Etiology of Depression by Race and Religious Affiliation. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 45 no. 5 (2009): 355–365.

⁶¹⁹ God has given us provisions and answers to our various human needs in the Bible. This word of God is meant to come alive for our physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being. The word of God is instrumental to our brokenness in the world. The bible talks about joy, love, freedom and recover. Jesus made it clear in the book of John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the father but by me.

God has revealed in His Word that He takes pleasure in being a Father to His people, particularly in their times of dangerous adversity and anguish. He gives His children grace for even the most extreme trial or suffering stumbled upon in life. The biblical counsellor identifies that while some sufferers will find instant comfort in God's providential, wise and loving provisions in His Word, others may fight to proximately comprehend, believe or accept those provisions and will need the counsellor to display God's love and grace to them during this lengthy process⁶²⁰.

The biblical counsellor identifies that the impact of trauma can be multifaceted and will differ from person to person, depending upon the physical, cognitive, emotional, social and spiritual resources and the state of the sufferer at the time of the incident and in its aftermath⁶²¹.

Additionally, the biblical counsellor must be aware of the possible distressing responses that sometimes follow traumatic events, particularly flashbacks, nightmares and dissociation. Depending upon the nature of the trauma, these responses may not persist. When they do, nonetheless, the biblical counsellor, if properly trained, can ground the sufferer in the present

⁶²⁰ Christians believe that God has revealed Himself to man through the general creation and through the Bible. Christians acceptable of the authority of the scripture rests upon the presupposition of biblical infallibility. The Holy Spirit was given to Christians to abide them forever and Jesus called the Holy Spirit as "the Counselor". In the book of John 14:16, Jesus said "And I will pray the father and He will give you another comforter that he may abide with you forever". The Holy Spirit is the one that reminds us the word of God and actually applies the truth of God's word to the believers' life.

⁶²¹ For instance, the duration and intensity of the trauma, the age of the sufferer when the trauma took place and other similar factors also impact the responses. While some counselees may have received a psychiatric diagnosis at some point, the biblical counselor strives to view the counselee as a person under severe distress and will recognize that the complexities of each situation will often require a more thorough knowledge of the counselee and the nature of the situation. He also realizes that trauma sufferers must be allowed to disclose the details of their suffering at their own pace and to the extent to which they are comfortable.

during times of distress and assist in the development of a biblical perspective for handling those responses when they persist. The journey for both the suffering counselee and the counsellor can be difficult and painstakingly sluggish, but the result of seeing hurting believers experience healing grace from God, strength from His Word and greater effectiveness in His service brings glory to God.

Biblical counsellors realize that all trauma is disorderly and possibly debilitating to the life and spiritual health of believers. Nevertheless, the trauma that comes with sexual assault and abuse is particularly so and therefore presents exceptional challenges and opportunities for both the counsellor and the victim of such assault or abuse to grow in grace together as they trail divine healing and wholeness through the Gospel of Christ. When dealing with sufferers of sexual abuse and assault, the biblical counsellor will regularly need to seek to establish stability and safety for the counselee. This process often begins by assuring the victim that the perpetrator bears the entire blame for such crime(s) committed against the victim. The counsellor must undoubtedly communicate that the victim is not at fault for this harm done to him or her and must assist the victim in avoiding any self-blame for the abuse or assault. The counselee must be guaranteed that all sins against him or her will be righteously resolved by a just God who will not permit unrighteousness to go unjudged.

Biblical counsellors cognise that these matters associated with wellbeing and stability must precede other counselling determinations, for instance, helping to process disturbing memories; establishing proper beliefs about self, God and others; and the way the world works because of the Fall. Suitable time and grace should be given for biblical sorrow that comes with such trauma and loss.

As the counselee engages with God's truth, the biblical counsellor can likewise, when possible and advisable or appropriate, support in the process of repairing injured

relationships from the past. Also, the biblical counsellor inspires the counselee to consider founding healthy networks with others who can help navigate the process at a pace and manner contented with the counselee. During the course of this whole process, the biblical counsellor dependably points the counselee to the grace of God through the work of Jesus Christ, who Himself suffered physical abuse and assault so that His people might experience healing in the Gospel with help from His Spirit.

Biblical Counseling as a solution to Mental Health

The premise of Biblical counselling is that God has provided every indispensable truth the believer needs for a happy and fulfilling life in our Lord Jesus. God has never left us without an assistant to our needs. 2 Peter 1:3 assures God has divinely provided us with everything we need for life through our knowledge of him who called us his own glory and goodness. In line with Crabb, the counsellor can only comprehend and communicate what he knows in a way that will change the life of the counselee if he uses Scriptural concepts as his frame of reference⁶²². Collins underscores that a Biblical counsellor should use Jesus Christ as the final example of a counsellor. With sympathy, a counsellor should take in position next to the counselee so as to help him. A counsellor should repeatedly endeavor to intensify in Scriptural knowledge and grow in sanctification. Chiefly grounded in Biblical principles, he should also be experienced in the use of techniques that can help the counselee move towards change and spiritual growth, directing his focus on Christ. His work should not depend upon his own abilities, training, and counselling skills, but should be exercised under the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit⁶²³.

⁶²² Crabb, *Understanding*, 71ff.

⁶²³ G.R. Collins, *How to be a People Helper* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1995), 172.

The Bible is God's infallible, inspired revelation in propositional form. In the book of Isaiah 40:8, we learnt that "the grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever". Biblical counselling describes a two-way communication where the scriptures are used as a helping tool. This approach of counselling is repeatedly more effective when the parties involved are believers. Or the non-believer counselee is open and willing to accept the word of God in his or her helping process. Dr Crabb L. Jr, *Effective Biblical Counselling*, feels that every Christian is called to a Ministry of inspiration and helping others, particularly those of the family of faith..."⁶²⁴

To be effective counsellors, we must have the right fruit. The Bible calls it the fruit of the spirit within us; these fruits of the spirit comprise: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The counsellor must let the Lord take charge of their lives so they can have the "wisdom that comes from above". The Bible upheld that those who help others should be spiritual⁶²⁵. To develop a Christian counselling approach, assessment of the client and where he is having conflict becomes essential to accomplish our goal in counselling.

Religion in Synergy Mental Health

Religion stands as a spring of strength, hope, and purpose to billions of people in modern-day societies⁶²⁶. Many researchers fascinated by understanding the link between religion and

⁶²⁴ L. Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counselling: A Model for Helping Caring Christians become Capable Counsellors*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977).

⁶²⁵ Galatians 6:1 "who are responsive to and controlled by the spirit should set him right and restore and reinstate him without any sense of superiority and with all gentleness, keeping an attentive eye on yourself, lest you should be tempted also".

⁶²⁶ R. M. Bonelli, & H. G. Koenig, Mental disorders, religion and spirituality 1990 to 2010: A systematic evidence-based review. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 52 no. 2 (2013): 657-673; Koenig, Research on religion, spirituality, 283-291.

mental health commenced numerous studies across multiple religions with decisive evidence about its positive contributions to welfare. Partnership Between Psychiatry, Counselling, and Christianity. Despite the antagonism that branded the relationship between religion and psychiatry, Verhagen recommended that collaboration and mutual influence between both institutions were still conceivable⁶²⁷.

Moreover, counselling organizations that stimulate counsellors' professional development support the inclusion of spirituality and religion in counselling as standard practice for mental health counsellors, irrespective of their therapeutic approaches. Hartog and Gow perceived that both adherents of Christianity and psychiatry could be complementary, although their validated descriptions of mental distress's causes and treatments may differ⁶²⁸. Nevertheless, the disbelief toward psychology and psychiatry continues, as many church leaders still oppose psychology for its secular and humanistic foundation⁶²⁹. Incorporation of psychology and religion remains a scratchy compromise for some clergy members because they believe their religious beliefs, which are foundational to their pastoral care ministries, stand in opposition to the ethics governing the practice of psychology, psychiatry, and counselling. They believe the values psychologists and psychiatrists endorse are mismatched with biblical teachings⁶³⁰.

The conflicting relationship between Christianity and psychiatry is apparent and well-indexed. While mental health

⁶²⁷P. J. Verhagen, Psychiatry and religion: Consensus reached! *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 20 no. 6 (2017). 516–527.

⁶²⁸K., Hartog, & K. M. Gow, Religious attributions pertaining to the causes and cures of mental illness. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 8 no. 4 (2005): 263–276.

