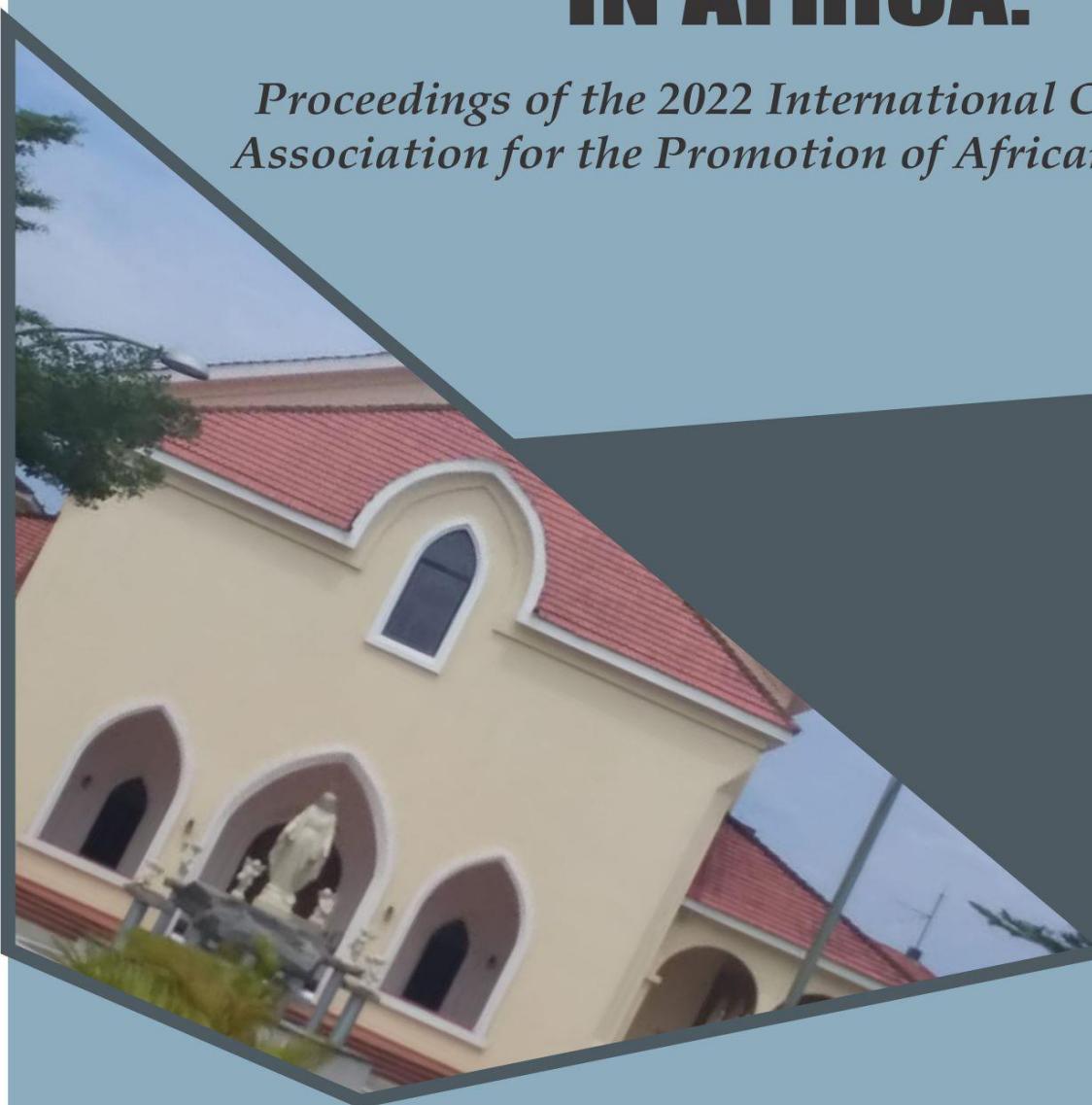# DIALOGUE ON RELIGION, THEOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA:

Proceedings of the 2022 International Conference of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS)

Editors
Ikechukwu Anthony KANU
Kanayo Louis NWADIALOR
Mary Winifred ECHE

APAS

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Dedication

In Memory of African Migrants,
Dead and alive

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INTRODUCTION

In recent times, African continent has witnessed a number of religious crises and theological disputes that have led to loss of lives and properties. Such religious crises were not only between one religion and the other, but were also found within a particular religion. The causes of these religious crises were numerous. There were fanatics who insist that Africa will know no peace until everyone embraces their own religion; others cause problems on the ground of theological differences. Again, there are others who feel that a particular religion has dominated Africa's political scene for a long time and it is their turn to claim their right and lord it over all with no moderate hand. Additionally, self-interest, love for power, personal gain, political interest and other mundane affairs had led some religious leaders to either incite or encourage their followers to cause trouble.

Seeing religion in this way, men of critical minds and intellectual alertness have started to wonder if religion can ever promote peace in the society thereby contributing to national development. The anti-religious feeling is so noticeable that the popular opinion seems to be that Africa's development should be devoid of all the mumbo-jumbo that religion purveys. For such people, religion is a mere bourgeoisie attempt to feed the masses with opium. However the exponents of this view are victims of bias and prejudice against religion who exhibit enormous ignorance about the role of religion in human life.

This book is a point of departure as it argues that enough attention has not been given by scholars to the role of religion in the development of growing regions like Africa. It does appear that religion has either been subsumed into ethnicity or that scholars had regarded religion as apolitical. The point here is that the life of a developing continent like Africa that is riddled with complex moral problems needs religious forces especially now that people are often driven to points when rationality and scientific gadgets fail and raw emotions take over. Thus, while it is true that religion has often been misdirected into negative roles, this book seeks to explore its inherent potentials for meaningful development. It is in this light that some scrupulous researchers would dissect the possibilities of retrieving the emancipatory potentials of religion from its current exploitation and demonstrate how it can be redirected towards creating new social order in Africa. At the same time, it is hoped that this book will provide useful evidence that will interest, and perhaps provoke, those struggling for Africa's development to pay closer attention to, rather than dismiss the potentials that religion has

for mass appeal and for mobilization of energies necessary for nation building.

The takeoff ground for this study lies on the impacts of biblical injunctions and traditional religious provisions in the fight against corruption in Nigeria, which is an indisputable fundamental function of a living religion. It tries to interrogate the correlation between religion, religiosity and moral decadence in Nigeria especially among the ruling class. It appears obvious, that political corruption is the major aspect of corruption that negatively affects the welfare of Nigeria amid other aspects of corruption that run across different areas of human endeavor. Nigeria is used here to mirror what seems to be a general case in Africa's leadership system. But, this book offers hope that at least, a reasonable level of control could be gotten by paying attention to the biblical injunctions as well as traditions of the people as provided by their traditional religious customs. Such traditional religious customs are seen in African taboos. African taboos refer to the moral principles among the African people that serve as proscriptions, spelling out how African traditional societies ought to or ought not to relate with the persons and things in their environment. These taboos provide and preserve balance and harmony within the community, and in the community's relationship with nature. They are respected by members of African communities because of the spiritual background that they possess, given that they are either promulgated by a deity or the ancestors.

Attention is also paid to land as both normative and ontological elements that connects man to the essential elements of nature and which occupies central position in the traditions of Africa as it defines the bases of spirituality, identity, unity, economic progress and the essentialities of human existence. A special reference is made in this regard to Engenni – a traditional African society in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria which came in contact with Christian religion and Western civilization about the late 20th century. It was discovered that Christian conversion and adherence to biblical injunctions in Engenni has religious, social and cultural dimensions that produced some positive impacts on the Engenni people and society. The Engenni people identified the commonality between the Christian religion and their traditional religion, and adjudged that Christian religion upholds the provisions of African traditional moral prescriptions and prohibitions, though in different perspective and approach, but all for the promotion of moral uprightness, justice, equity and altruism, necessary for national development. Thus it was easy for Africans to

identify with the Christian religion. This led to a recommendation, in this book, that while the Christian Church emphasizes the biblical perspective of Christian conversion, it should encourage traditional values that prompt the people's indigenous religions for a more holistic response to everyday existential challenges in contemporary Africa which includes, among other things, constant inter-regional migration and its attendant homelessness and other forms of hardship. The book reveals that religious evangelization and globalization have become significant factors in human migration due to their ease of communication and travel, though wars, insecurity, pandemics, conflicts, and xenophobic attacks in some countries are also causes of migration that result in homelessness.

Using Kenya as a case study, the book demonstrates how African culture of hospitality forged partnership with biblical provisions to address migration and challenges of homelessness. The study cited a number of African proverbs and tales that demonstrate Africa's love for migrants and asylum seekers. Songs and stories, conventions, and people's institutions were cited to show the earliest forms of Africa's hospitality, which was initially pre-literate, pre-scientific, and pre-industrial. In this sense, Africa's hospitality epitomizes the African spirit of community which is, "I believe, therefore I am". This highlights how, like African religion, the concept of hospitality pervades every facet of African civilization. Africans regard and practice hospitality as the most natural, instinctive and generous conduct in the world. Communities such as the *Luo* and Kikuyu are mentioned for practical illustrations.

The main passage from the Bible that serves as the study's primary source in relation to Christian response to challenges associated with migration is Leviticus 19:33–34 "love aliens as yourself". Leviticus 19:33-34 provides a commandment on how to deal with aliens and the reasons why they should be treated justly. The Kenyan case is used in this book as an informed study to showcase the phenomena of homelessness and migration at the depth, their implications, and how communities and religious institutions can respond to them.

It was further observed that some, if not most young Nigerians, given the opportunity, would prefer migration as the only solution to the recent political and religious crises, unemployment, insecurity and sub-standard living. These ugly situations in the country have made migration a necessity and not a choice. Those who do not have the opportunity to migrate consider their only option as looking up to God

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Introduction

through religious institutions for succour. This accounts for why Pentecostalism has become so alluring to Nigerian Christians as a result of the assurances of life, health and peace it promises which the state could not provide, and also a more recent brand that emerged about three decades ago which has presented Pentecostalism as assurance of wealth and health. Hence the Church's longstanding teaching drawn from natural law was examined and the result shows that the Church recognizes the nation as an extension of the human family; no man is a stranger on earth because God is common father of all. This universal designation of the earth and the need for an international cooperation constitute the basis for the Church's social teaching and response to migration related challenges.

An undeniable factor in the role of religion in Africa's development as shown in this book is faith-culture dialogue. It is noted in this book that the proclamation of the message of the Gospel is addressed to men and women who live in particular historical and cultural contexts. God is one, unique and unchangeable, yet differently approached in different cultural ambient. Culture, as a vehicle for transmission of faith, helps in understanding the apparent multiplicity in the means and mode of the search for God. Inevitably, man performs dual role in the process of the transmission of faith. It is therefore necessary to take into consideration the cultural context into which he is born. It is within this cultural spectrum that one aptly comes to appreciate the faith, to comprehend it and to internalize it. On account of this, for effective and adequate communication of the content of the deposit of faith, this book pays ample attention to questions of culture. However, to obviate the possibility of relativizing and adulterating the message of faith under the pretext of cultural adherence, it becomes pertinent to unravel the dialogue of faith and culture with St. Paul's theology and ministry as paradigm. Paul employed the dialogue of faith and culture in his missionary encounters. In this way he made missionary in-roads into alien cultures. It was an apt dialogue of faith and culture that would have met with utter rejection were Paul to make a blatant denunciation of alien cultures.

Notwithstanding this obvious interpenetration between faith and culture, conflicts frequently ensue in some areas. Sequel to such possible unfavourable occurrences, in areas of the faith-culture conflict, this book employs dialogue in order to arrive at a harmonized permeation of faith into the culture of a people, which has undoubtedly formed their way of life. This initiative is intended to engender the sifting, and where possible the remodeling of those elements that go

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contrary to the Gospel message; and not without extolling those elements that synchronize with the message. In this way, faith becomes properly rooted, belief more meaningful and the Gospel solidly incarnated and more exuberantly and convincingly proclaimed as a way of life, all geared toward sustainable development of the African continent.

This book also observed that the existence of three major and often opposing religions in Africa-Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religions-makes it more difficult for the people to engage in meaningful inter-faith dialogue as adherents are deeply affected by religious identities and meanings. Even within a particular religion, theological disputes and denominationalism hinder ecumenism and open dialogue necessary for national development. It would appear that whichever way we turn, religious differences and its attendant crises are inevitable in Africa. Hence, the book recommends that religious post-conflict dialogue be adopted for peace and sustainable development. In this way religion can be harnessed as a source of peace and national development instead of war and violence.

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IMPACT OF THE BIBLICAL AND TRADITIONAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE LAW AND SIN ON THE CORRUPTIBLE THOUGHTS OF CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN SOCIETY

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Executive Summary

Nigeria is predominantly considered as a religious society. Though Africans generally have been tagged a religious continent, but Nigeria seems to have outnumbered other African nations on the degree and growth of divergent attentions to religion. Her major religions are: African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam. This paper anchors on African traditional religious culture and Christianity and their impact toward eradicating or reducing corruption to the barest minimum. The problem of the study remains that the Christians and traditionalists have devoted immense strength through their biblical and traditional perceptions of the law and sin to curb corruption in Nigeria to no avail. The paper discovers that corruption in Nigeria has taken the shape of an anthill that appears dried outwardly but very fresh and alive inside. The research aims at addressing the issues with the contemporary structure of corruption and its panacea. The paper adopts hermeneutical and sociological research approach. It is recommended among other things, that the legal contents in the biblical and traditional laws against sin should be built in Nigeria constitution. Data were selected from primary and secondary sources. Data collected were analyzed with phenomenological method of data analysis.

Keywords: Bible, Tradition, Law, Sin, and Corruption

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Law is always promulgated to tackle sin in the biblical point of view and abomination in the traditional religious view point,. In the bible, the law within the premises of the Pentateuch is termed "the commandments", or Decalogue while in African traditional religion, it is conceived as customs, norms, mores etc. In the secular world view the two variables are perceived as law/constitution/decree, by-laws/acts and crimes respectively. In the New Testament part of the bible, Paul has stressed so much on law and sin in his letters to Romans, Galatians and other Pauline epistles. Galatians 5:19 – 21 points thus:

> Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Sins are stated herein, with their stipulated consequences in the bible. The order given to adherent to avoid these sins is simply a law. In the New Testament, rules, laws, etc., that stress against sins and their relevant consequences run across the Gospels, Pauline epistles, Acts of Apostles, letters of Peter, James, etc, In the Old Testament, the Book of Law – Torah (and Palestine Talmud) etc, lay warning against certain actions as sinful and contrary to the law with defined punishment.

In the traditional strand of thought, such laws and warnings are promulgated in form of laws of the land, customs and norms. Traditional leaders are the custodians of law, customs and norms in the traditional societies, there are various customs, norms, etc that serve as the legal code of conduct to the people, which are guided by the traditional leaders. Most of the actions concealed in the bible as sins are also given a similar frown look in the traditional customs, norms, etc. The problem now is, both ardent traditionalists and Christians appear to have exhausted strenuous efforts via their religious perceptions of the law and sin, yet no reasonable impact has been experienced or achieved against corruption in Nigeria. It is found in this research that corruption in Nigeria gets to alarming stages on daily basis. The paper is aimed at addressing issues associated with contemporary structure of corruption in the midst of Nigerians and the members of the two great religious faiths: Christianity and African Traditional Religion. The paper employs hermeneutical and sociological methodologies. It recommends that, the legal contents on the bible and traditional laws

against sins should be built in Nigeria constitution, etc. Data were got from primary and secondary sources. Phenomenological style of data analysis was used to analyze available data.

Definition of Concept
In this research, the concepts that are defined include: Bible, Tradition, Law, Sin and Corruption. Bible is being defined by the common men mostly as religious document of the Christians. Ojoreh Prime defines bible as the collection of sacred writing of the Christians and their Religion, comprising the Old and New Testaments. For the Christians whatever that is directed to religion, spirituality and God is given explanation and interpretations with the bible as the most reliable authorities and sacred religious document. Biblical contents are the bases of Christian belief system.

Tradition in this research refers to African tradition. That is, the archaic ways of doing and understanding things in centuries back, in Africa and by Africans. Tradition is always older than culture, though the older culture forms a tradition. Longman Dictionary states that tradition is a belief, custom or way of doing something that has existed for a long time or these beliefs, customs etc. In general, tradition in African has preserved a lot of prohibited actions. At the same time, tradition preserved actions that are acceptable until the contemporary time.

Sin is generally conceived as actions that are rejected by the common man and divine order. Living stone in Ezeme (2011:31) perceives sin as: "The purposely disobedience of a creature to the known will of God". Ezeme (2011) adds that: "The explanatory Catechism of Christian Doctrines defines this act as. "An offence against God by any thought, deed or omission against the law of God".

In Christian view point, sins are committed through one's thought (i.e thinking of something against God's Law), taking some actions against law(s) or altering words that are against the God's commands. Douglas (1977:1189) points to sin as: failure, error, iniquity, transgression, trespass, lawless, unrighteous… An unmitigated evil … directed against God". Sin is obvious in every religious setting but the terms used vary among people of different religions cultures and traditional backgrounds. In the Christian bible, the Old Testament records that sin has its origin from the first man and woman in their weakness to resist the serpent against the laid rule given to the man (Adam) on the his

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possession of the garden of Edem. After encountering this weakness from Adam and Eve, God laid down some commandment to man as a guide to actualize sinlessness. These commandments are recorded in Exodus 20:1 – 17 thus:

1. I am the lord your God: you shall have no other god before me.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain
3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's day
4. Honor your father and your mother
5. You shall not kill
6. You shall not commit adultery
7. You shall not steal
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods

These commandments give the Christians a laid down guide to be in peace with God in a documented hard copy. In the case of Africa tradition, such solid and written structure of laid down guides are not provided for the votaries, rather than their guides are provided through oral tradition and man's consciousness.

Corruption on the other hand has become a common phenomena in Nigeria. Summers (2001:306) have examined corruption thus: "dishonest, illegal or immoral behaviour, especially from someone with power". Corruption is more or less, commonly linked persons with power. Power is not limited to political power. Nwankwo (1992) has classified power into: Political Power, Normative, Economic Power, and personal Physical Power. He further classify power into potential (Stored) power and actual (effective) power. The truth remains that the most obvious area or type of power where corruption is a common place is in political power. Igbo and Anugwom state thus:

> Political Corruption is one of the problems that have emerged as a result of social change in Nigeria. Political corruption refers essentially to the fraudulent conversion of public funds for private ends. It also includes; all manner of inducements and bribes offered to public officers in order to gain favours from them or to influence their judgement over issues that affect the individual concerned.

It appears obvious, that political corruption is the major aspect of corruption that negatively affects the welfare of Nigeria amidst other

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aspects of corruption that run across different areas of human endeavour in Nigeria.

Odey (2001: 8 – 9) views corruption as far back as 1960 thus:

> Abubakar Tafawa Belewa's regime did not see it until the military struck in 1966. Yakubu Gowon did not see it either until he was removed from office. Murtala Mohammed saw it, tried to do something about it. But they killed him before he could succeed. Obasanjo himself did not feel the punch of it when he ruled Nigeria first. Today corruption is his abarross. Muhammadu Buhari saw it as great threat to Nigeria. He tried to do something about it, but failed partly because fighting corruption in Nigeria is not an easy task and partly because Ibrahim Babangida who ousted his regime felt that Nigeria could not live without corruption.

It could be difficult to sweep corruption out from Nigeria completely because it has gone so deep in the country's bone marrow and has created much damages to the important tissues of the society's whole being. But, there is still the belief that at least, a reasonable level of control could be gotten by paying attention to the will of God. This creates the background at which this research anchors on biblical and traditional perceptions of law and sin as other options in controlling corruption to a reasonable degree in Nigeria presently. Ugwu (2002:16) adds that: "The Nigerian society is in a very serious state of moral, social, political, economic, legal and educational decay. Corruption has been defined as behavior, which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private regarding influence". This deviation of behavior from formal duties of a public to private influence role has gone across, social (education. legal), religious (moral), political and economic spheres of the nation's affairs. The article therefore, examines the relevance or impact of biblical and traditional conceptions of law and sin in controlling the corruptible thoughts of contemporary Nigerians lives on the areas of social, political, religious and economic wellbeing of Nigerians. The commandments and their corresponding traditional laws, customs and norms are to address the current waves of corruption in Nigeria.

Impact of Biblical and Traditional Perception of Law and Sin in Controlling Corruptible thoughts on the socio – political lives of contemporary Nigerian Society

It is factual to emphasize that any deviation from these laid down laws of both Christian bible and African tradition is automatically termed "a

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sin". Though sins could not be conceived at the same level and gravity. In the secular legal units offences are not placed equal likewise their accruing penalties and punishments. In the Roman Catholic doctrine, sins are grouped into forgivable and deadly punishable sins. For example, in the Court of Law in Nigeria, the punishment for murder case and that of pilfering are not the same. In African tradition, all sins and offences are not judged as equal, likewise their punishments, forgiveness and warnings. The ten commandments are contained in the Old Testament, these ten commandments gives and access to the development of more laws in the New Testament.

On the social relationships, some laws are found in the New Testament addressing issues on relationship among individuals. Schmidtbleicher (2003:56) emphasizes on the law of the husband found in Romans 7:2 is narrow use of the law of Moses as it affects marriage thus:

> Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has domination over a man as long as he lives. For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies she is released from the law of her husband.

The law is linked with contents of Exodus 20:14. That is the sixth commandment which says: "You shall not commit adultery" in Ephesians 5:21 – 25 the law continues thus:

> …And be subject to none another to the fear of Christ wives be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church…. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her.

On the political sphere, Graham (2020:2) has used some New Testament verses to refer to the biblical law guiding individuals' relationships with people in political power thus:

> Scripture tells us to honour the emperor (1 Pet. 2:13), to submit to authorities (Rom 13:1) and to do good to all people (Gal 6:10). This represents the bibles basic stance on our relationship to authority. The Old Testament too confirms the rightness of submitting to proper authorities through it narratives. Throughout scripture, God also calls us to what is good and right (Deut 6:18). (1 Pet. 2:12). So, if someone in authority tells us to deny Jesus or act wickedly, we have to say, "We have to obey

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God rather than men" (Act 5: 29). Hence the martyrs died at the hands of Romans because they would not deny Jesus. Our obedience has certain set limits…

On the aspect of marriage, for example marital relationship between a husband and wife the bible has given out a law that should guide the couple. When this law is obeyed to the letter, there would be no need for litigations arising from martial issues which could metamorphose in lobbying and bribing judges or magistrates to pass judgement to favour a party's interest or to pervert justice. At the same time, when a husband and his wife obey this martial law, they will live with mutual understanding, peace and unity. As children are being brought – up in this background, they are bound to emulate their parents, meanwhile, such parents will make it a point of duty to make sure that their children will not be misled by pears and other environmental factors. As it is to marriage, so, it is to other social affairs.

The bible also makes it clear that people in political powers should be obeyed. In the Old Testament certain prophets warned the kings against some wrong actions. In the New Testament, it is also clearly stated that obedience to authority should not transcend to denying Christ, by agreeing with people in authorities to be used as machineries to execute wicked action or plans. Political malpractices are executed by individual whom the government in power plans to use. Therefore, the biblical law says that it is a sin to agree to be used for such purpose. If people follow the biblical laws on social and political relationships, corruption will naturally die in Nigeria. It is worthy to note that the bible says that we shall do good to all people (Gal 6:10). When people in authorities discover that the led obeys God more than man they will relent from planning evil that motivates corruption in Nigeria there by killing corruption in Nigeria.

The traditional political environment counters political corruption. Orji and Olali in Okafor (2020:248) refer to indigenous politics as:

> ….. Political arrangements whereby leaders are with proven track records are appointed and installed in line with the provision of their native laws and customs. The traditional leader are perceived to be the custodians of people's norms, customs and other cultural practices……

This is the position of African tradition as regards traditional politics. If Nigerians abide by this traditional laws in instituting people in

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positions of authority men of proven track records will take charge of government, and corruption will just die off in Nigeria politics, because these men will not encourage corruption, they will follow the due process in every affair of the state.

On the social realm also, Ejikeme (2020:159) points thus:

> Morality is the number one value cherished by the Igbo people. Igbo have a lot of morals that guide their society and help to checkmate the behaviour of people. However, respect for elders has gone into extinct. The children, youths and adults have a rule on how they should live they portray the Igbo culture. Children are told a lot of folktales during moonlight by the elders that depict humility, courage and obedience. Youths, through social organizations during initiation ceremonies, are guided with some norms that help them to live an honest and transparent life. The adults are penalized for their wrong doings. Masquerading serves as a social function bringing people together as ne during festivals.

Igbo tradition for example place morality at the fore front on the children up – bring in their social relationship. The adults are punished for the wrong actions without favour. Marriage life was highly organized that one rarely hears about martial disputes (Mr. Gabriel Ilo, personal communication, 14 April, 2022). As it is to the Igboland, so it is in other traditions of other ethnic groups in Nigeria particularly and Africa in general.

Social and political lives in African tradition existed without corruption until this recent time. If the tradition/traditional laws are obeyed in Nigeria, they will go far in eradicating the sin of corruption from Nigeria people's thought. The biblical ten commandments, from the fourth law to the ninth see any deviation from them as a social a sin, they read thus:

Honor your father and mother

You shall not kill

You shall not commit adultery

You shall not steal

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor

You shall not covet your neighbors wife.

Traditions of Nigerians maintain that children should honor their parent or guardians. Nigeria traditions see stealing as deadly sin just as it is seen in the commandments. Yet the most common corrupt acts among Nigerians led by those in authorizes is stealing. Commissions

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like EFCC (Economics and Financial Crime Commission) and ICPC (Independence Corrupt Practices Commission) have been inaugurated, yet corruption increases every day. The fifth law says; You shall not kill. Today, people are killed on daily basis as against the constitution of the country. Insecurity is the highest problem facing Nigeria today. This insecurity problem has been suspected to be connected with politics. The eighth law states. " You shall not bear false witness". People bear false witnesses in Nigeria law courts, and they go free just to favour their ally or relation. The ninth law says: "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. This is the major cause of divorce and separation in marriage in Nigeria. All these sin pointed out in the bible are have their counterparts in African tradition, as forbidden actions. In all, it could be agreed that compliance to biblical and traditional concept of law and sin in the conscience of Nigerians will go far to reduce social political corruptions to the barest minimum.

Significances of the Biblical and Traditional perception of law and sin in reducing Socio – Economic corruption in Nigeria today.

In the Nigeria tradition, there are sanctions for obedience and disobedience to the customs and norms embedded in the traditional of each ethnicity, community, village, kindred and family Akulue (2013:49) asserts that:

> … there are occasions when individuals for one reason or the other, tend to behave in a socially unapproved manners. On the other hand, there are those who almost always strict to the norms and values approved by the society. To ensure social order and control, the society has various devices aimed at discouraging non – conformity and encouraging conformity. One of them is **Sanction**. The use of sanction is not limited to societal level only. It extends to every human group. Sanctions take various forms ranging from teasing ridicule, suspension of membership, expulsion from an organization to award of honour and prizes.

In Africa traditionally, customs and norms function as the laws of the land, non – conformity to these customs and norms is conceived as sin. Hence the traditional societies in Nigeria employ sanction and some other physical punishments as penalties , against such sins. In some communities, when one steals other persons belongings or properties, they are beaten and dragged round the communities in some occasions such robbers are taken round the communities and villages necked and are forced to carry the items stolen on their bodies as they move round the villages in the communities (Mr. Jude Chijioke, Personal

Communication, 18 May 2022). People are treated in according with the regard to the traditional laws of the land.

In Nigeria, different ethnicities and geographical regions are known for divergent economic activities or technologies. Akulue (2013:70 – 71) asserts that:

> The patterns of architecture, methods and tools for exploiting the resources in the environments, occupation and related skills are all function of the dominant occupation is fishing, the able – bodied men are usually boat building, Net Making, Swimming and Fishing. In the Northern parts of the country, people are skilled in leather work and farming. … Certain areas are endowed with resources for weaving as in, Asio Akwuete, Cloth dying as in parts of West and North salt boiling as at Okposi and Uburu communities in Ebonyi State, gin distillation as in Rivers State, Raffia work as in parts of the North and so on.

All these economic activities among different ethnic groups and geographical zones have traditional laws inform of customs and norms guiding economic expertise for the security of the products and professions. Specific punishments are promulgated for offenders of these economic laws in the customs and norms. Related laws affecting economic relationship are stated in the biblical Ten Commandments where it is said that: "You shall not Steal" "You shall not covet your neighbour's goods". Nigerians as a people in different capacities as businessmen, trading, craftsmen, politicians, civil Servant etc. To covet neighbours goods is becoming a culture in Nigeria. There are economic corruptions virtually in every economic endeavour among Nigerians.

It could be ascertain here that if Nigerians, especially the Christians and traditionalists abide by the biblical laws against economics sins, and traditional laws, customs and norms against economic sins, the corruptible ideas in Nigerians psyche will vanish in no distance time. This will promote economic trust and activities in the nation foreign investors will be attracted to Nigeria. People responsible for provision of social amenities that will enhance economic practices will sit up since they will understand that they are crippling their neighbours goods by indirectly making the cost of production in the state expensive.

Biblical and traditional Perceptions of Law and Sin in Socio–religious corruption in the contemporary Nigeria.

Power in the view of Nwanwko (1992) is of many types including normative power. Normative power deals with the powers of the religious. For example; the priests, religious ministers, etc. In the first to third commandment in the bible, Christians are given laws guiding their relationship with God (Exodus 20: 1 – 6). For the love of earthly and material things in life, people in religious powers are perverting the laws contained in the first, second and third commandments. Some have started making money their God, calling the name of God in vain, and even run some private businesses on the Sabbath day in the camouflage of running church or religious programmes on the Sabbath day. Priests have been involved in immoral acts including sexual abuse and immoralities, and other religious irregularities. Some of the activities are related to the actions of Eli's house hold. Gaiya (2014:4) avers that:

> The end of the reign of Eli and his family was the period when Samuel was called. God had rejected Eli's household, because of the following reasons: 1. They have proved themselves morally depraved 2. They are spiritually degraded. They were unworthy to lead people. The people of Israel regarded Samuel as a prophet of the Lord and he increasingly became recognized as a religious leader and judge.

These actions of Eli's family were against the commandments of God. It should serve as a reason to the present Nigerian priests Philemon 1:18 in Nweze (2015:25) states thus: "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account". This is an interceding assurance given to Philemon by Apostle Paul on behalf of Onesmus. This is an example of the expected behaviours expected from Christian ministers if both the religious leaders and the led should work in the light of the expected religious and spiritual principles to wipe religious corruption from Nigeria. Nkamai (2022:3) express the regulatory strength in Uloubu religious practice of Amasiri community thus:

> … Both as a trado – religious activity and simultaneously presently as a social regulatory mechanism for the Amasiri people. It explores the religious underpinning and cultural practices in "Ulo ubu", as well as how it performs a regulatory function in relation to the marriage, justice, religious, economic and education sectors of the Amasiri community.

Among the regulatory functions of "Ulo Ubu" is regulation of religious activities of the members of the traditional society. Some traditional diviners, priests, medicine – men. etc do a lot of irregularities in mischarging their religious and spiritual duties against the customs and norms of the land. Mr. Ezeja Nnamchi (Personal Communication, 18 March 2022) stresses that some adherents of the traditional religion have died, as a result of the connections to immoral and irregular religious activities unveiling in divination. Sometimes, penalties for sins against the law of the land come divinely and nit from physical and human being in the society. This contributed to immense fear people have against traditional religion. Henceforth, if people (Nigerians) begin to fear and obey traditional laws as well as biblical laws to avoid sins and their accruing punishments, corruption will reduce to the barest minimum in Nigeria.

Recommendations and Conclusion:
Obedient to both biblical and traditional laws is needed to shape and transform Nigeria out from the menace of corruption. Corruption has gone throughout all the spheres of human welfare in Nigeria. Nigeria is conceived globally as a religious state, yet most corruptible nation. Today insecurity in Nigeria is connected with politics and material interest. Measures have been adopted by government to control corruption to no avail.

This research, recommends and advocates that compliance to biblical and traditional perceptions of laws and sins can proffer a better solution than relying completely on law enforcement agencies and crime control commissions. It also recommends that the contents of the bible and traditional laws against sins should be built in Nigeria constitution. Proliferation of religious bodies should be controlled for ideal expected compliance to traditional and biblical laws. Nigeria will be better with adequate attention to biblical and traditional laws. Corruption should be better handled from human conscience than physical attacks as far as it affects Nigeria.

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Mr. Jude Chijioke, Anambra State, Trader, 50 years, 18/5/202
Mr. Ezeja Nnamchi, Ebonyi State, Theologian, 46 years 18/3/2022

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A DISCOURSE ON CHRISTIAN CONVERSION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGENNI IN AHOADA WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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Executive Summary

The phenomenon of Christian conversion has been open to academic discourse, particularly by scholars of anthropology, philosophy, religion, culture, sociology and developmental studies of the African continent. Scholars have displayed knowledge and scholarship on Christian conversion based on their perspective, understanding and interest on the subject matter. This paper is an attempt to interrogate some thoughts raised by scholars about Christian conversion, starting from the biblical perspective of the early apostolic church era to the 21st century Pentecostalism and Christian milieu. The focus of this discourse is Christian conversion in Engenni – a traditional African society in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria which came in contact with Christian religion and Western civilization about the late 20th century. The paper examines how Christian conversion has impacted on the people of Engenni who embraced the second and alien religion - Christianity. The paper adopts a historical and phenomenological methods of investigation, considering the interface of academic discourse involved to arrive at some findings which include, that Christian conversion in Engenni has religious, social and cultural dimensions that produce positive and negative impacts on the Engenni people and society as a result of the global social change mantra. It defaces the Christian religion, and reduces the Engenni rich cultural heritage and identity. The paper finally recommends that the Christian church should emphasize the biblical perspective of Christian conversion and retain traditional values that prompt both religions.

Keywords: Conversion, Development, Engenni (Egene), Christian

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Introduction

Scholars have advanced different interpretations to the religious phenomenon of Christian conversion. To what extent these interpretations have affected the society, particularly the African society, has been a matter of academic concern for scholars and to various Christian missions, including the society at large.

The scope of this paper, however, is restricted to the Engenni nation in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The wheel of Christianization in Africa has watered down the phenomenon of Christian conversion. The study made reference to an instance of Okarki-Engenni when converts openly opposed a traditional religious practice, and such actions eventually paved way for the Christian religion to survive and thrive in Engenni (Basene, 2004).

The paper examined some scholarly perspectives to Christian conversion and how it has affected the Christian church and development of Engenni. And to adequately carry out this task, the study adopted the historical and phenomenological methods of investigation, including the insiders' hind view of the Engenni culture, and leveraged on the rational choice theory and Horton's conversion model to explain the possible reasons for conversion from traditional religion to the Christian religion in Engenni. Consequent on the findings, the paper made some recommendations and conclusions to promote further studies and scholarship in this area.

Theoretical Framework

The rational choice theory of religion by Stark and Horton's religious model of conversion are considered relevant in this discourse.

Stark, a sociologist who studied conversion work with Lofland, focused on the early missionary effort of the unification church in the Sanfrancisco bay area; while Horton an anthropologist, stimulating essays on African conversion, provides an alternative vantage point for evaluating the rationality of religion and the forces promoting conversion to world religions. This vantage point actually complements the rational choice theory of religious conversion. According to Stark, "converts are not attracted so much by religious group teachings, which at first usually seem bizarre, as by personal connections with people already in the group". This implies that the theory considers religious conversion as a process of maximizing benefits from interpersonal relationships, given one's place within networks of such relationships. The theory was developed by Stark, Pinke and Lannaccone. In the

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scholars opinion, people act to further their interests within the limits of their information and understanding, restricted by available options guided by their preferences and tastes, human attempts to make rational choices. There is a correlation between the rational choice theory and the theories of modernism. This provide the platform for Horton's religious model of conversion which states that conversion is "due as much to the development of the traditional cosmology (microcosm) in response to other features of the modern situation (macrocosm); as it is to the activities of missionaries". This establishes the link between "the pre-existing thought patterns and values and the pre-existing socio-economic matrix" as basis for Christian conversion.