⁶²⁹See A. S. Hodge, J. N. Hook, D. E. Davis, & M. R. McMinn, Attitudes of religious leaders toward integrating psychology and church ministry. *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*, 7 no. 1 (2020): 18–33.

⁶³⁰K. Pargament & J. Lomax, Understanding and addressing religion among people with mental illness. *World Psychiatry*, 12 no. 1 (2013): 26–32.

counselling is a relatively newer discipline and practice, in relation to psychiatry, mental health counsellors also have a history of being unconcerned with the role of religion and spirituality in mental health⁶³¹. As a profession, mental health counselling has progressively incorporated religion and spirituality in recent years⁶³². Nevertheless, many mental health counsellors continue to display a lack of respect for religion and their clients' religious beliefs⁶³³. Also, some counsellors reported uneasiness working with religious clients, regularly lacking the capabilities to integrate spiritual issues into counselling⁶³⁴.

Christian clergy members and mental health professionals may share many common goals, including helping people realize their identity, live profoundly, and experience social support⁶³⁵. Nonetheless, church leaders and congregants have likewise been skeptical of the values and practices that mental health counsellors sanctioned⁶³⁶. Many clergy members consider partnership with the mental health community a menace to

⁶³¹ A.-M. Yamada, D. Lukoff, C. S. F. Lim & L. L. Mancuso, Integrating Spirituality and Mental Health: Perspectives of Adults Receiving Public Mental Health Services in California. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 12 no. 3 (2020): 276-287.

⁶³² L. Bohecker, R. Schellenberg & J. Silvey, Spirituality and religion: The ninth CACREP core curriculum area. *Counseling and Values*, 62 no. 2 (2017): 128-143.

⁶³³ J. W. Crosby & N. Bossley, The Religiosity Gap: Preferences for Seeking help from Religious Advisors. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 15 no. 2 (2012): 141-159.

⁶³⁴ Yamada, Lukoff, Lim & Mancuso, *Integrating Spirituality*.

⁶³⁵ Ultimately, clergy members' stance on the collaboration between psychology, counseling, and Christianity comes with potential ramifications for how they interact with families living with mental distress in their faith communities. Clergy members are decision-makers concerning what mental resources they are willing to offer to individuals living with mental distress. They can significantly influence their congregants' lives, and their views impact mental health experiences in faith communities.

⁶³⁶ A. E. Smith, R. Riding-Malon, J. E. Aspelmeier, & V. Leake, A qualitative investigation into bridging the gap between religion and the helping professions to improve rural mental health. *Journal of Rural Mental Health*, 42 no. 1 (2018): 32-45.

Christians, believing that such experience will be harmful to their congregants' spiritual well-being⁶³⁷. Yet, some clergy members were willing to integrate mental health concepts into their ministries and collaborate with professional counsellors despite their suspicion⁶³⁸. These clergy members argued that understanding the relationship between religion and psychology was essential for comprehensively meeting the needs of families and individuals living with mental distress in faith communities⁶³⁹.

Christ's Redemption is the Primary Soul-Curing Dynamic

In contrast to secular counselling, reformational counselling assumes a redemptive-therapeutic approach that places Christ's person and work in his life, death, and resurrection at the centre of the therapeutic enterprise. Whether directly or indirectly, all the counsellor's efforts are focused on helping the client benefit from Christ's person and work. As Calvin taught, union with Christ is foundational to Christian soul-healing:⁶⁴⁰ Union with Christ is the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation⁶⁴¹. The outworking of union with Christ leads to the degradation of the old self and the vivification of the new self⁶⁴². Reformational counselors will manage with their counselees, teaching them how to receive the cross and the resurrection more intensely into their beings, so that the Holy Spirit's

⁶³⁷ L. Baldwin & A. B. Poje, Rural faith community leaders and mental health center staff: Identifying opportunities for communication and cooperation. *Journal of Rural Mental Health*, 44 no. 1 (2020): 16–25.

⁶³⁸ Hodge, Hook, Davis, & McMinn, *Attitudes of religious*.

⁶³⁹ W. A. Kinghorn, American Christian engagement with mental health and mental illness. *Psychiatric Services*, 67(1), (2016): 107-110.

⁶⁴⁰ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), III.ii.24-25.

⁶⁴¹ See David B. Maddox, "Union with Christ: The Implications for Biblical Counseling," in *Introduction to Biblical Counseling*, edited by J. F. MacArthur, Jr. and W. A. Mack (Waco, Texas: Word, 1994), 116-130.

⁶⁴² Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xx.42-43; John Owen, "Of the mortification of sin in believers," in *The works of John Owen*, edited by W. H. Goold (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1967), 6: 2-87.

application of Christ's work in the new creation may be eschatologically grasped in their hearts, lives, relationships, and stories in this age (see Romans 6:1-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 5:17-26; 6:14-15; Ephesians 2:1-10; 4:22-24; Colossians 3:1-1128).

Conclusion

Findings from the literature show that many, if not all, mental illnesses result from sinful lifestyles and that only via repentance and getting right with God, as you might say, can people with mental illness find relief from their conditions. Christians who follow that belief often discontinue treatment for mental illness without discussing their decision with their doctors, largely because of their belief that complete healing occurred at a church service or prayer meeting. Nevertheless, such discontinuation can put patients at risk of experiencing acute or recurring episodes related to their mental health conditions (e.g., manic or psychotic episodes). It is also common among Christians who experience active, prominent symptoms of mental health conditions to delay treatment for years as they wait to be healed by God.

A large number of people struggle with mental illness in Christian communities, yet appear to feel isolated and rejected by their churches. Christian churches must consider how they should interact with such members of their communities, as well as those indirectly affected by mental illness. Psychiatrists and mental health providers can play a pivotal role in educating Christian patients on mental illness and its interaction with faith and spiritual practices. Although the literature on specific perceptions of Christians concerning mental illness remains scarce, the studies described above offer insights into Christian attitudes toward mental illness that perpetuate stigma and the underuse of mental health services among Christians. It was the objective of the present study to add to the knowledge of Christian attitudes toward mental illness by assessing both medical and spiritual therapy.

Biblical Approaches to Conflict Resolution: The Role of Spiritual Maturity in 21st- Century Christian Communities

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Abstract

Conflict is something that is integral to humanity. Everybody is facing conflict. Conflict is a social interaction when two or more people or groups have a similar desire which is in short supply. The central mission of the Church is to reconcile all in Christ. However, a distinctive approach to the settlement of disputes is lacking. This paper aimed to use Biblical evidence to expound the process, strategy, principle, and approach of resolving conflicts among Christians. It adopted structural conflict and transformational peace-building management theories. The paper posited that conflicts can be resolved when parties accept their existence, engage in dialogue on matters of concern, and advocate for the way forward. Willingness to make sacrifices, separate where necessary, and accept new responsibilities to forestall future occurrences is essential. It is recommended that parties should be willing and open to talk frankly about issues affecting their relationship and accept responsibility to implement their part of the solution for peaceful co-existence. Conflict resolution is a vital aspect of the church's responsibilities, increasingly critical in an era where complex social, economic and religious dynamics present unprecedented challenges. This study explores the conflict resolution in Biblical perspective and the growth of Christianity in contemporary Nigeria. The study reveals that effective conflict resolution within Christian households creates an environment of peace and stability, which is essential for fostering the

broader growth of Christianity. By addressing and resolving conflicts, Christian families can maintain unity and strengthen their commitment to the faith. This, in turn, contributes to a more vibrant and expansive Christian community. The findings underscore that Jesus' model of conflict resolution is intrinsically the most effective conflict resolution, which can significantly enhance both individual and collective spiritual growth.

Key words: Approach, conflict, resolution, Church, and peace.

Introduction

Conflict is a natural part of life, an unavoidable concomitant of life. It is an opposing interest that occurs in human relationships. Some Christians think that whenever there is a conflict, the weaker party should simply apologise to the majority group for the sake of peace. The witness of the church in the 21st century is experiencing challenges with the advancement of information technology. Though the Scripture contains diverse ways of resolving conflict among believers, there is a need for a distinct approach to conflict resolution within and outside the Christian fold. The purpose of the study is to examine Conflict resolution management in the church through a biblical perspective to restore peace in Christian communities. This paper provided a Biblical framework for conflict resolution and reconciliation that will promote peaceful coexistence in society. By drawing on the biblical model of resolving disputes, such as in Matthew 18:15-20. The study of Jesus' Model of managing conflict in the Matthean pericope for spiritual maturity. This approach not only aligns with scriptural teachings but also encourages church members to actively participate in resolving conflicts, thereby promoting an ethos of reconciliation within and outside the church community.