Horton's religious model of conversion is a function of osmotic pressure from a region of lesser quantity to a region of greater quantity, not necessarily quality related, as is the case with world religions and traditional religion. He further explains that this model "conflates two concepts that are better kept distinct: the contrast between traditional and world religions and that between localized and trans-regional religions." This is the basis for considering Christian conversion as the catalyst-stimulator and accelerator for development in Engenni.

The Concept of Christian Conversion
The conceptualization of specific human situations like Christian conversion in relation to development of Engenni requires comparative and interdisciplinary considerations.

The Biblical consideration, for instance, is characterized by personal confessions and demonstration of faith as chronicled in the Holy Scriptures. A remarkable case in point is the dramatic conversion experience of Paul, an outstanding missionary, theologian and writer of the early church who was converted on his way to Damascus. The word conversion, though rare in scripture, is a crucial biblical and theological concept, meaning "to turn or return of a person to God." Paul's conversion experience is described as dramatic, without a previous narrative script. It was spontaneous and believed to be Holy Spirit driven. "Christ appeared to him with blinding radiance" and within a split second, he was on the ground, heard an interrogating voice that convicted and directed him on what to do. He obeyed and thereafter his ways changed as he became an apostle of Christ, instead of a persecutor of Christians that he was. Paul received the Holy Spirit and was baptized. This was a model of Christian conversion. However, Christian conversion may not necessarily follow Paul's dramatic pattern,

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but there must be clear evidence of a right angle or 'u-' turn from a former religious way of life to a new one. In Africa, Christian conversion is a turn from the traditional religion to the Christian religion. Paul turned from a Jewish religion to the Christian religion in a spectacular, dramatic, spontaneous and spirit-motivated action. However, scholars have introduced other dimensions to Christian conversion as mentioned earlier.

In the religious market place, the rational choice theory and Horton's religious model of conversion are relevant to the Engenni experience.

The rational choice theory introduces economic perspective. Here, the convert may not necessarily have a divine encounter, but is pressured by socio-economic or political needs. In this case, it is need, rather than religious based, and therefore situational, circumstantial or directional to meet specific needs of the convert. For example, elements of the rational choice theory of conversion also played out in the apostolic era and the early church. The need for successful occupational career prompted Peter, Andrew and James, the first disciples, to turn to Jesus. In the Roman Empire, Constantine's political ambition was a serious need which led to his conversion when he saw the vision of a cross and the assurance of victory in the battle that was ahead of him. The fulfillment in the expectation of these ones gave them the convert status. But the conversion of Constantine was controversial among scholars of church history, even though his administration favoured the growth of the church. This implies that religious conversion can be pretentious, cosmetic and temporal, contrary to the biblical model demonstrated by Paul who was actually steadfast to the end. The rational choice theory of Christian conversion, like Christian marriage, has capacity that distorts the divine principle of holding on to the end, no matter the challenges because rationality creates room for freedom of free entry and exit in any relationship.

This freedom is an essential ingredient in Christian conversion. How does this play out in the Engenni context?

Models of Conversion
Three models of Christian conversion are discussed in this paper: the spiritual model, the evangelical model, and the imperialist model.
The Biblical Christian Conversion Model (BCCM):In this model of spiritual conversion, the Holy Spirit drives the process. Here, the convert goes through a dramatic experience without his control. It is an instant event that ends up with the convert responding to given

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instructions without resistance. Paul's conversion experience falls into this category.

The second one discussed is the Evangelical Christian Conversion Model (ECCM). Here, the convert responds to the power of the word being preached. The word has the potential of the Holy Spirit that converts a person unto salvation. This is the common model used by the church through preaching and teaching and invitation to perform the religious ritual of altar call when a person willingly decides to accept Jesus as personal Lord and Saviour on the conviction by the declared word of God. After such experience, the convert goes through a systematic discipleship teaching to build him up to Christian maturity. This is akin to the process of Christian conversion in Engenni where the convert enjoys the freedom of choice either to resist or accept to go through the process.

The third one is the Imperialist Christian Conversion Model (ICCM), where the convert is influenced by the features of a wider worldview that is associated with globalization. This is associated with the world religions such as Christianity which is referred to as a macrocosm over traditional religion. The latter is usually overwhelmed by the imperialist tendencies of the world religions. This model complements the rational choice Christian conversion theory which underpins this study.

The Engenni Experience of Christian Conversion
Engenni is a cluster of twenty three traditional Africa communities situated along the Western bank of the Orashi/Engenni River in the Ahoada West Local Government Area of Rivers in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

The Christian religion spread to Engenni in the early 20th Century from the neighbouring Kalabari people in the same geographical region who had earlier had trade and religious contact with European trade merchants of the United African Company (UAC) and Christian Missionaries of the Southern American Baptist Mission (SABM). (Joel, 2017).

The European trade merchants opened up trading posts at two Engenni communities – Okarki and Joinkrama, while the European Christian missionaries established churches and schools in many Engenni communities, and a hospital in one Engenni community, Ususu-

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Engenni (Joinkrama) i.e. the Baptist Schools and the Baptist Hospital. These institutions, particularly the schools and the hospital, served as conversion grounds for the church and Christian missionaries – the Southern American Baptist Mission (SABM).

The services provided by the schools (education) and the hospital (health care delivery), including their ancillary employment opportunities as teachers, nurses, pastors, labourers, cooks, cleaners, messengers, cloth launderers, drivers etc., i.e. white collar jobs, were attraction to the Engenni people, particularly young people (youths) who were hitherto limited to their traditional occupation – agriculture, fishing, farming, and industry-crafts at the subsistence level. The schools, churches and hospital taught Engenni youths how to read, write and communicate in the English language and also write in the vernacular; they could read the Bible, translate the scripture to vernacular, understand the science of healing the sick of various diseases, particularly malaria and diarrheathat were prevalent in the area because of the enabling breeding environment for the vectors – mosquito lava and bacteria. These interventions reduced the mortality rate of the people, and obnoxious practices such as killing of twins and human sacrifices were discouraged. The traditional Engenni people admired the lifestyle of the European missionaries, and trade merchants and their values – e.g. dress code, moral code, etc. All of these physical indices, more than the spiritual, constituted the basis for Christian conversion in Engenni. This situation was further enhanced because the early Baptist missionaries to Engenni paid less emphasis to spiritual formation and discipleship into the image of Christ through the manifestation of the Holy Spirit as was the case with Apostle Paul's dramatic conversion experience. A few cases of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the Baptist Church were condemned by the European missionaries. For instance, Okwukwu, a convert of the Christian church at the Baptist church Edagheri-Engenni, manifested some spiritual fits and he was excommunicated from the Baptist Church. This led him to establish the First Indigenous Church in Engenni (Joel, 2019). At the later period, converted youths of the Baptist Church who demonstrated the gift of the Holy Spirit such as speaking in tongues and demand for musical instruments were penalized by the church elders. This led to the establishment of the Living Faith Baptist Church Ususu-Engenni (Odoya, 2017). Odoya also stated that the manifestation of the gift of the Holy Spirit at a youth programme at the Baptist Church attracted very serious condemnations by the elders of the church. These few examples corroborated the fact that the Holy Spirit was not emphasized by the early Baptist missionaries, and so dramatic and Holy Spirit models of

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conversion was not common in the early church in Engenni. However, the following Engenni indigene-converts impacted positively on the growth of the church in Engenni.

Akinalapikia, Ogbapu, of the Peace Movement, Pastor Opuwari, Apostle Oweh, Rev. Ade, Rev. Apapa, Rev. Alasia, Pastor Osuagi, Rev. Dimugu, Rev. Oku, Rev. Elijah, Rev. Osah, Rev. Odoya, Rev. Elijah, Rev. Eli, etc., served as ministers of God at different times in Engenni. They impacted positively on the development of Engenni and the church.
Before the incursion of the Christian religion in Engenni at about 1900, the Engenni indigenous religion was fully in place. According to Basene (2004) "the Egene (Engenni) traditional religion had been in full control of the people's life". But from 1900, Engenni was confronted with an entirely new religious message which posed a direct challenge to the old gods. Basene's assertion implies that the indigenous religion of the Engenni people has been displaced by the Christian religion which rendered the Engenni religious gods as old. Here, a new religious order takes over the people's life, aspiration, culture and religion through a conscious, consistent, systematic Christianization and conversion process. This process involved the establishment of schools which introduced Western education; churches which introduced Christian religion; hospitals which introduced Western healthcare system and trading post for economic enterprise. All of these institutions provided essential services that complemented the needs of the people, and became strong avenues for Christian conversion – a turn from the indigenous Engenni religion to the Christian religion (Christianity).

Converts of the Niger Delta pastorate of the Anglican Church from the Kalabari Kingdom of the Niger Delta region in Nigeria had trade contacts with the Engenni people at two major trading posts along the Orashi/Engenni River – Okarki and Joinkrama. These traders came to Engenni in Christian and European clothing, having had earlier contact with European missionaries and merchants in their communities – Abonnema, Buguma, Bonny, Okrika, Opobo, etc. The European missionaries actually took advantage of the trade merchants being Africans to gain entry into the Engenni domain. The trade merchants were more interested in economics of trade than in religious conversion. The latter was the attraction which also played out in the Engenni Christian conversion where the people became Christians without actually having the spiritual encounter as was in the apostolic dispensation of Paul, as explained in the scripture. In this sense, we find more church goers who are yet to experience Christian conversion.

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Some who share a conversion experience formulate it. In the course of the study, a couple of adult Engenni Christians were interviewed and they confessed that they never had a conversion experience. Some of them disclosed that they are Christians because they were born into a Christian home; their parents are Christians so that automatically makes them Christians. Here we see conversion being reduced to belonging to a family where their parents had or may not have had any conversion experience. This is family conversion and it is common in Engenni. It was revealed that one of the respondents, in an admission interview into a seminary, was told to formulate a conversion experience which he never had to qualify him for admission for pastoral training. He had to formulate one (Odoya 2022). Similarly, in a funeral biography stating the Christian life of a deceased, she was described as a "Christian born into an Anglican family." A mum, as she was called by many, was born a Christian into an Anglican family: One would ask, at what point was she converted? Was it before birth, at birth or later in life? It is also possible that she never had a Christian conversion experience all through life but was a Christian in the African sense of Christian conversion.

In Engenni, most of the cases of early Christian conversion were based on the rational choice theory and the imperial model of conversion as propounded by Stark and Horton respectively. This is reflected in the development pattern of Engenni. The early elite were attracted by the Western education which gave them the opportunity and privilege to be identified with the Europeans and be trained as interpreters to the missionary pastors or the district officers in the customary court, or to be able to read and write letters for persons or corporate organizations like family or community. The Engenni people who were engaged in these activities went through missionary schools and churches, and were perceived to be Christian converts who had abandoned the traditional religion. Those who clung to the traditional religion never had the opportunities and privileges that were open to those who accepted the Christian religion, either as converts or church members. And in most cases, the church members outnumbered the converts. This is even the challenge in contemporary African church where baptized members are less in number than the church goers; a church of mixed multitude (the Nigerian Baptist Convention online).

From the perspective of Horton's religious conversion, the European missionaries had a macrocosm status over the Engenni people. This was a strong factor that increased their worldview and stimulated the need

for them to identify with the Christian religion which has become a household religion in Engenni.

Another side to Christian conversion in Engenni was the God factor that is also in the traditional religion. The Engenni culture and religion recognize the existence of a supreme God who they refer to as "OnisonaOdemufieya", meaning the God that is the greatest i.e. the Supreme God. The Engenni people identified the commonality between the Christian religion and their traditional religion, and adjudged that the Christian religion shares this same belief. Thus it was easy to identify with the Christian religion, even though there was no clear-cut divide – as Mbiti (1976) argued that there is no departmentalization in the African religion. The African goes about with his religion but returns to it when he is faced with serious challenges. In other words, the Engenni Christian has the innate traditional capacity to convert, reconvert or reverse conversion.

Thus, the dynamics of Christian conversion has a positive and negative influence on the development of Engenni. There are benefits accruing from the introduction of Christian religion in Engenni. They include the establishment of schools that opened up the Engenni worldview to globalization. The mission schools trained the pioneer elite that served in various areas of the civil service and brought recognition to Engenni. Secondly, the health facilities established by the Christian mission trained skilled medical personnel that also served as caregivers in Engenni and beyond. The institutions served as infrastructural development in Engenni; for example, the Baptist Hospital in Joinkrama, the Baptist State Schools, etc., which are now being poorly managed by the state government.

Thirdly, obnoxious traditional practices such as human sacrifices, killing of twins, etc., were discouraged and discontinued by converts who enforced the rejection in the churches, schools and hospital, including the communities which were influenced by the converts.

Though it is difficult to identify a convert of the apostolic early church model in Engenni, converts were attracted by their rational choice and influence of world religion (Christianity). This has contributed to the development of Engenni in various ways - economically, socially, politically and religiously. The religious development tops the list because most Engenni people are Christians, even though their conversion status may not be ascertained.

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However, an exceptional and controversial case was the Christian conversion of Okwukwu, an indigene of Edagberi – Engenni, who abandoned the traditional religion for the Christian religion of the Baptist Church and later established a new Christian religious movement of the Pentecostal extraction, called the Faith Tabernacle Congregation, which started a new community named Betterland - Engenni. It also established branches and followers in several communities along the Gbarain, Nembe, Okordia-Zarama, Oybia axis of Bayelsa State.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Christian conversion in Engenni was stimulated by the socio-economic needs, rather than the spiritual needs, of the people. For the people, Christianity was more of a social change agent of the society than a means for salvation to eternity. Thus, the development of Engenni was more materialistic than spiritual. For example, the pioneer elite of Engenni were Christian converts who served as agents of socio-economic development in Engenni, the state and nation. This paper, therefore, recommends that Christian conversion in Engenni should strike a balance between the biblical model and the rational choice model. The God factor in the Engenni traditional religion should be sustained as the basis for Christian conversion and Engenni identity in the Christianization process.

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BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO THE PROBLEM OF HOMELESSNESS AND MIGRATION: A CASE STUDY IN KENYA

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Executive Summary

Using Kenya as a case study, this article investigates how the Bible addresses migration and homelessness. The following concerns guided the research: how does Kenya relate to the commandment in Leviticus 19:33-34 to "love aliens as yourself?" In what ways do homelessness and migration relate to Biblical migration, and how are homelessness and migration discussed as critical contemporary issues in Kenya? The methodology this study uses is the desktop study through the reader-response approach, socio-historical criticism, and literary criticism. The study reveals that globalization has become a significant factor in human migration due to its ease of communication and travel. Wars such as the Russian-Ukrainian War, insecurity, pandemics, conflicts, and xenophobic attacks in countries are some of the causes of migration that result in homelessness. The study cited a number of local proverbs and tales that demonstrate the locals' love for migrants and asylum seekers. Communities such as the Luo and Kikuyu were mentioned. The main passage from the Bible that served as the study's primary source was Leviticus 19:33–34. The study recommends that the churches, NGOs, FBOs and the Kenyan government should work collaboratively to integrate migrants and the homeless into the society.

Keywords: Migration and homelessness, Leviticus 19:33-34, hospitality, Kenya, trafficking

Introduction

Homelessness and migration are a reality and a topical issue today. They existed in the human history, among the Jews and in our contemporary world. According to Speak (2019), in the developing world, there is a continuum of homelessness, first, is"rough sleeping" which refers to night time sleeping in a public place, such as on the

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ground or under a bridge, that is transitory, seasonal, short-term, or long-term to pavement habitation, in which a standard "pitch" is used over time and some extremely rudimentary short to medium-term shelter, is created out of card, fabric, or plastic. Second, is a repeated short to medium-term squatting in the same abandoned building. Third, is a long-term or permanent residence on a woefully insufficient, frequently hazardous, unprotected, unserved, or floating platform that fails all sufficiency requirements, and finally, residing in refugee camps with few hopes of relief or permanent return home.

Homelessness and migration can be temporary and cyclical; for instance, in Alto Plano, Bolivia, rural populations go to cities before going back to their rural homes. They spend the summer trading and residing on the streets, as affirmed by Speak (2019) on research about homelessness in the developing countries. Furthermore, she revealed that homelessness can also be a longer-lasting, even permanent, condition, like in Indian towns where families raise their children while living on the streets. (Speak, 2019).

For Matamanda (2020), homelessness in the form of woefully insufficient, frequently unofficial housing, also known as "slums," is typically considerably more permanent. Kenyans are compelled to live in slums due to a severe land shortage and escalating land costs. Certain parties may resort to violence in order to grab further land. According to accounts, Tharaka herders, who frequently struggle for land, have been observed in certain towns. These herders assaulted the rural town of River Naka in Tharaka Nithi central Kenya, displacing hundreds of farmers (Parr, 2014).

Following the existence of COVID-19, more than 7,000 people were recently forced out of their homes and onto the streets of Nairobi's slums. Assuming that these individuals were residing on "public land," the authorities responded appropriately (https://borgenproject.org/homelessness-in-kenya/).

This study examines a biblical response to the problem of homelessness and migration in Kenya. It discusses the question of homelessness and migration as a critical issue. The central questions this study investigates are: first, what is the link between contemporary homelessness and migration and the biblical migration? Second, how do Kenyans respond to the commandment "love aliens as yourself" in Leviticus 19:34b? It proceeds to assess the issues of aliens in Leviticus 19:33-34 and the related texts using literary criticism, socio-historical

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criticism and reader-response approach. The Kenyan case is used to inform the study as a context so as to understand the phenomena of homelessness and migration at the depth, their implications, how homelessness affects the life of the community and Kenya's response to them.

Homelessness and Migration as a Critical Contemporary Issue
The dynamic nature of the human persons urges the people who live uncomfortable inhuman situations to move out of their native lands for survival and improve their lives. Migration is a human reality and it is as old as human kind. Tataru (2019) defines migration on her research work as a phenomenon of great complexity, in that there are many different and evolving factors that influence migration. Furthermore, it is difficult to categorize migrants because they arrive under a variety of conditions, from a variety of surroundings, and with a variety of personal traits. It follows that addressing the issues that arise and creating sensible policies to protect migrants require an awareness of the causes and effects of migration as well as theoretical and practical abilities.

Besides, migration is a historical element known down the history. In historical records, many people migrate from place to place (Onaiyekan, 2019). Human beings constantly move from place to place in search of settlement away from home land.

In the recent time, globalization has made migration fast and easier. As illustrated by Czaika et al. (2014), advances in transportation and communication technologies are frequently associated with increases in the volume, diversity, geographic breadth, and overall complexity of international migration, as well as, more broadly, globalization processes. The statement "widening, deepening, and speeding up of global connectivity in all sectors of contemporary social life" (De Hass, 2014, p. 48) may best represent globalization. Thus, in terms of both technological and political dimensions, globalization technology advancements have made travel and communication over greater distances cheaper and faster, thereby strengthening migrant networks and transitional ties by making it easier to communicate with families and friends, send money, and travel between countries of origin and destination (Czaika, et al., 2014, p. 48).

Furthermore, Javakhishvili (2019), in his paper about globalization and migration process, indicated that migration patterns and the globalization of the economy is fundamentally worldwide. It is

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described by the following characteristics: extraordinary growth in the scales of global migration, qualitative shifts in migration patterns, feminization of labour migration, rise in illegal migration, and transformation of migration into a transnationally organized business, including criminal activities. This is supported by data from the United Nations in which, at the turn of the century, more than 272 million people lived in countries other than their countries of birth and citizenship, McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou (2022). Hence, people quickly move across borders by air, rail, road and sea.

On the report released by World Immigration, United Nations Migration, it indicated that the world had international migrants of 281 million up from 272 million in 2019 of whom 135 international migrants were females and 146 million male international migrants. This clearly shows an increase in migration, as reported by McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou (2022).

On illustration by Nwachukwu (2019), many factors have contributed to the migration of people which include, but not limited to, social, economic and political instability. Other factors include violence and war-torn environment which compels people to move from hostility to find security and safety. The last decade witnessed a large number of people moving from conflict, violent and war-torn countries like Syria, the Republic of South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia, The Central Republic of Central Africa, and Nigeria. Currently, many people are moving from Ukraine to seek refuge in Poland and other NATO countries because of the Russian-Ukrainian war where Russian aggression of invading Ukraine on February 24th, 2022 marks the beginning of a severe displacement crisis. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, highlighted in a statement on February 24, 2022 that "The humanitarian implications for civilian populations will be severe" (Juric, 2022).

In a conflict, no one wins, but countless lives are shattered. In Russian-Ukrainian war, people have already started to leave their homes in search of protection, and there have even been reports of casualties. According to UN officials, if the situation worsens, up to 4 million people could leave Ukraine. 1.2 million people had left Ukraine for neighboring nations in the region as of March 4, 2022. As retrieved from https://edition.cnn.com/europe/live-news/ukraine-russia-putin-news-03-05-22/h_80a5075fc1b190f2b5963647dd6ca45

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According to Guenette, Kenworthy and Wheeler, (2022), a serious refugee issue has resulted from the Russian-Ukraine war. Over 7 million people have been forced to leave Ukraine, and as of the 15th of April, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that 4.7 million people have fled to neighboring countries (IOM 2022; United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) Data Portal 2022). Women and children make up a sizeable portion of refugees, of the estimated 7.5 million children in Ukraine, 4.3 million (or 57% of the total) have been compelled to flee their homes; of these, 1.8 million (or 24% of the total) are believed to have traveled as refugees to nearby nations, and the remaining 2.5 million (or 33% of the total) are believed to be internally displaced (IOM 2022; UNHRC 2022), requesting asylum.

Obinwa (2019), towards the same, indicates that religious terrorists like ISIS, Alcaida, Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen attack people and force them to move away from their home lands and the oppressive conditions. LeVan (2019) proposed that xenophobic attacks cause people to migrate to safer zones as refugees. There is ethnic cleansing where one ethnic group forces non-ethnic members to leave and return to their homeland, for example the case of Nigeria.

Homelessness and immigration have been linked to pandemics such as COVID-19, as illustrated by Duclos and Palmer (2020) on their case study on "The Impact of COVID-19 on Forced Displacement: addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities of a crisis." They explained that in America, the US government is one of 57 countries to close its borders, with no exceptions for asylum seekers, in an attempt to slow down the spread of COVID-19. Under the new border regulations implemented by the US government on March 21st 2022, a total of 7,000 people were deported to Mexico, 377 of whom were minors. This resulted in individuals getting removed without going through regular immigration procedures. According to Hesson and Rosenberg (2020), 120 of the minors who arrived without a parent or legal guardian at the US-Mexico border were sent to Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. All the individuals sent above are migrants. There are those migrants who go abroad because of their high education, qualifications, specializations and skills to offer to the host countries. They move to improve their life status and future. Some of these skilled migrants send money back home for development. Whether people migrate from their homelands for green pastures, or due to social, religious, political and economic reasons, the whole process causes migrants to experience some form of homelessness either

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for a short term or long period of time; therefore, migration is a structural risk factor for homelessness.

Homelessness and Migration Globally, Regionally and Locally
Homelessness is placed in diverse forms and manners throughout the globe. Homelessness is defined by the United Nations Expert Group Meeting as a condition where a person or household lacks a habitation with security of tenure, right and ability to enjoy social relations, including safety. Homelessness is a sign of severe poverty and a violation of many human rights (Obiorah, 2019, pp. 22-24). This definition highlights the failure of human rights in establishing housing and security, and the lack of housing that has resulted in millions of people living in slums and urban areas.

According to Quinn (2020) on the conference paper about congregations push UN to confront homelessness,UNANIMA (non-governmental organization (NGO) advocating on behalf of women and children particularly those living in poverty, immigrants and refugees and the environment), they defined homeless families as those who live separately, temporarily, or chronologically in temporary housing, including shelters and locations not intended for human habitation or settlement, due to a lack of continuity or the support required to maintain their own residency, (Herlinge, 2019). Slum dwellers were included in UNANIMA's definition of homelessness.

Homelessness is driven by personal and family circumstances, urbanization, and natural disaster like floods, earthquakes, landslides, domestic violence against women, addictions, conflicts and trauma. For Speak (2019), the homeless include those who sleep on the streets or under bridges, those who squat, those who live in abject poverty and fail all adequacy tests, and those who are displaced and have no realistic chance of returning home (Speak, 2019).

The mass media are full of pictures and stories about drama and tragedy of thousands of people, especially the youth from Africa and Asia going into Europe and dying in the desert or drowning in the Mediterranean Sea (Onaiyekan, 2019, p. 43). The control of borders across Europe with the external border military reinforcement and the European Union Policy on migration have made it difficult for migrants to enter European countries (Enrico,et al., 2022, p. 1-21).

Giansanti, Lindberg and Joormann (2022) suggested that migration is still evident in the European Union states as people move from their

poor states to rich states. Homelessness covers diverse areas including those on the streets, in temporary shelters and living with friends. Also, those that the governments give housing for three years are counted homeless when the three-year period set for settlements by the government is due (Hermans, et al., 2020, p.20).

As indicated by Gilleland, et al. (2016), North America is known to be a land of migrants over the past 400 years. Migrants came to America from their home countries in Europe to escape from hunger, war and political persecution to find freedom and to practice their religion. Others came to own land and to escape from poverty. In the recent past, migrants continue to flow into America. There are four or more groups of migrants to America. These are migrants within American cities, those who seek asylum and there are those that have entered America illegally, and those with legal documents (Lanchica, 2013). Asylum seekers or migrants without documents in America are vulnerable. They are kept out of employment; they lack economic and social stability and they cannot raise money to pay for their housing. Some live in crowded shared houses. They are ignorant of migrant policies and fear to be deported.

Hermant (2021) reports that 15% of homeless people in Australia are migrants who arrived in Australia since 2017. Homelessness is a critical issue in Australia where migrants sleep in park benches and local Lion Clubs, among other places, while waiting for housing.

Cross-border migration in Africa is on the increase. Thousands of people leave their countries in African for abroad with documents for paying jobs or without documents due to religious, socio-political, cultural and economic conditions. For example, people from the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia and Eretria have left their countries and crossed borders because of wars, conflicts, violence and poverty. Thousands of Nigerians migrate to African cities as well as abroad every year due to socio- economic situation, seeking employment to improve their life status (Obiorah, 2019).

Other Nigerians are pushed out of Nigeria because of Boko Haram, armed robbery and Fulani Herdsmen attack (Nwachukwu, 2019, p. 55-68). Many migrants from Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Nigeria stream to South Africa to make a better living condition. Several xenophobic attacks have taken place in South Africa where the citizens demanded that the migrants leave their country. The citizens

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accuse the foreigners of stealing their jobs and bringing moral decay like prostitution, as expressed by Mashau (2019). The cross-border migrants in South Africa are exposed to many challenges, including poor housing and sanitation, and homelessness as represented in book titled "Migration in the Bible" by Adekambi (2019).

Kenya is suggested by IOM (2015 p. 15) as main distribution and transit country for many people in Eastern region of Africa, including migrants, refugees, and human traffickers. The migrants who move to South Africa, West Africa, Central Africa and North Africa, Europe, America, Canada, Middle East and Gulf countries pass through Kenya, (Adekambi, 2019. P.16). Most of the Kenyans who are professionals, skilled workers and educated migrate to Uganda, Tanzanian, Lesotho, South Africa, Namibia, Rwanda, Europe, Asia, America and Canada. These Kenyans leave the country through legal and regular means. The less-skilled Kenyan migrants move to Europe, Middle- East and the Gulf countries (FMPT, 2016).

In fact, Kenya hosts refugees and asylum seekers in two of the country's oldest refugee camps, Daadab and Kakuma refugee camps, which house thousands of people fleeing the Republic of South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia, as well as some refugees from the Republic of Congo. Although there is currently little information on human trafficking in the nation, two major trafficking routes have been identified: the north-eastern route while passing through Garissa on the Kenya-Somalia border and the western route between Kenya and Uganda at the Busia-Malaba crossing point. The Middle East is the location of the other trafficking, where victims run the risk of being exploited for forced labour, domestic servitude, or both (IOM, 2015, p. 15-16).

Due to a lack of opportunities in rural areas, Kenya has a high rate of internal migration between rural and urban areas. Many young people who have completed their primary or secondary education move to urban areas to look for jobs. The rural-urban migrants form the unemployment sector. They either live with relatives or friends, but the majority finds their residence in the slums. Although they live in slum houses, technically they are considered as homeless because they are away from their homes and the slum houses lack basic requirements for housing. Other migrants that pose problem for Kenya are the street dwellers that consist of street children, street boys and girls, and street families. Street people come from different parts of Kenya and form distinct communities in the streets. Some live in abandoned buildings.

African Hospitality

African hospitality can be described in terms of kindness that is freely given and without any strings attached. Gatogo's (2006) justification was consistent with Echema's claim that "it is an absolute willingness to share" (give and take). The willingness to give, help, assist, love, and bear one another's burden without regard for gain or reward is thus the driving force.

From the research on 'some expressions of Africa hospitality today', Gathogo (2008, p. 39) revealed that the concept that no one is an island unto themselves and that everyone is an important part of the community is at the heart of African hospitality.Songs and stories, conventions, and people's institutions were the earliest forms of this aspect of culture, which was initially pre-literate, pre-scientific, and pre-industrial. In this sense, African hospitality epitomizes the African spirit of community which is, "I believe, therefore I am" (Mbiti, 1969, p.53).

Moila (2002) reinforced that in a basic sense, African cultural and moral values are a way of life, not an ideal. This highlights how, like African religion, the concept of hospitality pervades every facet of African civilization. Besides, Moila (2002) affirmed that African hospitality can also be defined as brotherhood or sisterhood between members of the same family group and clan. Everyone in the same family group owes it to the other members of that group to provide for their needs. However, hospitality for strangers is also a tradition in Africa. Africans regard and practice hospitality as the most natural, instinctive and generous conduct in the world.

The Relevance of Hospitality to the African

The African hospitality shows up in three circumstances, namely; religious life, social life and economic life.

Religious life is where this calls for having positive relationships with one's forefathers on a religious level. When drinking the local beer, it was customary in ancient Africa to pour the last few sips into a calabash for the ancestors. Similar to this, it was believed that when a pot of beer cracked, the ancestors should devour it.

Social life: African hospitality can be evident in the social life, which is heavily religious. As a result, it adds to the overall well-being of a community. Activities such as singing and dancing are consequently regarded as welcoming activities since they bring people together. Africans dance to honour every feeling imaginable, including joy, grief,

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love, and hatred, as well as to bring wealth and avert tragedy. Africans can also ease tensions in their tiny communities through songs and humorous talks (Gathogo, 2007).

Economic life, which was indicated through working together on chores such as farming, home construction and maintenance, land clearing and cultivation, hunting and fishing among others, has been a practice among Africans from the beginning of time. Kenyatta discusses the Kikuyu people of Kenya and how thoroughness is an important component of African hospitality. (Obengo, 1997).

Many African proverbs reflect this communalistic way of life. A Kikuyu (African) saying is: "*Mugogo umwe nduaraga iriuko*". This means "One log does not create a bridge." It suggests that an individual cannot accomplish much on their own. Above all, one requires the assistance of others for direction, instruction, chastisement, correction and training (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16). Bridges make it possible for people to cross rivers and engage in activities like trading and social interaction; so, without cooperation from other members of the community, one log, that is one person, cannot guarantee the survival of the community. If one is totally reliant on himself, they risk starvation or isolation, owing to a lack of a sufficient bridge to cross and engage with one another.Because no one can see behind them, they cannot counsel, punish or instruct themselves. Logs must be joined together to make a solid bridge in order for us to safely traverse through the valleys of life together.

How Africans Show Hospitality to Aliens, Refugees and Asylum-Seekers
It is incredible how friendly Africa has been to refugees. African countries have open doors and borders to refugees. Even before the UNHCR and the rest of the world can assist, host communities are accepting refugees.

According to Momodu (2019), as thousands of desperate men, women and children flee conflicts and natural disasters in search of safety, some countries are debating whether to accept or reject asylum seekers. On the other hand, Uganda has taken in a record number of refugees. Despite its poverty, Uganda hosts over a million refugees, with South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Burundi and Somalia accounting for the majority of them. Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are some of the countries on the continent that host the most refugees.

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Luo community in Kenya is built upon the idea of sharing with others, the asylum-seekers were referred to as *jodak.* Hebinck and Mango (2008) illustrated that a *jadak* is someone who goes to another clan's territory and requests land. According to Luo tradition, it is difficult to deny a foreigner the land they seek to support their subsistence. Because of this tradition, people can coexist with tribes or clans that are not their own. If they are friends, mothers, or have other connections, they are eligible to request usufruct land. In any case, such a transaction requires the elder's council's approval.

The Luo encouraged the *jodak* to settle among them, and until recently, a *jodak* was rarely forced to leave the land that had been "given" to him, except in extreme cases. According to some sources, the Luo concept of *jadak* is closely related to the expression *chiem gi wadu* ("eat what you have with your neighbor"). In contrast, if a *jadak's* clan was at war with another clan and the *jadak* demonstrated bravery during the conflict, that clan would elevate him to the rank of landowner.

Through *sigendini* (folklore) like the one of *Simbi Nyaima* (a crater lake named Simbi) the Luo children are taught the importance of sharing with others so that when they are adults, they will embrace the extended family system's ideology, which is a component of social responsibility. The Simbi villagers and their elders are drowned in water for ignoring or shrugging off their social obligations when they felt too happy to welcome Anyango, as stated by Odaga (1980). African hospitality towards migrants is similar to the way aliens are treated in the Bible.

Migration and Homelessness in the Bible
The underlying environment of African hospitality promotes interdependence. It agrees with Pauline theology that acknowledging the abilities and talents of others is vital for the edification of the church and society at large (Ephesians 4:10-12, 1 Corinthian 12).

Bible narratives provide stories of migration and homelessness. It has evidence of persons who migrated from one place to another. For example, Abraham moved from Negeb to Egypt when famine was severe in the land (Gen. 12: 10) and at Hebron where he bought a land for burial (Gen. 23: 4). Isaac went to Abimelech King of Philistines in *Gerar* at a time of famine (Gen. 26:1). Judah parted from his brothers and settled near Adillamite named Hirah (Gen. 38:1). Jacob and his sons moved to Egypt and settled at Goshen (Gen. 46:1-34). During a severe famine in the land of Judah, Abimelech, his wife and children left

Bethlehem and settled in Moab (Ruth 1:1). When Moses knew that he was in danger after killing the Egyptian, he flew to Midian (Ex. 2:15). Elijah stayed as a migrant with a widow of Zeraphat (1 Kings 17:20) and Elisha sent the woman of Shunem to fertile coastal area due to the imminent famine. Joseph migrated with Jesus and Mary his mother to Egypt to protect Jesus from the wrath of Herod. They stayed in Egypt until his death (Mt. 2:13-23). There are texts that refer to *ger/gerim* (Ex. 22: 20; 23:9; Deut. 10: 19; 23:8; Lev. 19: 34). The same word appears in prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah. These are only a few examples of migration in the Bible. The Scriptures recognize the plight of migrants, and homelessness is implied (Deut. 16:14), (Obiorah, 2019, p. 127). The word alien *(ger/gerim)* appears many times in the book of Leviticus.

Literary Reading of Leviticus 19:33-34
Leviticus 19:33-34 provides a commandment on how to deal with aliens and the reasons why they should be treated justly. The periscope is set between two commandments: the first set of commandments is Leviticus 19:1-18 and the second set of commandments is Leviticus 19:19-37. The first set of the commandments observes God's statutes, while the second set (Lev 19:19-37) consists of 21 (3 times 7) laws which are segmented by a sevenfold repetition of the phrase, "I am the Lord (your) God" (cf. Lev. 19:25, 28, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, and 37; Obiorah 2019, p. 131).