The Concept of Conflict

Conflict is natural, normal, neutral, and sometimes even delightful. It can turn into painful or disastrous ends, but it doesn't need to. Conflict is neither good nor bad, right nor wrong. Conflict simply is⁶⁴³. Jeong asserted that conflict is a social expression that involves at least two actors who express hostility⁶⁴⁴. Consequently, a conflict can be abridged as a clash between two people who have different opinions, most often those who have a mutual dislike. Conflict is an articulated struggle between at least two interdependent parties who identify incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals⁶⁴⁵. Additionally, conflict deals with the emotional, verbal, written or physical expression of differences regarding wants, needs or expectations between two or more individuals. Conflict unswervingly impacts behavior, decision-making, and the ability to complete assigned tasks.

Some people identify conflict as a process of social interaction connecting a struggle over claims to resources, power and status, beliefs, and other preferences and desires. Gelfand avers that conflict is a process that begins when one party perceives its interests, norms and values, or opinions and viewpoints being opposed, hurt, or countered by another party⁶⁴⁶.

Largely, people see conflict with the images of opposition, fighting, adversaries, and other negative images. However, conflict can similarly be a very positive force, repeatedly bringing about critically desirable adaptation in response to

⁶⁴³ David Augsburger. *Caring Enough to Confront* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1981), 11.

⁶⁴⁴ H. W. Jeong, *Conflict Management and Resolution: An introduction* (Oxon: UK, Routledge, 2010).

⁶⁴⁵ E. R. Runde & T. A. Flanagan, *Building Conflict Competent Teams* (San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, 2008).

⁶⁴⁶ M. J. Gelfand, Robert D. Pritchard (ed.) *The Psychology of Conflict and Conflict Management in Organizations*, (New York: NY: Taylor & Francis).

external changes. Just as with fire or even water, it is not conflict itself that is good or bad⁶⁴⁷.

The Concept of Conflict Resolution

Resolution is the process of reducing complex things into a simpler form. It implies a sense of conclusiveness, where the parties to a conflict are mutually satisfied with the outcome of a settlement and the conflict is resolved in a true sense. Thus, conflict resolution is the process by which individuals or groups resolve issues causing disaffection among them and bring about mutual acceptance of each party's existence in society⁶⁴⁸. Conflict management is the process of reducing the negative and destructive capacity of conflict through several measures by working with and through the parties involved⁶⁴⁹.

The Basic Characteristics of Conflict

Conflict, in fact, is not necessarily bad. The Bible basically teaches that some of the differences are natural and beneficial.

⁶⁴⁷ Conflict is rooted in fighting or struggle for mastery, a quarrel. It is an opposing interest that occurs in relationships, an expressed struggle between at least two inter-dependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards and interference from the other party. It is a frustration-based attitude or protest against lack of opportunities for development and against lack of recognition and identity. Conflict involves a perceived or real incompatibility of goals, values, expectations, interests, processes, strategies, or outcomes between two or more interdependent parties in their relationships. Conflict is not a problem in itself; it is what we do with it that is important.

⁶⁴⁸ S. G. Best, Conflict Analysis. In Best, S.G. (Ed.). *Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies in West Africa: A Reader* (Ibadan: Spectrum Press, 2009), 61-78.

⁶⁴⁹ Best, *Conflict Analysis*, 61-78. For example; It attests that not all conflicts can always be resolved; hence they can be managed or controlled through the exhibition of such skills as mastering emotion, effective communication, and broadmindedness. Conflict prevention is a proactive measure dependent on channels and intelligence coordination to control strained relationships before threats materialize in a conflict situation. The strategies for conflict resolution relate to the way people manage their self-image in relationships which is influenced by their cultural, religious, social, and economic background. Hence most people respond to conflict based on the way they learned while growing up.

Because God created us as unique individuals, humans must often have different opinions, beliefs, desires, perspectives, and priorities. Many of these differences are essentially not true and/or not wrong. This difference is nothing but the result of personal diversity and preference given by God (1 Cor. 12: 21-31). When handled appropriately, the differences can stimulate productive dialogue, encourage creativity, generate change that is very helpful, and generally make life more interesting. Therefore, although we must seek unity in our relationships, we must not demand uniformity (Eph. 4:1-3). Rather than avoiding all conflicts or demanding that others always agree with us, let us rejoice in the diversity of God's creation and learn to accept and cooperate with people who only see things differently from our perspective (Romans 15:7; cf. 14:1-13).

However, not all conflicts are neutral or useful. The Bible teaches that many differences are a direct result of sinful attitudes and behavior. As James 4:1-2 tells us, "Where do the conflicts and where do quarrels among you come from? Is it not from this, from the passions that battle inside you? You desire, and you do not have; you murder and envy, and you cannot obtain; you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask." (NET). If conflict is the result of a sinful desire or action, it is too serious to ignore. We need to avoid the temptation to look away from or attack the conflict. We instead need to work for one of the atonement reactions to conflict, which can help us to know the root causes of conflict and restore true peace.

Types of Conflict

Intrapersonal conflicts are disputes that occur within a person over issues of life, such as time, career, and marital issues, among others. It is when you get confused, perplexed, and lack harmony within yourself due to human nature. The intrapersonal conflict of Apostle Paul led to the statement, "For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. For the good that I

will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice” (Rom 7:15-19). Interpersonal conflict is a disagreement between two or more individuals in a relationship. Paul and Barnabas, who were missionary partners, had a quarrel over John Mark, which made them part from one another (Acts 15:36-41). Inter-group (International) conflict is disputes between groups, communities, churches, states, and nations. There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days (1 Kings 14:30). Intra-group (Societal) conflict is when individuals within a group or organization express their disagreement. In the family of Jacob, the wives, Rachel and Leah, who were sisters, had conflict (Gen 30:1-24). Another two sisters, Martha and Mary, had a conflict when Jesus visited them (Luke 10:38-40). Intrapersonal conflict is relational conflict that comes from inside an individual person⁶⁵⁰. It is an inward and personal battle within one’s own heart and mind. Intrapersonal conflict can easily be projected onto other people and situations. Throughout all situations, it is important to address the inward conflict because it will affect how conflicts with others will be resolved⁶⁵¹. This type of conflict is best dealt with through friends, mentors, and counsellors⁶⁵² in one-on-one moments of time. If a person is unable to address intrapersonal conflict, then all other types of conflict will be mismanaged or avoided entirely. Interpersonal conflict is relational between several individuals. A few causes of interpersonal conflict are personality clashes, diversity, communication breakdown, and sin. People should celebrate that there are many different personalities. God created people to be different. However, differences, or even similarities, in personalities contribute to the creation of conflict.

⁶⁵⁰ Everest Norma Cook, *Church Conflict: From Contention to Collaboration* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), chap. 2.

⁶⁵¹ Everest, *Church Conflict*, chap. 2.

⁶⁵² Everest, *Church Conflict*, chap. 2.

The Main Causes of Conflict through the Biblical Lens

A conflict⁶⁵³ arises because, of course, there is a root cause in the parties involved in the conflict. The root cause is often not because of something negative. It might even be that a conflict occurs because the parties dragged by the conflict compete with one another in proposing good things or positive things. Conflict as a human phenomenon does not just happen; it occurs within particular contexts when parties fail to detect, control, and respond to crisis signals by being insensitive to conflict indicators. The contexts include culture, government arrangements, institutions, social roles, norms, rules, and codes in a society. Conflict-causative factors are complex and vary from one situation to another.

Satan

Biblically, conflict started in heaven among the angels led by Satan and Michael. The latter won and chased the former around the world. The Bible states, “For the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God, day and night, has been cast down... Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath”⁶⁵⁴. Satan causes conflict, especially amongst Christians, by setting people in disagreement with one another and with God. The three-point agenda of Satan on earth is “to steal, and to kill, and to destroy” (Jn. 10:10). Therefore, Christians and indeed all men are expected to always, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking

⁶⁵³ Conflict can be affective when individuals become aware that their feelings and emotions are incompatible. Conflict of interest is when people experience incompatible preferences for a course of action or plan to pursue. Value conflict occurs when people have differing ideologies about issues of life. Cognitive conflict is when two or more people become aware that their thought processes or perceptions are in conflict. Goal conflict is when people disagree about a preferred outcome or end state. Societal conflict has to do with unjust or unequal social relationships.

⁶⁵⁴ *Revelation*, 12:10-12.

whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Conflicts are caused or made worse by sinful attitudes and habits, which lead to sinful speech and actions (James 4:1-2).

Information

Disputes or conflicts can arise because of misunderstandings that result from poor communication (Joshua 22:10-34). Negative information can cause a crisis. In contrast with Adam and Eve, it was the negative conversation they later had with the serpent that led to their disobedience (Gen 3:1-6). The rebellion against Moses was triggered by the bad report about the land of Canaan they had spied out, given by Caleb’s teammates, of the presence of giants compared with the Israelites, whom they described as grasshoppers (Num 13:31-33). Negative explanations of information can also result in a crisis. The analysis given to Joseph’s dreams by his family was the chief cause of his brothers’ hatred (Gen 37:10-11).

Distraction in the flow of information among workers at Babel caused the tower project to be deserted. When God saw that their motive was evil, He decided to confuse their language, and no one could understand the other. This resulted in a multi-lingual world (Gen 11:7-8). The nature of information available to the parties, as well as mediated communication, can cause conflict. Another conflict promoter is gossip. The Scripture says, “Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; And where there is no talebearer, strife ceases” (Prov. 26:20). The feeling that the dominance of a particular culture is negatively affecting the economic growth of another could lead to resentment.

Prospective information or communication gaps, as well as withholding of vital information from family or organization members, may negatively affect the response of members. When rules and policies of an organization are not effectively communicated across the board, there will be poor understanding that may result in conflict.

Environment

It is the surroundings and conditions that affect natural processes and the growth and development of living things that comprise water, land, soil, and air, as well as the living organisms found in these entities⁶⁵⁵. Man's environment is multifaceted and vast, the aggregate of all the external factors and influences affecting human, animal and plant life and the development of an organism. It likewise includes physical and psychological territories like area of responsibility, status, and privacy at stake.

The conflict between Abram and Lot was triggered by environmental and economic factors. Their enlarged prosperity, population, investment, and scarcity of natural resources occasioned by over usage, in addition to the presence of competitors (Canaanites and the Perizzites), made the workers quarrel (Gen 13:6-7). Even with accurate information, something in the environment could still act as a hindrance in human relationships. When family members or organizational workers find it difficult to access available resources at the same time, conflict may occur. The situation and context of the parties involved could also cause conflict.

Most conflicts in many communities like Nigeria are based on land space and resource competition, scarce political and economic resources and competition, micro and macro social structures, population growth, colonial or cold war legacy, creation and location of local government council headquarters, poverty, marginalization, disputed jurisdiction of traditional rulers and other significant personnel. Environmental crises are worsening; therefore, there should be fairness in the use of resources to minimize environmental-related crises among families and groups.

⁶⁵⁵ J. K. Udonsi, *Health hazards of a Filthy Environment. A paper presented at a workshop on Environment awareness for Secondary Schools*, River's state Ministry of Education: (2004).

Envy

The dictionary defines envy as the “painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another, joined with a desire to possess the same advantage. Where people envy the skills of those working with them in a family or organization, conflict is bound to occur. Skill is the ability to use one's knowledge effectively and readily in the execution or performance of learned physical tasks. The wife of Jacob, Rachel, envied her sister and mate Leah, because of childbearing⁶⁵⁶. The contemporaries of Daniel conspired against him because of his commitment to his God (Dan 6:5).

The envy of the Jews accounted for the crisis that greeted Paul and his missionary partner Barnabas at Antioch (Acts 13:44-45). Envy leads to party spirit (I am of Paul, and I am of Apollos), and division among group members. Confusion and every evil thing are prevalent where envy and self-seeking exist (1 Cor. 3:3-4, James 3:16).

Values

Differences in values, goals, gifts, vocations, priorities, hopes, interests, or opinions can also cause conflict (Acts 15:39; 1 Cor. 12:12-31). Values⁶⁵⁷ are the feelings that are not open for discussion within a culture that are judged to be good or bad, beautiful or ugly, right or wrong, normal or abnormal, which

⁶⁵⁶ *Genesis*, 30:1-24

⁶⁵⁷ Poor delineation and handling of values can cause some people to be “busy here and there” resulting in conflict. A man charged with the security of another had conflict with his master for his carelessness when the captive escaped (1 Kings 20:39-40). The discrimination in food distribution among “native” and “foreign” widows in the early church caused some people to murmur (Acts 6:1). The first General Council of the Church was occasioned by converts’ attitude to the Jewish cultural value on circumcision (Acts 15:1). Selfish desires and party spirit can cause conflict (James 4:1, (1 Cor. 1:11-12). Disrespect for cultural and religious symbols as well as resistance of new ideas can also cause conflict. Respect for each other’s cultural values and religious beliefs will curtail the rise in conflict.

are present in a majority of members or at least those who occupy vital positions. Conflict can emanate due to differences in orientation, values, experiences, and perceptions of the goals of a family or organization. Human knowledge is incomplete and imperfect, so even sinless people in a perfect world will see the same situation differently through their own knowledge and perspectives. Personal values determine the way people act and the results of their work. A clash of values can cause unintended conflict because no two individuals are the same, nor will they work the same in any given environment, and with the same resources. Principles bordering on moral values, political ideologies, and religious beliefs are other factors. It is a known fact that individuals always disagree about the actions they should take because of their personal values. The door of conflict often opens due to differences in people's values and perceptions of the goals of a family or organization, methods of work, as well as who is responsible for what.

High standards of living and taste, as well as profound personal beliefs about their identity, can cause conflict. Where there is a noticeable threat to relationships or potential ones, power tussles, fights for supremacy, and personality clashes, conflict is bound to occur.

Competition

Competition for limited resources, such as time or money, is often a source of contention in families, businesses and congregations (Gen. 13:1-12). Unhealthy competition and rivalry lead to misunderstandings that could result in conflict. Families and groups (churches) experience disharmony when some people castigate others for cheap favour. It is expected of peace lovers to know what is written to counter false information. Jesus said, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:32). Conflict is inevitable, and it can occur at personal, family, community, and international levels as a result of the struggle for power and material gain by leaders and followers alike. Jesus himself declares I did not

come to bring peace but a sword, to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law (Matt 10:34-36). Again, in Him believers may have peace, but in the world tribulation (John 16:33).

The processes, progression or stages of conflict, as acknowledged by Simon Fisher and others as cited in Best, are Pre-conflict, when goals between the parties become incompatible and are likely to result in open conflict; Confrontation, characterized by sporadic fighting, search for allies, mobilization of resources, and strained relationships⁶⁵⁸. A crisis is the peak which leads to the destruction of relationships, properties, and even lives. Outcome is when there is a decrease, and room is opened to dialogue or alternative settlement processes. Post-conflict is when disputants identify and address the causes with the aim of preventing a repeat of the conflict.

Effects of Conflict

Conflict has the potential to harm the relationship between members of the family, church, organization, and communities, as well as affect their witness to the world. Through conflict, new entities are created in the church, community and nation. The national, regional, and ethnic crisis in Nigeria is responsible for some new organizations in Nigeria.

Conflict provokes research. In the midst of Harman's plot to annihilate the Jews, King Ahasuerus ordered extensive research in the royal archives, and the findings led to the promotion of Mordecai (Esther 6:1-3). In the Jewish fight against the early church, Gamaliel was bold to call for religious tolerance following his research findings on previous movements in Israel (Acts 5:34-40).

⁶⁵⁸ See Best, *Conflict Analysis*, 61-78.

Conflict hinders interaction, breaks communication among people in a relationship, causes damage to reputation, and wastes of financial resources. It makes leaders lose their grip on members, disrupts developmental projects, destroys communities, and even leads to loss of lives.

Biblical Conflict Resolution Approach: Bridging Divides with Strategies

The Bible prescribes a very wide range of tools for the internal resolution of conflict among believers. Fundamental is readiness to obey the word of God, which compels the faithful to dialogue and forgive one another. Our Lord Jesus said, "Moreover, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you, one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector" (Matt 18:15-17). Conflicts among Christians and with other members of the community can be resolved through the following approaches.