Reading the Text: Leviticus 19: 33-34
V33 You should not oppress an alien who lives on your property.
V34 because you were an outsider in Egypt, you must treat the alien as you would a citizen among you. I am your God, and you must treat the alien as such.

Literary Analysis of Leviticus 19:33-34
Obiorah observes that Leviticus 19: 33-34 has a rhetorical construction of A, B, C, D, E, F.
- A- When an alien resides within your land (v33a) serves as an introduction with *gwr/* alien as a key word. *Gwr* appears five times, including the pronominal suffixes.
- B- You shall not oppress the aliens.
- C- The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you.
- D- You shall love the alien as yourself. Line D gives instruction that the alien should be treated with love.
- E- Gives the reason for the command; "for you were aliens in the land of Egypt".

F- Provides a divine seal to this command, "am the lord your God".

Obiorah posits that 'hb אהבה (to love) is also found in Leviticus 19:18, Love summarizes the injunction in lines B and C. Line E offers reasons for the command and line F gives a divine seal of the law, (Obiorah ,2019, p.130).

Kellermann (1979) suggests that the root word for alien (*ger/gerim*) is *gwr*, which means to tarry as a sojourner. *Ger* is a sojourner away from his home in another homeland or group. *Gwr* is a frequently word used in Leviticus 19:33-34. *It* appears five times in a periscope of twenty-six words, and twice it appears as a verb: a finite construction in v33 and a particle in v34. The other three times, *gwr* expresses the theme of Leviticus 19:33-34, and its structure (Obiorah, 2019, p.131).

The root *gwr* in Leviticus 19:33-34 is the basis of *gerim* that links Leviticus19:33-34 with the entire Leviticus 19. Leviticus 19:33 "when an alien resides with you in the land "introduces the law on how to treat aliens. Leviticus 19:33-34 alternates singular and plural pronominal suffixes and makes the reading of this text difficult. Is it addressing an individual or the community? The plural elements mingled with singular explain that the text was a secondary modification to take care of the aliens living in the midst of people of Israel. Leviticus 19:33b prohibits the oppression of aliens: "You shall not oppress him (the alien)" – *io, tonu oto oto*. The verb *ynh* in the text is in hiphil. The same verb is found in Exodus 22:20 (21) in the context of covenant code. The covenant code is the oldest legislation in the Old Testament. Leviticus 19:33-34 could have been written in reference to Exodus 22:20 (21) where Leviticus 19:33 prohibits the oppression of aliens. Obiorah (2019) suggests that if Leviticus 19:33-34 was written in reference to Exodus 22:20(21), then more information was added to Leviticus 19: 30-33 to include the inclusion of aliens in the community worship.

Close Reading of Leviticus 19:33-34
Leviticus 19:34a states: "The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you". The citizens are called to treat the aliens as native citizens (*ezrah*). They shall have rights like any citizen (*ezrah)* and accorded citizenships. (Obiorah, 2019, p.130)

Leviticus 19:34b: "You shall love the alien as yourself" calls the citizens to treat the aliens living among them with love. This text implies that the aliens living among the Jews underwent oppression which took different forms. They lack protection, therefore, the commandment

orders that the aliens should be loved unconditionally and inclusively (cf. Leviticus 19:18). The aliens are human beings and so they should be treated accordingly. The pronominal suffix *kamok*a "who is like you" or "who is your equal" reminds the citizens that God created all human beings as equal, that is the reason for Israel to treat all aliens equal. (Obiorah, 2019, p.131).

Leviticus 19:34b states that, "For you were aliens in the land of Egypt". The verse gives the reason the Jews must treat the aliens well and care for them; because they knew the plight of aliens. The Jews were subjected to slavery and hard labour in Egypt. By being in their own land, they should stand for the aliens.

Socio-Historical Reading of Leviticus 19:33-34
The close reading of Leviticus 19:33-34 elicits some embedded socio-historical realities at the background of the text which reveals that there were aliens (*gerim*) living among the Jews and they recognized their status in Israel. (Erhard, 1996)

In Israel, there were different categories of aliens. There were aliens who migrated on their own accord or personal compulsion. Others were compelled by famine and war (2 Sam. 4:3; Isaiah 16:4). Some migrated to preserve their nomadic deal (Jer. 35:9). Still others migrated for religious reasons like the Leviticus (Deut. 16:11, 14; Judges 17: 7-9; 19:1, 16). The resident alien observed Israel's religious practices, festivals, feasts, the Sabbath (Ex. 20: 10; Deut. 5:14), the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29) and the law of cleanliness (Leviticus 17:8-13, 18: 26; Num 19:10). Aliens circumcised could celebrate the Passover with Israelites (Ex. 12: 48-49, Num. 9:14), (Erhard, 1996 p. 26-264).

There were laws that protected the aliens and they enjoyed the protection. God provided them with food and clothing like the orphans and widow for example, some proceeds of the farms were left for them in the land to collect (Deut. 24:19-21). They were free to pick any fruits, and any olive left on the tree belonged to them, including the remnant grapes (Leviticus 19:10). They were also allowed to glean after harvest (Leviticus 23:22). They received sustenance from the regular tithe (Deut. 14:29).

There was another group of strangers known as *nokri.* The law did not protect the *nokri* and they remained strangers among the Jews. They came among the Jews by accident. They were hostile or neutral to the Jewish way of life and they could not be neutralized, (Obiorah 2019,

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p.131). There were still other groups of foreigners like merchants, labourers, craftsmen and slaves. Some of these foreigners were not professional and had no national connections in the land. They depended on the hospitality of the people (Oropo, 2016, p. 328).

Aliens in Israel, whether with document or no documents, were exposed of hardships and discrimination, and depended on the citizens for survival. At times, there was hostility towards them and that explains the reason for commandment in Leviticus 19:33-34. The commandment was set to protect the aliens. The experience of the homeless and the migrant society today is not different from that of aliens who lived among the Jews. In our society, migrants without documents who are among the citizens of the host countries are exposed to severe treatment, imprisonment, and some are even killed. Kenya continues to be the hub for irregular and regular migration.

Leviticus 19: 33-34 and Homelessness and Migration in Kenya
Homelessness, migration, migrants, and human trafficking are all major issues in Kenya. Although there is little information on the number of Kenyans living outside Kenya illegally, it is estimated that at least 300,000 Kenyans live in the United States. While professionals and skilled Kenyans migrate abroad, there is a steady brain drain that deprives the country its development and delays its growth to the middle class.

As of the end of January, 2021, Nairobi was home to approximately 81,023 urban refugees and asylum seekers, (UNHCR, Kenya, 2021). Many people in Kenya, particularly the young school leavers, in search of employment, have moved from rural to the urban settings, and the majority find themselves residing in the slums. Kenya has large slums and has high records of the homeless, street-dwellers, and internally displaced people (IDPs), so, what is the biblical response to homelessness and migration in Kenya?

Biblical Response to Homelessness and Migration in Kenya
The Bible has stipulated covenant code and commandments to make citizens and aliens live in harmony. For example, Leviticus 19:33-34 addresses aliens' situation and how the citizens should treat them, while in Kenya there are challenges because of the increasing number of the homeless and the prevailing migration. The homeless and migrants lack acceptance and integration in their places of prevailing "refugee". In most cases, the homeless are evicted and so they have no home, while the street dwellers work or loiter along the street, experiencing

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harsh living. The professional migrants in Kenya fail to get the required jobs; as such, they resort to menial and sometimes dehumanizing works, or they stay in the refugee camps with little hopes of getting asylum. Leviticus 19:33-34 states that "when an alien resides with you in your land, you should not oppress the aliens". In reference to this command, there is the need to recognize the sacredness of all human beings, and as such human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. They are sacred and should be respected. According to the World Council of Churches (WCC), migrants in Kenya must be treated with respect. As per this viewpoint, respect for human dignity and the worth of every person, regardless of age, abilities, ethnicity, or faith, obligates the country to uphold human life, physical safety, and individual safety in laws and institutions (Magezi, 2015).

Being a Christian country, Kenya should recall that the Bible stipulates that Christians should respect human rights of migration and pray for the struggling migrants, particularly refugees in transit seeking asylum in Europe and America to succeed and eventually settle into what they will call home.

Leviticus 19:33-34 commanded the citizens to care for the aliens; "The alien who reside with you shall be to you as yourself", which implies that the lives of the homeless and migrants are at risk as they are victims of violence and insecurity. On migration, Pope John XXIII, in *Pacem in Terris*, states that it is an "inherent right of human person" to move freely and to fix, for valid reasons, himself/herself in a better place. There is a moral obligation to protect the life of people who move from their homeland to the host countries, (Pope John XXIII, 1963)

Pacem in Terris calls for moral and ethical obligations and responsibilities for the common good of humanity which is the life of every human being (Adangba, 2019, p. 25). The homeless and migrants are full human beings that deserve to have a full human protection. By showing hospitality, they will welcome and receive migrants without discrimination and enable them participate in a more just and humane development.

Leviticus 19:34b states that: "You shall love the aliens as yourself". Jesus summed up the two-fold commandment of love: to love God above all else and to love neighbour as self. "You shall love your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest commandment. The second is like it: you shall love your neighbor as self" (Mt. 22:37-39, cf. Mk.12:28-31, Lk. 10:25-28). For Jesus,

to love God means to share in his plan for people, to become God's instrument of love. When Leviticus 19:34b commands the people of Israel to love aliens as themselves, it refers to biblical values of love, justice and peace. These values compel Christians to renew themselves, which refers to biblical values of justice and peace. These values compel Christians to renew their response to the migrants.

The Bible talks about unconditional love. It is a call for Kenyans to work towards a just and unified world, to love migrants unconditionally. Practically, solving the problem of homelessness and migration, with regard to loving them selflessly, will compel the Kenyans to struggle for justice and peace for all, to work for the world where economies, political and social institutions serve people unconditionally. Like Leviticus 19:34b called the Jews to love aliens as themselves, Kenyans too are being called to build an inclusive community with the homelessness and migrants; to embrace the uprooted in service and witness, which means that Kenyans are called to be with the migrants and the homeless who are struggling to change their status of life.

Kenyans are challenged by Leviticus 19:34b to intensify the ministry of accompaniment and advocacy with migrants and the homeless. Kenyan churches are called to uphold the prophetic witness by speaking for the migrants and the homeless. Since the command of love comes from the Bible (Leviticus 19:34b), Kenyans ought to uphold the dignity of all people because they all bear the imprint of the all-loving God. Therefore, Kenyans are reminded to love their neighbour as themselves, which calls for including the homeless and migrants by welcoming them and guarding them against any form of injustice while in Kenya.

Leviticus 19:34c which records that, "For you were aliens in the land of Egypt" orders the Jews to welcome strangers because they were migrants in Egypt and they know the plight of being strangers. It is a call for solidarity with the homeless and migrants and how to treat them fairly and justly when they reside with the citizens. As a hub for migrants in the region, it is important that Kenya has a clear migration policy that will protect migrants and the homeless while they are in transition.

Recommendations

This study recommends that the churches, communities and both faith-based and the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) should work together with the homeless and migrants. As a group, they would be able to work with the migrants and the homeless and integrate them

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into the native churches. The study makes the following recommendations:

- To provide homeless people and migrant workers with material assistance;
- To advocate for the human rights of immigrants, the homeless, and those living on the streets;
- There is need to address the root causes of migration and homelessness by different groups coming together….church, country legislatures, NGOs and FBOs.
- There is need to provide accommodation and push the government to see the need of having affordable housing for the homeless and migrants and work with those that are evicted because of financial challenges.
- Bodies and organizations dealing with migration, the homeless and street people to conscientize members of society and the government about the plight of migrants.
- Faith communities to follow the call in the commandment and the call of Jesus on love of God and of neighbors towards justice and peace and community service.

Conclusion

Migration is part and parcel of human life. People migrate for different reasons globally, regionally and locally, as indicated in various parts of Africa, including the Democratic Republic of Congo. The major reasons that have led to migration and homelessness, according to this study, were war (as currently revealed in the Russia-Ukraine war), conflicts and pandemics such COVID-19. For whatever reasons that make the people to move out of their homes, lands and countries - whether for a change of life status or security - it never works out a hundred percent as many migrants get exposed to different forms of challenges. The Bible reveals that although people migrate and find themselves as foreigners, the bottom line is that they are human beings and need to be treated with integrity and dignity. Love is a biblical value that Christ Jesus advocates, and so Kenya can model the call to love aliens in their midst and work towards a just society. Africa has exposed many of its people to migration and as such homelessness.   Wherever the homelessness takes place, whether in America, Australia, Europe, Asia or in Africa, it takes away the integrity and dignity of the victims. It is for this reason that Leviticus 19:33-34 reminds the readers and humanity to treat migrants justly and fairly. They deserve to have a home; therefore, churches, organizations and governments need to work together towards affordable accommodation for them. The Kenyan society faces a challenge on how to treat migrants, since it

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serves as a hub for migrants who transit to different parts of Africa, Europe, Asia and America.

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TRACING THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATION OF FAITH-CULTURE DIALOGUE

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Executive Summary

The proclamation of the message of the Gospel is addressed to men and women who live in a particular historical and cultural context. God is one, unique and unchangeable, yet differently approached in different cultural ambients. Culture, as a vehicle for transmission of faith, helps in understanding the apparent multiplicity in the means and mode of the search for God. Bearing in mind, however, that there are almost as many cultures as there are peoples, one observes a certain tendency towards cultural relativism. Consequently, there comes the need of striving towards the maintenance of the objectivity of faith lest it becomes a victim of cultural vacillation and vicissitudes. To obviate this imminent danger of relativizing and adulterating the message of faith under the pretext of cultural adherence, it becomes pertinent to initiate an authentic dialogue between faith and culture. However, for us to unravel the dialogue of faith and culture, this research aims making an appeal to Christ himself who is the origin and epicentre of such dialogue. He was born within a culture; lived and experienced the good and ugly sides of the Jewish culture, and was thus better placed to challenge and transform elements of Jewish culture that were incongruous with the Christian living. St. Paul employed the dialogue of faith and culture in his missionary encounters. This research, therefore, applies an expository and interpretative approach to unravel biblical evidences regarding this faith-culture encounter.

Keywords: Faith, culture, Faith-culture conflict, dialogue, inculturation

Introduction

Man has a natural inclination to God. Consequent upon this innate tendency, his overall disposition and way of life are directly or indirectly, geared towards an avowed search for the Divine. This search becomes manifested in an act of faith that legitimises the innate

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religious option. This act of faith is more and more deepened, properly appropriated and responsibly responded to when its obligations and implications are undoubtedly appreciated and professed. However, one must not forget that not only the full realization of faith but also the initial moment: *initium fidei* (beginning of faith) depends fully on God's grace.

But the transmission of faith does not take effect in a vacuum. For "how can they call upon the name of the Lord", says St. Paul, "without having believed in him? And how can they believe in him without having first heard about him? And how will they hear about him if no one preaches about him? And how will they preach him if no one is sent?" (Rom.10,10-15). Evidently, the human instrument is of fundamental and unavoidable importance in the transmission of faith. On the other hand, he remains also the recipient of the message of faith.

Inevitably, man performs a dual role in the process of the transmission of faith. It is therefore necessary to take into consideration the cultural context into which he is born. Nonetheless, such cultural background in which he lives is not without its attendant strings of explicit and implicit demands and responsibilities. Based on that existential fact, his life-situation and world-view normally condition his reception and transmission of this faith. It is within this cultural spectrum that one aptly comes to appreciate the faith, to comprehend it and to internalise it. On account of that, for effective and adequate communication of the content of the deposit of faith, one needs to pay ample attention to questions of culture. In fact,

> Culture is the vital space within which the human person comes face to face with the Gospel. Just as a culture is the result of the life and activity of the human group, so the persons belonging to that group are shaped to a large extent by the culture in which they live … From this perspective, it becomes clearer why evangelization and inculturation are naturally and intimately related to each other … the Kingdom of God comes to a people who are profoundly linked to a culture, and the building of the Kingdom cannot avoid borrowing elements from human cultures. (John Paul II, 2000 no.21)

Notwithstanding this obvious interpenetration between faith and culture, conflicts frequently ensue in some areas. Sequel to such possible unfavourable occurrences, in areas of the faith-culture conflict, there is always the need to employ dialogue in order to arrive at a

harmonised permeation of faith into the culture of a people, which has undoubtedly formed their way of life. Thus Mushete writes:

The fact is that every people, every human community, conceives and organizes its historical existence not according to a universal, immutable model, but according to its own particular situation in space and time. A perception of the world and its values always depends on different spaces, they experience and theorize their human relationships, their culture, and their religion differently. (Mushete, 1994, p.24)

Therefore, the proclamation of the message of the Gospel is addressed to men and women who live in a particular historical and cultural context. God is one, unique and unchangeable, yet differently approached in different cultural ambients. Culture, as a vehicle for transmission of faith, helps in understanding the apparent multiplicity in the means and mode of the search for God. Bearing in mind, however, that there are almost as many cultures as there are peoples, one observes a certain tendency towards cultural relativism. Consequently, there comes the need of striving towards the maintenance of the objectivity of faith lest it becomes a victim of cultural vacillation and vicissitudes.

To obviate this imminent danger of relativizing and adulterating the message of faith under the pretext of cultural adherence, it becomes pertinent to initiate an authentic dialogue between faith and culture which has a biblical foundation. Such initiative will then engender the sifting, and where possible the remodelling of those elements that go contrary to the Gospel message; and not without extolling those elements that synchronize with the message. In this way, faith becomes properly rooted, belief more meaningful and the Gospel solidly incarnated and more exuberantly and convincingly proclaimed as a way of life.

Faith: a brisk survey

The word faith is etymologically founded on Latin and Greek roots. Faith derives from the Latin fifth declension noun "*Fides-ei* meaning trust, confidence, reliance, credence, belief, faith"(Simpson, 1959). Furthermore, this noun *fides* derives from a semi-deponent (Tantucci, 2000, p.130) verb of third conjugation – "Fido-ere-fisus sum – to trust, believe, confide in" (Simpson, 1959). More so, faith also translates the Greek noun □í□ς. □í□ς like its adjective □óς□□was initially used in reference to personal relationship with somebody or something (Bultmann et al., 1968, p.176); on the contrary, their opposites - □í□□□ς

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□and□íhave the senses of distrustful and unfaithful, unreliability and unfaithfulness respectively.

However, it is important to note that in classical Greek □óς □and □í□ς were never used for true religious relationship to God or for the basic religious attitude of man. The religious application started with□ī□ī□and í□When it means 'to put faith' the object will not only be human words, but also divine sayings and even deity itself (Bultmann et al., 1968, p.179).

Nonetheless, "faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ" (Rom. 10,17). If there is no one who teaches, it is not possible to learn; it is not even possible to get those who teach if not sent through the divine grace to whom alone belongs knowledge of choosing them. Therefore, it is necessary that elected messengers be sent for the teaching. This Pauline verse reveals the intrinsic connection between faith and preaching. So the preachers are the elders to whom those, who have not fully accepted the faith, need to listen with faithful obedience. These preachers have the duty of proclaiming Christ as the Light that liberates from the darkness of sin and unbelief. It is faith that leads to that Light which in turn unveils to us the vision and knowledge of God. However, preaching plays a significant role in the initiation and sustenance of faith.

Even if one does not receive this light of faith, there is still a fundamental belief in something else. Therefore, although unbelievers do not believe in God, they nonetheless manifest an act of faith. This act of faith is evident in their belief in the fact that they were born by their parents without prior experiential knowledge of that fact. This implies that they can believe in events which they did not experience personally. Faith remains in the words of St. Paul "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11,1). Since faith is a spiritual reality, it is not comprehensible through mere human reason. There is a limit to human reason. For one cannot arrive at the knowledge of God and other heavenly realities through reason alone. To that effect, we do not ascribe to a blind faith that would exclude rational investigation. It has to be reasonably convincing. For «if you do not believe», says Prophet Isaiah, "you will not understand" (Isaiah, 7,9).

Against this background, it is clear that faith though spiritual in its nature has also a concrete dimension in its manifestation. Since faith appertains to the man's spiritual dimension, since man thanks to the grace of God is both the agent for the transmission faith and the

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recipient of its content, since man by nature has a dual component, spiritual and material, we cannot exclude the cultural context where that faith is lived. It is in the same cultural context that conflict often times ensues with regard to the practice of faith.

Notion of faith-culture conflict

The meeting of two cultures, for example, the divine culture (faith) and temporal culture, is most often fraught with conflict and tension. The tension is consequent upon the divergence in their objective. The former has a transcendent goal; the latter, though ultimately geared towards the supernatural, is more so weighed down by its earthly ties. Undoubtedly, the opposition in their objective cannot be gainsaid because although man is created in the image of God and as such has the divine imprint right from birth, temporal culture has an existential priority in its concrete manifestation on account of which it gains a deep-rooted position from the onset. Any shift from its root creates conflict. This priority is obvious as man from the beginning shapes his cultural inclination through conscious or even unconscious imitation of others. We want what our neighbour possesses, and we desire what he desires or what we think he desires. The child's closest neighbours, for instance are the parents. The child starts by assimilating the social assumptions around him, and gradually the self comes to view the surrounding world with a particular slant, which in turn shapes his or her typical expectations of others. The tone and quality of these relationships in turn influence the kind of religious horizon likely within a given culture. In this way, culture becomes "a huge school of imitation and if dominated by a spirit of enmity, then it becomes a school of collective violence and conflict" (Gallagher, 2003, p.38).

All in all, it is evident that "all human cultures are infected with a spirit of rivalry between human beings" (Gallagher, 2003, p.38). This rival tendency confirms the fact that culture is in constant change and always in the process of becoming, and it is by its nature "shapeless, seething and shifting …" (Archer, 1988, p.xxii) Girard describes in a penetrating manner this continual change that goes with culture using the analogy of the scapegoat. There is always a quiet violence of one desire over another and constant displacement of a weaker desire with a stronger one. This "conflictual mimesis" (Girard, 1987, p.26) presents the idea of victimhood, which goes to foster hostility, and this hostility in the long run culminates in what eventually sums up as culture. In the same vein, the entire "creation theology is the basis for the long adventure of human culture – symbolised in the mandate to human beings to grow and rule the earth. Thus there is a biblical foundation for seeing culture

as the human response to God's continuing creative gift, as a co-operation through our freedom with the creator …" (Gallagher, 2003, p.121).

The Gospel, on the other hand, is filled with a renewing and perfecting encounter. The acceptance of the Gospel message means some consolidation or shift from or a total rejection or even an overall remodeling of the temporal culture that has taken root. The Jewish and Hellenistic cultures experienced such purifying and perfecting touch when it came in contact with the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. In the 'Sermon on the Mount' (Mtt. 5-7) where Jesus presents the manifesto of his evangelization we witness such a shift. It is a series of you-have-heard-that-it was-said-to-the-men-of old: you shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not swear falsely; an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; you shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy; but I say to you: whoever kills shall be liable to judgment; everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart; do not swear at all, rather let what you say be simply 'yes' or 'no'; if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven (Mt. 5:21-22, 27-28, 31-45).

In fact, divine revelation sets man free from the same dark inheritance of culture and he thus becomes free to live out another existential vision. When the Gospel is thus accepted, one gives up mimetic desires and begins to share the desire of Christ himself (Girard, 1987, pp.430-431) and thus compassion assumes the place of victimising. Therefore, the adventure of Christian faith is that of healing culture of its inner logic of violence (Gallagher, 2003, p.38). That is what conversion is all about.

In this line of healing the culture of the time, the Church in all her apostolic endeavours insistently and tirelessly continues to combat the worldly cultures that go against the divine culture. There is always the ceaseless fraternal appeal against war, abortion, euthanasia, injustice, and every other form of violence and policies that go against the dignity of the human person as created by God in His image. In the same line, Karol Wojtyla through theatrical performances defiantly confronted and resisted the Nazi and communist ideology, which went all the way in suppressing human freedom. As a Pope, his inclination towards fighting oppressive cultures became more apparent. He tirelessly brought every effort to bear in expunging the political ideology of his time of its dark and inimical vestiges. It began as "a clandestine act of

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cultural resistance" (Weigel, 2003, p.1) and later transformed in an overt manifestation. In fact, Pope John Paul II confronted a brutal attempt to crush human freedom, which was evident in the communism that had replaced Nazism as the usurper of Poland's liberties. These ideologies, which he counted among the horrors of late twentieth-century life, are among the product of defective and vitiated concepts of the human person (Weigel, 2003, p.8). Once again, he was engaging in this venture not with any political or military might but with what he understood as the truth that could liberate his people in the most profound sense of freedom which entails the truth about the dignity, vocation, and destiny of human beings, and which he believed had been revealed in Jesus Christ (Weigel, 2003, pp.1-2).

From the foregoing, it is evident that for faith and culture to cohabit without friction, there is need for a dialogue. The blueprint of this dialogue is traced in the bible.

Tracing Faith-culture dialogue from the Gospels

The Gospel is replete with evidences of faith-culture dialogue in the ministry of Jesus Christ. One can easily glean this dialogue in all the facets of Christ's life on earth; more especially in his encounter with the Jewish culture in which he was born, bred, and ministered. His birth into a particular culture sets in motion the theology of incarnation. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn. 1,14). Hence, "the incarnation of Jesus Christ is the theological basis for inculturation ..." (Gallagher p.122). Being a Jew, Jesus paid attention to his cultural background in his ministry. He made use of the elements in his culture for effective proclamation of the Kingdom of God. In fact, "Jesus proclaimed the Good News to the Jewish people from within the perspective of the Jewish culture and...challenged that culture to respond to Good News by using its resources to express the message of salvation" (Ukpong, 1994, p.44). Undoubtedly, "Jesus can be described, as one who really knew Judaism from inside" (Kealy, 1989, p.28). Based on this evident awareness of the intricacies of Jewish culture, his proclamation of the God's Kingdom was primarily aimed not only at evangelizing his people but also using their culture as the instrument for passing the gospel message. By so doing, he also passes the culture through the crucible of Gospel requirement. The culture is surely evangelized wherever it is found wanting. In this regard,

> the gospels portray Jesus as showing a strong sense of mission to evangelize the Jewish people and their culture. All the gospels depict him not only as a preacher of the coming of God's Kingdom but also as one who was aware that that was his special mission. (Ukpong, 1994, p.46)

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While carrying out this his special mission, Jesus made use of parables which formed part of the daily life of a common Jew, encouraged respect of civil authorities and reacted vehemently against the Pharisees who laid excessive legal burdens on the gullible masses and against a near uncomfortable insistence on rituals. The parables, which the rabbis were using for explanation of their teaching, formed an essential part of Jesus teaching (Meier, 2000, p.1320). In this way, he hammered home his message by using parables, which encapsulate what the people experience in their day-to-to life. On account of this homeliness of the parables and other forms of speech that derive from the wisdom and prophetic traditions of Israel, the people could easily draw the conclusion of his teaching without much labour.

He not only preached by using parables, but he also sought to confront and evangelize the Jewish culture, especially the Jewish Law that was more or less too legalistic. He gave the Jewish Law a new face. Conscious of the fact that the Law meant a lot for the Jews, he showed a reasonable respect towards their Law. The Jews had "one body of laws, the Torah, which was religious but governed both the religious and secular aspects of life. The Torah was regarded as the manifest will of God for Israel…a way of life for the Jews" (Ukpong, 1994, p.49). Since the Law formed a vital element in their daily life, since it has formidable root in them, since the "Torah became the central symbol of Judaism and the summary of what Jews believe and how they live…" (Brown et al., 2000, p.1080), it needed to be handled with utmost caution and charitable disposition in order to make an adequate rapport between faith and culture. His approach was not an offensive rejection of the Law but a tactically prudent transformation of the Law. He showed the supremacy of mercy over rigidity of legalism. A glaring example was the case of the adulterous woman who according to the Law was supposed to face death by stoning. As John has it in his gospel,

> the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees brought in a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They made her stand in front of everyone. Master, they said, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. Now the Law of Moses orders that such women be stoned to death; but you, what do you say…. Let anyone among you who has no sin be the first to throw a stone at her. (Jn. 8:3-7)

Here, they had the hidden intention of ensnaring Jesus.

> If Jesus followed the Law and condemned the woman to stoning, he would appear to be heartless. On the other hand, if he showed

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mercy and released the woman he would seem to show no regard for the Law. In view of Jesus' new perspective on the Law in terms of love and mercy, there is no doubt that his intention was to show mercy to the woman. He did not, however, do this directly but turned the episode into an indictment of the character of the woman's accusers before releasing her. In that way, without attracting confrontation, Jesus implemented his perception of a new interpretation of the Law based on love and compassion. (Ukpong, 1994, pp.51-52)

And St. Augustine summarized it thus: "the two of them alone remained: *mercy with misery*" (Augustine, 1991, 33,5). More so, Jesus gave the Law of the Sabbath a new dimension. He interpreted it in the spirit of *epikei*, that is, "an interpretation of the human law not according to its letter but according to its spirit in those border cases which have not sufficiently been taken into consideration by positive law" (Peschke, 1991, p.197). By this attitude, he maintains the superiority of the intrinsic law inherent in human nature over the codified norms of positive law. He mellowed down the agonizing severity of the Law on Sabbath and gave it a human face. He took care of the urgent necessities of human life. Thus, he exalted the law of love and mercy above that of the temple and Sabbath. In fact,

> Jesus, through his preaching and the total gift of himself that would lead him to the Cross, returned the Mosaic Law to its true and original intent. Here what is central is not the law or legal justice, but the love of God, which is capable of looking into the heart of each person and seeing the deepest desire hidden there; God's love must take primacy over all else….The misery of sin was clothed with the mercy of love. Jesus' only judgement is one filled with mercy and compassion for the condition of this sinner. (Francis, 2016, no.1)

Against the confrontations of the Scribes and Pharisees, against every accusation of transgressing the law of the Sabbath, he went on to heal the sick on the Sabbath, (Mk. 3:1-5; Lk. 14:1-6) allowed his disciples to appease their hunger by plucking ears of corn, (Mtt. 12:1-8; Mk. 2:23-28) and summarily emphasized that the Sabbath was made for man and not vice versa (Mk. 2:27) .In all these cases, careful reading makes evident Jesus attempt at incarnating the gospel in the Jewish culture. He accepts the Jewish culture but rejects its excesses. His attitude was not in any way based on disrespect for the Jewish Law and culture but on an inner understanding of God's will in relation to the Law; Jesus' interpretation

was also a reaction against a false evaluation be it of the Law in particular or the culture in general (Ukpong, 1994, p.52).

Apart from his attitude towards the Law, his general missionary approach was devoid of any propensity of segregation. There was no discrimination in his good works. Even the pagans and notorious sinners were not marginalized in his ministry. Rather, he converted them through his show of love and concern towards them. Despite the scornful and despising attitude of the Jews towards the pagans which actually inhibited them from understanding all that was foreign, Jesus showed them that salvation was meant for all. It was thanks to his broad-minded approach that he was able to discover that faith of a pagan woman, a Syrophoenician by birth, who begged him to drive the demon out of her daughter. Based on her faith, Jesus healed her daughter not minding her being a pagan (Mk. 7:24-30).

His ministry did not exclude the Publicans and sinners. He mingled with them; dined and wined with them. This goes to prove the fact that conversion is not done from a distance but through contact with others and through proper understanding of the condition of others. When confronted regarding his association with tax collectors and sinners, he responded, "healthy people don't need a doctor, but sick people do. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners" (Mk. 2:17). What a method that demands emulation by those that are charged with the work of evangelization! What an open-minded approach that is needed in the dialogue of faith and culture!

It is noteworthy that "Jesus was set on evangelizing Jewish culture and religious thought from within by utilizing the resources of the culture" (Ukpong, 1994, p.49). Against this backdrop,

> using the elements of Jewish culture, he sought to instil into the Law and the Jewish religion a new vision based on the Good News that he preached. This involved a challenge to people to rethink their basic beliefs, hopes, and institutions. Jesus issued this challenge from within the culture itself and not from outside it. This is the inculturation approach in evangelization. (Ukpong, 1994, p.58)

Actually, Jesus' approach to his ministry in the face of his challenging Jewish cultural background remains a legacy and a model that can be applied in the face of other cultures. Indeed, the fact of the incarnation is the inception of inculturation. Christ taking human form *ipso facto* incarnates the gospel into human culture with its attendant vicissitudes.

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This fact must be embraced by all missionaries and all preachers of the gospel. The gospel must be preached from within the perspective of the people's culture. On no account should a people's culture be forcefully expunged in the name of evangelization. Such attitude is detrimental to the true meaning of evangelization, and more detrimental to the eventual effect on the people's life pattern, and most detrimental to the type of faith they will embrace. Christ method of "he who has ear let him hear" (Mtt. 11:15; 13:9) must be adopted. St. Paul really applied this approach in his missionary encounter.

Tracing faith-culture dialogue from The Acts of Apostle and Pauline Epistles
Paul was a Jew by birth (Acts 21:39; Phil. 3:4) and initially a persecutor of Christians (Acts 22:4, Phil.3:6). After his conversion he took the Gospel message of Jesus to the Gentiles. For a better understanding of the encounter of these two cultures, it is necessary to expose the Jewish cultural background in which Paul grew up.

The Torah formed and shaped the Jews' cultural outlook. Consequently, they viewed their culture as being divinely inspired. They saw themselves as God's unique and holy people, set apart from the Gentiles, whom they regarded as sinners (Gal. 2:15). The Jews guarded the Gentiles' social life with some restrictions. In that context, the Jews deeply believed that eating with the Gentiles made them unclean and they strictly observed this code of conduct (Okure,1989, p.46). Aware of the fact that the Hellenistic culture is greatly different from the Jewish culture, Paul tried to adapt the Gospel to the new audience without denigrating the inherent values of their own culture. Thanks to this charitable adaptation, the result was a Gentile form of Christianity, one that engaged in dialogue with Greek and Roman philosophy (Schineller, 1990, p.9). The Areopagus speech thus becomes the first witness of Christianity to an encounter between the biblical faith in the creation and the cosmic piety of the Greeks (Legrand, 1976, p.349). It was neither a Christianity that stripped the Jews of their Jewishness nor one that aimed at divesting the Gentiles of their Gentileness (Pesce, 1987, p.205). Paul thus became an example of how Jesus' early followers inculturated the counter-cultural message of the Gospel. He made use of a new symbol system, that is, parables that were in vogue in the cultural ambient where he preached. In his preaching, Paul, cognisant of the particularity of his cultural ambient, spoke of athletic competition (cf. 1Cor 9:24-27), grammar and phonetic (cf. 1Cor 14:9f), makes appropriate analogies with architects and builders (cf. 1Cor 3:10f), tutors (cf. Gal 3,24) and use of perfumes and mirrors (cf. 2Cor 2:14; 1Cor

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13:12) (Mattam, 2003, p.231).This "apostle of the Gentiles preached the highest wisdom also before the more learned as when in the Areopagus of Athens he spoke to the onlooker of the unknown god" (Pius XII, 1951, no.42).

When Paul was confronted by the traditional beliefs of the Athenians at Areopagus he did not lay violent hands on their religious images and rites but rather anchored on them in a dialogical and persuasive manner to preach the true God. Ancient testimonies show that Athens had a religious background. Sophocles holds that "Athens is held of states the most devout…" (Sophocles, 1962, p.171). Livy in turn describes Athens as a city "replete with ancient glory…the statues of gods and men-statues notable for every sort of artistry" (Livy, 1962, pp. 342-343). For Cicero, in Athens, "men think civilization, learning, religion…tradition relates that even the gods competed for the possession of their city, so beautiful was it" (Cicero, 1962, p.511). Indeed, Athens is a city with "a nervously devout populace frequenting ubiquitous shrines, philosophers of famous schools dialoguing in the agora, new gods introduced from time to time…" (Dillon, 2000, p.754).

It was in an environment as this that Paul went to preach. It was a confrontation of the Christian faith with other religions. At his speech at Areopagus, Paul employed *captatio benevolentiae* which literally refers to the fishing for the good will of the audience. It is a "rhetorical category aimed at capturing the good will of the audience at the beginning of a speech. (Andoková, 2016, p.2). This is reflected when Paul acknowledged at the beginning that the Athenians were in every way very religious (Acts 17:22).

> As a Jewish Christian, he realizes that pagan Greeks do not worship the 'true' God of Jews and Christians, but tries to show that the God whom he proclaims is in reality no stranger to the Athenians, if they would only rightly reflect. His starting point is Athenian religious piety, and he tries to raise them from such personal experience to a sound theology. Their piety, in his view, does not go far enough. (Fitzmeyer, 1998, p.607)

This primary acknowledgement disposes the minds of the listeners. Such appreciation of other people's religion promotes the dialogue of faith and culture. Any outright condemnation makes an outright abortion of positive progress in the process of evangelization. He respected their religious images but based on the one attributed to the "Unknown god" as a springboard for his preaching on the true God. "Now, what you worship as unknown, I intend to make known to you.

God, who made the world and all that is in it, does not dwell in sanctuaries made by human hands, being as he is Lord of heaven and earth. Nor does his worship depend on anything made by human hands, as if he were in need." (Acts 17:23-25) In fact,

> the God worshipped in the 'pagan' Athens is the same Creator whom Paul had come to proclaim. The speech thus provides the theological basis for the missionary enterprise among non-Jews and non-Christians. God is not circumscribed in a particular geographical ambient. He is acknowledged and worshipped by all men and women everywhere. (Isizoh, 2001)

Paul in this way made a missionary in-road no matter how little into Athens. It was an apt dialogue of faith and culture that would have on the contrary met with utter rejection were Paul to make a blatant denunciation of their gods.

This rapport between faith and culture was also evident at the decision of the Council of Jerusalem. The Council intervened to douse the fire of commotion, which arose in Antioch consequent upon a desire to impose circumcision on Gentile Christians. This imposition was based on the fact that circumcision was insisted upon as a necessity for salvation. The Council under the guidance of the Holy Spirit quelled the upheaval when it decided that "to be a Christian one does not have to be circumcised or have to obey all the prescription of the Mosaic Law." (Fitzmeyer,[1998, p.544]) The faith-culture dialogue detests excessive burden on the converts.

Following from this, the pastors of today should emulate the approach of Christ in his ministry and that of St. Paul in his various missionary ventures. A situation where a pastor of soul incites the overzealous faithful, through his preaching, to indulge in a desecration of the sacred geography of the Traditional Religionists is an arrant negation of what evangelization is all about. Worst still, a wholesome iconoclastic tendency against their religious artefacts in the name of bringing them to the faith is nothing but an uninformed method of spreading the gospel. Such bespeaks of a breach of religious freedom. Such pastors must as a matter of urgency be reminded of the words addressed by Pope John Paul II to the Bishops of Nigeria,

> The Church truly respects the culture of each people. In offering the Gospel message, the Church does not intend to destroy or abolish what is good and beautiful. In fact she recognises many cultural values and through the power of the Gospel purifies and takes into Christian worship certain elements of a people's

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customs. The Church comes to bring Christ; she does not come to bring the culture of another race. Evangelisation aims at penetrating and elevating the culture by the power of the Gospel. (Palermo, 1993, no.1752)

Therefore, "the Gospel is not opposed to any culture, as if in engaging a culture the Gospel would seek to strip it of its native riches and force it to adopt forms which are alien to it." (John Paul II, 1998, no.71)

Rather, "evangelization loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into consideration the actual people to whom it is addressed, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not answer the question they ask, and if it does not have an impact on their concrete life" (Paul VI, 1975, no.63). As we bemoan the mistakes of the early missionaries that came to Africa, saw numerous objects used in religious functions and called them idols, dismissed Africa Traditional Religion as paganism, idolatry, heathenism and fetishism, (Isizoh, 2001) indigenous pastors of soul must be on their guard so as not repeat the mistakes of the past. We must take our bearing from Christ himself who was very exemplary in the way he tackled issues arising from Jewish culture with commensurate missionary respect. Faith must have to touch the lives of Nigerians, and manifest itself in respect for life and search for peace. When faith permeates the lives of Christians, domestic violence, insecurity, kidnappings, killings and other related societal ills will surely fizzle away. Otherwise faith-culture encounter will only be a lip-service exercise. On this note, we must remember that in the encounter between faith and culture, faith purifies and transforms the pagan culture from every trace of error.

In short, the missionary activity is primarily concerned with preaching the gospel to the ends of the earth. To achieve this, imminent cultural problems could be obviated if the pastors of soul are groomed and properly abreast with the unavoidable necessity of spreading the faith in the perspective of culture.

Conclusion

Faith and culture, all things being equal, should enjoy an interconnected co-existence. All the same, dialogue remains a veritable medium for ensuring collaboration between faith and culture. Such healthy cohabitation thanks to dialogue helps to root out any tendency of friction and to engage in re-establishing peace where the friction

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already exists. Therefore, dialogue forms an integral part and remains a reliable vehicle of faith transmission in every evangelizing mission.

There is, therefore, no gainsaying the fact that much depends on the pastors who engage in the apostolate of preaching and ministering to the people in the different cultural situations. More so, much depends on the magisterial office of the Church. For, "it is the task of the Pastors, in virtue of their charism, to guide this dialogue with discernment" (John Paul II, 2000, no.21). Adequate caution is necessary so as not to impose the faith on the people. Rather due patience must be taken to preach to the people in an unhurried manner from their cultural background. This disposition goes to say that "it is necessary to inculturate the preaching in such a way that the Gospel is proclaimed in the language and in the culture of its hearers" (John Paul II, 1999, no.70). If not, the faith will be foreign to them and will end up engendering protracted faith-culture conflicts instead of continuous dialogue.

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THE THEOLOGICAL CUM ECCLESIOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO MIGRATION AND REFUGEE CRISIS

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Executive Summary
Movement of people from one place to the other has become the other of the day because of several reasons all pinned to importance attached to life. Life is the first and most precious gift of God to man and to save this life, man is free to take shelter wherever it suits him. Unfortunately, the present situation of affairs in Nigeria drives citizens out of the nation imbedded with the loss of human life. Today, Nigerians are facing severe life challenging issues that threatens the existence of life. Most Nigerians if given opportunity would prefer migration as the only solution to the recent political and religious crisis, unemployment, insecurity and sub-standard of living. These ugly situations in the country have made migration a necessity and not a choice. This paper studies and ventilates migration so as to bring to the open why Nigerians are migrating exponentially. It then goes further to examine the Church's stand on migration, the role the Church is playing to ameliorate the situation. The Church's longstanding teaching drawn from natural law is examined and the result shows that the Church recognizes the nation as an extension of the human family. Hence, no man is a stranger on earth because God is common father of all. Nations are advised to address the conditions that make citizens to

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begin to consider migration as a solution; leaders should make their home countries livable for their citizens. Going further, from the backdrop of Genesis 12:10, the Church asserts that when the need arises, man is free to save life wherever it suits him.

Keywords: Migration, Life, Refugee, Theology, Crisis

Introduction

The movement of people from their place of 'origin to a destination, or from a place of birth to another destination across international borders' is a severe contemporary issue (Skeldon 2013). Likewise, there are also people who migrate from one community or town within the same country (IOM 2015). The earlier movement refers to international migration, whereas the second movement refers to internal migration. This implies that migration has both 'internal and international' features (IOM 2015). In other words, international migration is a voluntary or non-voluntary 'movement of people across borders to reside permanently or temporarily in a country other than their country of birth or citizenship' because of political, social, economic, natural disasters or climate change factors (United Nations Human Rights 2015). Every person who migrates from his or her place of birth to another destination across international borders is referred to as a migrant. The foregoing definition of international migrants includes refugees, victims of human trafficking as well as documented or undocumented migrants. In addressing the subject of 'migrants in transit', Gilmore (2016), maintains that migrants is an umbrella concept as she employs it to represent all people who have a lack of citizenship attached to their hosting countries in common.

IOM (2015) presents a penetrating picture of the extent of international migration as a serious contemporary issue which the international community cannot afford to ignore. It states that: "the number of international migrants worldwide has continued to grow rapidly over the past fifteen years reaching 244 million in 2015 up from 222 million in 2010 and 173 million in 2000" (p. 1).

Likewise, in the Global Challenge of Managing Migration, Martin (2013) states that from 1980 to 2010, the number of international migrants has increased by 117 million. In 1980, the number of international migrants was 103 million, which increased to 220 million by 2010. Furthermore, Martin (2013) and the United Nation Department of Economic and

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Social Affairs (2013) reported that 'the number of international migrants increased from 220 million to 232 million by 2013'. Martin (2013) continued to estimate that the number of international migrants is most likely to reach 400 million by 2050. In both confirming and magnifying the extent and gravity of the issue of international migration, the IOM (2014) pointedly reported that 'approximately one in seven people are migrating every day'.

Migration confronts both migrants and migrants' hosting nations with various challenges. On the one hand, migrants face discrimination in various forms. Some hosting nations do not recognize the foreign qualifications of migrants which result in migrants accepting low-paying jobs in order to survive in their new homeland. This is usually done by adjusting the human rights of migrants through labour polices which favours the civilians of the hosting nations at the expense of migrants (Bose 2014; Datta et al. 2006). Furthermore, migrants encounter the imposition of burdensome migration regulations (i.e. hosting nations' tightening of their borders and onerous visa requirements) by the hosting nations as a means of discouraging migrants to enter in their country (Chelius 2014; Gilmore 2016; Rajendra 2014; Ridsdel 2014; Sazonov 2015). On the other hand, the migrants' hosting countries face the following challenges:
(1) The cost of resettling and integrating migrants (Boundless 2015; Nie 2015; Thomsen 2016)
(2) The increment of the rates of unemployment (Rivera-Pagán 2012)
(3) The dilution of their native cultures (Corhen & Sirkeci 2011; Tan 2012)
(4) Threats from the refugees' opponents (Pakoz 2016)
(5) The suspicion that migrants, particularly refugees, are intertwined with terrorism (Louw 2016; Plucinska 2015).

The surfacing problem is that although the existential challenges of both migrants and hosting nations are real and the international community cannot afford to ignore them, theology has been lowly participating in shaping the discourse of migration (Groody 2009a; Heimburger 2015; Jackson & Passarelli 2016). Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that there are no ecclesiological-theological responses and approaches to migration challenges.

Although there are ecclesiological-theological responses and approaches to migration challenges, it is apparent that these responses are lacking in numerous ways. Hence, this article seeks to critically assess some theological-ecclesiological responses and approaches to

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migration challenges in order to identify lacunae for further exploration in Christian ministry engagement. In order to accomplish this objective, the researcher will focus on migration issues within theological discourse.

Migration Issues within Theological Discourse

Migration is a serious theological issue because Christianity itself and its foundational doctrines draw significantly from a history that has a clear thread with migration. In this regard, a considerable number of scholars (Campese 2012; Groody 2009a, 2013; Rivera-Pagán 2012) and the church councils (Catholic Church Conferencia Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil 1981; the Lausanne Occasional Paper no. 55. 2004) have concurred that both the Old Testament and New Testament clearly assert migration as a biblical concept.

These scholars and church councils subscribe to a theological position that states that we are all migrants, starting from Adam to us (cf. Lausanne Occasional Paper no. 55. 2004). It is in Genesis 3 where the original migration of mankind emerged as a result of Adam's rebellion against God and was expelled from the Garden of Eden (Gn 3:1–24). In their expulsion from Eden, Adam and Eve migrated into another land in form of judgment. Thus, in linking Adam's expulsion from Eden as the first migration idea in scripture, scholars are bringing the doctrine of creation and the fall to bear on the biblical notion and philosophy of migration.

However, in reversing the Adamic migration by recreating a new person for himself, God called Abraham to leave his home in order to inherit the promised land of Canaan (Gn 12:1–3; Groody 2013). This shows us that in God's large salvific purposes, Abraham migrated in form of blessing to dwell in foreign lands which God was to give to him and his descendants (Gn 12). In this way, the notion of Adam and Abraham's migration is juxtaposed. On the one hand, Adam's migration was in form of punishment and destruction, whereas on the other hand, Abraham's migration was particular and universal in nature. The particularity of Abraham's migration was in form of receiving particular blessings for him and his descendants, while the universal aspect of his migration lies in bringing people back to eternal fellowship with God (Torrance 2008). This scriptural notion of migration is intensified when Israel, the descendant nation of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, migrated to Egypt as well as their return to the

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Promised Land. This aforementioned migration was a pattern for the entire life of Israel in the Old Testament. Given this:

> … the theme of migration is at the heart of the Judeo-Christian scriptures. From the call of Abraham to the exodus from Egypt and Israel's wandering in the desert and later experience of exile, migration has been part of salvation history. (Groody 2009c)

Likewise, the Catholic Church Conferencia Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil (1981) claims that:

> Israel is a country which has been deeply marked by the drama of migrations. Its history has been enriched by this experience and contains important elements which can shed light in the present day reality of migration. (p. 178)

That is, the notion and philosophy of salvation in the Old Testament is 'migration bearing'.

Furthermore, the New Testament speaks about the incarnational mystery of God and Christian life from a migration perspective (Campese 2012; Matovina & Tweed 2012). The former denotes that the migration position of the church is anchored in the mystery of the incarnation in which the infinite, eternal and transcendent God (in and through Jesus Christ) came into our estranged territory in order to save and bring us back to our eschatological homeland in which we will experience full reconciliation between God and us, as well as man and man (Groody 2013). Nagy (2015) corresponds with Groody, Matovina and Tweed, and Campese when he affirms that a proper understanding of migration as a metaphorical expression of the incarnational mystery of God will result in one's 'deeper understanding' of the nature of God and his relationship with the world. The latter denotes that the migration position of the church is embedded within the fact that Christians are biblically ascribed as migrants by scriptural texts that describe believers as aliens or strangers in the world (1 Peter 2:11 and Heb 11:13-16; Campese 2012; Groody 2009a; Matovina & Tweed 2012). Given this, the comprehension of migration as a descriptive metaphor for the incarnational mystery of God and the Christian life is central in configuring migration as a serious theological concern for the church.

Consequently, Aymer (2015:1) understands migration as a theological issue by viewing the New Testament as a diaspora space. She arrived at her conclusion about the New Testament as a diaspora space after a thorough examination of the New Testament books. She argues that the seven unquestionable letters of Paul were written by him when he was in diaspora, instead of his homeland (Aymer 2015). The four gospels

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(Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), Acts and the three epistles of John are mainly identified in the scholarly world as written by some exiled anonymous authors after the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman Empire (Aymer 2015). In substantiating her case, she argues that the letters to Hebrews, 1 Peter and James were written within a diaspora space because the authors of these letters identify their audiences as people in exile or aliens. Furthermore, without building a strong case, she simply identifies the letter of Revelation to have been authored by John while in exile (Aymer 2015). Therefore, Aymer (2015) encapsulates migration as a theological concern for the church because 'the majority of the New Testament authors wrote as migrants (on the road, in exile, on the move) and that their writings constitute sojourners' truths, and thus diaspora space'.

Given the aforementioned discussions, it can be affirmed that both the Old and New Testaments present the notion and philosophy of migration as interconnected with the aspect of God as a migrant and the self-identity of Christians as pilgrims on the way. Thus, Christians are expected to shape the migration debate because the fundamental twin doctrines of Christianity (the incarnation and Christian salvation) rest on the notion and philosophy of migration. However, the arising problem is that although other disciplines such as 'economics, politics, geography, demography, sociology, psychology, law, history, anthropology, and environmental studies' are at the center of shaping the emerging field of migration studies, theology is at the margin of the migration debate (Groody 2009a). Campese (2012) and Jackson and Passarelli (2016) observe that theological reflections on migration are immature. Jackson and Passarelli (2016) continue to note that there is very little that has been done to develop migration theology programmes; hence, in-depth theological reflection and programmes should be developed across the spectrum starting with undergraduate programmes. Groody (2009a) and Heimburger (2015) added that theology has been on the periphery of shaping the emerging field of migration as if it does not have anything to offer. The low participation of theology in shaping the emerging field of migration is a serious theological concern because theology and its fundamental doctrines of salvation draws largely from the notion and philosophy of migration (Campese 2012; Groody 2009c, 2012, 2013; Matovina & Tweed 2012; Nagy 2015).

Various Ecclesiological-Theological Responses and Approaches to Migration Challenges

Pastoral Care of the Migrants

Heyer (2012), Snyder (2012), Tan (2012), Adogame (2013) and Matovina and Tweed (2012) are but a few examples of scholars who focus on practical responses from a pastoral care that is limited to a particular social context. Matovina and Tweed focus on Mexican and Cuban exiles; Tan focuses on the Asian context; Adogame focuses on African migrants in diaspora; Snyder focuses on migrants (particularly asylum seekers) in British social contexts and Heyer focuses on Latin American migrants in the United States. The prevalent practical response for many of these scholars is a call for the hosting nations and Christians to accommodate migrants (particularly refugees) as well as standing alongside them as they encounter various challenges. For instance, Heyer (2012) as a representative voice criticized America for its complicit systems that create the conditions which cause many people to engage in unlawful migration. Heyer (2012) further recognizes that the complicit systems of America subject Latin American women to sacrifice their sexual purity for survival in the United States. There are many unreported sexual abuse cases involving migrant women in work places because they are scared of being deported.

In bringing the Roman Catholic social teachings and the theological discussion of the analysis of sin to bear on migration challenges, Heyer (2012) advances the church as locus for transformation. She calls both the church and the nations at large to employ incarnational and conflictual solidarity as dimensions of solidarity which can save the world troubled with globalisation. The former refers to American churches and America as a nation to identify with many Latino Americans in their various challenges (Heyer 2012). The latter calls nations to fight with conflicting forces which prevents the attainment of incarnational solidarity (Heyer 2012). Heyer (2012) concludes by bringing the notion and philosophy of migration as a metaphor for Christian pilgrimage at this Christian interim period that 'migrants serve as witness to enduring hope'. In this way, Christians' hospitality towards fellow pilgrims provide 'eschatological glimpses' of the now but not realised Kingdom of God (Heyer 2012). In view of the challenges that migrants face, this theological approach represented by Heyer is a useful approach; nonetheless, it is clear that this approach lacks wider application as it focuses on selected contexts.

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Theological Motif and Ministry Praxis From Narrow and Single Biblical Texts

Snyder (2012) is the representative of the theological response to migration crises which focuses on migration theological motif and ministry praxis from narrow and single biblical texts. Snyder (2012) calls the churches in Britain, and Britain as a nation, to accept migrants based on the biblical texts of Ruth (a Moabite woman) and the gospel narrative of the Syro-Phoenician woman in Mark 7:25. Snyder (2012) discusses Ruth as a woman who went into a foreign land by faith and was welcomed by Boaz. This resulted in Ruth's inclusion into the foreign nation of Israel (cf. Ruth 4:11ff.). In substantiating her point, Snyder (2012) linked Ruth's story to the Syro-Phoenician woman, whom by faith had approached Jesus so that she could heal her child who was tormented by evil spirits (Mk 7:25). In connecting Ruth's plight to those of the Syro-Phoenician woman, Snyder calls migrants to have faith, as well as calling Christians and the citizens of the nations to welcome strangers (Snyder 2012). In further underscoring her appeal for the churches and nations to be hospitable to migrants, Snyder employs Ruth, by locating the significance of Ruth in the lineage of Abraham which stretches to Jesus, as a classical example on foreigners' contribution in building a foreign nation.

However, the weakness of this approach is that it is both unsystematic and incomprehensive, therefore, unable to make a compelling theological basis for the acceptance of migrants by Christians. In other words, the unsystematic and incomprehensive aspect of Snyder's approach can possibly result in failing to alter the mindset and actions of the targeted audiences. This is because Snyder does not engage with various biblical texts in the New Testament (e.g. Mt 25:31–46; Heb 13:2–3) which provide Christians with a robust theological basis for accepting migrants – particularly strangers (Sagovsky 2014). Even though Snyder's theological approach is useful, it is also true that it challenges us to construct a systematic-comprehensive theological approach which draws on the whole council of God's word as a means of establishing a better theological basis for Christians' inclusion of migrants particularly refugees.

Israel as a Paradigm of how Native Christians and Hosting Nations should Treat Migrants

In response to the migration crisis, Matovina and Tweed (2012), Rivera-Pagán (2012) are using an approach that focuses on Israel as a paradigm

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of how native Christians and hosting nations should treat migrants. That is, Israel as a covenantal nation of God is taken as an example of how local communities and the churches of the hosting nations should treat migrants in their homeland. In taking Israel as a model of churches and nations' response to migrants, these scholars perceive God's command for Israel to love the foreigners in their land as a dominating response which the church and hosting nations have to exhibit in the current migration crisis (Bedford Strohm 2008). This understanding is rooted in the experience of the salvific history of the nation of Israel (Bedford-Strohm 2008). Israel has experienced the pain of being a stranger in its captivity in Egypt, and therefore, it was supposed to treat foreigners in the way it would have wanted to be treated herself (Lv 19:33–34; cf. Dt 10:19–20, Ex 22:20, 23:9, cf. Matovina & Tweed 2012; Bedford-Strohm 2008).

Bedford-Strohm (2008) emphasizes that the Israelite community was commanded to love strangers among them in the same way they love themselves (cf. Lv 19:33–34). In saying this, Bedford-Strohm (2008) is moving towards his affirmation that the churches and nations are to act likewise as a means of ending discrimination, xenophobia and the exploitation of migrants. That is, just like Israel, God commands equality between migrants and the citizens of the hosting nations; therefore, migrants' hosting communities and native churches are to act in a reciprocal manner. In developing an ethics of empathy, Bedford-Strohm (2008) demonstrates how the commandment of Leviticus 19:33–34 is promoted by God in the subsequent comprehensive summary:

> Firstly, the commandment is emphasized as comprehensible and accessible from Israel's own experience: 'You know how it feels to be foreign and discriminated against. Therefore treat the foreigner just like you would want to be treated if you were in the same situation!' Secondly, the reasoning for the commandment culminates by referring to God Himself: 'I am the Lord your God'. I adopt the cause of all foreigners just like I. (p. 41)

Bedford-Strohm (2008), Matovina and Tweed (2012) and Rivera-Pagán (2012) represent theology in a way which recognises the teachings of the Old Testament about how Israel is to relate to strangers or foreigners among them. It is agreed that Israel was commanded by God to love the strangers among them as they love themselves. However, a point of contention, concerning the current nations experiencing migration crises, is that there is a tendency to directly apply Israel's manner of dealing with the foreigners. This is problematic because Israel was a theocratic and covenantal nation of God, which is distinct to any other

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nation. Israel was a distinct nation and has a particular relationship with God. For instance, it was a priestly nation chosen by God as his instrument of salvation to the whole world. This clear distinction begs for bridges in bringing Israel as a model of response for non-theocratic nations encountering migration challenges at the moment.

Catholic Church's Response to Migration
The Church has always defended migrants' rights, endorsing the right to free movement, family reunification, and the respect for immigrants' cultural, linguistic and religious rights. The universal destination of the earth resources and the need for an international cooperation constitute the basis for the Church's social teaching concerning migration. Faced with new challenges such as the illegal migration flows, the Church advocates respect for fundamental human rights and calls upon international norms capable of regulating the rights and duties of each person, with the aim of preventing one-sided decisions that cause harm especially to the low-income and poor people. She protects illegal immigrants through political advocacy and by running an extensive legal and charitable network in their favour. The Church's social teaching on migration remains an unfinished task at the level of reflection. But through her teachings, the Church continues to sensitize public opinion and legislators by keying ideals so that the fundamental rights of each person may be respected and upheld everywhere and in every circumstance.

Benedict XVI (2010) recalls that "The Church's presence among migrant people is maintained constantly through the years, achieving significant results at the beginning of the last century. One may recall the memory of blessed Bishop Giovanni Battista Scalabrini and St. Frances Cabrini" (p34). With the explosion of the modern phenomenon of migration, the Church, at least in her official documents, has given ample proof to be attentive and close to people forced to leave their country, by suggesting and implementing numerous religious and charitable activities for them. This choice of a practical nature has marked many of her operations in the 19th and 20th centuries. Leo XIII (1891) states

> Neither one believes that the attentions of the Church are so wholly and solely aimed at the salvation of souls, to overlook what belongs to the moral life on earth. She wants, and gets it mostly; the working class emerges from its unhappy state, and improves its living conditions (p.23)

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The Church does not reduce the immigrant to a receiver of charitable services, but emphasizes his personal dignity. Even though the commitment to the welfare and the pastoral care in favour of these people is important, the official documents of the Church soon begin to address the phenomenon of human mobility in more general terms by developing, over the years, some guidelines which will, later on, bring about a social doctrine in this field of migration. However, so far, no documents of the Church and even less moral theologians offer us a systematic treatment of the rights and responsibilities towards forcibly displaced persons. Pius XII is a witness of the tragedy of World War II and the subsequent flight of millions of people from their lands. He introduces some forceful considerations on migrants' rights.

Conclusion
From the forgoing, theology should dialogue with the current challenges that migrants encounter. Reactive ministerial and ecclesiological models that respond to the challenges of migrants should be developed. Hence, advancing a useful intercultural theology of migration. Theology has to dialogue with current forms of arising issues. An emerging problem indicates that while theology is expected to dialogue with migration, scholars observe that theology has been peripherally participating in shaping the discourse and responses to migration crises. Notably, Groody (2009) observes that other disciplines such as 'economics, politics, geography, demography, sociology, psychology, law, history, anthropology, and environmental studies' are at the centre in shaping the emerging field of migration studies while theology is on the side-lines. This lacuna is indeed of theological concern. The above-mentioned lacunae indicate a challenge to place theological reflection of migration on the theological agenda.

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PENTECOSTALISM, DOCTRINE OF PROSPERITY AND THE CULTURE OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA.

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Executive Summary

Pentecostalism is a vibrant revival movement that broke out in the 20th century in the United States of America. The movement is quite unique in its operations and a departure from the orthodox Christianity as they emphasized on a personal relationship with Jesus Christ which is marked by the infilling of the Holy Spirit that comes with signs and wonders. This movement easily found its way into Christianity in Nigeria firstly through the protestants that later dovetailed into modern Pentecostalism. The paper focuses on Pentecostalism in Nigeria which was originally mirrored after the 20th century revival movement, and was identified with vibrant revivalists and evangelists known for prayers, fasting's with accompanying signs and wonders, while living a lifestyle of piety that was dedicated to the service of God devoid of worldly entanglements including teachings on prosperity. It also examines how Pentecostalism became alluring to Nigerian christians as a result of the assurances of life, health and peace it guarantees which the state could not provide, and also a more recent band that emerged about three decades ago which have redefined pentecostalism to come with wealth, suffice to say that the proliferation of the doctrine of prosperity has a correlation with the culture of corruption in Nigeria which is on the rise despite the large following of pentecostal movements in the country. This paper therefore gives a historical perspective on the introduction of religion into the country from which pentecostalism evolved from. It further appraises Pentecostalism in Nigeria from the lenses of the classical and the neo pentecostal school, and also how religiosity has affected the culture of corruption in the country. The paper concludes by drawing the nexus between pentecostalism and corruption as the acceptability of pentecostalism among christians in Nigeria is supposed to

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be an antidote to corruption first in christianity and also in the society based on the principles of the movement that emphasizes on piety and modesty in human conducts.

Keywords: Prosperity,   Pentecostalism,   Corruption, Religion, Christianity.

Introduction

Christianity in Nigeria is made up of several denominations. The orthodox denominations have the earliest history of the religion from which it birthed other denominations with the first being the protestants. The Protestants later became the home for the emergence of several other denominations within christianity with the most popular known as pentecostalism.

Christianity in Nigeria was as a result of the activities of the missionaries that came from Europe as far as the 12th century. The story of modern missions in Nigeria began with the freed slaves in the Americas and Great Britain. They became the pioneers and the instruments of spreading and building Christian missions on the West Coast of Africa, especially in Yourubaland, the Niger, and Cross. River. One of such freed slaves was Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther.[1]

Pentecostalism is a charismatic protestant christian movement that emphasizes a personal encounter with Jesus Christ as savior and healer, with the potential for converts to be "born again" as Christians.[2] Since its emergence, pentecostalism has been a vibrant aspect of the christian religion in Nigeria and sometimes categorized as a global form of christianity. They are viewed by the orthodox denominations to be propagators of deviant doctrines and cultures that are repugnant to the classical christian religion.

Notable of these doctrines is the doctrine of prosperity. Neo classical pentecostalism believes that prosperity is the full proof of the calling of Christians which has been enacted in both the old and new testaments. But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.[3] This was further enunciated in the

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[1] B.Y Galadima and T Yusufu, "Christianity in Nigeria" Part 1 In African Journal of Evangelical Theology 20.1, 2001. P.92

[2] Pentecostalism in Nigeria. https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/faq/pentecostalism-nigeria (Accessed 06/1/2022)

[3]*King James Version,* Deuteronomy 8:18

new testament. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.[4]

Many christians and certainly most secularist see religion as one department or segment of life and culture alongside all others. There is an economic segment of life, a political one and then there is religion. Some people work in the economic segment of culture; others, in the religious segment and most of them are known as clergy.[5] This isolation of religion from politics, culture and economy has imposed an enormous responsibility on religious leaders in the country. Hence, they have carved a niche for themselves with a large following while possessing a mien more vibrant than some of the leaders of the other departments of life.

Prosperity is an aspect of the christian teaching. Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.[6] Written by John an Apostle of Jesus Christ, the word 'prosperity' is generic. The word "prosper" in the context that was used by John in the scripture above means to excel. Consequently, a christian is to reign supreme and do well in the totality of the being—spirit, soul, and body.

Accordingly, this is not just about money, riches and other material wealth and earthly possessions, but it is about total wellbeing. The Nigerian pentecostalism especially the contemporary congregations have eroded the contextual meaning of "prosper" to suit a narrative of a church in affluence and wealth with a capacity to possess anything that money can buy. This ideology of pentecostalism by these new breeds has fueled avarice firstly in the leadership of such organizations.

In other words, the contemporary Nigerian church is engulfed by the quest for materialism. Rather than find solace in the Christian hope of eternal life, signs of total submission to capitalistic tendencies, especially in insatiable material acquisition, looms large in Nigerian churches.[7]

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[4]*KJV,* 2 Corinthians 8:9

[5] Jan H. Boer, *Christians and Muslims: Parameters for Living Together*. (Belleville, Ontario Canada: Essence Publishing 2009) P.90

[6]*KJV,* 3 John 1:2

[7] N. N Iheanacho, A Critical Look at Contemporary Nigerian Christianity. In International Journal of Theology & Reformed Tradition Vol 1. 2009. Pp 104 – 117. P.106

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This doctrine of prosperity is therefore a major deviation from the ethos of pentecostalism that emphasizes on the need for a personal relationship with God based on an encounter with Jesus Christ as Lord and savior. This doctrine has helped in the eroding of the basic emphasis of pentecostalism as members are excessively pumped up with the need to get wealth. This therefore has fed into the culture of corruption in the Nigerian state.

Pentecostalism: The Classical And Neo Pentecostal School

Pentecostalism incorporates several of the recurring features of nineteenth century American Protestantism—perfectionism, premillennialism, fundamentalism, dispensationalism—and also draws down, through its African-American origins, a strong current of African religious sensibility (which would of course reconnect potently with local cultural demand when it got to Africa). [8] Traditional African religions are less of faith traditions and more of lived traditions which made it to be more concerned with doctrines and much more so with rituals, ceremonies, and lived practices.

African traditional religion over the centuries has failed in meeting some of the yearnings of its followers. This has therefore created an avenue for the easy penetration of western religion into the country, more especially pentecostalism due to its uniqueness especially in doctrines and practices. Perhaps what most set it apart from earlier (and largely European) expressions of evangelical religiosity was the emphasis placed on the physical tokens of divine favor, notably speaking with tongues as the mark par excellence of baptism of the Holy Ghost, and miracles of healing.[9]

Pentecostals take their name from the biblical feast of Pentecost (in Judaism, the harvest festival of Shavuot), which took place 50 days after Passover. Early followers of Jesus who had gathered for the festival, as described in the New Testament Book of Acts, were said to be "filled with the Holy Spirit" and able to "speak in other tongues."[10]

The roots of the modern Pentecostal movement are in the American Midwest. In 1901, Charles Parham, the leader of a Bible school in Topeka, Kan., came to believe that the speaking in tongues that he

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[8] J.D.Y Peel, *Christianity, Islam, and Orisa Religion: Three Traditions In Comparison and Interaction.* (USA: University of California Press, 2016) Pp 84-85

[9] J.D.Y Peel, P. 85

[10] Spirit And Power. A 10 – Country Survey of Pentecostals. . (Washington D.C: Pew Research Center, October 2006) P1

observed there occurred as the direct result of the working of the Holy Spirit. He then spread that theological message during travels through Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas. In 1905, William Seymore, an African-American preacher who heard him speak, was soon himself preaching about the baptism of the Spirit and the gift of tongues at a revival meeting on Los Angeles' Azusa Street. [11]

Following the peculiarities of the African society, most especially the Nigerian state that is demand oriented, religion seems to be a gate way to the realization of some of these expectations. This also has been fueled by the inability of the government to meet some of these basic expectations has made the alternative created through the penetration of pentecostalism into the Nigerian society alluring as it comes with some renewed assurances.

Nigeria presently is the home of pentecostalism in Africa and a destination for religious tourism. Many dignitaries have in recent time found Nigeria the essential balm to many of their spiritual problems, with many heads of government visiting Nigeria to seek solution.[12] The Synagogue Church of All Nations boasts of having the largest number of religious tourists into Nigeria. Figures released by the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) indicate that six out of every 10 foreign travelers coming into Nigeria are bound for SCOAN. Over two million local and inbound tourists visit the church, which runs Emmanuel TV television station from Lagos, annually.[13]

Pentecostal churches inundate every nook and crannies of the country as a result of the acclaimed exploits. A few of them have permeated all states of the federation and local government areas with large following amounting into millions while reaching out to other nations of the world through missions and satellite televisions. These successes have been alluded to the Holy Spirit which they believe is present among their midst. And it shall come to pass afterward, *that* I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:[14]

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[11] Spirit And Power. P2

[12] O.O Emmanuel, Socio Economic Assessment of Religious Tourism in Nigeria In International Journal of Islamic Business and Management Vol.2 No1:2018. P.2

[13] Synagouge Church receives highest number of tourists annually into Nigeria https://guardian.ng/features/synagogue-church-receives-highest-number-of-tourists-annually-in-nigeria/ Assessed 20/01/2022

[14] *KJV*, Joel 2:28

It is therefore routine to see a number of pentecostal assemblies in Nigeria having annual gatherings with millions in attendance from all continents of the world. While some of the classical pentecostal assemblies like the Deeper Christian Life Ministry, Redeemed Christian Church of God and Watchman Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement have been able to reach out to their followers across the world using their own resource, the new pentecostal breed prefers seeking for partnership especially from western pentecostal assemblies that are focused on the teachings of prosperity.

This partnership has made the country a hub for the importation of western pentecostal pastors that come at the behest of their Nigerian counterpart who strive to mirror their ministries after the western model that is geared towards the doctrine of prosperity that comes with opulence especially in the lifestyle of the leadership.

The classical pentecostalism can be said to have seemingly maintained the original basis of pentecostalism that focuses on revival while maintaining a lifestyle modeled after Jesus Christ that emphasizes on holiness and modesty in lifestyle amidst the profligacy of the doctrine of prosperity in Nigeria by the neo Pentecostal movements.