Acceptance

The first step in conflict resolution is to accept, recognize or approve that a conflict subsists, as no one can make an effort to solve a problem that does not exist. Acceptance is to regard as proper, normal, or inescapable the issue that is at stake. It is to recognize or admit formally the de facto existence of an issue or conflict formally, and that the parties involved are entitled to be heard. Here, the conflict is defined with a determination to handle it either internally or externally, which is by engaging a third party, such as mediators, conciliators, facilitators, and arbitrators. When God appeared "in the cool of the day, Adam and Eve acknowledged their nakedness and decided to hide from their maker. Hence, the question, "Where are you?"(Gen 3:8-10). In Abram versus Lot, the Scripture says,

“So Abram said to Lot, please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren” (Gen 13:8). In the Scribes & Pharisees versus Adulterous woman, the defendant was accused of being caught in the “very act” (John 8:3). The Apostles accepted that people murmured during welfare distribution which did not mean well for the Church (Acts 6:1).

Dialogue

Dialogue is a discussion or other form of conversation between two or more persons. It is a two-way communication that implies speaking and listening, giving and receiving for mutual growth and enrichment. It comprises witness to one's own faith as well as openness to that of the other⁶⁵⁹. It is not simply an exchange of ideas; in some way, it is always an exchange of gifts. In doing dialogue, “each side must presuppose in the other a desire for reconciliation, for unity in truth,” which implies that any exhibition of mutual opposition must vanish.

Dialogue is found in the very plan of God, who initiates and enters into conversation with the human race. He says, "Come now, and let us reason together" (Isaiah 1:18). It is the supreme value and strategy of conflict prevention and resolution, as it employs free flow of communication and information among disputants. It is to be carried out in a spirit of friendship, respect, open to all, and never compromising the truth. It requires wisdom, learning, discernment, built on freedom, and guided always by hope and love.

It places before the parties the genuine divergences on issues of life comprising faith, and these differences should be faced in a genuine spirit of fraternal charity, of respect for the demands of one's own conscience and of the conscience of the other party, with reflective humility, and love for the truth. It includes areas

⁶⁵⁹ B. O. Onu, & G. Vilawa, Dynamism of Religious Dialogue (Inter-faith meeting) and the growth of Christianity in Nigeria. *Jalingo Journal of Christian Religious Studies*. 4, (2020, May): 1-20

of common interest and concern, explores different themes and issues of faith, and permits questions, misperceptions, and misconceptions. Through it, people in a relationship let each other understand more about how they experience the conflict, which can cause them to reexamine their positions and feelings⁶⁶⁰. It includes the process of negotiation and discussion, which uses an oral direct approach and emotional restraint. It inspires disputants to “say what you mean and mean what you say, like the Irish saying, “what is nearest to the heart is nearest the mouth”⁶⁶¹. Gathering together is a major step in conflict resolution. Nevertheless, dialogue can be obstructed through threatening, commanding or instructing, criticizing, and name-calling. Other means are unsolicited advice, debating, interrogating, manipulation, and not listening. All parties are to respond to conflict punctually, courageously, wisely, and maturely analyse the problems to reach a godly solution.

Advocacy

Advocacy is a helper or one who intercedes on behalf of another, an advocate as a person privileged to plead for another. He pleads the cause of another, who exhorts, defends, comforts, and prays for another. He can be a humble and God-fearing senior disputant or a third party. Jesus Christ, the righteous, is an Advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1-2). Advocacy is the

⁶⁶⁰ S.A. Ucendu, *Conflict Management & Resolution: A better Approach*. (Enugu: Zubik printers, 2007).

⁶⁶¹ In resolving the first conflict, God interacted with Adam and Eve. The later were given opportunity to explain themselves (Gen 3:11-13). In Abram versus Lot, Abraham, afraid of doing anything that might tend to injure his character or bring discredit on his name, as one who had a strong sense of religion called the parties together, and talked over the issue. In Harlot versus Harlot, King Solomon gave audience to the two women in his chambers, and they shared their stories (1 Kings 3:21-22). When the Scribes and Pharisees went to Jesus with the Adulterous woman, the plaintiff presented their case though without evidence of who the defendant committed the “very act” with (John 8:4-5). In the early church, the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples in response to welfare crisis (Acts 6:2).

act of arguing in favour of, or supporting; the practice of supporting someone to make their voice heard. In it, we present our case and bring forth our strong reasons (Isa 41:21).

In Abram versus Lot, the former proposed the option of a change of location. "If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left" (Gen 13:9). In Judah versus Tamar, the defendant's evidence nullified her accusation. "When she (Tamar) was brought out, she sent to her father-in-law (Judah), saying, "By the man to whom these belong, I am with child." And she said, "Please determine whose, these are-the signet and cord, and staff" (Gen 38:24-26). In Israel versus Prophet Samuel, God asked the latter to heed the voice of the Israelites for a King (1 Samuel 8:9). In Harlot against Harlot, King Solomon proposed the use of a sword to divide the living child in two, and give half to one, and half to the other as a solution to end their quarrel (1 Kings 3:24-25)⁶⁶².

Sacrifice

Sacrifice is a voluntary deprivation characterized in a "giving up" of cheerfulness, status and the like, which is continually of some value to the one who sacrifices. It is to purposely give up (a piece) something of value, particularly for a particular purpose, to improve one's position on the board. It is the medium in which different religions and religious people are energized, nourished and sustained in their relationship with the divine and one another. Socially, it helps in bringing people together as they reaffirm their vows and strengthen their unity. Jesus underscored sacrifice as an essential virtue of a perfect life. "But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever

⁶⁶² For example, in Scribes and Pharisees versus Adulterous woman, while the complainants argued that the defendant "be stoned", Jesus made a case for the accused when he stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, that he who is without sin among the plaintiff should throw the first stone at the accused (John 8:5-7). The Apostles proposed involving new hands to handle food sharing as to end the murmurings (Acts 6:3).

slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. "If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also." And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away... "Therefore, you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matt 5:38-48). Sacrifice expresses humility, the virtue of considering others better than oneself, and it includes forgiveness⁶⁶³.

In Scribes and Pharisees versus Adulterous woman, Jesus sacrificed his schedule, gave attention to the parties, and even wrote on the ground for the sake of justice (John 8:8). In Philemon versus Onesimus, Apostle Paul offered to make personal sacrifice and refund to the former as to reconcile the parties (Phil. 17-20).

Separation

Where there is increased dispute, separation of the parties is a step in the right direction. Quarrels between co-wives who share a common residence will be reduced when they are separated. In God versus Adam and Eve, God separated mankind from the serpent and put enmity between them. Again, He removed the offenders from comfort zone (garden), and introduced them to hard work (Gen 3:15). In Abram versus Lot, the two parties separated from each other which ended strife between their workers (Gen 13:11). In Harlot versus Harlot, the resolve of the compassionate woman to be separated from her living child confirmed her honesty, helped King

⁶⁶³ For example, in God against Adam and Eve, God sacrificed His planned fellowship meeting and entered into settlement of dispute. In Abram versus Lot, the former sacrificed his right as the oldest and leader of the team, and allowed his nephew to grasp all the advantages for the continuity of his business and joy of his followers by making the first choice (Gen 13:9). In Harlot versus Harlot, willingness of the compassionate woman to make sacrifice as well as save King Solomon from committing murder gave her justice (1 Kings 3:26).

Solomon to identify the true mother, and passed right judgement (1 Kings 3:27).

In Herod versus the Holy family, the Angel of the Lord instructed the family to separate from the former's domain, and relocate to Egypt (Matt 2:13). In the Scribes and Pharisees versus the Adulterous woman, the plaintiffs wilfully withdrew themselves and the matter was dismissed (John 8:9).

Responsibility

A responsible person is "able to answer for one's conduct and obligations". It is the act of being morally, legally, or mentally responsible. That is, an action necessitated by moral obligation that is both established and restricted by knowledge. They consist of acceptance of guilt, repentance, accountability, and restitution, such as a refund of embezzled funds. Parties in conflict are to take up responsibilities that will remove idleness, distractions, and forestall future occurrences. Conflicts are resolved when parties become committed to a new and positive responsibility, which includes rendering and accepting of apology.