However, some others while still having a form of Pentecostalism have deviated into neo – Pentecostalism which prioritizes prosperity as the basis for the new tribe. Neo-Pentecostalism is a global movement in Christianity, with much circulation of people and media between West Africa, its epicenters in the American South and West, and even such places as Brazil or Korea.[15]

It is not easy to generalize about the direction of change within African Christianity as whole over the last three decades, but if there is a single dominant trend, it is the rise of neo-Pentecostal or (as it is colloquially known in Nigeria) born-again Christianity. [16] This new tribe of pentecostals seems to be overshadowing the classical pentecostal movements because of the radicalization on the preaching of wealth over all other virtues of Christianity.

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[15] J.D.Y Peel, P81
[16] J.D.Y Peel, P81

The Culture Of Corruption, Religiosity And The Nigerian State

The Nigerian state practiced the traditional system of religion before the importation of Islam and Christianity which are the two dominant religions in the country. Both religions promote a strong belief system that emphasizes on piety while shunning all forms of entanglements that is capable of constraining the feeling of religiosity.

The teaching of Islam is founded on 5 pillars. The Qur'an is the main source for the Five Pillars, which are Shahada (faith), Salat (prayer), Zakat (charity), Sawm (fasting), and Hajj (pilgrimage). [17] This underscores the fact that Islam is a religion that demands dedication. A devoted Muslim is expected to pray five (5) starting from the early morning prayers at around 5am to the night prayer.

Christianity on the other hand is sold out to a life of dedication given to prayer, fasting, and evangelism as was exemplified in the life of their master while on earth. Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.[18] As such followers of Christ here on earth should be occupied with the business of the master as exemplified by Jesus Christ while on earth.

Both religions are based on strict monotheism. Islam teaches that all people are responsible for their own actions. Each individual will stand before God on the final judgment day and, depending on his/her actions, face either eternal bliss in paradise or eternal punishment in hell. Christianity also believes in the doctrine of only one God, but three divine versions of the same God referred to as the Holy Trinity.

The fear of a future judgement where everyone will give account of his actions while on earth has instilled a form of religiosity amongst adherence of the both religions. This is supposed to influence the lifestyle and actions of adherents of the both religion which ideally should reflect in the Nigerian society.

Though Nigeria is a multinational state that ensures the freedom of religion as enshrined in the constitution, it can tacitly be referred to as a religious state. Some northern states in Nigeria with a high concentration of Muslims have been able to feed religion into the

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[17] Edgar, Scott. "The Five Pillars of Islam in the Hadith." Studia Antiqua 2, no. 1 (2002). .P.73 https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/studiaantiqua/vol2/iss1/9
[18]*KJV*, Matthew 9:35

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system of governance. On October 27, 1999, Ahmed Sani Yerima, the then governor of Zamfara state, introduced the Sharia law and established relevant sharia courts vested with both civil and criminal jurisdiction.[19]

The introduction of Sharia underscores the extent of religiosity in the Nigerian state. Sharia law as a religious law lays down governing principles for spiritual, mental, and physical behavior that must be followed by Muslims. Regarded as God's command for Muslims, Sharia law is essentially Islam's legal system. Based on the principles governing sharia law which is anchored primarily on the Quran, states in Nigeria that have adopted the Sharia law should be a reflection of how Allah wants an ideal society to be both in principle and practice.

Based on the popular support accorded to the Sharia law as introduced in Zamfara state by Muslims, eleven other northern states followed suit.[20] Though this was met with strong opposition initially in some northern states like Kaduna where they have a mix of Christians and Muslims even though the later dominates the state, these northern states have been implementing varying degrees of the Sharia system.

The southern Nigeria that is predominantly dominated by the christians has still maintained the constitution as the ground norm for states administration as the concept of institutionalizing religious believes system into states affairs is absolutely zilch. More recently, some states in southern Nigeria have tried to propagate the idea of their states being a Christian state. "…, Anytime I have the opportunity, I repeat the declaration with authority and I owe nobody an apology. I am standing on a solid authority. Rivers is a Christian state."[21]

Akwa Ibom state has institutionalized christian practices like the christmas carol to be a state's religious affair. This is always celebrated opulently with international music artistes gracing the occasion with songs of praise not only geared towards the birth of Jesus Christ but also that of thanksgiving for another end of year. Therefore, there is a fusion between religiosity and the Nigerian state.

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[19] N. Agapus et al, How Has Political Sharia Fared in Nigeria? In Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice, 33, 2021. P. 153

[20] N. Agapus et al, P. 153

[21] Ann Godwin, I owe nobody apology declaring Rivers Christian State. https://guardian.ng/news/i-owe-nobody-apology-declaring-rivers-christian-state-wike-insists/. Accessed 26/01/2022

Historically, religion has always been a cover up for the advancement of varying degree of interests. Islam was brought into Hausaland by traders and scholars. About forty Wangarawa traders are thought to be responsible for introducing Islam to Kano during the reign of Ali Yaji (1349-1385). Al-Maghili, a famous scholar of his era, brought Islam to Katsina in the fifteenth century, similarly, a number of scholars from Sankore University; Timbuktu visited Katsina, bringing with them books on divinity and etymology.

The christian missionaries also used the same strategy in advancing christianity in southern Nigeria. The religion was brought into Nigeria through the voyages that were done by the Portuguese around the 15th century who came trading in slaves but masqueraded under religion.

In spite of the correlation between religion and the Nigerian state, corruption tends to thrive in all facets of the society. Where the level of spirituality is high, all things being equal, the level of corruption should decline. The situation in Nigeria is such that not only has religion failed to reduce corruption, but religion itself has become a channel of corruption, providing support for corruption in the society.[22]

This may not be unconnected with the nature through which the both religions were propagated in the country as it was shrouded under the guise of trade. This have in no small measure contributed to the reasons why believers in the religion merely confess piety without a translation in the outcomes of behaviors amongst citizens.

Though Nigeria is a religious state, the culture of corruption has permeated the entire state system. Corruption is a common word in the vocabulary of every Nigerian citizen, corruption is popular in the home, street, associations, groups, public and private bureaucratic organizations, traditional institutions and even the Church.[23]

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[22] A.A Adenugba and S.A Omolawal, Religious Values and Corruption in Nigeria – A Dislocated Relationship. In Journal of Educational and Social Research. MCSER Publishing, Rome – Italy. Vol 4, No.3 2014. P.527

[23] A.O Bassey et al, Corruption as a Social Problem and its Implication on Nigerian Society: A Review of Anti corrupt Policies. In Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences. Vol.4 (1) January 2013. P.423

The Nexus Between The Doctrine Of Prosperity And The Culture Of Corruption In Nigeria

Having established that the origin of religion in Nigeria was fundamentally marred in corruption as it was merely used as a vehicle for trade, it is not surprising to witness that those that have adopted either islam or christianity as a way of religion use it as a mere identification rather than upholding the tenants of the faith. This is the reason for the spate of corruption in the country which holds sway both in the public and private sector.

The doctrine of prosperity is a trending teaching amongst the neo pentecostal christian community in Nigeria which tends to be a driving force behind the formation of churches in the country. Over the past few decades, the influence of pentecostal christianity has inundated the political and cultural landscape of the society.

It is not in doubt the sphere of influence this brand of christianity has attained in Nigeria. The neo pentecostals have further made the brand more alluring to a vast majority of Nigerians by emphasizing on prosperity which comes with a wide range of promises from sudden financial breakthroughs to the transfer and accumulation of wealth which is not worked just by mere believing. Also, members allude to the practicability in what in pentecostal parlance is known as testimonies. This has given more impetus to the doctrines of prosperity being held by these assemblies.

Furthermore, in a bid to advance the prosperity message, biblical references are often misconstrued which aligns to their message of sudden breakthroughs. Then you shall see and become radiant, And your heart shall swell with joy; Because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, The wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you.[24]

Some of the neo pentecostal movements have adopted catch phrases that associates the church with prosperity. The Commonwealth of Zion Assembly (COZA) a vibrant neo Pentecostal assembly is also known as The Wealthy Place. Birthed over Twenty-Two years ago in the city of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, The Commonwealth of Zion Assembly has touched countless lives across the nations of the world.[25]

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[24]*KJV,* Isaiah 60:5
[25]https://coza.org.ng/about-us/. Accessed 28/01/2022

The neo pentecostal leadership has vociferously made this belief system so strong among her vibrant followers to the extent of making some followers look unto God as if being prosperous all depends on God. Some others have decided to take the bull by the horn by maximizing every given opportunity to make wealth even when it made through corrupt practices.

The implication on the emphasis of prosperity is that it is has developed avarice among members. This has contributed to a spike in the corruption cases in the society by those that are supposed to be possessed by the fruit of the spirit which is part of the high calling of the pentecostals. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.[26]

The fruit of the spirit is enabled by the Holy Ghost which is the fulcrum of pentecostalism. It is what distinguishes a believer from the unbeliever. These virtues have since taken a flight among these self-confessing pentecostals because they have been pumped up with the message of prosperity. As such, virtues like honesty, patience and truthfulness are hardly seen in the lifestyle of self-acclaimed pentecostal movements.

These social movements largely lack the understanding of the Christian call to a high level of sacrifice, discipline, honesty, truth and justice. There is no doubt that authentic religion will checkmate corruption because individual and social morality of the people is predicated on their religious beliefs and values.[27]

This is the reason why in the face of a thriving pentecostal Christianity, the Nigerian society is riddled with wide range of corruption that transverses embezzlement, bribery, cronyism parochialism and nepotism. Sadly, these forms of corruption have also been found in the pentecostal assemblies especially among those with the penchant of pushing the prosperity gospel.

The prosperity gospel and her messengers most times have fueled controversies as a result of their inabilities to explain the sources of their wealth and also their flamboyancy. In a bid to cover up corrupt practices within their fold, financial records are altered as they hide the

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[26]*KJV*, Galatians 5:22-23

[27] A.A Adenugba and S.A Omolawal, Religious Values and Corruption in Nigeria – A Dislocated Relationship. In Journal of Educational and Social Research. MCSER Publishing, Rome – Italy. Vol 4, No.3 2014. P.527

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mystery behind their prosperity under the guise of being blessed by God.

The corruption in christian pentecostalism affects the pulpit and the pew. Out of the 300 randomly selected Neo Pentecostal Churches, only 37 (12.33%) has Financial secretary as a non-family member of the Church founders. Significant respondents of 263 (87.67%) either has financial secretary as founder's relative or the G.O. serves as the Treasurer of the Church. Only 9 (3%) out of the 37 (12.33%) perform End-of-the-Year Audit.[28]

This opaqueness in financial management is as a result of the mindless pursuit of prosperity amongs Nigerian pentecostal movements. It is now a commonplace for Nigerian pentecostal leaders and also members that are celebrated in church to be accused both in the law court and that of public opinion for cases of corruption.

Dogmatically, the term corruption should not be mingled with Christianity because it typifies defilement and anything that is defile is unholy in line with the teachings of Christ. While this assertion rest in the place of dogma, the reality says otherwise amongs pentecostal leadership and her members. And nothing that defiles or profanes or is unwashed will ever enter it, nor anyone who practices abominations [detestable, morally repugnant things] and lying, but only those [will be admitted] whose names have been written in the Lamb's Book of Life.[29] The Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) as a body has not been categorical in addressing issues of corruption within its fold by having resolutions to punish erring members that are guilty of cases of corruption. However, they are always quick to condemn corruption in the public sector, ignoring the fact that members of the PFN are also active players in the sector.

A former president of the body, Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor has asked pentecostal pastors to scrutinize the wealth in a bid to tackle corruption. "We must be ready to give an account for ourselves and therefore we will no longer tolerate criminals in the Church of God. Men of God, you must be ready to question the source of member's wealth."[30]

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[28] AO Dairo, Sacred Corruption in sacred places: the case of some selected Neo Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria. In Arts and Humanities Open Access Journal. Volume 4 Issue 6, 2020. P.244

[29] *Amplified Bible,* Revelation 21:27

[30] Sam Eyoboka, Question the source of your members wealth – Oritsejafor urges PFN Pastors. https://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/02/question-the-source-of-your-members-wealth-oritsejafor-urges-pfn-pastors/ Accessed 27/01/2022

Despite the proliferation of pentecostalism in Nigeria, corruption still thrives because of the quietness in the leadership of the pentecostal assemblies to emphasize on the tenants of pentecostalism but rather on prosperity. An open condemnation of corrupt practices therefore may see a drop in the income of the churches, and not all church leaders are ready for the shock.

Pastor David Ibiyeomie who runs a neo pentecostal assembly in Rivers state seemed to have followed an unpopular path by placing a curse on internet fraudsters. "It is a demonic, satanic way of getting money. Which kind of money is that? You are a thief. No matter how you colorize it, you are a thief. You love stealing! I curse the root of it. Do you know how many people you have killed?"[31] Though the pastor used strong words against fraudsters, it is not enough to fight corruption that have pervaded pentecostal membership especially when other neo pentecostals are indifferent about cases of corruption and the sources of the wealth of her members.

The doctrine of prosperity being upheld especially by the neo-pentecostals is a clear departure from the original conception of the 20th century pentecostal movement which is only being upheld by a few denominations.

It is noteworthy to state that some of these classical denominations like the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) still accounts for the wealthiest churches in the country with prime assets in major cities of the country in spite of not being known for the propagation of the gospel of prosperity. This underscores the fact that true pentecostalism can generate wealth without the emphasis on the teaching of prosperity that has led to covetousness and corruption in the country.

Conclusion

Prosperity is good. The bible affirmed its relevance in Deuteronomy 8:18. But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.[32] By this, there is a covenant of wealth in store for christians and the conditionality attached is only to remember God in the wealth.

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[31]https://www.reubenabati.com.ng/index.php/component/k2/you-ll-get-accident-with-that-car-pastor-david-ibiyeomie-curses-yahoo-boys-policemen-video. Accessed 28/01/2022
[32]*KJV*, Deuteronomy 8:18

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In a desperate bid to circumvent the biblical guidelines of attaining sustainable wealth which is anchored on dutifulness, Nigerian pentecostalism has adopted the doctrine of prosperity. This teaching asides the fact that it has been conjured to fit into the self-serving purpose of the leaders of such pentecostal assemblies, it goes against the ethos of the pentecostal movement ab initio which is anchored on a personal encounter with God marked with the Baptism of the Holy spirit and the working of miracles.

The pentecostal christian therefore should firstly be marked by their fruits. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.[33]

The Bible makes no mistake in saying that Love, joy, peace, patience, meekness, kindness, gentleness of the spirit and brokenness are the fruit of the Spirit and not wealth which the Nigerian pentecostalism is propagating. Hence, there is a school of thought within the Nigerian pentecostal circle that prosperity is the mark of the calling of a pentecostal.

The implication of this skewed doctrine of prosperity is seen in the rising cases of corruption first within the pentecostal movements by her leadership and also by members of these movements which is being reflected in every stratum of the Nigerian society.

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[33]*KJV*, Matthew 7:16-17

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INTERFAITH DIALOGUE AND RELIGIOUS PEACE-BUILDING IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF ACTS 15:1-15 TOWARDS THE SURVIVAL OF THE CHURCH

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Executive Summary
Religion and peace are dynamic concepts because they involve human relationship. The conflicts and insecurities in Nigeria have triggered the worst humanitarian crisis since after the independence, and if not checked, will continue to rise. Population and values displacements are increasing and an entire generation of youth and children has and is being exposed to war and violence, increasingly deprived of basic services, education and protection. Three major religions are being practiced in Nigeria; Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religion. These religious affiliations make it more difficult for the country to engage in meaningful interfaith dialogue because she is deeply affected by religious identities and meanings. Hence peace search based solely on secular values will probably not be sustainable. The study adopts hermeneutical and historic approaches. Biblical passage of Acts 15:1-15 is used. It is therefore the aim of this paper to recommend religious post-conflict dialogue as expressed in the Acts 15: 2-15 which involves the different religious believers and recognize their religiousness. The council of Jerusalem thus demonstrated the willingness of the religious leaders to make compromise on certain issues in order to maintain peace and unity.

Key words: Interfaith, dialogue, religious peace building, church

Introduction
The insecurity and discriminatory events in Nigeria were in nexus with the discrimination deeds and lack of peace in the days of the early Christians (Acts 6:1-7). The religious organization should be involved in dealing with the problem of injustice, discrimination and oppression for the promotion of religious peace-building. Everywhere in Nigeria is

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been ruled by insecurity. The insecurity in Nigeria today is of great worrisome and concern to all stakeholders and the entire citizens. It has triggered the most humanitarian crisis since after the independence. Sectarian conflict is so high in Nigerian that of the three major tribes, existing situation seems to suggest that almost none appreciates the other.

Emilia and Chukwuemeka, went further to said there is tension everywhere which pushes many to placing security measures in their various residential places consequently pushing them to be unusually and abnormally hypersensitive to any state of unrest and disorder. The various regions in the country are a volatile mix of insecurity, ethno-religious and political instability calls for various community policing. Many tragedies and devastations had become noticeable and felt due to the domineering, overbearing manifestation of ethnic and religious discrimination. Many have been killed, others maimed while other people's property have been destroyed. The situation even saddens the heart when all these take place with impunity; no repercussion of judicial redress and moral approbation seems to be given to all these violence (354). In the light of all these ugly and threatening situations in the country, for which various formed committees and institutions have failed to fight, this paper therefore is posited to recommend the use of interfaith dialogue as in the case of Acts 6:1-7 where the Disciples reach a certain compromise in their dialogue in some aspect of their belief to gain peace and tranquility. Consequently, the situation in Nigeria at this moment needs this kind of interfaith dialogue and religious peace-building if peace, unity and development must be gained (Emilia & Chukwuemeka 354).

Conceptual Clarifications
Interfaith
Arinze as in Abu-Nimer, Mohammed, Khoury, Amal I, Welty, Emily, said interfaith referred to as interreligious interaction which is also often refer to as the coming together of different faiths, is about people of different faiths coming to a mutual understanding and respect that allows them to live and cooperate with each other in spite of their differences. The term refers to cooperative and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions, norms (i.e. "faiths") at both the individual and institutional level. Each party remains true to their own beliefs while respecting the right of the other to practice their faith freely. Interfaith dialogue is not just words or talk. It includes human interaction and relationships (176-178). It can take place between individuals and communities and on many levels. For example,

between neighbours, in schools and in our places of work - it can take place in both formal and informal settings. In Ireland Muslims and Christians live on the same streets; use the same shops, buses and schools. Normal life means that we come into daily contact with each other. Interreligious Dialogue is defined as: "All positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of faith which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment, in obedience to truth and respect for freedom" (Emilia & Chukwuemeka 355).

> Franda, argued that the term interfaith dialogue refers to cooperative, constructive and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions and faith, at both the individual and institutional levels. Increased awareness of religious plurality, the potential role of religion in conflict, and the growing place of religion in public life present urgent challenges that require greater understanding and cooperation among people of diverse faiths to increase acceptance of others and to better understand their identity. Such interfaith dialogue can take a wide variety of forms, ranging from joint appeals by high-level religious leaders, to attempts to develop mutual understanding and the recognition of shared values and interests, to grassroots efforts to encourage repentance and promote reconciliation (4-5).

Therefore, interfaith dialogue can be summarized as the coming together of different religious persuasions for mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence.

Interfaith Dialogue

The nation Nigeria is deeply affected by religious identities and meanings. A peace process based solely on secular values will probably not be sustainable. According to the writings of several academics, the reconciliation must involve the religious believers and recognize the religiousness. An empirical research was published in 2007 called Unity in Diversity – Interfaith Dialogue in the Middle East, where interfaith dialogue was studied in Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan. The study demonstrates the desire for interfaith dialogue in polarized society, and confirms that religion can be a source of peace instead of war and violence. Resulting from this study of Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty (40-41), interfaith dialogue contributes toward conflict resolution because its concept of reconciliation, involves processes of confession, repentance, mercy, and forgiveness. These processes are drawing on religious resources as the basis for dialogue. Millions of residents in the Nigeria are motivated largely by religion. Bringing religion into the

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dialogue allows the participants to engage in the process, with their religious identity as their primary point of reference.

In times of conflict, religious believers from different faiths often find that they have more in common with one another than they have with non-religious people from their own background. Interfaith dialogue requires individuals to meet as equals in a process of giving and receiving information. Abu-Nimer, Khoury, Welty (41) suggest the following ground rules for making an interfaith dialogue as effective as possible. All participants should;

1. be willing to share their views in the context of their own life story, and not presume to speak for the entire religious tradition
2. recognize the complexities and varieties of the other faiths
3. stand firmly in their own faith while remaining self-critical and open to new perspectives
4. undertake a realistic view of their faith, and not focus on "defense" against others
5. be considered to have equal status and importance
6. commit to some basic ground rules for the meeting

Dialogue

Etymologically, dialogue means a speech across, between, through two or more people. Dialogue comes from the Greek *dialogos*. *Dia* is a preposition that means "through," "between," "across," "by," and "of." *Dia* does not mean two, as in two separate entities; rather, *dia* suggests a "passing through" as in diagnosis "thoroughly" or "completely." Logos comes from *legein*, "to speak" Crapanzano cited by Emilia and Chukwuemeka (354-355). Logos means "the word," or more specifically, the "meaning of the word," created by "passing through," as in the use of language as a symbolic tool and conversation as a medium. As Onians points out, logos may also mean thought as well as a speech– thought that is conceived individually or collectively, and/or expressed materially. Consequently, dialogue is a sharing through language as a cultural symbolic tool and conversation as a medium for sharing. Accordingly, dialogue refers to the mutual exchange of experience, ideas and opinions between two or more parties; i.e., a conversation. Dialogue is two-way or multi-way communication. It presumes the opportunity to reply on several occasions in order to enhance a line of reasoning. The concept of dialogue contains a dimension of simultaneity and direct contact, either physical or via technical aids. In order to achieve genuine civic participation, there must be some form of dialogue between citizens and those in positions of power. In a dialogue, everyone taking part must be given the chance to study the other

parties' suggestions and opinions, contemplate them and respond (31-34). According to Turner cited in (355):

> Dialogue is a culturally and historically specific way of social discourse accomplished through the use of language and verbal transactions. It suggests community, mutuality, and authenticity–an egalitarian relationship. So understood, dialogue provides a meeting ground, *communitas*, and manifests itself in a variety of spontaneous and ritual modes of discourse in which nature and structure meet.

Listed below are some of the phrases used by people who have engaged in dialogue in many different schools, corporations, government, non-profit organisations, communities, families:

1. a level playing field with respect for all
2. a chance to get all our cards up on the table and play with a full deck
3. space and pace that allows for all to hear and be heard, recognition and strengthening of relationships
4. an exploration of our individual and group assumptions to reveal our thinking and generate new possibilities
5. building shared understanding of differing points of view
6. ability to hold the tensions of complexity and paradox and see systemic patterns

Dajwan (5-6) defined the concept of dialogue as the conversation between two or more persons of different faiths and beliefs systems, ethnic groups, cultural backgrounds, norms, philosophy and people of different understandings. He went further that the purpose of dialogue is "seeking mutual understanding and harmony". Again, that it is essentially a process of shared thinking, in the course of which a valuable form of relationship may emerge. He concluded that dialogue to encompass a broader range of activities in which people of different cultures, religions, social, political or professional groups come together and interact. Dialogue is not just something that takes place on an official or academic level only – it is part of daily life during which different cultural and religious groups interact with each other directly, and where tensions between them are the most tangible.Therefore, dialogue can be seen as the mode of interaction which made any human life, in any society, worth living example is the Africa value of communality (6).

Religious Peace-building

An urgent call for religious peace-building in Nigeria constitutes the thrust of this paper. This is premised on the fact that peace has

remained elusive in the country because government has failed to utilize a relevant strategy for attaining lasting peace. Peace-building that engages dialogue and a down-up strategy means, I suggest, much more than just sending security tax forces in violent conflict zones to enforce peace or the provision of relief materials to victims of violence. Ambulance peace-building also transcends peace-making because peace-making fails to address the root cause(s) of violence by providing peace-sustaining structures in place to forestall future occurrence of violence according to Pokol as in (Dajwan 120).

According to Little, David, Appleby, and Scott cited in Emilia & Chukwuemeka (356):

> Religious peace-building is a term used to describe the range of activities performed by religious actors and institutions for the purpose of resolving and transforming deadly conflict, with the goal of building social relations and political institutions characterized by an ethos of tolerance and nonviolence.

Philpott, Daniel, Powers and Gerhard as in Emilia & Chukwuemeka contend that religious peace-building includes the beliefs, norms, and rituals that pertain to peace-building, as well as a range of actors for whom religion is a significant motivation for their peace-building (356).

According to Franda, religious peace-building conceptualized as "the range of activities performed by religious actors and institutions for the purpose of resolving and transforming deadly conflict, with the goal of building social relations and political institutions characterized by an ethos of tolerance and nonviolence" (5). Religious peace-building includes; theological frame works, beliefs, norms, values and rituals that involves peace-building as well as the activities toward peace-building.

Church

For a proper understanding, there is the need to make a distinction between two senses in which the term Church' is used in this paper. In one sense, the Church is used as an institution while another sense it is used as an organism. The Church as an institution is defined by Van Reken as the "formal organization that sets out to accomplish a specific purpose (198). According to Van it is an agent which can do things; and can say things because it has its own voice. The Church as an institution has its own purposes and plans, its own structure and officers, and its own mission. It has its own proper sphere. In many ways it parallels other institutions, like governments or schools (198-202). And the

Church as an organism refers to "the church as the body of believers, the communion of believers. Caleb D. Dami, understands the term 'Church' to mean an organized people of God, a spiritual and moral force to be reckoned with (5);

The distinction between the two concepts of the Church is that while the institutional church refers to a unified organization. They Church as an organism refers to an aggregate of individual believers in which each Christian acts as a personal agent with a purpose and a call in God's plan. This twofold meaning of church reverberates in Jim Harris' view when he says: "By "church" I mean both the individual believer and the institutional entity (Dajwan 3). It therefore means that in discussing the role of the church in the pursuit of intra church conflict resolution and peace of a given country, we are invariably dealing with the part that both individuals and the corporate body have to play in the society.

Dialogue, Debate, Discussion And Deliberation
The differences between dialogue and debate is clear, in debate, you aim to win an argument. Dialogue is about mutual understanding, and "the worst possible way to advance mutual understanding is to win debating points at the expense of others". The relationship between dialogue and discussion is more subtle, talk becomes dialogue rather than just discussion when the three particular conditions are in place, first, and there must be equality between the participants and an absence of coercive influences. Even if outside the dialogue they have very different social or professional status, for dialogue to work, they have to try to put this aside so that all can participate freely, without fear of any form of intimidation. Secondly, dialogue requires us to listen with empathy. For dialogue to happen, we need the ability to think someone else' thoughts and feel some else's feelings. This demands considerable motivation and patience. Examples of dialogue are found in Genesis 13:1-8; workers strike as in bargaining and pre- and marital counseling.

Finally, in dialogue, participants need to explore their own assumptions and those of others, and bring them out into the open. Our deeply engrained assumptions about the world and other people can very effectively prevent us from understanding pother points of view. As David Bohm as in Dajwan (13) notes, we tend to identify our assumptions very strongly with ourselves, and feel attacked when they are commented on or challenged by others. However, in a real dialogue, participants suspend judgment when assumptions come to light, allowing these assumptions to be explored in safety.

To recap, discussion does not necessarily require equality, listening with empathy or the exploration of assumptions, but these three conditions are the marks of dialogue. Deliberation, (14) considers is 'a form of thought and reflection that can take place in any kind of conversation'. It is problem solving activity involving the weighing up of different options. This activity can happen; in dialogue as well as in discussion or debate (debate is a form of discussion aiming at winning the other party). It is only when imminent consensus and decision become the priority of the conversation that dialogue essential focus on mutual understanding gets lost. Example of desensitization and deliberation is found in Acts 6:1-7 (Dajwan 14).

a Brief Overview Of Dialogue In a Pluralistic Society In Nigeria
Northern Nigeria has the unfortunate peculiarity of experiencing some of the most violent that is destructive frictions/conflicts between Muslims and Christians in recent years. Thousands of lives have been lost as a result of the genocide along with properties worth billions of Naira. Communities have been displaced, and religious and communal relations devastated. Interreligious interactions and neighbours no longer trust each other, as everybody is suspicious of one another and Godly human values basterdised. What happened that set people against each other like this? Is the question (Kadala 20). Here the researcher is briefly seeking to look at the history of Christian-Muslim relations in northern Nigeria, and the factors that have made peaceful interaction as well as peaceful coexistence elusive.

Brief History of Northern Nigeria
Kadala (21) opined that Northern Nigeria is part of the area known to historians and geographers as the western Sudan. This area has been in contact with the outside world since the beginning of the middle Ages. 67 The Trans-Saharan trade route linked this region with places like North Africa, Asia and the Middle East. This contact introduced the area to civilization from Egypt and other parts of the world. This civilization brought through its contact with the Islamic faith. In this part of the country, many empires, city-states or states were formed and, at one time, had great influence over a large area, which extended its borders beyond what is now Nigeria.

Kadala (22) said before colonialism the north was divided into three sections: the first is Hausa land, which comprise the Kano and Sokoto axis that has come to be popularly known as "Daulan Usmaniya". They were tremendously affected by the Usman Dan Fodio jihad. The second

part is called the Kanuri land. This was the area covered by the former Kanem-Borno Empire and it comprises the Borno and Yobe axis. The final part of the north is the vast land that is not under the two above. This includes part of Kebbi, Kwara, Niger, Taraba and Adamawa states. Others include Kaduna, Nassarawa, Benue, Plateau and southern part of Borno. This area is popularly known as the Middle Belt where the jihad had not greatly affected the people. The people of this area have resisted the encroachment of Islam. According to Takaya and Tyoden in Kadala said: *Native communities which hitherto had minimal or no contacts with Islam, particularly those located in the less accessible forest, Plateau and hilly surroundings however remained outside the emirates; the areas being impregnable to the invading Fulani Cavalry* (Kadala 23).

In order to exercise control over Islam and to dominate non-Muslims, the north is divided into three geo-political parts. These are Northeast, Northwest, and North central. The Northeast is the core of the old Borno axis of the North or the area covered by the former North East State. It covers the present day Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, Taraba, Bauchi and Gombe states. The Northwest covers the so-called core-North. This area covers the region which was directly affected by the Dan Fodio Jihad. These states include Sokoto, Kebbi, Zanfara, Katsina and Kano. The agitation for the implementation of the Sharia is fierce in these areas (Kadala 24).

Religions In Nigeria
Emergence of Islam in Nigeria
Islam infiltrated Nigeria through the Northern Part of her borders. Islam predates Christianity in Nigeria. Metuh (28-30) asserts that Islam came to Northern Nigeria about five or six hundred years before Christianity. Enwerem (48-49) points out that Islam arrive Nigeria sometime between 1000A.D and 1100 A.D., it first come in contact with the town Bornu in the North-eastern Nigeria before it overtook the entire Hausa States between 14th and 15th Centuries (Trimingham 641-643). Ekeopara (1996) opines that initially, Islam was propagated only among City dwellers and was chiefly patronized by the upper class for economic, social and political reasons. It was not until the time of Uthman Dan Fodio's Jihad that Islam spread to Northern Nigeria and was forced upon the people. In his studies, Ekeopara observes that from:

> 1750 AD, Islam in Northern Nigeria entered into a new phase. It became militant and intolerant of the Traditional religious system. By this time, Muslims were no more satisfied with receiving tributes. They were now bent on wiping out all associations of pagan custom with Islam. The infidels or unbelievers were

forcefully converted by the military might of the Jihadists and not through preaching (12).

Historical evidence shows that upon capturing a place, the Jihadists immediately introduced Islamic system of Law and government in order to cement their stronghold in the region.

Emergence of Christianity in Nigeria

Christianity entered Nigeria in three phases. In the first phase, Christianity is reported to have made its appearance in Nigeria in the 15th Century. Historical facts abound that Benin and Warri in the Niger Delta region are the first cities to witness missionary presence in Nigeria. The earliest known Christian Mission that first showed up in Nigeria is the Portuguese Roman Catholic Mission which came to Benin in 1485 at the invitation of Oba Uzolua and later in 1514 by Oba Esigie, Kings of Benin (Agha 90-99). Njoku asserts that Roman Catholics were the first to send missionaries to Southern Nigeria. By 1487, the Portuguese, who had already opened up trading connection with Benin City two years earlier, sent out Portuguese Catholic Christian Missionaries to Benin City and Old Warri. These early missionaries laboured under difficult conditions. Despite the initial good reception, the mission to both Benin and Warri collapsed due partly to inadequacy of the numerical strength of the missionaries and partly to the cold feet which the Obas and their people developed later (25). History shows that the initial attempt in planting Christianity in Benin failed because "The Kings of Benin City remained strongly attached to their indigenous religion" (Baur 75).

The second attempt in the 16th Century under Oba Esigie succeeds to a certain extent as the Oba himself and most of his chiefs did submit themselves for baptism and actually professed and practised Christian religion fairly in their own terms. Ultimately Christian churches were built but unfortunately the Benin Mission appears to have remained confined to the royal court. Much later, it is reported that Some Spanish Capuchins, some Augustinian monks and some missionaries from the Sacred Congregation de propaganda Fidei had their turn in the Benin and Warri Mission field with both positive and negative responses each time. How far this Benin mission expanded is not known. But it is most likely that the crucifixes, mutilated statues of saints and several Catholic emblems that were discovered within the Benin royal court several years later reveal that some measure of success was recorded in the Benin missionary work. Njoku affirms that, "When the British came to Warri in 1897 they said that they saw people with rosary beads like that

of the Roman Catholics. The Chief, the Olu of the Jekris (Itshekris) had a silver crown with cross in front which was sent to his forefather by the king of Portugal. He wears a garment resembling a Dalmatic and wears a chaplet with a crucifix attached (rosary beads) round his neck" (26).

In the second phase, Christianity is reported to have penetrated Nigeria through Western Nigeria. Lagos as at 1841 had developed into a notorious slave market with its King Kosoko as the Principal promoter of the trade (Dike n.p). Evidence indicates that it was after his deportation by British administration that real missionary enterprise began in Yoruba land. Among the earliest missions that evangelized Yoruba land are the Wesleyan Methodist Mission and the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) ably represented by the Reverend Thomas Birch Freeman and Catechist Henry Townsend respectively in 1842. Samuel Ajayi Crowther became the first Yoruba man to get converted at Sierra Leone as a freed slave. He became instrumental in reaching his own people with the gospel (Dike n.p).

Calabar Mission followed in 1846 with the Scottish Presbyterian Mission taking the lead in evangelizing the Efik people. Essien Ukpabio, a native of Greek town emerged the first convert and was baptised by the Reverend Hope Waddle, the first pioneer missionary to Calabar after being to Ethiopia. Other missionaries like Mary Slessor joined later in the missionary work in Calabar. King of Greek town, King Eyo Honesty was one of the main actors that helped missionaries to plant Christianity in Calabar. From Calabar, the Presbyterian Church spread to the other parts of the former Eastern region (Ajayi 35). According to Ajah, "Christian Missions came to Eastern Nigerian mainly through two angles. The first angle was through Lagos area or from Western Nigeria, and the second angle was to the eastern end of the country through a sea port" (40).

In the third phase 1885, the researcher wills intentionally choose the mission of the Irish Catholic missionaries in Onitsha, the Lower Niger Mission. This mission to Onitsha was providential in the sense that the primary destination of the missionaries was Lokoja in order to begin the Upper Niger Mission. The missionary team was led by Father Joseph Lutz, a French Alsacian priest who had served previously for over ten years in Sierra Leone, a man of apostolic dynamism and experience. His colleagues were Father Johan Horne, a newly professed priest and two Brothers: "Hermas and Jean – Gotto, formerly of the station at the St. Coeur de Marie" (Metuh & Ejizu 12).

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Encounter Between ATR, Islam, And Christianity In Nigeria
Undoubtedly, some values, institutions and world views that are at variance with those of the indigenous religion are introduced into Nigeria through Islam and Christianity. These obviously, appear to create some serious conflicts with the already existing values in Nigeria. According to Danfulani, "Islam and Christianity constituted a threat and a disruptive force to African tradition and custom" (28).

It is observed that at the beginning, the propagators of both Christianity and Islam never saw anything good in African Culture and her religion. Those values and customs Nigerians guarded zealously from birth were all despised by the propagators of the new religion. They hated all their traditional religious practices. The Christian Missionaries, particularly condemned polygamy and other cultural custom of the Africans as akin to idolatry. They frowned at human sacrifice, the killing of twins, blood bath and other cruel aspects of African Culture (Iwe 79). This posture of the missionaries has some implications on the life of the African Christians who eventually became dissatisfied with the Europeanised Christian traditions, culminating in the founding of the historic African Independent Churches (AIC).

As it happened at the initial stage, Islam and Christianity really suppressed ATR, almost to the point of strangulation. But as time went on, there were some kind of give and take from each of the religions in Nigeria. For instance, in the predominantly Muslim area in Northern Nigeria, the Muslims' ways of dressing have influenced the general mode of dressing in a way which seems to be the general culture of the Northerners. Islam has equally been infected with the traditional belief and practice of magic and medicine. Christianity too has borrowed heavily from some of the traditions of the Africans (79).

Christian-Muslim And ATR Interfaith Dialogue
According to Hosea, the grounds and reasons for dialogue are to impress the implication of exchange of views of two or more free and religious persons in the presence of each other about their beliefs. The Interfaith Dialogue is done in boldness and honesty about the other person with readiness to listen patiently to the views and reactions of the other faiths. This enables room for peaceful coexistence in a country or given community especially in setting straight with some hard and difficult issues or crises (10).

Interfaith Dialogue is not only designed for tolerance but can be utilized to bring about mutual understanding to enhance respect for the faith

and beliefs of other people. With mutual understanding, attitudes can be determined and approach made right toward people of other religious persuasions or faiths (10).

Although, we do not all belong to the same religion in all given communities, we share things in common. This therefore, it is very important to live with mutual understanding in order to be of service to one another in the community. Unless there is mutual respect we may not serve one another effectively (Hosea 10).

Interfaith Dialogue as a ground for mutual understanding can be an effective tool for witnessing of the faith. This is for the Christian not all people and faiths believe in Jesus Christ. Again, Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Mtt. 5:16). We have every reason to be mutual with people of other religious faiths to enhance our witness (11).

In Interfaith Dialogue we establish mutual understanding that can perfect in Christians the royal law of love and build up or enhance our values especially of love, tolerance and forgiveness. In other religions are found moral values which if respected would make Nigeria and the world move on and be a better place to live in. This is because we need not be separated into various communities; we have to appreciate political systems and ideologies coming from other living religious faiths. This would enhance the building of sound economic policies, educational and cultural policies. Our unity shall drive well the social and health matters in the right direction all toward a national unity. We must cultivate the Israel mentality and that of the African philosophy that says "I am because we are" and "we are because I am" (11).

Dialogue In Management Of Conflict In a Pluralistic Society

According to Dajwan Conflict managers use the term "dialogue" in a variety of ways. Most dialogue processes, however, involve people who are engaged in a long-lasting, deep-rooted conflict sitting down together with a facilitator who will help them explore their feelings about the conflict and each other, and develop an improved understanding of the concerns, fears and needs of the other side. Sometimes, the goal of such a process is to develop approaches to conflict resolution: sometimes the goal is simply improved interpersonal relationships, understanding and trust- at least between individuals, if not between the groups as a whole (38).

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Conflict theorist Jay Rothman in Dajwan (38) describes four different kinds of dialogue as in conflict management. The first is positional or adversarial dialogue. In this situation, disputants, meet with a facilitator to talk, but the conversation continues in the same adversarial (I'm right and you are wrong) mode that conflicts typically take. In adversarial dialogue, disputants engage in positional bargaining (that is they focus on firm, usually mutually – incompatible, positions) and blame each other for the problem. The second is human relation dialogue. This approach has disputants meeting with a facilitator to explore their feelings about the conflict and each other. They break down negative stereotypes [Alhaji Sabo Mangu 2001 issue of arna].

Rothman's as in Dajwan (39); third type of dialogue in management of conflict is activist dialogue. This form of dialogue provides a foundation for action. Disputants from opposite sides of a conflict get together to rebuild a war – torn city, form a bi-partisan school, or deliver health care to the sick and injured a practical example is [Stefanos Foundation in Jos South-Mark Lipdo]. The purpose of such dialogue is not just talk and understanding, but Mutual Corporation and assistance. (Mutual understanding and trust are often by-products, nevertheless). The fourth dialogue in conflict management is problem solving dialogue – referred to elsewhere in these notes as an analytical problem solving workshops. Such workshops bring disputants together to explore their feelings about the conflict and each other (as it is done in human relations dialogue), but special attention is focused on the parties' fundamental needs, the absence of which is seen to be deep – rooted conflicts. An intense effort is made to jointly reframe the conflict in terms of needs and then engage in joint problem solving to develop ways to meet those needs and hence, resolve the conflicts.

Dialogue processes are becoming increasingly widely used. Some (especially human relations dialogues) are typically facilitated by therapists, religious leaders and mediators. Problem solving workshops are typically facilitated by mediators and/or conflict scholars. As originally conceived, these workshops were to be highly analytical. Thus, conflict scholars with an expertise in conflict theory as well as the particular conflict at hand were considered the best facilitators. Many problem solving workshops are still carried out by academicians, but others are facilitated by mediators and other practitioners with less of a scholarly background. Great challenge is the unresolved conflict in Assemblies of God Church because of leadership, all forms of dialogue is used but yielded no result- lets continue to pray (Case study is

dialogue in Kwaghas Lahir Mangu Alhaji A Sabo initiative experienced of 2001).

Contextualizing Acts 15:1-15 To Contemporary Nigerian Society
Early Christianity in Jerusalem witnessed a very controversial case that nearly rocked the unity of the church. It was dialogue that saved the situation. This section therefore discusses the relevance of the method adopted for resolving this crisis in the early church to Nigeria. There are several methods and strategies there are to solving a crisis. The method adopted in Jerusalem Council was identification of the problem, having understood the nature of the problem; it was extensively and freely discussed. This strategy involved dialogue, debate, tolerance, resolution, and recommendation. The resolution was given immediate implementation.

Different steps were observed taking by the council in resolving the conflict. Acts 15: 1-15:
1. First, there was identification of the nature of conflict and the cause, and then a meeting was summoned for debate and dialogue.
2. The issues involved were extensively discussed with open mind by listening to different opinions and suggestions.
3. There was good understanding among the members of the Council.
4. A practical positive step was taken to implement the resolution and recommendation arrived at by sending emissary with a letter for immediate implementation. It is to be noted that the recommendation was not put in a cooler and there was no begging the issue. A letter was sent and two people; Judas called Barsabbas and Silas, leading men among the brethren, as emissary to explain in detail the decision of the Council.

It is to be noted here that good understanding and workable agreement was reached that satisfied both parties in the conflict. This satisfaction confirms the statement or belief that conflicts are better settled or solved through dialogue and not in the battle field. Onaiyekon (2011 p.10) asserts that "Dialogue calls for understanding among the conflicting parties." If two opposite parties understand each other, they would be able to settle their differences through genuine dialogue. This was the suggestion of Paul to numerous conflicts of interest in the Church in Corinth. It was the argument of Peter and James at the Jerusalem Council for a conflict that was capable of destabilizing the early Christian Church (Acts 5: 6-21).
The Council and the Issue, (15:1-12)

The question was whether Gentiles could be saved apart from circumcision and the legslism of the Mosaic system, 1, 5. That they could, and had been so saved, had been full demonstrated on the first missionary your, as Paul had reported to the Antioch Church. The door of faith opened to the Gentiles(14:27) was an announcement that the gospel, apart from circumcision and Mosaic legalism, had been divinely authenticated as the medium of salvation to the nations. It was a summary declaration that Christianity was an international religion, completely separated from the legalism and narrow isolationism of the Hebrew faith, reaching out to the uttermost part of the earth(1:8). The church at Antioch was send a delegation to the mother Church at Jerusalem, 2-4, and thus also witness the struggle of Christianity with Judaism (cf. Galatians 2:1-10). Peter saw the futility of insisting that Gentiles had to become Jews to be saved, 7-11. He comprehended the irrationality of the Judaizers who desired to open the door to the Gentiles only halfway, admitting only those who in addition to faith in the Messiah submitted to Jewish rites, notably circumcision. Paul and Barnabas added their testimony, 12 (Unger's 583).

The Council and the Decision
The question of the first Church council was happily settled in the form of the gospel of free grace Paul had seen so signally authenticated. James summarized the decision: "Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God,"19 (RSV). They were merely enjoined to abstain from idolatry, from fornication, and from things strangled and from blood, 20-21. The decision was communicated by a delegation of the Jerusalem council to Antioch (Unger's 584).

The importance of the First Church Council
Unger's affirmed that the immense significance of the first church council consists, first, in saving on the gospel fromJudaistic mixture, thereby setting Christianity on it's own course as a universal as a universal spiritual movement transcending all social, racial and religious barriers, offering spiritual regeneration to everyone who believes; and second, in the revelation of God's gracious purposes for the present age and to come, 14-18. The purpose of the present is to take out of the Gentiles a people for God's name, 14, the "called - out" ones, the church, the Body of Christ. "After this I will return," 16, that is, Christ's advent. When the called - out number is completed, Christ's will return. Then Israel will be restored: "I will build again the tabernacle of David... I will set it up," 16 (cf. 1:6; 3:21). The kingdom will

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be established - the world converted, 17 and God's plan for the ages will be fulfilled, 18 (584).

The Survival Of The Church In Nigeria: Recommendations

The survival of the Church from all the insecurities of our nation and injustices are as indicated below:

1. Ministers of the Gospel must be ready to jettison gifts that could distract them from saying the truth. They should be ready to contended and having self-reliance like Prophet Amos, Patriarch Abraham and the Apostles as in Acts 6:1-7.

2. Interfaith dialogue and religious peace-building are urgent need for the survival of the Church, if the Church must continue in this era of insecurity in the nation. Because Acts 6:7 says "So God's message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too".

3. The Church must unite in order to fight and pursue a common goal wholistically, because united we stand and divided we fall Matthew 12:25 ESV.

4. The cry for Masses and the poor should not be assignment of few people like in the days of Prophet Amos and the Apostles and people who are seen as opposition to the government when they talk. It must be a collective vision and passion.

5. Restructuring of the Constitution is extremely necessary for the survival of the Church, as the current Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is not in favour of non-Muslims.

6. Interfaith Dialogue and Religious Peace-building must start from the house of God. The Church universal must first of all reason together as in Isaiah 1:17-18. For Christians to make a reasonable impact in the society, justice, peace and equity are needed.

7. The Godly values are missing in the Church and Nigeria State. Truth is the bedrock of Justice towards the survival of the Church and peace-building. There is need to revive all of our distorted values.

Conclusion

There is a peace-making force in religion that can help us to mutual understanding, joint efforts for peaceful coexistence and genuine humanity. The Gospel calls Christians, and the Quran calls Muslims, to be witnesses for God. The Bible speaks of the God who is merciful, just, sovereign and forgiving. If mission, is in God's name, it must be carried out in God's way. This means dialogue, fairness, respect and the opportunity to respond freely. God's attributes in Christianity provide a basic understanding of the peace making force in religion. Again it is explained that the first attribute to understand is what prompts God to

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be merciful. In Islam it is his goodness and his generosity, while Christians believe it is motivated by God's sharing in human suffering and his compassion. Christianity perceives the need to be reconciled with God and to be saved by him. It is also important to understand the role of love in each religion. Emphasis is that Love in Islam is conditional, while Christians understand God's love in an overwhelming and personal way.

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LAND AS A RELIGIOUS TOOL IN AFRICAN ONTOLOGY

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Executive Summary

This study is an ontological examination of the import of land in Africa with emphasis on its religious and cosmological existence. In this study we shall argue that there are both normative and ontological elements that connect man to the essential element of nature. Using the analytic method, the paper will try to harmonize the African conception of land ontologically from a more spiritual point of view land as force and force as being, and at the end one will discover that land in various societies' traditions in Africa occupies central position as it defines the bases of Spirituality, identity, unity, economic progress and the essentialities of human existence. This paper will at a long run show that the contemporary Africa over time have lost their reservation on land due to circularity, it therefore see the need to return to the foregone by identifying the spiritual benefits attach to land. Normatively, the study observed with interest that land serve as the beginning of the being of man and at the same as the finitude since it is the source of social identity, economic and kinship have also become the source of conflict. The study concludes, there must be Africans to go back to its conception of land, that is as natural trust committed not to the economy but a field of events, where vital forces spirits responsible for various natures occurrence act upon nature and existence in African.

Keywords: land, African ontology, identity, beginning and end, and duality.

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Introduction

Although land lies at the heart of social, political, religious and economic life of Africa, where agriculture, natural resources and other land-based activities are fundamental to livelihoods, food security, incomes and employment. Land also has major historical and spiritual significance for Africa's people. Because land in Africa is seen as a spiritual holding both by the ancestors and the living, attempting to convert land into commercial assets only that have characterized the modern African society has continue to water down the African ontological orientation of land.

Land is the forerunner of the ancestral world; it is in land that homage is paid to the ancestral spirits. These spirits are believed to, as Ukoma will put it "have a stake in the land because in African family, the umbilical cord of a new born baby is buried in the land and when a child is circumcised, the foreskin and blood is also buried in the land" (51). Thus, the sacredness of land in Africa is further linked to the fact that our ancestors are buried in it. Without land we could have not have had a home for a dead body. That is why "we knell barefooted to the grave when we want to communicate anything to our ancestors. Showing a lot of respect for the land on which they lie" (Agu 76). The link between spirituality and land seems to apply not only to man, rather it seems to be a common denominator in the life and faith of all traditional Africa. Spirituality seems to be always socially, culturally and even economically conditioned. The question of land, which is the primary source and sustainer of human life, cannot but be central to the spirituality of all the indigenous African.

Land as the Foundational Framework of the Operation of the Universe

Following Obis concept of duality as dialectics of the sky and earth, one will understand de-emphasizes the African quest for upholding the feasible option of the mode and model of operation of the universe. Obi expands as follows, minerals identified with rocks and stones as part of the earth are interpreted in relation to the sky. This interpretation justifies according to him that "the site of quarry where ore is extracted and placed in the furnace for the fabrication of iron is extracted as altar for divinity" (65). In supporting Obi's argument, Nyang in his article titled *Reflections on 'Traditional African Cosmology*, avers that "Africa was, and still is, rich in cosmological ideas" (2). Though the diversity of Africa's religious and cosmological heritage has been little known outside of the continent, the intensive researchers of Africanists around the world and the growing global interest in the African world have

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combined to draw attention to what could be Africa's spiritual gift to humanity. This gift is less understood by many Africans, even much less by the greater majority of non-Africans. Africa's traditional cosmology is diverse, but behind this diversity lays the core of shared religious beliefs attached to land which spread across the continent.

This research does not plan to bring out the differences operation of the universe; rather, it seeks to construct a framework of analysis out of the body of ideas that researchers in the field have agreed upon as the common elements in the various cosmological and ontological systems among Africans in their quest for understanding the way and manners the world operates. Obiechina arguing with Tempels and Metu in his book titled, *Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novel* avers that:

> The main principles of the African-centered worldview on the operation of the universe are "the interconnectedness of all things "*vital force*"; the spiritual nature of human beings" collective individual identity; the collective/inclusive nature of family structure; the oneness of mind, body and spirit; and the value of interpersonal relationships (12).

For him, he stress that; as with the Indians, the Brazilian and as the Israelites distinguished the *pure* from the *Umpire,* so beings are differentiated from each other in the African ontology in to various species according to their vital force and powers passed through their inherent vital ranks. According to (Tempels 29) above all other force, land as a vital force is a spirit, it propels other vital force who has force and power responsible in various actions in them-self. Those vital force gives existence, power to survive and power of increase, to other forces. Using the Supreme Being as relations to other forces, he is *he who increases*. After him come the first fathers of men, founders of the different clans. These arch patriarchs were the first to whom the Supreme Being communicates his vital force, with the power of exercising their influence on all posterity.

Land as Cause and Effect
The notion of cause and effect from a typical African though system is strongly linkup with almost the same believe in empirical causation as that of the Westerner, but the African person goes further than this to ascribe causation to non-empirical realities like vital forces which includes, deities, ancestors, witchcrafts and other spiritual agencies that triggered the functionality of the universe. In his work titled *Metaphysics, Phenomenology, and African Philosophy*, Unah argues that: "This view of causality is influenced by the African general perception of the universe.

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Africans see the universe as that of extraordinary harmony, one of synthetic unity and compatibility among all things" (107). Ijiomah also argued in his *Reference to Ultimate Reality and Meaning in an African language: A further contribution to Igbo studies*, that: "it is a world where everything is seen as "*dovetailing into one another*" (76). In this world, Africans see events as being determined by the will of spiritual beings, the operation of automatic forces, and the self-willed actions of men and other animals, which follow in orderly and comprehensive sequence. The African perception of the world therefore influences his causal explanations of events, which tend to embrace both the material and spiritual plane of existence. Sogolo in his work titled *Foundations of African Philosophy: A Definitive Analysis of Conceptual Issues in African Thought,* points to this fact when he argues that:

> An African healer may attribute a disease to a successful natural cause not dissimilar to the germ theory of modern medicine. Yet the healer may also believe that the same disease is caused by supernatural forces, and would then proceed to cure the disease in these two seemingly incompatible ways (182).

In other words, the traditional African believes in the empirical (natural) idea of causation following the Western rules of causation we outline above and he also believes in supernatural causation which is not analyzable in empirical terms. Sogolo made this more vivid, by dividing these levels of causation into primary and secondary levels. The secondary causes are similar to the empirical causation of the Western type and the primary causes are attributed to supernatural entities such as deities, spirits, witches, etc.

It should be noted here that though the African in most cases explains an event through both the primary and secondary levels of causation, but in some occasions he does explain reality only empirically. For instance, when someone out of carelessness cut himself with a knife or when someone out of stupidity is burnt by hot food. In these cases the African may explain these events in purely natural causation. But when the cut or burnt are considered intriguing and grievous, supernatural causes may be attached to the explanation.

Helaine Minkus in his *The concept of spirit in Akwapim Akan philosophy* explains this better using the Akan world-view He wrote:

> If one person steps on a snake and is bitten, the occurrence may be ascribed to his carelessness and perhaps dismissed as happening without ulterior reasons. But if he dies from the snake bite it is more than likely that his own destiny or else witchcraft,

sorcery or some other cause will be proposed to explain why such a thing should have happened (141).

In his work *African Ideology and Believe*, published in the International Journal of Research in Arts and Social Sciences Vol 8, No.1, Minkus argued that:

> A typical African therefore, explains causation from the point of view of secondary and primary causes. Thus, it is not uncommon to see a traditional healer, identify for instance, the secondary cause of an ailment as the consumption of some poisonous food, and also locate the primary cause to a malicious spirit or witch who influenced the individual to eat the poison (180).

The primary cause may also be explained as a result of the anger of a particular vital force over bridge of some taboos. In the or Boki of the East Afica, the Igala's, Igbo's, Yoruba's and the Edo culture of Nigeria for example, there is the belief that certain actions are taboos and will bring down the wrath of the vital forces responsible to every natural occurrence on the offenders. Actions like sexual intercourse in the bush, killing of a kinsman whether by accident or intentionally must be appeased or else the cosmic force of life will strike the entire village, in the sense that the farm products stops, river dries and so on. Sometimes malicious vital force in Africa are capable of just attacking the community indiscriminately causing sickness, death and other maladies. Hutondji in his *Knowledge of Africa, Knowledge by Africans: Two Perspectives on African Studies*, argues that "from the Boki thought pattern when he argues that: this actually informs why the Boki people frequently perform the *Atam Masquerade Dance*"(71). This dance is believed to be capable of warding off evil from the community. The costume of the masquerade which is made of palm fronts will be laid at the end of the dance at the entrances to the village. This action for the Boki people blocks off evil that would have entered the village to cause havoc. Thus, for Hutondji the belief in the possibility of evil forces striking at random also explains why in Boki, weird names like:

> Kekong (toilet), Bukie (juju), Bebia (weeds), Dikan (bush), Orim (Satan) et cetera are common. These names are prevalent, because a Boki man believes that evil spirits strike only the children a parent loves most, which could be identified by their names. Thus for this cultures, giving unpleasant names to their children would deceive the evil spirits to believe that none of the children is loved, thereby protecting the children from attack (154).

In Africa therefore, almost all events are traceable to the metaphysical including event like an accidental fall of a piece of yam from somebody's hand while eating would be explained in terms of the

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force. This could be attributed to the cause of a hungry or angry force. These are taken seriously as the real cause of the said effects.

Nature of Force in Africa
The common notion of the idea of vital force, recalls the belief that the human person form a huge part of the community of life within the realm of the cosmic spirit. This assertion may seem like a truism that should not require any further enunciation within Africa. However, belief in the Creator-Spirit, a pneumatological understanding of creation in the African conception of being is fairly young in the Western tradition.

Despite the contestation of Tempels' idea of vital force, African thinkers and theologians have endorsed the concept to varying degrees. The objections to Tempels' articulation of the notion of vitality are mainly on three counts. Firstly, the critique is about positing a distinct African way of thinking abounds among African professional philosophers who hold that Tempels' characterization, rather than valorise African thinking, in fact, contributes to imaging Africa as 'different'. The discourse of African difference is characteristically a product of colonial discourse.

Maluleke in his work *Vitalism, Community and Human Existence in Africa* has in fact argued that: Tempels' work 'was not … directed at the African's or understanding's sake, but for the benefit of the colonials and missionaries (29). Poignantly, Tempels' last chapter in his *Bantu Philosophy* is titled *Bantu Philosophy and our Mission to Civilized*. That locates Tempels' work as a product of his age as is borne out by that chapter. Furthermore, the portrayal of Africans as objects rather than subjects of study in Tempels' work is problematic from a postcolonial standpoint.

Those criticisms notwithstanding, Tempels' contribution lays on his contribution to African cosmological interpretation using the idea of vital force, which he understood as encapsulating all of life in African thought. In this conception, each being is imbued with a vital force that enables life, which explains how that energy relates to ontology. In his own words, 'Force is the nature of being, force is being, being is force' (Tempels 44).

Thus, Hountondji in his *Knowledge of Africa, Knowledge by Africans: Two Perspectives on African Studies* presents an incisive qualified damnation and what seems like a tongue-in-cheek part-acclamation of

Tempels' *Bantu Philosophy*, when he contends that his work is aimed and writes:

> On the one hand at facilitating what it calls 'mission to civilise' (by which we understand practical mastery by the coloniser of the black man's [*sic*] psychological well springs) and, on the other hand, at warning Europe itself against the abuses of its own technocratic and ultra-materialistic civilisation, by offering her, at the cost of a few rash generalisations, an image of the fine spirituality of the primitive Bantu. (49)

Conversely, but without excusing or defending the colonial bias in Tempels, Okafor quips that we cannot expect him 'to shed every bias of his time, despite his protestations' (Okafor 89). Taking that caveat into account, one would equally argue that Tempels' ethnography was quite advanced for his time. He provided what would become a basis for African studies that would mark a new epoch of taking African experience relatively seriously within the context of colonisation. In an attempt to fully understand the meaning of the nature of the universe and its constituent elements from the African point of view, it would be worthwhile now to first explore the concept of 'ontology'. Etymologically, is the branch of philosophy that studies concepts such as existence, being, becoming and reality it is from the Greek words: which includes the questions of how entities are grouped into basic categories and which of these entities exist on the most fundamental level or the cosmos and Logos, meaning 'universe' and the 'vital forces' that occupies it respectively. Put together, it is the 'science of the universe'. By universe it is meant worldview. One needs to glance at the works of eminent scholars like Wambutda, Obi, Ejizu, Achebe, Onuoha, Metuh, Ubesie, Madubuko, Madu, Ezenweke and Kanu for a very good grape of the subject matter. Very significant to their analysis, is an underlining principle that speaks of vital forces as basically the nature of the universe, which gives a sense of purpose and direction to existence and enables the Universe to act purposefully and exercise a measure of control over nature. According to Obi in his *Being as Duality and African Hermeneutics of Foundation* argued that:

> The potency of the universe to confer existence to thing implies that there is essential relation between the universe and action. This relation is informed by speech/action dialectics which is a permanent feature of African language. The universe and action are interpreted as two aspect of the same reality "thing" which constitutes the full realization of the human person (87).

It is in this regard that Metuh in his *A Philosophical Investigaton Into African Values: Towards Ameliorating, The African Predicament* maintains that:

The ontological study of vital forces answers some of the fundamental questions about the place and relationship of beings with the universe. This cannot be done outside the ambience of supernatural power or vital forces that helps in complimenting the beingness of the other (87). What then is African understanding of the universe and forces? Thus, for Hountondji also argued that:

> It is simply the way Africans perceive, conceive and contemplate their universe; the lens through which they see reality, which affects their value systems and attitudinal orientations; it is the African's search for the meaning of life, and an unconscious but natural tendency to arrive at a unifying base that constitutes a frame of meaning to the interactions that thus, exist between force and the nature of the universe often viewed as terminus a *quo* origin, and as terminus ad *quem* end. This conception is the underlining thought link that holds together the African value system, philosophy of life, morality, rituals, and ideas of the universe in general (82).

Vital force has been affirmed as representative of African ontology and cosmology from the above expression so far. This notion has been theologically appropriated and apprehended on African terms by the likes of Kaoma, Sakupapa, Magesa, Nkemnkia, Obi Nkurunziza, Nyamiti and Kagame and applied to a variety of themes in theology. Hitherto, did not study has attempted to explore and articulate the notion of African vital force as a pneumatheological concept in reference to nature and spirit with an underlying emphasis on the interrelatedness of the divine and creation and of creation within itself.

Relationship between Forces

Many African philosophers have tried to explain the concept of being and the relationship that exist between them without getting a cogent explanation to that effect. This is because (Tempels 35) is of the view that "being is force and force is being" they is no single line of demarcation of the concept of being from that of force. For Obi this is possible because:

> Force as being makes becoming feasible and informs the meaning of a thing as the relationship that exist between them and the force that controls them and the value attached to a being as the sum number of force which express themselves in things (45).

On this note we are going to focus on African philosophers, those whose notions of force as becoming seem more appealing to the quest of this research. It is necessary to start first by given a systematic understanding of African ontology. On this note it is believed that

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Tempels is the first major proponent of African Philosophy. Hence, he is the first to put forward a more systematic African notion of vital forces, which he believes is distinct from that of the West. He holds that the central idea of African philosophy rests on the shoulder of African ontology, their conception of reality or notion of being as he argues that:

> The transcendental and universal notions of being and of its force of action, and of the relationships and reciprocal influences of beings make up Bantu philosophy which becomes the foundation of African ontology (77).

He also holds that it is this ontology that is the key to Bantu behaviour and thought which is centered on the idea of vital force which originates from the Supreme Being. With this, he placed Supreme Being first in his Bantu hierarchy of being which can be pictured as follows: Supreme Being, spirit of ancestors, humans, animals, plants and inanimate objects (18). That is why Njoku in his *Culture and customs of Morocco* argued that: Beings stand in relation to each other and exact influence on each other. But the superior's influence on the inferior is greater (14). It is worthy of note that Bantu ontology is rooted in the expression of Tempels in which he reduced African ontology to the notion of force: We conceive the transcendental notion of "being" by separating it from its attribute, "force", but the Bantu cannot. "Force" in his thought is necessary element in "being", and the concept "force" is inseparable from the definition of "being". There is no idea among Bantu of "being" divorced from the ideas of "force"- Without the element "force", being cannot be conceived. What has been said above should be accepted as the basis of Bantu ontology; in particular, the concept "force" is bound to the concept "being" even in the most abstract thinking upon notion of being. Thus, (Njoku 50-51) by implication, also argued that being is force and force in the other hand is being. Hence in Africa, there is no way that one can talk about being without talking about force vital force. Egbeke Aja buys into this view as he posits that:

> For the Igbos, being is force like Tempels posits of the Bantu. For the African, the concept, force is bound to the concept of 'being' even in the most abstract thinking upon the notion of being. Similarly, the Igbo have a double concept concerning being and this can be expressed '*ife na ike ife bu otu'* i.e. being is that which is force (53-54).

In supporting the above conception, E. A. Ruch like Hutondji, also notes that:

> This force is what endows being with the capacity of doing or acting as he posits, We might say that in African conception the capacity for doing is identified with being and therefore with act

> or perfection A being is defined by what it can do, rather than by what it is (149).

By this, Ruch is saying that for Tempels, force confers being. This makes his being-force a physical force thus, making being solely concrete or physical entity devoid of abstractness.

The African universe is made up of a myriad of spirits. Death is not understood as the final end of man. After death, the soul *Afu* or what Ruch called *nkpulobi* goes back to The Supermen Being. The after-life for the African is a life of continuing relationship with the living dead. Life in Africa is cyclic: birth, death and rebirth. Those who lived good lives and died at ripe old age, receiving the appropriate funeral rites, in relation to their status, go to the spirit-land, where they continue to live until they reincarnate. On the other hand, those who lived bad lives and died bad death, like in accidents and before one reaches a ripe old age, are sent to an intermediate state, between the spirit-land and the land of the living where they live frustrated, as wandering and restless spirits in Igbo worldview, they are referred to as bad spirits. Apart from the bad spirit we have the ancestors. Metuh argues that: they are under the presidency of the *Ala* deity. They are the guidance of morality and the owners of the soil (91). They occupy a very significant place in Igbo life and religion. Uchendu avers that ancestors are the invisible segment of the Igbo lineage (65). Their world and the human world are very similar, just like in the human world, they have their farms, their roads, their markets; the only difference is that while our world is visible, theirs is invisible. They are honored and not worshiped. The honour given to them is anchored on the principle of reciprocity and philosophy of reincarnation: having been honored, they are expected to reincarnate and do for the living members what they did for them. Nyamiti In his *Legendary pioneer of African theology* also argued that:

> In distinguishes the two elements that characterize the African concept of ancestorship: natural relationship, which usually exists between the ancestor and his relatives, either as parent or brother. It can also be founded on common membership of a clan, tribe, religious sect or society. It can therefore either be consanguinous or non-consanguinous (4).

From the point of the relationship between forces, there is also the sacred orsupernaturalstatus of an ancestor, which is the consequence of his death. Following the African traditional moral standard, a good life is very significant here, since the ancestor is like a standard for the living, In the place of man (land) as at the centre of the universe, is more central to the Supreme Being than the vital force responsible for actions and happenings. Following the above arguments, Mbiti tries to use land

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as the relationship between forces. He continues that: Land is at the very centre of existence and African people see everything else in its relation to this central position of land as the foundation of man, it is as if the Supreme Being exists for the sake of man and man alone (92). Corroborating with Mbiti, Metuh, avers that:

> Everything else in African worldview seems to get its bearing and significance from the position, meaning and end of man". The idea of Supreme Being, divinities, ancestors, rituals, sacrifices etc., are only useful to the extent that they serve the need of man (109).

The analysis of the Yoruba idea of a human person reveals the African concept of man as a being having its origin and finality in the universe as a relationship between forces. This implies that man in the African universe is best understood in his relationship with forces as his creator, to whom, from the Igbo perspective, he is ontologically linked with through his *chi*, the spark or emanation of force in each person. Man's coming to the world cannot be understood within the Western category which sees the human person in mechanistic terms. Tempels in his *Bantu Philosophy* argued that:

> Man in African worldview or the ontology of personhood has a purpose and mission to fulfill, he comes into the universe as a force amidst forces and interacting with forces. Good status, good health and prosperity are signs of the wellbeing of a person's life-force, and man struggles to preserve it through an appropriate relationship with the spiritual forces around him (116).

This is the reason why Oguejiofor in his *The Influence of Igbo Traditional Religion* supports that: The goal of every human person is to achieve his *akara chi,* the destiny imprinted on his palm by his *chi* (11). He is not just an individual person, but one born into a community whose survival and purpose is linked with that of others. Thus, the human person is first a member of a clan, a kindred or a community. According to (Oduwole 20), Idowu agree that: the human person is made up of three basic elements: *Ara* (body), *Emi* (breath) and *Ori* (soul). This is also true of the constituents of man in Igbo ontology: *Obi* heart or breath, *Chi* destiny, *Eke* or *Agu* ancestral guardian. Idowu also describes the body as the concrete, tangible thing of flesh and bones which can be known through the senses (21). As regards the *Emi,* he describes it as spirit, and this is invisible. It is that which gives life to the whole body and thus could be described through its causal functions: Its presence in the body of a person determines if the person still lives or is dead.

Land as Origin of Things

The question on how did existence (things) or life begin in the universe? From a common man point of view, there can hardly be a bigger

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question to the origin of things, than that. For much of human history, almost everyone believed some version of nature and how existence starts. Wamba-Dia-Wamba in his work titled *Philosophy in Africa* argues that: they is no other explanation to the source or origin of things apart from land was inconceivable (3). Thus, over the last century, a few scientists have tried to figure out how existence sprung up or tried to investigate the source and origins of things outside land. But so far nobody has managed a convincing result to that effect, but existence has come a long way. Today, many philosophers studying the origin of existence are confident that they are no right track to understanding the origin of things without first acknowledging the fact that everything originated from land, with critical arguments to back up their confidence. Land as a foundation of all things becomes our quest to discover the ultimate origin of things.

Thus, according Alastair Fothergill in his *BBC Earth* argued that:
> Life is old, because the dinosaurs which are perhaps the most famous extinct creatures and they had their beginnings dated back to over 250 million years ago. The rivers and water basin which occupies over 97% of the universe is said to lay on land because land is said to be dates back much further than any other form of being that makes up the universe (http://www.bbc.com/earth/story/20161026-the-secret-of-how-life-on-earth-began).

Alastair Fothergill reasons here is appealing to that of Tempels notion of "being" in African philosophy is contained in his epochal work, *Bantu Philosophy*. Tempels made the following basic observations about the philosophy of the Bantu people on the origin f things that:
> The transcendental and universal notions of being and force, its action, the relationships and reciprocal influences of beings on land make up Bantu philosophy. This domain is accessible to the ordinary intelligence of every normal person…The subjective point of view of the Bantu founds the general principle and notion of being on the argument of authority, the source of their origin and on their own observation of the constitution and the makeup of the universe… The general conception of being "things" which land is said to have hold the knowledge of the particular qualities or makeup's of each individual being and their distinct future (51).

In trying to understand the concept of land as the origin of things, one have to first understand the writings of Tempels' book which is in 7 chapters, namely, in chronological order, *In search of a Bantu philosophy*, *Bantu ontology*, *Bantu wisdom or criteriology*, *The theory of the "Muntu"*

which implies personhood and *Bantu Philosophy and our Mission to Civilize.* In each of those seven chapters, Tempels argued that: Land just as Properties is the foundational entities or makeup of things or the origin of existence following the above argument, in other words, land is the *attributed* to existence. Thus, in other terms, land is the "attributes", "qualities", "features", "structure and component", "framework" of things and the universe itself. Land defines the way things are, entities and form that things *exemplify* or *instantiate*. For example, if we say that this is a leaf and is green, we are attributing the properties and make up *leaf* and *green* to it, and, if the predication is veridical, the thing in question exemplifies these properties.