In God against Adam and Eve, the first defendant demonstrated responsibility by giving a name to his wife. God Himself went on to provide them with quality clothing to replace their human and indecent dressing (Gen 3:20-21). In Abram versus Lot, both parties took charge of their new commercial sites, while Abram settled in the land of Canaan, Lot went as far as Sodom (Gen 13:13). In Judah versus Tamar, the plaintiff accepted responsibility for the pregnancy and said "She has been more righteous than I, because I did not give her to Shelah my son" (Gen 38:26)⁶⁶⁴.

⁶⁶⁴ For example, in Herod versus Holy family, Joseph "took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt" (Matt 2:14). In Scribes and Pharisees versus Adulterous woman, the accused was discharged and acquitted, and asked to "go and sin no more" (John 8:10-11). The

Communication of resolution terms to the parties is an essential aspect of responsibility. The early church communicated the decision of the Jerusalem Council to the converts by writing to churches in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia (Acts 15:22-23). An idle mind, they say, is the devil's workshop. Empowerment of youths and just compensation will increase productivity and defuse the upsurge in conflict, especially for the unemployed in Nigeria.

Conflict resolution responsibility includes reconciliation, which is the process of rebuilding a relationship in the course of the conflict. Parties who experienced emotional frustration, depression, and loss of vision have the responsibility to go for counselling for restoration. The parties should responsibly apply their part of the solution. They can meet to reassure each other that the solution is being implemented, re-evaluate the effect of the resolution, and enhance their relationship.

The Power of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is an integral part of the Christian life that every true believer should experience, as well as demonstrate to others. Some of Christ's very last words spoken on the cross focus on forgiveness. Jesus extended forgiveness to the thief who recognized that Christ was the true Messiah (Luke 23: 43-44). Also, we see the love of the Saviour being demonstrated as he unconditionally forgives those who have put him through tremendous anguish and unimaginable pain (Luke 23:34). Here, we see a clear picture of the reconciliatory work of Christ in action as preordained by the Father. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:17). Jesus, as well as Stephen, forgave their murderers in the hour of death, even when their attackers were unwilling to consider forgiveness and reconciliation (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:59, 60). Even though

early church solved the problem of discrimination as Stephen and his team took over the welfare ministry (Acts 6:5-6).

Christians hear so much teaching about forgiveness, forgiveness as a life concept remains very difficult to get their arms around.

As we are engaged in assisting others to find conflict resolution, we cannot ignore this blessed fruit of Christ's redemptive work on the cross. It is sad to say, but too few church conflict situations end with true forgiveness as demonstrated by Christ. David Augsburger asserts in a very poignant manner the dilemma that we find ourselves in. In a world of flawed communication, community is possible through understanding others. In a world of painful alienation, community is created by accepting others. In a world of broken trust, community is sustained by forgiveness⁶⁶⁵. Being in ministry for over 30 years, I can easily identify with the insight of R. T. Kendall through his experience when people repent of their harmful ways: If we wait for those who have hurt us to repent first, we will almost certainly wait for a long, long time. We also justify ourselves to stay bitter the rest of our lives⁶⁶⁶.

When we rediscover Biblical truths, we become more confident that the Good Shepherd will help us when difficulties arise. One of the major problems in the local church is that the offended member does not usually take the first step and go to the individual who has hurt them. This behavior is detrimental because the offending party cannot explain the rest of the story (Matt. 18:15-20). It is not necessary to share one's position and emotions with others before attempting reconciliation. Only when this process fails are we to take one or two other believers with us as witnesses to the dispute⁶⁶⁷. Finally, Gary Allen makes it absolutely clear that conflict management is not something we will ever get a complete handle on. In other words,

⁶⁶⁵ David Augsburger, *Caring Enough to Forgive: True Forgiveness and Caring Enough to Not Forgive: False Forgiveness*, (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1981), 78.

⁶⁶⁶ R. T. Kendall, "Forgiving the Unrepentant," *Christianity Today*, March 2005, 78.

⁶⁶⁷ Bryan H. Sanders, "Resolving Conflict in the Church," *Enrichment Journal Online*, Spring (2005), accessed 11 November 2006.

we will never completely arrive at the point of having everything under control. Conflict management is an ongoing process. In the pain and anger of conflict, pastors often want to resolve the situation immediately. This is understandable. But in reality, conflict management is a leadership lifestyle. A pastor minimises and manages conflict by using ongoing leadership skills and abilities. Conflict cannot be completely prevented, but pastors must be as preventative as possible in intentionally leading and training people⁶⁶⁸.

Divine Solution to Conflict

God is always concerned with the spiritual solution to conflict. How can sinful human nature and character, which fuel conflict, be changed? Stott further asks: Is it possible to make a sour person sweet, a proud person humble, or a selfish person unselfish⁶⁶⁹? The Church must change, viewing parties to a conflict not as individuals with competing interests but as brothers and sisters in the body of Christ caught in rebellion and bondage of sin⁶⁷⁰. Deep-rooted matters and motivations of the human heart, such as idolatry, anger, revenge, lusts and cravings in opposition to God are really better addressed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Bible declares that the miracle of salvation permanently takes place in human beings (Matt 1:21, Acts 2:38). Human sins are forgiven effected by the priestly death of Jesus Christ on the cross; eternal life is received by union with Christ, specifically his divine nature, manifested in his Kingly victory over sin, evil forces and death in the resurrection⁶⁷¹ (Acts 2:24) and the union presupposes an obedience to the prophetic demands of Jesus Christ (Mk 1:15). God's plan of salvation is

⁶⁶⁸ Sanders, *Resolving Conflict*.

⁶⁶⁹ John R. Stott, *Basic Christianity* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity 1958), 99.

⁶⁷⁰ A. Poirier, *The Peace-Making Pastor: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Church Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 12-14.

⁶⁷¹ G. Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement* (London: SPCK, 1931), 20-22.

first to reconcile us to himself and progressively to liberate us from sin and our self-centeredness and bring us into harmony with our fellow men. Jesus Christ offers to change not only our standing before God but our very human, sinful nature and character (Mk 1:15). In John 3:3-8, Jesus Christ spoke to Nicodemus the necessity of being born again in order to see and enter the Kingdom of God. The Apostle Paul's statement: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold all things have become new," (2 Cor 5:17) sums up the New Testament's message of the need for a new heart, a new nature, a new birth, a new creation and new eternal life⁶⁷².

The doctrine of salvation is multifaceted and must be internalized in human life. For salvation to be meaningful in our ministry, all the theories of atonement, such as objective, subjective and classic aspects, must be interactive and drawn from each other. One should not be overlooked because they are essential for the full understanding of the death of Christ. The full understanding of salvation must result in the restoration of broken relationships between people and God. Christianity must be a practical way of living; a life of worshipping God, sharing, fellowshiping, mutual love and service in the name of Jesus Christ.

The Church is called upon to radically change, love, and serve the community by declaring the Good News of salvation, discipline and sacraments. We owe our forgiveness of sin and reconciliation chiefly to the death of Jesus Christ, but it is by the power of His Spirit that we can be set free from sin, self-centeredness and that we can be united in a fellowship of love in the Church. Jesus Christ, our Prince of Peace, calls upon us to seriously carry out the divine assignment of peacemaking to the world. The Church, in turn, must prophetically challenge her members to engage in reconciliation, restoration and peacemaking efforts. Conflict, if handled well, stimulates dialogue, creativity and change. Sin and conflict, therefore,

⁶⁷² Stott, *Basic Christianity*, 99.

provide a golden opportunity for reflection, confession, repentance, spiritual renewal and radical transformation in the Church and society. This is the glory of Good News.

This type of atonement model reverses the fall and expiates human sin; it brings change and a closer relationship with God. This spiritual solution to conflict seems rather to have been ignored or untried by society, including the Church. It must be our prayer that the Church in Malawi will access the riches that God has made available to us, but which we seem hesitant to use.

Public Apology

There must be a complete turning around of the heart, newness of the heart, a change of attitude and behavior. The Public apology approach to reconciliation accelerates the healing of wounds between people. It would be a powerful, moving and memorable occasion if the conflicted congregations organised a public apology ceremony or rally so that people could come together and just say: “Sorry,” to each other, “I am not angry with you anymore!” Public apology parallels the public confession of baptism. Jesus Christ made a public confession not because of sin but to fulfill all righteousness and identify with the sinners (Matt 3:14-15, Lk 3:21). All Christian believers are urged to make a public confession of baptism, die to sin, be buried with Christ through baptism and rise with Christ from the dead by the glory of the Father and walk in newness of life (Rom 6:3-10).

Prayer and Intercession

The Ministry of Reconciliation calls for serious prayer and intercession. Prayer is communion with God; it unites, communicates deep things of God. In simple terms, prayer is talking to God. Since God is the Divine Person, through serious prayer and intercession, people make contact with the Living God. They “cast all their care and anxiety upon God” (1 Pet 5:7),

making “their supplications, requests, petitions, prayers with thanksgiving known to God for all men” (2 Tim 2:1-2). Prayer is the means of expressing our feelings and thoughts to God about the situation in which we find ourselves.

In intercession, we bring to the consciousness of God all our hopes, fears, frustrations, the selfishness, courage and our cowardice, the love and joy that we find within ourselves. To stimulate reconciliation and peace, Churches must be prepared to engage in prayer in favour of individual Churches, their leaders and the nation.

The Role of the Holy Spirit

The work of Christ on the cross is the presupposition of the redemption of human character by means of forensic justification: forgiveness of sin, the giving of eternal life through intimate union with Christ and repentance by sanctification⁶⁷³. It is the Holy Spirit who enables this intimate relationship. Jesus Christ spoke of new life received by new birth and connected that with the work of the Spirit (Jn 3:5-6). The fundamental role of the Spirit is to enable intimate relationships between persons. The Holy Spirit plays this noble role as a person. He bears witness, speaks, teaches, guides, and converses with Christian believers about the things of God and what He has heard from Jesus Christ (Jn 14:26, 16:12-13, Acts 10:19-20). The role of the Holy Spirit is to soften hearts. The Holy Spirit moves powerfully in the conflicting parties, softening the heart to truly hear and believe in what Christ has taught through the word. He moves people to relate to one another in love closely.

A relationship to Christ as King is not one-sided; receiving his benefits involves a response. In return, citizens of the kingdom are expected to be loyal to their King, obey his laws and serve

⁶⁷³ H. R. Mackintosh, *The Christian Experience of Forgiveness* (London: Nisbet & Company, 1934), 297-9.

the kingdom. The King desires that citizens live in harmony and does what he can to facilitate this. To maintain law and order, the King creates and enforces structures that oversee the smooth running of the Kingdom. In times of conflict, the king enforces his laws of justice to provide human harmony and reconciliation. The subjects have to follow the example of their king, internalize and apply the law in their lives. They obey his law, his will and in this obedience comes order.

Here, there are probably two aspects in relation to reconciliation. First is what Christ has done to facilitate reconciliation between individuals in His action as prophet, priest and king. Second, there is the action of the Church in relation to the offices of Christ, and empowered by the Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who internalizes the relationships between Christian believers by promoting brotherly affection, love, reconciliation and peace (Jn 15:26, 16:13-15, 1 Cor 13, 1 Jn 3:11-24).

Jesus' Model of Managing Conflict in Matthean Pericope for Spiritual Maturity

This section will start describing the kinds of conflicts faced by Jesus then it will discuss some ideas about conflict resolution afterwards. When discussing kinds of conflict, some biblical passages will be intentionally selected. Mostly, those passages will be in the book of Matthew.

Spirit of Humility Matthew 18:1-5

In this special event, Jesus teaches humility to his disciples. This idea is reflected in the words of Jesus, "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Mat 18:4 NAS). In the life of the disciples, they should have this nature.

Apostles have their desire to be one in the kingdom of Christ. This is one of their greatest desires among them. The problem is that they need to have a quality that is matched with the

kingdom of Jesus. If they fail to have this quality, then they will not have the chance. Their desire is not supported by their trait. They have their own concept of the kingdom's greatness. However, their concept of the greatness of the kingdom was not supported by their character. The character is humility. They feel superior to the other friend. This is not the character that fits the kingdom of Christ. Jesus taught that what is considered great in His kingdom is the humble one⁶⁷⁴.

Humility is seeing oneself as no more important than anyone else. Spiritually, Humility means recognizing personal unworthiness and inability to do anything at all to become worthy before God and earn salvation wholly. Humility depends entirely on God's mercy for Forgiveness and salvation. It looks to Jesus Christ as the Saviour, who offered up himself as the perfect sacrifice for all sins. Humility is not about self-esteem; it is about Christ-esteem. The kingdom of heaven is a kingdom of peace where there is no conflict. Humility is the nature which can help to get rid of conflict. So, one way to solve problems that occur in a family is humility.

Pauline humility is likened to Jesus' model of humility. It is widely believed that the Apostle Paul wrote the Epistle of Ephesians while he was in a Roman prison⁶⁷⁵. Willard Taylor, in his commentary on Ephesians, writes: Paul seeks to demonstrate that the redemptive plan of God involves essentially the unity of man and the cosmos with himself. At the heart of the order of things, there exists a deep rift. Man, and God are tragically alienated. Likewise, the world in which man lives is disunited, naturally, morally and socially. Discord is the more characteristic train of man himself and the world around him⁶⁷⁶. For Paul, unity is crucial, and it is through

⁶⁷⁴ G. J. Albrecht & M. J. Albrecht, *Matthew. The People's Bible* (Milwaukee, Wis.: Northwestern Pub. House, 1996), 260.

⁶⁷⁵ Taylor H. Willard, "Ephesians," in *Beacon Bible Commentary: Volume IX Galatians through Philemon* (Kansas City, MO: The Foundry, 2011), 134, ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁶⁷⁶ Taylor, "Ephesians," 132.

Jesus that the church will achieve it⁶⁷⁷. This letter is written to address unity in the church. Ephesians 4⁶⁷⁸ specifically addresses unity within the body of Christ. In this part of Paul's letter, he teaches the church in Ephesus the attitudes and behaviors needed to keep unity within the fellowship of believers. The practice of these attitudes and behaviors speaks to how the church today should navigate conflict.

In these three verses, Paul tells the church they must live a worthy life, which is determined by a person's humility, gentleness, patience, love, and unity⁶⁷⁹. Humility is when people see themselves through God's eyes⁶⁸⁰ and do not allow pride, supremacy, and arrogance to get in the way. Humility is also the willingness to surrender to God's authority. Gentleness is not a lack of power, but controlled power. It is also not an absence of strength but requires a vast amount of it. Gentleness is the strength to control one's power. Patience is expectantly waiting for God and believing that God's time, place, and action are right. The love that Paul wrote about, ἀγάπη in Greek, echoes the message Jesus gives his disciples in John 13:34, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." Paul instructs the people not only to love, but to "bear with one another in love." It is easy to love when there is no suffering, pain, or difficulty in the relationship, but to "bear with one another" means to persist, tolerate, endure, and suffer through all circumstances. Simply stated, it means to love regardless. When Paul speaks about unity, he tells the Ephesians to make

⁶⁷⁷ Taylor, "Ephesians," 134.

⁶⁷⁸ See in Ephesians 4:1-3, Paul writes, "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

⁶⁷⁹ Robert H. Gundry, *Commentary on Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2011), 29, ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁶⁸⁰ Max E. Anders, *Holman New Testament Commentary—Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1999), 140, ProQuest Ebook Central.

every effort to keep it. Paul wants the believers to put forth all of their effort and to be diligent to maintain unity within the fellowship.

Spirit to Redeem Matthew 18:15-20

Matthew 18:15-20 is the Scripture that most Christian leaders use to inform their methods of congregational conflict management. To understand the instructions of Jesus in these verses, it is imperative to look at the pericopes that come before and after Matthew 18:15-20. It is also important to understand the honour/shame culture Jesus spoke into when he gave these instructions to his disciples⁶⁸¹. The pericope that follows is Matthew 18:21-35 and is focused on forgiveness. Jesus instructs his disciples to not only forgive once or seven times, but to forgive seventy-seven times. He then told the parable of the unforgiving servant. These verses reinforce the intent of Matthew 18:15-20 in that it is not conviction, but reformation, and not condemnation, but salvation, to which Jesus is referring⁶⁸².

One passage of the bible that is used by scholars to deal with conflict resolution is Matthew 18:15-17. This bible section summarizes the steps that need to be followed by the disciples of Jesus when they are in conflict. Although the actual story is about a man who commits a sin which is not related to another.