Conclusion

Despite the abrasive effect of westernization to the original conception on the African connection that existed between the African person and their land of birth, this research serve as an eyes opening to the believe that Africans have the ability to recreate a value system to land and the lost bond that existed between them through religion, like a lost item, be sought and found. We believe that this recovery can be achieved through a return to the mysticism value if land as hand on by the customs and traditions of their religion. The western world has much more to gain from the African understanding of land as soon as that self-consciousness is regain. Thus, the decisions on land usage have always been part of the evolution of African and her society. In the past, down to the present, land and her use changes often came about by gradual evolution, as the result of many separate decisions taken by individuals. In the more crowded and complex world of the present they are frequently brought about by the process of land use planning which becomes the foundation of the make of their religion. Such planning takes place in all parts of the world, including both developing and developed countries, but does not reflect too much in their religion. It may be concerned with putting environmental resources to new kinds of productive use. The function of land as religious tools is to guide decisions on land use in such a way that the resources of the environment are put to the most beneficial use for man and the vital for that cohabited in the universe, whiles at the same time conserving those resources for the future. This planning must be based on an understanding both of the normative environment and the metaphysical environment. If the relationship that thus, exist between land as a religious tools is not properly put in shape is Africa, more damages will be cost to the ontological relationship that exist between the human person and nature.

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AFRICAN TABOOS AS GUARDIANS OF THE ENVIRONMENT: A DIALOGUE IN INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTALISM

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Executive Summary
African taboos refer to the moral principles among the African people that served as proscriptions, spelling out how African traditional societies ought to or ought not to relate with the persons and things in their environment. These taboos provide and preserve balance and harmony within the community, and in the community's relationship with nature. Theyare respected by members of African communities because of the spiritual background that they possess, given that they are either promulgated by a deity or the ancestors. Within the context of African environmental ethics, taboos fit into several facets. Even though it can be studied as a major source of African environmental ethics, it belongs to a special place in the study of the indigenous modalities for environmental preservation. This piece, therefore, studies African taboos as guardians of the environment with the view of outlining its role in the preservation of the environment, especially in precolonial African societies. For the purpose of this study, the hermeneutic method of inquiry was employed. The paper discovered that African taboos occupied a central place in the effort of traditional African societies towards the preservation of the environment.

Keywords: Taboos, African, Environment, Preservation, Guardians, Indigenous, Igbo

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Introduction

The activities of human beings that continue to degrade the environment has reached its apogee in the twenty first century, accounting for its attraction of the attention and commitment of governments and organizations nationally and internationally. The result of this attention that it has attracted is that laws have begun to come into being for the preservation and protection of the environment and in fact even days and years such as *Earth Day of the United Nations on Human Environment* [1] and the *International Year of Sanitation* [2] are beginning to be observed for the purpose of giving the environment the importance that it deserves. Interestingly, the seventh agenda of the Millennium Development Goals focuses on *Environmental Sustainability* [3]. This has attracted also the attention of scholars from different academic backgrounds- it is one area of concern that has attracted the attention of both those in the pure sciences and the arts. Journalists, religious leaders, local communities, etc., are part of the discourse on the future of the environment.

At the international level, several multilateral agreements have been reached and laws brought into existence such as the following: Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially of Water Fowl Habitats of 1971; Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 1972; Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora of 1973; International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships of 1973-1978; United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982; Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer of 1985; Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer of 1987; Basel Convention on the Control of Trans-boundary movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal of 1989; Convention on Biological Diversity of 1992; United Nations Framework Convention on Climate

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[1]It calls for collective, transformative action on a global scale to celebrate, protect and restore our planet.United Nations, World Environment Day 5th June, https://www.un.org/en/observances/environment-day 2022.

[2]The International Year of Sanitation 2008 was established by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2006 to accelerate progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goal of reducing by half the proportion of people living without access to improved sanitation by 2015. In addition,progress on sanitation will contribute to the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals. UNICEF, International Year of Sanitation. https://reliefweb.int/report/world/unicef-welcomes-international-year-sanitation-2008

[3]Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). No. 7. *Ensure Environmental Sustainability.* https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals. 2015

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Change of 1992; United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Draught, Particularly in Africa of 1994; Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational uses of International Watercourses of 1997; Kyoto Protocol of 1997; Cartagena Protocol on Biodiversity of 2000; Stockholm Convention on Present Organic Pollutants of 2001; Minamata Convention on Mercury of 2013; Paris Agreement of 2015; Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides inInternational Trade of 1998.[4] These multilateral agreements shows that there is need to combat environmental degradation in other to minimize or or eradicate its threats.

However, the survey carried out by the researcher in 2022, reveals that most African people are not aware of the presence of these multilateral agreements, and the very few that know about them, do not know what their contents are. There were also difficulties regarding the possibility of their implementation, which include, the absence of a spiritual dimension to the agreements, the conceptualization and the mode of communicating them makes them very effective among the African people. The survey also reveals that the same people who are not aware of these multilateral agreements and laws are well aware of their indigenous taboos regarding the preservation of the environment, with very few knowing the taboos but with limited knowledge of details[5].

The result of this survey indicates that there is the need to patronize the indigenous approaches on environmental preservation, or to begin from the culture of the people, which they know, then to that which they do not know, a bottom-top kind of approach. It is on this basis that this work investigates African taboos as guardians of the African environment. It will make a collection and presentation of African taboos that relate to the environment in such a manner that reveals their ecological values.

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[4]Kanu Ikechukwu Anthony, *Igbo-African ecological spirituality: An Indigenous response to modern ecological crisis*. A paper presented at the Inaugural Conference organized by Harvard University (Divinity School) on Ecological Spiritualities, from April 27th – 30th, 2022, p. 6

[5]Kanu Ikechukwu Anthony, *Igbo-African ecological spirituality: An Indigenous response to modern ecolacal crisis*. A paper presented at the Inaugural Conference organized by Harvard University (Divinity School) on Ecological Spiritualities, from April 27th – 30th, 2022, p. 7.

The Methodology or Approach to this study

The approach employed in this study is the indigenous holistic approach. This is necessary give that African taboos are indigenous norms or local knowledge held by indigenous people that guided or moderated the attitude of people towards the environment. It is considered holistic because of the nature of the African worldview that is complementary and relational in character. It is this worldview that shapes African taboos. These indigenous knowledge systems as related to the environment are designed in such a manner that:

a. Feedback comes from the environment and not just from the human society;
b. It creates a moral economy that places a moral obligation on those who are members of the local community;
c. It focuses on the development of the behavioral patterns of the indigenous people with the view of altering the way they relate with biodiversity;
d. It regards the environment with awe and respect, given that the environment is understood as the abode of the divine[6].

This is a contribution to local and international studies or discourse on the preservation and protection of the environment.

African taboos and the environment

Below are selected African taboos[7] that serve as guardians of the environment.

No.	Taboo	Ecological value
1	Hunting from some particular forests	Protects species on the land
2	Eating new yam before the new yam festival	Preserving food
3	Not taking children to the stream at infancy for dedication	Introducing the next generation to the environment
4	Committing suicide	Protects life
5	Causing the fall of an elderly person	Protects life
6	Plugging breadfruit at night	Protects trees

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[6]Emmanuel Ebeku Essel, The role of taboos in solving contemporary environmental degradation in Ghana: The case of Cape Coast Metro. *Social Sciences. 9. 4. 2020*, p. 90.
[7] Kanu, I. A., *African philosophy: An ontologico-existential hermeneutic approach to classical and contemporary issues*. Nigeria, 2015: Augustinian Publications; Kanu I. A.,*A hermeneutic approach to African traditional religion, theology and philosophy*. Nigeria: Augustinian Publications, 2015.

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7	Not eating some animals	Protects animal species
8	Killing of tortoise	Protects tortoise
9	Killing of a human being	Protects life
10	Hunting on some days	Protects species on land
11	Fishing on some days	Protects species in water bodies
12	Fishing from some particular streams	Protects species in water bodies
13	Killing of vulture	Protects vultures
14	Killing of ram	Protects rams
15	Killing of an owl	Protects owls
16	Killing of parrot	Protects parrots
17	Killing of python	Protects pythons
18	Entering sacred forests	Protects biodiversity
19	Cutting down of some trees	Protects trees
20	Taking more than a person needs from nature, like hunting an animal and not eating the meat	Protects natural resources
21	Killing of a dog	Protects the dog
22	Washing cloth or taking bath on some parts of the stream	Protects inhabitants of water bodies
23	Killing of a tiger	Protects the tiger
24	Killing of Iguana	Protects the Iguana
25	Killing a pregnant animal	Protects species
26	Killing an animal fending for her young	Protects species
27	Cutting or destruction of sacred forests or bushes	Protects the environment
28	Farming near watersheds	Protects water bodies
29	Digging of graves without the authorization of the chief	Protects the earth
30	Bush fire on virgin land is not allowed	Protects the land and species
31	Defecating into streams or water bodies is not allowed	Protects water bodies
32	Stealing from a persons farm land, especially yam, is not allowed	Protects the land, the property of another and pays respect to the yam
33	Urinating into streams or water bodies is not allowed	Protects water bodies

Taboos and environmental ethics

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Taboos promote fundamental ethical values in relation to the environment in the following ways: Justice and sustainability, sufficiency and compassion, solidarity and participation.

1. Justice and Sustainability: Justice is about giving each his due. This is a primary principle that underlies the African taboo's prohibitions regarding the environment. It holds that the environment must be given the respect that it deserves. It should be treated not as a voiceless aspect of nature but one that inhabits great spirits, and what taboos actually do is that they speak for nature or the environment. Taboos present the different dimensions of the environment as personalities - for instance, the python is seen as mother, and anyone who kills it is supposed to bury it as a human person. Trees such as the Iroko are described with divine and human qualities like 'protector'[8].

Alongside the idea of justice is that of sustainability. What sustainability does is that it extends justice into the future and ensures that the opportunities and livelihood of the future generation is not endangered. The sustainability of the environment requires that the human person does not take from her more than is needed for survival or satisfaction of basic needs. This explains why these taboos prohibit the exploitation of rare species, and also slow down the exploitation of nature. This is to avoid the use of nature or the environment in such a manner that exceeds what we can replenish. Sustainability calls for a balance in the satisfaction of the needs of today in relation to the needs of the future generation[9].

2. **Sufficiency and Compassion:**The idea of sufficiency requires that a person should not exploit nature beyond what he or she needs for his or her livelihood. This requires that individuals must share what they have and live more simply, think creatively and ensure that everyone has access to the goods that they need to live a life of dignity. The idea of sufficiency requires that we think of other persons and other realities while we relate with them instead of only focusing on our needs.

The idea of compassion comes in from the African understanding of nature as a part of the being of the human person. This

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[8]Keith Douglass Warner OFM and David DeCosse, Using ethical principles in moral reasoning about the environment. https://www.scu.edu/environmental-ethics/short-course-in-environmental-ethics/lesson-three 2009

[9]Keith Douglass Warner OFM and David DeCosse, Using ethical principles in moral reasoning about the environment. https://www.scu.edu/environmental-ethics/short-course-in-environmental-ethics/lesson-three 2009

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requires that they also be treated with compassion rather just as instruments for profit. Animals, plants, and the elements (such as water, soil or air) are, therefore, considered to be morally significant, and that humans have responsibilities to act so that their needs are met too. Sometimes, the idea of compassion goes beyond the aspect of nature that is being used, it also requires that the human person becomes compassionate to himself or herself given that whatever the human person does to nature will have a way of affecting the life of the human person directly and indirectly.

3. Solidarity and Participation: The idea of solidarity is based on the African understanding of nature as holistic- a community of living and non-living things. It, therefore, invites the human person to consider how to relate to nature as a part of his or her worldhood. It considers the full range of our relationships and the interconnectedness and relationality of reality; it assumes that we recognize that we are a part of at least one family - our biological family, our local community, or our national community.Solidarity requires us to consider this kind of extended community, and to act in such a way that reflects concern for general well-being.

Participation is important in this because of the perception of nature as inter-relational. Since nature has different stakeholders relating together, there is need that the position of such stakeholders are not bypassed in decisions regarding their future[10].

The Mode of Ethical Reasoning in African Taboos
The mode of the ethical reasoning that can be drawn from these taboos include: command, consequences and character.

1. **Commands:** One of the basic features in taboos as it relates to morality is that of command. It is a command that has its authority in the ancestors. It is meant to give direction to the African society for the purpose of achieving the common good of the African people. In this case, command refers to the things that we ought to do or the things that we ought not to do. It is within the context of the idea of command that some African taboos are compared to the Ten Commandments in the Christian scriptures. The taboos regarding the environment are not agreements or

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[10]Keith Douglass Warner OFM and David DeCosse, Using ethical principles in moral reasoning about the environment. https://www.scu.edu/environmental-ethics/short-course-in-environmental-ethics/lesson-three 2009

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negotiations; they are commands that must be obeyed by the members of the society. If one agrees to be a member of that society, such a person must also agree to keep to the commands for the good of the society.

2. **Consequences:** Associated with taboos are consequences. Since they are commands, the breaking of the commands go with very serious consequences. The ethical notion of consequences remind the African community that while the commands are thought about, one must also think of the consequences of one's actions if one does not keep to the commands. It is by thinking of the consequences that the human person becomes partly aware of his or her responsibilities.

The idea of consequences go with thoughts around benefits, costs, good, bad, harmful, etc. Thus, actions that lead to consequences that are beneficial, good, etc., are referred to as good actions, and those actions that lead to consequences that are bad, harmful, painful, etc., are referred to as bad. In environmental ethics, this also follows. Those actions that have harmful consequences on the environment are considered wrong and those actions that have beneficial consequences on the environment are considered good actions.

3. **Character:** Within the context of African taboos in relation to human action, those who keep to the taboos are considered to be people of good character, and also considered persons who have the interest of the community at heart. The community comes into the picture because actions that individuals carry out have resounding effects on the life of the community.

Ecological Value of African Taboos

African taboos have varied ecological values, no wonder they are referred to as the guardians of the environment. These ecological values drawn from the tabulated taboos relating to the environment include:

1. Taboos, especially among the African people helps them to understand and relate with the environment within the categories that they understand. It is only within such a relationship that the project of environmental preservation becomes productive.
2. They protect the environment through the moral obligations that they impose on the human person towards the environment. In a sense, they promote in human beings the character necessary for the general good of the ecosystem.

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3. They promote the understanding of the environment in metaphysical terms. With them, the environment is not just seen as a thing to be exploited but as having relationships with great spirits and the ancestors.
4. They protect endangered species in the ecosystem. Most of the taboos in African traditional societies in relation to animals and trees relate to endangered species that would go into extinction through overuse or over-exploitation.
5. They promote a sense of justice in the use of the environment- that is, treating the environment as it is due to it.
6. Through its emphasis on the consequences of human action towards the environment, taboos emphasize the reality of inter-connectivity and relationality in the environment. Thus an understanding of nature as that which must be included by the human person in his or her agenda for the promotion of survival.
7. Taboos are futuristic, in the sense that they promote the preservation of the environment for the sake of the future generation. Its commands in the present is for the survival of the next generation.

Conclusion

For more than 25 years, environmental experts, international organizations and conferences on environmental protection, among other human efforts have tried to grapple with the challenges of ecological crisis. The present ecological situation shows that there hasn't been much success and that there is need for alternative perspectives or approaches[11]. These measures, in spite of the availability of the will to achieve them have not been able to solve the problem at hand but only addressed the symptoms rather than the main issues, implying that there might be need to go deeper and wider than some of the present measures can go[12]. It is in this regard that Pope Francis teaches that:

> There is a need to respect the rights of peoples and cultures… Nor can the notion of the quality of life be imposed from without,

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[11]Tarusarira, J. African religion, climate change, and knowledge systems. *Ecumenical Review*. 69. 3.*2017*, 398-410; Melnick, D. Jeffrey McNeely, Yolanda Navaaro, Guido Schmidt-Traub, and Robin Sears, *Environment and human wellbeing: A practical strategy: achieving the millennium development goals.* London: Earthscan, 2005.

[12]Crockett, Daniel,Nature connection will be the next big human trend. *Huffington Post*.https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/daniel-crockett/nature-connection-will-be-the-next-big-human-trend_b_5698267.html. 2014, Accessed 10th March, 2022; Sponsel, Leslie E., Spiritual ecology. In Leeming, David A. (ed.). *Encyclopedia of psychology and religion (1718–1723)*. 2nd ed. Boston: Springer, 2014.

for quality of life must be understood within the world of symbols and customs proper to each human group[13].

The African people have related with their environment in a spirit of respect, solidarity and complementarity[14]. Ogungbemi avers that: "In our traditional relationship with nature, men and women recognize the importance of water and air management to our traditional communities"[15]. This understanding, is the basis for the present studies on African taboos as the guardians of the environment. It has studies selected African taboos that relate to the environment to show how traditional African societies preserved the environment before the advent of unilateral agreements and laws. Given the nature of most African societies that are glo-localized, there is the need for an emphasis on traditional indigenous knowledge and laws that are very well known to indigenous people. Such an emphasis provides a more holistic approach towards the preservation of the environment.

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[13]Francis, Pope,*Laudatio si (Praise be to You)*. Papal encyclical on climate. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015, no. 114.

[14]Kanu, I. A.,*Igwebuike* as a complementary approach to the issue of girl-child education.*Nightingale International Journal of Contemporary Education and Research*. 3. 6. 2017, 11-17; Kanu, I. A.,*Igwebuike* as a wholistic response to the problem of evil and human suffering.*Berkeley International Journal of Contemporary Education Research*. 3. 6. 2017, 56-72; Kanu, I. A.,*Igwebuike* as an Igbo-African ethic of reciprocity. *Berkeley Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*. *6. 4.* 2017, 115-124; Kanu, I. A., *Igwebuike* as an Igbo-African philosophy for the protection of the environment.*Nightingale International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences.* 3. 4. 2017, 28-38; Kanu, I. A.,*Igwebuike a*s the consummate foundation of African bioethical principles. *Nnadiebube Journal of Philosophy. 1. 1.*2017, 1-13.

[15]Ogungbemi, D., *Philosophy and development.* Ibadan: Hope Publication, 2007, p. 36.

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STRATEGIES FOR RECONCILIATION OF DISCREPANCIES IN AFRICAN RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL PHILOSOPHY WITH CHRISTIAN IDEOLOGY AMONG AFRICANS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Executive Summary

There have been discrepancies between the religious and cultural philosophy of Africans and the religious and cultural ideology or philosophy of Christianity among African adherents. Another problem that bothers this paper is that strategies have been put in place to reconcile these disagreements, but expected success has not been achieved. Amongst the strategies that have been advocated and adopted are religious dialogue, ecumenism, etc. This research advocates for anti-fanaticism campaign, infants religious and cultural integration campaign, central and annual religion and cultural archival interactions, etc. It has been discovered that these disagreements have drastically affected social, economic and religious development, growth and awareness of African Christians and traditionalists. The paper is, therefore, designed with the aim of addressing the negative effects of religious and cultural dilemma for a better futuristic relationship. The paper employs phenomenological research methodology. Data were collected through direct interviews, text books, journals, and other secondary data. Data gotten were analysed with historical and comparative sociological styles of data analysis.

Keywords: Christianity, African Religion, Culture, and Philosophy

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Introduction

African traditional religious and cultural philosophy has been in dispute with the ideology of Christianity in Africa. As at the early time, Achebe (1958) had stated that the white man has used a sharp knife to cut the things that held us together and things started falling apart. The sharp knife Achebe meant is simply Western religion and culture. The discrepancies in the philosophy and ideology of African and Christian religions' cultures are expected to have died naturally before this century, but the issue seems to escalate on a daily basis. Christianity itself took its root as an embodiment of a church, from Roman Catholic Mission before the proliferation of other churches. It could be suggested that the more churches sprout, the more divergent ideologies are developed. The development of Christian denominations on a daily basis triggers the outburst of numerous ideologies which encourage immense discrepancies between the indigenous religion of the aborigines and the Western (Christian) religion.

These disconnections are obvious in such practices like: title-taking, dedication of children, marriage rites, certain religious rituals, cultural dances, secret societies, offerings and sacrifices, other norms and customs, etc. One of the problems of serious concern in this paper is that strategies have been employed to settle these differences, but to no reasonable and positive results. Groups and individuals have adopted religious ecumenism, dialogue, seminars, symposium, etc., but expected success has not been attained.It is found in this study that these differences have immensely affected social, economic and religious awareness, growth and development among African Christians and traditionalists. Therefore, this paper is designed with the purpose to address the negative effects of religious and cultural misconceptions and proffer solutions for a better futuristic relationship. The paper adopts phenomenological research approach. Data were generated through direct interviews and secondary sources, e.g. text books, journals, etc. Historical comparative and sociological styles of data analysis were used.

It is pertinent to emphasize on the view of Obiefuna et al. (2016:19), thus:

> The unbridled proliferation of churches in Nigeria has steered up concerns among adherents of religious faiths, onlookers and academics alike. Nigerian society today is undergoing significant constant proliferation of churches which has brought not only changing values, but also source of solutions to people's problems. The origin of this phenomenon could be traced to

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Martin Luther's 95 theses which sparked off religious revolution in 16th century Europe. Following Luther, Zwingi and John Calvin started reforms in Switzerland, John Lawx in Scotland, also Holland and other countries witnessed the reform.

It could not be conceived as a blunder to concur with the assertion that contrary views or ideologies to existing philosophy constitute reformation, and reformation produces more recent philosophy to the affected society or societies. These contrary ideologies and philosophy between Christianity and African traditional religion and culture propagate the discrepancies in this context.

Clarification of Terms
The terms that are considered for clarification in this article include: Christianity, African Traditional Religion, culture and philosophy. Christianity is the most widely practiced religion in the world, with more than 2 billion followers. The Christian faith centers on beliefs regarding to the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (History Vault, 2017:1) Christianity is viewed as a monotheistic religion, irrespective of the fact that arguments have arisen against the monotheistic conception of Christianity as a contradiction generated by the trinity, that is the Christian belief in three persons in one God. Christianity is a religion that believes in one God. God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are presided over by God the Father. Although Christianity is centered on the personality of Jesus Christ (His birth, messiahship, activities, death and resurrection), yet it appreciates the supremacy of one God the father. African Traditional Religion, on the other hand, has been defined by scholars of Africans Traditional Religion as a unit in Religious Studies. Ekwunife, in Ugwu (2014: 6), defines it thus:

> Those institutionalized beliefs and practices of indigenous Religion of African which are rooted in the past Africans religious culture, transmitted to the present by successive African forebears mainly through oral traditions (myths and folklores, songs and dances, liturgies, rituals, proverbs pithy sayings and names) sacred specialists and persons, sacred space and objects religious works of art, a religion which is slowly but constantly updated by each generation in the light of new experiences through the dialectical processes of continuities and discontinuities.

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In this definition, African Traditional Religion should be understood as an indigenous and religious property of African aboriginals. Every other religion that exists and is practiced in and by Africans is foreign, and not primal. The religion is a chief carrier of African culture and tradition. It has appeared to be difficult to separate African Traditional Religion from African culture.

Culture has been viewed by a layman just as a way of life. Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, in Pappas and Mickelie (2021:2), perceives culture as:

> Shared patterns of behaviors and interactions, cognitive constructs and understanding that are learned by socialization. Thus, culture can be seen as the growth of a group identity fostered by social patterns unique to the group.

Cristiana de Rossi in Pappas and Mickelvie (2021:3) adds that culture encompasses religion, food, what we wear, how we wear it, our language, marriage, music, what we believe if right or wrong, how we sit at the table, how we greet visitors, how we behave with the loved ones and a million other things.

Culture, therefore, could be ascertained to be a unique and special identity of a people which provides a special identification of their dressing style, housing patterns, dances, songs, religion, economic activities, politics, health management, food and feeding habit, other behaviours, greetings and responses, language and literal expositions, e.t.c. Therefore, "culture, then is the primary means by which human beings adapt to the challenges of their environment" (Ikeyi, 2004:171). Onyibo (203:1) adds that, culture is the totality of the people's way of life. It gives honor and respect that is the reason why people are proud of their culture. Therefore culture could be said to be the pride of a people.

Philosophy has commonly been connected to human thought. Leaning (2022:3) has viewed the term philosophy thus;

> The noun philosophy means the study of proper behavior and the search for wisdom the original meaning of the word philosophy comes from the Greek roots philo,-Meaning "love" and – sophos, or "wisdom". When someone studies philosophy they want to understand how and why people do certain things and how to live a good life.

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Philosophy deals with the search for meaning of nature and life. Philosophy covers the areas of epistemology, metaphysics and ethics – moral philosophy. This article, therefore, looks into strategies that will yield better fruits in reconciling the the religious ideologies of Christianity and African Traditional Religion.

Highlights On Some Areas Of Discrepancies

The ways of conceptions of different ideas, practices and beliefs among adherents of Christianity and African Traditional Religion call for attention, especially in this 21st century. These discrepancies exist between Christianity and Islam, but it seems, ordinarily, gratuitously inessential and undeserved to encounter an experience of hostile relationship between these two religions as a result of existence of different ideologies. Of course, two entities from different cultural backgrounds must not be expected to work or think alike. It is expected that a similar understanding between the converted Jews and Judaisic Jews would occupy the psyche of African Christians and their counterparts who are traditionalists. Unfortunately, crises become the case of these sets of African traditional and Christian religious practitioners or votaries. Jewish tradition and culture were able to build themselves gently in transition, from old to new dispensations with cordial growth development and harmonized differences. In Africa, the two major foreign religions are in conflict, one among them opens local confrontations with the indigenous religion of the aboriginals. This creates chaos in the African religious scene as a whole.

Few areas where these differences are obvious include: the idea and use of symbols, cultural or certain materials or objects, health management and treatments, covenant/oath and administration of justice, priesthood sacrifices, rites of passage, gender sensitivities, etc. African and Christian religious atmosphere is littered with antagonists. Achebe (1974: 70 – 71) posits thus:

> As he approached the centre of the market place Ezeulu reenacted the first coming of *Ulu* and how each of the four days put obstacle in his way. At that time, when lizards were still in one and twos, the whole people assembled and chose me to carry their new deity. I said to them "Who am I to carry this fire on my bare head? A man who knows that his anus is small does not swallow an *udala* seed. They said to me:
> "Fear not. The man who sends a child to catch a shrew will also give him water to wash his hand" I said: "So be it". And we set to work. That day was Eke".

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Achebe narrates the process of choosing priests of deities of shrines in Africa – Igbo traditional society. This is similar to Old Testament process of choosing priests. This choice of priest/priesthood in some cases was revealed to the people in divinations as a divine call, as it was in the case of Samuel. For the Christians in this 21st century, priestly vocations are decided by the individual priests who may believe that they have been called by God but have to work hard, and would be sponsored by family, friends and philanthropists within their reach, before they could be ordained by the priest of a higher order. More so, in this 21st century, people have chosen on their own to function as priests with different nomenclatures, viz: evangelists, apostles, etc., and as Christian religious ministers of various ministries. Most of these specialists in the priestly order, in Christianity, criticize and condemn traditional religious priesthood.

In Africa, there are actions and items that have cultural and religious symbolic interpretations. On the traditional Igbo society encapsulated in Chinua Achebe's novels, three food items stand out: kola nut, palm wine and yam (Onwuka, 2019). Most Christians, especially those from the new generation African independent churches, Pentecostal churches, etc., have condemned the social symbolic significance of yam, kola nut and palm-wine. They counter the claim that the yam, which is acknowledged by the traditionalists especially among the Igbo as a leading food item, has a divinity, *Ufiajioku,* attached to it and should be celebrated annually.

For this reason, such Christians have refused to participate in Igbo New Yam Festivals. And they believe that the masquerade cult display is an alliance to other religions. Some have refused to use kolanut and palm wine even in occasions where they are traditionally compulsory, like marriage rites, birth rites and child dedication, just because they believe that they are major food items used for traditional rites, rituals and worship. There are other concerns given by such Christians about the symbolic regards of such food items. For example, kola nut has some gender considerations. On issues of kola nut, for instance, some argue that the sharing practices in traditional societies are male-oriented. There are some practices, which seemingly marginalize women. Women are not allowed to present kola nut directly to a visitor in the presence of a male, even if it is her small son. From a common kola dish, instead she was given one. A woman owned no kola nut trees, and even when she dared to plant one, she owned it only by proxy (Eze, 2019). Kola nut has serious socio-cultural and religious symbolism and is held in very high esteem by the Igbo. Mr Izuchukwu Okalu (personal

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communication, 14th April, 2022) points out that in some Igbo communities, females do not cultivate yam or put it inside the yam heaps or make yam heaps in the farm physically by themselves. In some places, it is against the custom to march yam tuber(s). He continues that women do not own palm trees.

Discrepancies are also attracted by the Christian rejection of the use of certain cultural materials or objects. Most of them claim that all of them (cultural objectives) are meant for fetish intentions. There are eleven different versions of pot suffixed with '*ite*', seven different types of '*udu*' and five different types of '*oku*'. Some are either prefixed or suffixed with the name 'Chi'. These are: *Onu Udu chi, Chiagaliga / Chi Okpa nibo Chi okpa naa* (Nwokike, 2006 : 23). Most Christians do not want to use any pottery products, no matter the type, because they were used for traditional religious purposes in the past and present. These Christians do not want to know the purposes for which those pottery materials were made, and the purpose for which the present pottery materials are made. They discard any pottery products in their homes, even though those products can be used to preserve food items, seeds and seedlings, water, etc. Apart from pottery products, there are other cultural objects they reject. Examples, such traditional stools are: *okobo*, fresh palm fronds, *Omu*, the metal gong, wooden gongs, etc.

Some Christians divorce their relationships with people who acknowledge traditional health care delivery, in all ramifications. Okafor (2019: 67) points out thus:

> …Traditional medicine is of prophylactic (preventive and therapeutic (curative) while magic is of contagious, sympathetic and homeopathic types. In some cases, medicine can be simply administration of herbs, roots, ointment without any immediate spiritual attachment …

The perception of some Christians, as far as traditional health care delivery is concerned, is that it is the use of dangerous amulets, talisman, charms, and a shift from their faith to a devilish belief system. This causes a great difference in the understanding of some Christians of the practitioners of traditional religion in Africa.

There are other discrepancies that exist between them on idea of prophecy and revelation of hidden facts or things beyond physical sight and observation or reasoning. For the Christians, divination is not from the God Almighty. Though they believe that there is a serious gift of prophecy given to men by God, but it does not call for divination. Mr

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Okeh Donald (personal communication, 4th May, 2022) is of the view that divination in most cases comes as a gift from God to the expert, just like prophecy among Christians. Hence, there are fake and real diviners and prophets among Christians and traditional practitioners.

There are also disagreements in worship, prayers, sacrifices etc. Okafor, in Okafor (2020: 115 – 116), has identified up to fourteen types/forms of worship in African Traditional Religion. They include: public, individual, communal, private, daily, annual worships and so on. Okafor (2020 : 116) adds thus:

> In all these worships, prayers are the most observable element… It is pertinent to stress here that as far as prayers are of so much importance to Africans, it must at the same time, significantly influence the indigenization of African knowledge and values.

African prayer has significant space in the brains of Africans. The names they and their children answer radiate to their knowledge foundation. Even when an African man is a Christian, there is serious attachment of spiritualities in whatever happens around them. Therefore, it could be suggested that African traditional contents of prayers influence even the African Christians' beliefs and practices. In African prayers, many spiritual bodies are put at the forefront. They include: God, gods, oracles, divinities, magic and medicine, ancestors, and ancestresses. In every worship in African Traditional Religion, prayer forms the major element. It is also the same thing in the Christian religion, the types of worships observed by Okafor in African Traditional Religion are virtually seen in the Christian religion, but here the problems lie fundamentally on the belief systems on certain spiritual bodies and the images that represent them in worship (places) and during prayers.

While in the African acknowledge the spiritual being of God the father, lower gods, divinities, deities and ancestors and ancestresses, water spirits, spirits of living creatures and things, animals and plants, natural bodies e.g. mountains, hills, caves, grove, etc., the Christians acknowledge the spiritual values of God Almighty, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit (Trinity), Mother Mary, Angels, Saints, etc. All these spirit beings are important in these two religious faiths, and also create a serious demarcation in the relationship between the members of these two religions to an extent that chaos arises between blood relations on the basis of differences in their religious faiths. In extreme cases, it has created disunity between blood relations from different Christian denominations.

Other practices that create differences among the practitioners these religions are oath-taking/covenant offering and sacrifices. The Christian Bible teaches adherents not to swear in the name of anything; instead, they are to say the truth and go. For example James 5:12 says thus:

> Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to do say is a simple "yes" or "No" otherwise you will be condemned.

Hence, the Christian Bible does not support swearing of any kind of oath. But for the African Traditional Religion, swearing on oath serves as the major means through which one could be trusted or exempted from an evil or crime. All things being equal, Christians today swear oaths of allegiance to office, affidavit, assets declaration and attestations, etc., in most cases with a judiciary authority. For the traditionalists, the gods, divinities, deities, spirits and their priests are both religions and authorities in charge. This art of swearing oaths still causes havoc between these two religions because of the differences in their background philosophies and ideologies. On the practice of instituting covenant, the two religions adhere to that in different religious platforms. For the practitioners of African Traditional Religion, animals can be killed, and other traditional religious objects could be used. The basis of the uses of animal or food items for covenant in Africa generally and in Igbo in particular is that there is the belief that after having a sensitive religious and life-sustaining agreement between two persons or parties, dinning together with the same animal and food used to sacrifice to the divine order solidifies such treaty (personal communication, 31st May, 2022). So, if any of these parties or persons violates the conditions of the agreement, the person must be divinely and humanly punished. For the Christians, the only item that is vital in their covenant is the Bible. Okwueze and Kanu (2003: 97) examine this significance of traditional covenant thus:

> This type of traditional covenant was recently made between the people of Aguleri, Umuleri, and Umuoba Anam communities meant to set the wounds inflicted by fratricidal war, which took place among them. The situation in these communities of Amanbra East Local Government Area of Anambra State was to say the least a war of attribution, which degenerated to a state of anarchy. The conflicts was the death of hundreds of people with properties worth millions of naira destroyed… The covenant that took place is called in the local language *Iko Mme* which means

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> removing the bloodshed. *…Iko Mme* means traditional reconciliation. It is a sort of cleansing to appease the gods.

The truth is that it was this covenant that reconciled Aguleri, Umuleri and Umuoba Anam communities up till today. Such a crisis has never arisen among their communities. It is clear that both traditional and Christian covenant systems are efficacious in crisis conditions. Therefore, there is need to reconcile the differences that exist in these contrary religious ideologies because of their relevance to mankind.

Sacrifice is another area of misconception among Christians and practitioners of African Traditional religion. Gbenda (2006: 61) has conceived sacrifice in the Nigerian tradition thus:

> Sacrifice in Nigeria traditional religion is deeply religious. It is one of the elements of worship in which material things like cow, goats, fowls, rice, yam, wine, kolanuts, e.t.c are offered to the supreme being or though his agents for good relationship, harmony, communion to heal old wounds of trouble and expect response.

Sacrifice traditionally in African Traditional Religion can involve human sacrifice which for Christians is unnecessary for man, because for them, Jesus Christ has died once and for all for all humanity. In this area, this paper supports the Christian philosophy because religion should stand to save man, rather than to take life. Though human sacrifice has been condemned by most traditionalists, especially in this 21st century, practitioners of traditional religion insist that animal and food offered to the Supreme Being/gods should be killed and shared amongst the congregation. The importance of prayer in a Christian's life includes the avoidance of temptation, sin, to persevere in Christian life and seek the assistance of God in prayer. The African Traditional Religion serves the same importance. The processes and places and personalities involved in both religions' prayers create the difference.

The Christians also criticize the traditionalists that they offer sacrifices to man-made objects, while the traditionalists accuse Christians that their priestly order is self-centred by taking custody of whatever that is offered during worship, without allocating any to the congregation or members at service, even the persons that brought the offerings. All the same, these criticisms should not arise as far as members of each of these religions are comfortable with the practices on the order of sacrifice, especially where human life is not at risk. There are other areas of discrepancies, but the nature of this research would limit its

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scope to these areas at this point, to be able to attend to other sub-headings of this article.