⁶⁸¹ Rikard Roitto, said that the pericope before Matthew 18:15-20 is the parable of the lost sheep in verses 10-14. In Matthew 18:12, a sheep “has gone astray” and the shepherd leaves the herd to go and find that one lost sheep. When the sheep is found, the shepherd rejoices over it and brings it back to the herd. Jesus uses this parable to reveal how much God cares for his “little ones” and illuminate the goal of his desire to bring the “little ones” back into the community when they have gone astray (“Reintegrative Shaming and a Prayer Ritual of Reintegration in Matthew 18:15-20,” *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* 79 (2014): 106, <http://ths.divaportal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1357447&dswid=-7044>).

⁶⁸² Roitto, “Reintegrative Shaming and a Prayer Ritual of Reintegration in Matthew 18:15-20,” 106; R.A. Douglas Hare, *Interpretations: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching; Matthew* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 214, Kindle.

However, this verse has been used to be a method of resolving conflicts among church members. In addition, these verses may also become a principle of family conflict resolution. If one church member commits a deliberate sin and makes no effort to change his or her behavior, other fellow Christians should make an effort to convert. The brother who stumbles is manifestly the same as the “one sheep” that “went astray”; they need to be found. They need our help to be redeemed.

Albert & Albert commented that even if the sin does not directly affect a person, however, if he or she knows about it, God requires a personal effort to discuss and settle the sin⁶⁸³. The talent of inspiration is a sacred trust, one for which we will unavoidably be called upon to give account in the Day of Judgment. So it is a must for a Christian to take care of other friends who fall into sin. It can be a blessing for them.

If this step works successfully, the fellow friend who sins won, then the effort ceases. However, if this step fails, then a Christian does not stop. In the case that the friend does not admit his wrongdoing or change his course of action, and make right, as far as possible, the wrongs of the past. The next step should be performed.

The next step is to take one or two others to accompany them to help. In this case, credibility is important. These accompanying friends should be chosen carefully. They should be mature Christians and have no problem with the erring brother. The reason is that their presence will help to save the erring brother. The main purpose, that is to win a friend, will not be reached or at least difficult to reach.

The next thing that should be done is to bring this matter to the church. It has been understood that this church is a Christian congregation where the erring brother and those who are in the process of winning him or her belong. This action is intended

⁶⁸³ Albrecht, & Albrecht, *Matthew*.

to impress the brother that he is important to the church; however, his sins need to be cleansed⁶⁸⁴.

Spirit to Avoid (Matt. 2:13-15; 19-23)

At the time, right after the birth of Jesus, he faced conflict. When the Magi come to find the place of his birth, they were asking the place up to the king Herod. News that they brought up to the king drove him to a desire to know where or who the newborn king is. However, he also sought to kill Him. This shows the conflict that Jesus faced even though He was still an infant.

Immediately after these wise men saw Jesus, the angel of the Lord told them to take another way home. And at the same time, the angel told Joseph to go away to Egypt "Because Herod will seek the young child to destroy him (vs. 14). When the angel warns that Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him, the language used conveys the sense of an imminent danger. Wasting no time, therefore, Joseph and his family leave town by night and head for Egypt.

This biblical passage provides implications that the conflict is inevitable for man. Humanly speaking, it starts at infancy. The way of the angel told Joseph to take Jesus to Egypt is a portrait of one way of handling conflict. The way which is shown here is avoidance. Because the Bible further states that after the death of Herod, the angel told Joseph and his family to return to Israel, and they settled in Nazareth. Gardner gave his view about this by saying that Christian sometimes needs to flee from hostile powers⁶⁸⁵. And he asserts that while doing this, God has His deliverer who runs with Christians in their way, looking for a place of refuge. He also stressed that in a Christian place of comfort is subject to disruption at any moment. These

⁶⁸⁴ Albrecht, & Albrecht, *Matthew*.

⁶⁸⁵ R. B. Gardner, *Matthew. Believers church Bible commentary* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press.1991), 53.

ideas gave some principles that Christian's life is always in a state of conflict, and then while in conflict, Christian may flee.

Spirit of Silence (Matt. 27:13-14)

The following is the attitude of Jesus while he was before Pilate. After Jesus was sentenced by the council to be killed. He was brought to Pilate. Judged before Pilate, Jesus faced conflict.

When he was asked some questions, the Bible explained that: And when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto him, Hearst thou not how many things they witness against thee? And he answered him never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly. (Mat 27:13-14 KJV). Here, Jesus showed another way to deal with conflict. Jesus didn't say anything. When he was asked by Pilate, he answered nothing. When Christians get involved in a conflict, silence is one way to deal with it.

Spirit to Keep Stay on God's Word (Matt. 4:1-11)

This biblical account is about the temptation of Jesus that Jesus faced in the wilderness. It was said that "Jesus was led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil (4:1)." It was recorded in the previous chapter that Jesus was just baptised (Mat 3:13-17), and proclaimed by God the Father as His Son. Then, after fasting forty days and nights, Jesus went into the wilderness to be tempted.

In the wilderness, Jesus faced His conflict with Satan. It cannot be sanctioned that Jesus is God. He is not a sinner and even never sinned. However, He is open to temptation and can sin. In this condition, when He faced temptation, Jesus was fully spiritual. It is generally believed that, when a person is just baptised, fasting, and even led by the Holy Spirit, that person is spiritual. So, as a human, Jesus is spiritual. However, even though He is full of spirit, He is faced with conflict. This fact gives implications that there is no place where a person is free from conflict. It is assumed that conflict is the fruit of sin. It

became part of humanity when they fell into sin. And only those who are in sin will face conflict. On the other hand, those who are living in accordance with God will not face a conflict. But Jesus' temptation shows that even a faithful person will face conflict.

The conflict that was faced by Jesus at the first temptation related to the love of God and the will of God. Wiersbe, W. W., expanded the question of Satan by saying if Jesus is the Son of God, why does he get hungry? And if the Father is love, how does He bring Jesus into the terrible wilderness? And Satan continues to ask Jesus to exercise His divine power to meet His own need⁶⁸⁶. Jesus refused to do this proposal because He did not want to use power for personal need. But there was a reason for Jesus to turn down this suggestion. He was tempted to use his divine power to relieve his physical hunger and not to rely on the Father, who had already miraculously sustained him for 40 days. During his entire ministry, Jesus never once used his divine power for his personal benefit⁶⁸⁷.

There are at least two implications that Jesus shows here in relation to how to deal with conflict. First is people need to put spiritual needs first than physical or other needs. When Jesus said that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God, it means that feeding on the Words of God is more important than physical food⁶⁸⁸. Second is that people need to avoid allowing circumstances to dictate their actions. In every situation, a person needs to follow God's instructions. Jesus could turn the stone into bread; however, He did not. This action shows that Jesus is dependent on God for whatever He does (John 5:30; 6:38).

⁶⁸⁶ W. W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. "An exposition of the New Testament comprising the entire 'BE' series"--Jkt. Mt 4:1 (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books. 1996).

⁶⁸⁷ Albrecht, & Albrecht, *Matthew*. 49.

⁶⁸⁸ Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition*.

Spirit to Compromise (Matt. 8:28-34)

This pericope portrays Jesus' encounter with Satan in the country of the Gadarenes. There, He met two men possessed by devils. Satan, who possessed these two men, asked Jesus to send them away to the herd of swine. Then Jesus granted. In this short biblical account, Jesus shows, in a conflict, that sometimes people need to allow what the opponent wants. When they ask something that does not harm the organization. Or when the petition is not contrary to the welfare of human life.

Conclusion

Navigating conflicts is an inescapable part of life. Disagreements are bound to arise in personal relationships, work environments, or community dynamics. Thus, conflict is an integral part of human interaction, inevitable, and of different classifications. It is triggered by Satan, negative management of information, environmental resources, envy, and response to individual and group values. It has both positive and negative effects depending on how it is handled. Conflicts are resolvable, particularly among Christians who are called to a peaceful relationship with one another, and indeed with all men (Rom 12:18; Heb 12:14). There are diverse ways of resolving interpersonal and intergroup conflicts. The 21st-century Church is in dire need of a defined conflict resolution approach for effective witness of the love of God to the world. The use of diplomacy only offers a provisional settlement of disputes. Even issues ruled on at the Supreme Court are later reconsidered in different forms. Our proofs exposed authenticity in the settlement of conflict. Hence, the Biblical approach should be adopted in conflict resolution at the family, church, community, and society levels. The approach will usher in true reconciliation, which is the emphasis of Christian ministry. It will also uphold acceptability, forgiveness that opens the door for a good relationship, and increased peaceful coexistence in society.