Initial Strategies Adopted In The Reconciliation Of The Differences Between African And Christian Religious And Cultural Ideologies In Africa

Religious misconceptions and differences in ideologies have remained a tormenting problem to Nigerian religious practitioners. Among the Christians, there arose serious denominational crises that called for a lasting solution. There is need for reconciliation, giving rise to religious dialogue, ecumenism, etc. According to Gaiya (2018 : 120), "Dalogue is not only a conversation involving persons but also, the exchange of ideas or views on opinions.Dialogue involves understanding other people's idea and pattern of life and adjusting to accommodate them in co-inhabiting in the environment. Traditional religion, Islamic religion and Christian religion are the three major religions in Nigeria. In recent years, conflicts are often common, that seem to be unprecedented in the history of these religions, especially between traditionalists and Christians and between Christians and Muslims. With this development, there is need for inter-religions dialogue (Gaiya, 2018 : 121). Ganya (2018) continues that conflicts and misunderstanding between traditionalists and Christians, with examples from Igbo society where instances of bloody clashes involving issues such as masquerades. On issues of misunderstanding between traditional practices and Christianity, dialogue has helped to a certain extent in the 20th century. This strategy had gone as far as it can to close the gap in the understanding of each other's religious beliefs and faiths. But discrepancies still abound between these two religions.

Ecumenism was later adopted as another strategy to support inter-religions dialogue. Gaiya (2018: 112) has defined ecumenism as: "a body (movement, council) representing the whole Christian world or universal church in seeking to restore the unity of the Christians churches… Ecumenism is the principle or aim of uniting different branches of the Christian churches". This ecumenical thought has motivated the establishment of related institutions in Africa as far back as the 1990s. In the words of Ani (1990 : 47), Let us remember once more that the institute of Ecumenical Education, Thinkers Corner, Enugu is already nationally accredited to pursue research and teaching in ecumenical education and the social sciences in Nigeria in order to promote a better understanding between Christian churches, different faiths and divided communities. Ecumenism as a concept has developed a unifying concept even beyond the Christendom; but for the

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fact that the idea was originally developed to unite churches, it became less active in uniting other religious faiths in Nigeria. Mrs E. Chikelu (personal communication, 14th June, 2022) stressed that ecumenism as a concept is developed as general courses across all levels and disciplines of study in the institutions. Such institutes should have been for the study of ecumenical concepts as a discipline, instead of making it a general course for all students. On this background, the institute has not gotten to an expected or recommendable degree of achievement. The society of Nigeria in particular and Africa in general still faces inter-religious and cultural mischief and differences. Ecumenical dialogue demands, just as we accord ourselves, the valency of having reasons, logic and feelings peculiar to us; other people, since they are human beings, consequently have feelings, logic and reasons peculiar to them (Ani, 1987: 9). Ecumenism should be built to seriously tackle negative reasoning, logic and feeling against other people's faith and culture other than one religion's affairs.

Mr Nnebedum Chima (personal communication, 4th June, 2022) is of the opinion that print and other media platforms have tried in tackling religion and cultural differences between traditional and Christian religions at least in Igbo communities, but could not get down well to the interior or rural villages very well. More so, low literacy has contributed to the low output of these strategies, including conferences and seminars.

Before the recent years, churches trained their ministers. For example, the Roman Catholic mission made special academic training compulsory for her priests. At a time, other churches like the Anglican Communion joined. Mr. Okolo Okenwa (personal communication, 6th June, 2022) points out that a more accommodating understanding among Christian priests who are academically trained on missionary works in the contemporary African environment makes commendable impact in closing the discrepancies in inter-religious relationships. That notwithstanding, more seminar strategies need to be put in place.

Strategies For Reconciliation Of Differences Between African Traditional And Christian Religious And Cultural Perceptions In Africa In The 21st Century

In this 21st century, African indigenous religion and Christianity are suffering some issues that are anchored on understanding their individual religious and culture-orientated beliefs and practices. It is on this background that this paper suggests training for collaboration of

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inter-religious and cultural ideologies. Ugorie (2017 – 2018 : 103) avers thus:

> Owing to the religious leaders training on interfaith relations, the need arises for a training agency in Nigeria immediately. The agency's work would be to train religious leaders for interfaith relations. The Federal Government in conjunction with the Nigerian Interreligious Council (NIREC) should establish one. In that circumstance their role should focus on research and planning on how to achieve religious peace in Nigeria. Meanwhile the body or team should be thoroughly trained in all aspects of inter-faith relations possibly by the Cambridge inter-Faith Team, London or any other recognized interfaith relations organisation.

Training for collaboration of inter-religious and cultural ideologies is similar to inter-faith training, but it is at the same time different from it, because it will be organized for both religious and cultural custodians or leaders, and other members/practitioners of both Christian religion and African traditional religion and culture, season after season with training centres in every African indigenous community. Experts should be extracted among highly educated Africans in related fields within and outside the borders of the African continent in order to make the learning purely African. This will go a long way in reshaping African traditionalists' and Christians' philosophies on religion and culture.

Anti-fanaticism campaign is a measure that could also help to tackle these discrepancies to their barest minimum. Agundu (2020:15) examines thus:

> The history of Nigeria as a nation is replete with perennial struggle for national integration and Cohension as a result of tribalism or ethnicity and to some extent, regionalism. The Nigeria founding fathers in acknowledging the socio-cultural diversity and heterogeneity of Nigeria never contemplated it to constitute an albatross in Nigeria quest for national integration. This spirit was captured in a famous line of Nigerian anthem at independence.

The quest for national integration has been triggered by ethnicity and multiplicity of cultures and religions. A similar issue has contributed to or caused the differences in the philosophy of Christianity and African Traditional Religion in this 21st century. This article, hence, advocates for development of anti-fanaticism campaigns in line with the

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provisions of the Nigerian Constitution which solicits for freedom of worship and association for her citizens. The constitutions of other African countries also provided for such freedom for their citizens. Unenlightened traditionalists and Christians fight due to fanatical thoughts where Christians demolish traditional worship places and objects, while the traditionalists retaliate aggressively. Practical anti-fanaticism campaigns need to be seriously carried out. Mr. Okechukwu Nnaedozie (personal communication, 17th June, 2022) finds that both Christians and traditionalists embark on processions at intervals. For the traditionalists, processions are done on issues of concern to the community, and are done on gender identity in most cases. Communities in Africa should, at year intervals, organize rallies when members come together on both rural and urban streets, roads, avenues, closes, markets, squares, civic centres for anti-fanaticism processions. These steady, practical and physical processions that convey also penalties on fanatic actions will go a very long way in reducing the philosophical misconceptions between African traditional practitioners and Christians.

Infant religious and cultural integration campaign is another strategy towards managing misconceptions between Christians and traditionalists. Associate Prof. Christian Uzondu (personal communication, 18th June, 2015) teaches that in psychology, it is agreed that whatever you want from a child when s/he grows should be done from ages 0 – 10 years. Programmes should be put in place by relevant stakeholders on reaching out to young children between ages 4 – 17 years on the need to avoid opposition to religious and cultural ideologies. They should be taught during vacations in their groups, in their rural and urban streets, roads, closes, avenues, villages and communities. These children should be consistently taught to accommodate other children and people from other religions, culture, beliefs and backgrounds.

Central and annual religious and cultural archival interaction programmes should be encouraged. Independent African states should organize annual activities where people of all walks of life will meet to witness and watch different local archival contents and materials from the traditional religion, Christianity and other religions existing therein. The archives should be planned to contain every culture and religion's materials from history to the present. This annual event will help different religious practitioners to observe areas of similarities in individual religions.

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BriEf Hints On The Effects Of The Discrepancies

Although unprecedented violent and unpleasant conditions are experienced in Africa due to religious discrepancies, the menace has at the same time fortified African people's thought. While Christians fight to fortify their religions foundation, in Africa, traditionalists have never relented. Mr. Chiekwe Nze (personal communication, 8th May, 2022) points out that critics are a major reason why African Traditional Religion and culture and Christianity have lived to hold their principles tenaciously. Religious and cultural differences among the two religious groups have weakened social, religious, economic, political and health promotion and relationships in Africa. These differences do more harm than good in the African environment in this 21st century. Agha (1997: 103) asserts that:

> The priests and worshippers of the Native African Religion were hostile to the missionaries who brought New Religion as they felt that it was a threat to the growth of their "religious practices and worship. The Africans were regarded as Fetish people. There were constant frictions between the worshippers of the foreign and native religions. The Africans were branded as cannibals as human sacrifice were often made to the gods. The rules and the dread of malignant spiritual influences, whose power was thus to be placated, made the African religion a bondage of fear.

Among the effects of the discrepancies between adherents of African native religion and Christianity is the fact that inhuman practices were reduced to the barest minimum. Each of them is able to confront the other on inhumanity on their cultures. Shehu et al. (2021) are of the view that archives are mediums of preserving information on African culture and tradition. When all these materials are displayed annually in various African countries for public consumption, Africans will begin to understand the best approaches to religions and cultures.

Development and establishment of special non-governmental organisations for interaction and collaboration of inter-religious and cultural ideologies, and ministry of inter-religious and cultural affairs in African countries will be of great importance in tackling this menace. These two bodies will be very significant in the execution of these aforementioned strategies. They can establish their offices in strategic locations for effective delivery of these suggested strategies. Mrs Owusu Janet (personal communication, 7th April, 2016) states that Africans need personnel specially designated to tackle religious and cultural misunderstanding for rapid growth and development. Staff of

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these public services can be managed by government at all levels and philanthropists in various African societies.

Divergent philosophies in religion and culture have caused some disagreements between African religious and cultural adherents. These discrepancies do not exist without both positive and negative effects on social, religious, economic, political, health, etc., affairs of the citizenry. Religion is supposed to be a source of peace and tranquility, but, unfortunately, this hope has been lost in religions and cultures, especially in heterogeneous African countries. Religious and cultural discrepancies have caused a lot of loss of properties and lives, sources of living and   constant tension and fear in the inter-relationship between Christians and traditionalists in Africa. These are   wrong beliefs and practices; for example, some Christians reject their parents/relations because they refused to join their denominations' faith. African Traditional Religion believes in the law of karma, do-me-I-do-you – jungle justice, etc.

Recommendations

This paper recommends that:
1.   Africans should rather put the well-being of the continent first than the affairs of their individual religions.
2.   Africans should try to be open-minded to enable the suggested strategies give their expected results.
3.   Africans should make plans for sophisticated care for the elders as major sources of traditional religious culture and information, since African religion and culture are based on oral tradition and lacks written preservative measures.
4.   African traditionalists and Christians should encourage preservation of religious and cultural materials outside museums and archives.

Conclusion

African religion and Christianity have been facing a lot of disagreements from the advent of Christianity till today. Combined efforts have been made by concerned African traditionalists, Christians and foreigners, but expected results have not been convincingly achieved. These stakeholders had adopted ecumenisms, seminars, symposia, religious dialogues and so on, but much has not been gotten.

The research suggests other strategies to see if more productive results could be gotten. These new strategies suggested in this 21 century African society include: inter-faith training, anti-fanaticism campaigns,

infant religious and cultural integration campaigns, among other strategies. It is obvious that due to the fact that the negative effects of these discrepancies are more than the positive effects, these strategies are believed to   make more positive impacts than the previous strategies.

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Interview
1. Mr. Chiekwe Nze, farmer, Enugu 66yrs 8/5/22
2. Onwusu Janet, public servant, Ghana, 54yrs, 7/4/2011
3. Mr. Izuchukwu Okalu, farmer, Enugu, 49yrs, 14/4/2022
4. Mr. Donald Okeh Civil servant, Anambra 54yrs 4/5/2022
5. Mr. Thaddeus Tarkma. Businessman, Benue 44yrs, 31/5/2020
6. Mrs. Eugenia Chikelu, Lecturer, Enugu, 45yrs 14/6/2022
7. Mr. Nnabedum Chima. Civil Servant, Anambra State, 62yrs, 4/6/2022
8. Mr. Okolo Okenwa, Public servant, 53yrs 6/6/2022
9. Mr. Okechukwu Nnaedozie, Clergy, Enugu 56yrs 6/6/2022
10. Assoc. Prof. Christian Uzondu, Lecturer, Anambra State 70yrs 18 July, 2015

INTRA-CHURCH DIALOGUE AND ETHNIC CONFLICT RESOLUTION: AN EVALUATION OF ACTS 6:1-7 TOWARDS PEACE-BUILDING IN AFRICA

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Executive Summary

The conflicts in Africa have triggered the worst humanitarian crisis since after the independence, and if not checked, will continue to rise. Population and values displacements are increasing and an entire generation of children has and is being exposed to war and violence, increasingly deprived of basic services, education and protection. The study is premised on the assumption that the body of Christ is today plagued by numerous intra church conflicts resulting in breakaways or divisions because the appropriate church conflict resolution and management mechanisms are not used to manage and resolve them when they do occur. Hence peace search based solely on secular values will probably not be sustainable. The objective of this study is to expose these frictions and to ask how we can deal with this intra church conflict and how we can think with a text such as Acts 6:1-7 in addressing the conflict of ethnic discrimination and leadership crisis. The paper adopted the critical historical exegetical method and Biblical passage of Acts 6:1-7 and theories. The major findings of the research indicate that the early Christians in Jerusalem witnessed a case of ethnic or cultural discrimination that nearly rocked the unity of the church and the Jerusalem church at this point numbered in the thousands and likely worshipped in home gathering in three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek), the Widows' needs taxed the distribution network beyond the capacity of the apostles to oversee it directly. It was also confirmed that the major causes of conflicts in the church (Acts 6:1-7) include discrimination, negligence of the ministry of the word and prayer, poor communication skills, poor administrative structures. The paper aims at recommending intra-church dialogue as expressed in the Acts 6:1-7. The paper concludes that the disciples thus

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demonstrated the willingness to take a deliberate and decisive decision on certain issues in order to maintain peace and unity of the church.

Keywords: Church, Intra-Church Dialogue, Ethnicity, Conflict Resolution, Peace-Building

Introduction

Acts 6:1-7 marks the first intra-group conflict in the Christian community. In this passage, two different groups (Hebraic Jews and Hellenistic Jews) were trying to live together as one Christian community in spite of their cultural differences. This cultural divide marginalised the Hellenistic Jews. Commenting on this, Witherington (1998) avers that a community that regarded itself as the fulfilment of Israel's covenant with God, members who are more prototypically Israelite are receiving more of the group's resources than the others. This marginalised group, however, aptly complained to the Apostles and their complaint led to the restructuring of the community that would better serve the community's needs.

In the world today, most inter/intra ethnic conflicts occur as a result of marginalisation of certain group(s). The word 'marginalises' according to Okaneme (2014) means 'to treat someone or something as if they are not important.' It entails putting people in a position in which they lack power and cannot influence a decision. According to Mullaly (2007, p.252) 'marginalisation has the potential to result in severe material deprivation, and in its most extreme form can exterminate groups'. People who are marginalised often have little or no control over their lives, and the resources available to them. In line with this assertion, Young (2000) opines that marginalised individuals are materially deprived and as well excluded from services, programmes and policies of the society. This according to Saksena (2014) cripples the affected in making any positive contribution to the growth of the society. From the biblical creation story, we are made to understand that God created everyone equally for co-existence. However, in most culture of the world, especially the Jews and the Africans, the notion of equal co-existence is a mere daydreaming phenomenon, (Ugwu & Okoli, 2012). The Jews according to Ituma (2016) believed that God is their monopoly; hence non-Jews have no place in the divine economy.

In Nigeria, it is glaring that some ethnic groups claim dominance over others and this poses a serious challenge to the country's unity. No wonder Osudibia (2001) while commenting on this ugly situation postulates that marginalisation remains the major obstacle on our way

to nationhood. Nigeria as a multi-lingual entity is made up of ethnic or tribal groups with a population that ranges between five thousand to five million for each group, (Uzuegbunam, 2013). The Hausa, the Igbo and the Yoruba are the three main ethnic groups in Nigeria. Others are the Tiv, the Efik, the Urhobo, the Kanuri and so on. According to Okaneme (2014), the Igbo are the third largest ethnic nationality in Nigeria after Hausa and Yoruba. He (Okaneme) observes that there is no other ethnic nationality in the country that has suffered tremendous and orchestrated marginalisation like the Igbo people. In concordance with the above Nwankwo (2000) avers marginalisation has become the Igbo's bedmate. From the optic of Okaneme (2014), the program of 1966 meted against the Igbo in the northern part of the country, following their quest to secede from Nigeria, a move that was necessitated by endless acts of wickedness and man's inhumanity to man, claimed up to one million lives. It is not unsurprising that even up till today no successive governments have successfully addressed the issue of marginalisation of the Igbo. Probably that is the reason why most scholars, commentators and opinion leaders in the Eastern region of the country who do not understand why the Igbo are so neglected in a system that claims to accommodate them, questions the place of Igbo in Nigeria. Thus this gave birth to the Igbo question: *Who are the Igbo? And are they really part of Nigeria?* If the Igbo are truly part of Nigeria, then the recent call for the restructuring of the country's federal structure should urgently be addressed. Okonkwo (2018) while stressing the need for restructuring of the country's present structure succinctly defines restructuring as 'altering the way something is structured in order to make it more functional or effective.' In the context of this paper, the above definition implies that restructuring entail reworking or reorganizing the political structure of Nigeria in a way that will be generally acceptable by its citizenry, the Igbo inclusive. Understood from the above background, this research pegs its fulcrum within the pericope of Acts 6:1-7 which upholds to a reasonable extent restructuring as the best solution to the problem of marginalisation. Hence, if Nigerian leaders can restructure the country's political structure, then the complaint of marginalisation and constant secession threats by some ethnic groups in the country, particularly the Igbo will undoubtedly die off.

Clarifications Of Terms
Church

For a proper understanding, there is the need to make a distinction between two senses in which the term Church' is used in this paper. In one sense, the Church is used as an institution while another sense it is

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used as an organism. The Church as an institution is defined by Van Reken as the "formal organization that sets out to accomplish a specific purpose (2020, p.198). According to Van it is an agent which can do things; and can say things because it has its own voice. The Church as an institution has its own purposes and plans, its own structure and officers, and its own mission. It has its own proper sphere. In many ways it parallels other institutions, like governments or schools (2020, pp.198-202). And the Church as an organism refers to "the church as the body of believers, the communion of believers. Caleb D. Dami, understands the term 'Church' to mean an organized people of God, a spiritual and moral force to be reckoned with (2019, p.5);

The distinction between the two concepts of the Church is that while the institutional church refers to a unified organization. They Church as an organism refers to an aggregate of individual believers in which each Christian acts as a personal agent with a purpose and a call in God's plan. This twofold meaning of church reverberates in Jim Harris' view when he says: "By "church" I mean both the individual believer and the institutional entity (Dajwan 2020, p.3). It therefore means that in discussing the role of the church in the pursuit of intra church conflict resolution and peace of a given country, we are invariably dealing with the part that both individuals and the corporate body have to play in the society.

Dialogue
Etymologically, dialogue means a speech across, between, through two or more people. Dialogue comes from the Greek *dialogos*. *Dia* is a preposition that means "through," "between," "across," "by," and "of." *Dia* does not mean two, as in two separate entities; rather, *dia* suggests a "passing through" as in diagnosis "thoroughly" or "completely." Logos comes from *legein*, "to speak" Crapanzano (1990, pp.354-355). Logos means "the word," or more specifically, the "meaning of the word," created by "passing through," as in the use of language as a symbolic tool and conversation as a medium. As Onians points out, logos may also mean thought as well as a speech–thought that is conceived individually or collectively, and/or expressed materially. Consequently, dialogue is a sharing through language as a cultural symbolic tool and conversation as a medium for sharing. Accordingly, dialogue refers to the mutual exchange of experience, ideas and opinions between two or more parties; i.e., a conversation. Dialogue is two-way or multi-way communication. It presumes the opportunity to reply on several occasions in order to enhance a line of reasoning. The concept of dialogue contains a dimension of simultaneity and direct contact, either physical or via technical aids. In order to achieve genuine civic

participation, there must be some form of dialogue between citizens and those in positions of power. In a dialogue, everyone taking part must be given the chance to study the other parties' suggestions and opinions, contemplate them and respond (1951, pp.31-34). According to Turner cited in (1969, p.355)

> Dialogue is a culturally and historically specific way of social discourse accomplished through the use of language and verbal transactions. It suggests community, mutuality, and authenticity– an egalitarian relationship. So understood, dialogue provides a meeting ground, *communitas*, and manifests itself in a variety of spontaneous and ritual modes of discourse in which nature and structure meet.

Listed below are some of the phrases used by people who have engaged in dialogue in many different schools, corporations, government, non-profit organisations, communities, families:

1. a level playing field with respect for all
2. a chance to get all our cards up on the table and play with a full deck
3. space and pace that allows for all to hear and be heard, recognition and strengthening of relationships
4. an exploration of our individual and group assumptions to reveal our thinking and generate new possibilities
5. building shared understanding of differing points of view
6. ability to hold the tensions of complexity and paradox and see systemic patterns

Dajwan (2020, pp.5-6) defined the concept of dialogue as the conversation between two or more persons of different faiths and beliefs systems, ethnic groups, cultural backgrounds, norms, philosophy and people of different understandings. He went further that the purpose of dialogue is "seeking mutual understanding and harmony". Again, that it is essentially a process of shared thinking, in the course of which a valuable form of relationship may emerge. He concluded that dialogue to encompass a broader range of activities in which people of different cultures, religions, social, political or professional groups come together and interact. Dialogue is not just something that takes place on an official or academic level only – it is part of daily life during which different cultural and religious groups interact with each other directly, and where tensions between them are the most tangible.Therefore, dialogue can be seen as the mode of interaction which made any human life, in any society, worth living example is the Africa value of communality (Dajwan, 2022, p.6).

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Ethnicity

According to *African Bible Commentary*, ethnicity is conceptualized as "an attempt to prove that one's own group is superior to any other group" (6). Ethnicity involves one group of people discriminating against another group, primarily on the basis of ethnic differences. Turaki Yusuf in his book "Ethnicity, Racism, Tribalism and the Gospel of Christ" wondered about the strong force of the bond of ethnic affiliation above and over that of Christianity saying:

> Can the "water" of baptism of Christianity be thicker than the "blood" of ethnicity, racism, tribalism? How deeply rooted are biblical Christianity in the hearts of Africans? Are people in church representing their ethnic/tribal groups or the new Messianic community? To what extent have Christian and biblical values and principles transformed the hearts of Africans, then their expressions of Christianity would reflect the dominating influence of African world view especially of ethnocentrism and tribalism (1997, p.53).

The implication of the above statements is that the idea of ethnicity, racism, and tribalism superiority is and originated from man's pride.

Conflict

"Conflict" is term used to mean a variety of things, in an assortment of contexts under the mantle of conflict are words such as, serious disagreement, incompatibilities, fight, argue, contest, debate, combat, clash and war etc. These are the equally evocate terms to understand the term conflict or to know which description of behaviour fit under the title of conflict. According to Dajwan quoted Bercovitch, a situationalist thinker defines conflict as a "situation which generates incompatible goals or values among different parties" (2022, p.3). According to Lewis Coser an American sociologist defines conflict as the "Clash of values and interests, the tension between what is and what some groups feel ought to be" (Avorgah, 2010, p.9).

Conflict Resolution

The word "resolution" means, The quality of being resolute, A firm decision, An expression of opinion or intentions agreed on by a legislative body, The action of solving a problem or dispute, The process of reducing or separating something into components. Thus, we can preliminary define conflict resolution as a situation: "Where the conflicting parties enter into an agreement that solves their central incompatibilities, accept each other's continued existence as parties and cease all violent action against each other." Conflict resolution refers to a range of process aimed at alleviating or eliminating sources of conflict.

Conflict resolution is an umbrella term for a whole range of methods and approaches for dealing with conflict: from negotiation to diplomacy, from mediation to arbitration, from facilitation to adjudication, from conciliation to conflict prevention, from conflict management to conflict transformation, from restorative justice to peacekeeping (Avorgah, 2010, p.10).

Intra-Church Conflict/Congregational Conflict
This is the difference in opinion or purpose that may frustrate an individual's goals or desires when religious and spiritual beliefs are unaligned (Sande, 2004, p.12). Intrapersonal conflict is a struggle a person has within oneself. It becomes an internal battle between what they want and yet not wanting to compromise what others want. The contest one has when different parts of the self-compete with one another. I want to beloved Pastor, but I also want to be preacher who speaks the truth (Dajwan, 2022, p.8).

The Exegesis Of Acts 6:1-7
Translation of the Text

Greek	English (WEB)
Acts 6:1 Ἐν δὲ ταῖ ς ἡ μέραις ταύταις πληθυνόντων τῶν μαθητῶν ἐ γένετο γογγυσμὸ ς τῶν Ἑλληνιστῶν πρὸ ς τοὺ ς Ἑβραίους, ὅ τι παρεθεωροῦ ντο ἐ ν τῇ διακονίᾳ τῇ καθημερινῇ αἱ χῆ ραι αὐ τῶν	Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, a complaint arose from the Hellenistsagainst the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily service.
Acts 6:2 προσκαλεσάμενοι δὲ οἱ δώδεκα τὸ πλῆ θος τῶν μαθητῶν εἶ παν Οὐ κ ἀ ρεστόν ἐ στιν ἡ μᾶ ς καταλείψαντας τὸ ν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ διακονεῖ ν τραπέζαις.	The twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not appropriate for us to forsake the word of God and serve tables.
Acts 6:3 ἐ πισκέψασθε δέ, ἀ δελφοί, ἄ νδρας ἐ ξ ὑ μῶν μαρτυρουμένους ἑ πτὰ πλήρεις Πνεύματος καὶ σοφίας, οὓ ς καταστήσομεν	Therefore select from among you, brothers, seven men of good report, full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

ἐπὶ τῆς χρείας ταύτης·	
Acts 6:4 ἡμεῖς δὲ τῇ προσευχῇ καὶ τῇ διακονίᾳ τοῦ λόγου προσκαρτερήσομεν.	But we will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word.
Acts 6:5 καὶ ἤρεσεν ὁ λόγος ἐνώπιον παντὸς τοῦ πλήθους, καὶ ἐξελέξαντο Στέφανον, ἄνδρα πλήρη πίστεως καὶ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου, καὶ Φίλιππον καὶ Πρόχορον καὶ Νικάνορα καὶ Τίμωνα καὶ Παρμενᾶν καὶ Νικόλαον προσήλυτον Ἀντιοχέα,	These words pleased the whole multitude. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch;
Acts 6:6 οὓς ἔστησαν ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀποστόλων, καὶ προσευξάμενοι ἐπέθηκαν αὐτοῖς τὰς χεῖρας.	Whom they set before the apostles. When they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.
Acts 6:7 Καὶ ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ ηὔξανεν, καὶ ἐπληθύνετο ὁ ἀριθμὸς τῶν μαθητῶν ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ σφόδρα, πολύς τε ὄχλος τῶν ἱερέων ὑπήκουον τῇ πίστει.	The word of God increased and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly. A great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Extract from Bruce cited by Clement; (Clement, 2021, pp.3-5).

The Historical Context of Acts 6:1-7
The authorship of the book of Acts like many other books in the bible has severally been questioned by biblical scholars; however, nobody has sufficiently provided an alternative. Although the book of Acts never mentioned its writer, from the earliest times Luke has been held to be its writer, (Barclays, 2009). The researcher agrees with this position on the authorship of Luke since there are no sufficient grounds for an opposing view. With a careful study of the Book of Acts, one would discover that it is rich in the history of the nascent church. Bruce (1962, p.15) sagely remarks: 'of all the Evangelists, it is Luke who approaches most nearly the standards of the classical historians.' As we all know, historians barely restrict themselves to a single document, hence, there is no iota of doubt that Luke must have presented excellent information in the Luke-Acts narratives.

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However, carefully looking at our text of study (Acts 6: 1-7), one would observe that it marks the first cross-cultural conflict among the early church, (Kim, 2009). The church began to encounter some problems as it began to increase. Ituma (2003, p.121) meticulously avers that 'by effective biblical analysis one would expect the rate of numerical growth to indicate the rate of spiritual growth. But unfortunately, there are early indications that call for questions.' Commenting on the issue that led to the appointment of seven deacons, Ituma (2003) argues that the problem was not merely a matter of food and drink rather it is an exhumation of an age long acrimony and antagonism. This probably suggests that they have been disharmony between the Hebrews and the Hellenists prior to their coming together as one community of believers. The Hebrews here, were the Aramaic- speaking Jews who grew up in Palestine while the Hellenists refer to the Greek-speaking Jews who lived outside of Palestine but then moved to Jerusalem at some point in their adult lives (Pratt, 2017). Ituma (2003, p.122) observes that ''for those Jews of the diaspora who have been highly influenced by the Greek culture, therefore, Hellenised, total commitment to Torah and the Tradition of the Elders is wanting. So, even though these believers were justified and regenerated it was still difficult for them to dwell together as a family. For Boice (1997, p.112) it was "a problem of administration" as a result of rapid growth of the Church. Barrett (1994, 303) on the other hand narrowed it to "a minor deficiency in administration." On this note, the issue of marginalisation of the Hellenists by the Hebrews in the daily distribution can, therefore, be said to be as a result of the unbalanced structure that was in place in the early church. That is why Ituma (2003) on realising why an issue as mean as the meal could generate such a threat to unity, unsurprisingly stated that the meal issue was only the last straw that broke the camel's back. It was until after the apostles restructured the unbalanced structure that marginalised the Hellenistic Jews that the institution experienced growth and development; ''the word of God increased and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly…'' (Acts 6:7).

Textual Analysis Of Acts 6: 1-7 As Describe By Clement u. Daniel
V. 1-2 The growth of the church and the beginning of complaints by the Hellenists
Ἐν δὲ ταῖ ς ἡ μέραις ταύταις:En dé taís h¢mérais taútais (Now during those days) according to Bruce, (1967), marks the beginning of a new division in the early church. πληθυνόντων(plēthynontōn) used in this versewhich is a genitive form of the verbplhqoj (plēthos)meaning 'to increase' is used the show the rapid growth of the early

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church,*(Vincent's Word Studies, 2006)*.The word 'μαθητῶν' (mathētōn) which is earlier used for the personal followers of Jesus before his Ascension, is used in Acts as a name for Christians in general, (Bruce, 1967).This according to UBS (1997) is the first time in the book of Acts where the term 'disciples'is used as a designation of the Christians. Altogether the corresponding Greek term is used more than twenty-five times in Acts; once with the addition "of the Lord" (Acts 9:1); and in 9:25 the reference may be limited to the followers of Paul, Saul's followers,(UBS, 1997). 'παρεθεωροῦ ντο'(paretheōrounto) which means 'being neglected'is the imperfect passive of the verb 'paretheōrou' meaning 'to overlook' or 'to neglect'(Vincent's Word Studies, 2006).

V. 2-5 The need to restructure the church organisation

The Apostles, upon seen the need to restructure the church organisation, asked the disciples to look among themselves and choose seven men 'μαρτυρουμένους; *marturoumenous*(of good report). *'marturoumenous'*is the present passive participle of '*martureō*' meaning 'to bear witness to'(Vincent's Word Studies, 2006).The motive behind the Apostles' directive is that they'*may appoint*' them to oversee the material needs of the church. '*may appoint*' in Greekκαταστήσομεν:'katastēsomen'is future active indicative of katastēsomi', "*we shall appoint*", *as* an action of the apostles following the choice by the church. It is promised as a certainty, not as a possibility, (Robertson, 2006). The apostles believe that restructuring the church organisation will enable them concentrate on τῇ διακονίᾳ τοῦ λόγου:: *tē diakonia tou logou*'(the in ministry of the words). According to Robertson (2006) '*diakonia*' (ministry) is the same word employed in Acts 6:1, but here it's about preaching as the special ministry with which the apostles were concerned.

V. 5-7 Restructuring through the appointment of deacons

When the community of believers received the proposal presented to them by the Apostles they were 'ἤ ρεσεν::ēresen*(pleased)*. '*ēresen*' is the Aorist active indicative of '*areskō*' (Robertson, 2006). So they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch, (Acts 6:5 WEB). 'Chose' in Greek is 'ἐ ξελέξαντο'; *exelexanto* which is the first aorist middle indicative of *eklegō*, meaning "to pick out from." (Theological Dictionary of New Testament,1978). Each one of the seven has a Greek name, however, according to Vincent Word Studies, (2006), there is no reason to infer from this that they were all Hellenists because it was customary among the Jews to have two names, the one Hebrew and the other Greek. They were probably partly Hebrews and partly Hellenists. They were then presented to the Apostles who in turn inaugurated them. The result of this restructuring as seen in verse 7 is

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remarkable. The number of the word of God increased and the number of disciples multiplied.

Conclusion of the Exegesis

The exegesis and the textual analysis of Acts 6:1-7 reveals that two different groups (Hebraic Jews and Hellenistic Jews) were trying to live together as one Christian community in spite of their cultural differences. This cultural divide which favours the Hebrew-speaking Jews marginalised the Hellenistic Jews. This brought a very serious problem to the unity and growth of the early church. However, the Hellenist complained to the Apostles about the unbalanced structure that marginalised them the community that claimed to accommodate them. For the Apostles, who were unbiased and selfless, listened to the voice of the Hellenist and in response, proffered a lasting solution by restructuring the structure of the early church to accommodate the interest and wellbeing of the marginalised. The consequence of this was remarkable: 'the word of God spread so rapidly and the number of the disciples overwhelmingly multiplied' (Acts 6:7) (Clement, 2021, p.10).

Church As Instrument Against Herself (Intra-Church Conflict)

Unfortunately today, there is a lot of leadership tussles in the church giving way to Christian Politician dammed the consequences of their spiritual negligence over the church and often permits the Muslim counterparts to use them against the killings of their brethren. The rank of these Christian Politicians who permitted themselves to be used for the destruction of the church ranges from Pastor to Members of the church (Dajwan, 2022, pp.16-17).

Some denominations Overseers and Leaders pay allegiance of the same set of government who give no regard to the church destroyers. Many have no reasonable sense of humour as long as they receive financial support from the enemies of the Church. Sometimes you will hear such people saying "receive their money but don't vote them". Some campaign on the Pulpit as against the warning set out by Prophet Abraham and Amos. They Prophets openly cast their rebuke, but many church Leaders today hail and campaign for the enemies of the church on their Pulpits- what a pity? The gap of unity is missing in the church as good number of Christians condemns themselves of the evils that is happening against the church instead of condemning the Islamic Jihadists who are the perpetrators (Ogidiolu, 2019, p.19).

Dialogue in Management of Ethnic Conflicts in Africa

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According to Dajwan Conflict managers use the term "dialogue" in a variety of ways. Most dialogue processes, however, involve people who are engaged in a long-lasting, deep-rooted conflict sitting down together with a facilitator who will help them explore their feelings about the conflict and each other, and develop an improved understanding of the concerns, fears and needs of the other side. Sometimes, the goal of such a process is to develop approaches to conflict resolution: sometimes the goal is simply improved interpersonal relationships, understanding and trust- at least between individuals, if not between the groups as a whole (2022, p.38).

Conflict theorist Jay Rothman in Dajwan (2022, p.38) describes four different kinds of dialogue as in conflict management. The first is positional or adversarial dialogue. In this situation, disputants, meet with a facilitator to talk, but the conversation continues in the same adversarial (I'm right and you are wrong) mode that conflicts typically take. In adversarial dialogue, disputants engage in positional bargaining (that is they focus on firm, usually mutually – incompatible, positions) and blame each other for the problem. The second is human relation dialogue. This approach has disputants meeting with a facilitator to explore their feelings about the conflict and each other. They break down negative stereotypes [Alhaji Sabo Mangu 2001 issue of arna].

Rothman's as in Dajwan (2022, p.39); third type of dialogue in management of conflict is activist dialogue. This form of dialogue provides a foundation for action. Disputants from opposite sides of a conflict get together to rebuild a war – torn city, form a bi-partisan school, or deliver health care to the sick and injured a practical example is [Stefanos Foundation in Jos South-Mark Lipdo]. The purpose of such dialogue is not just talk and understanding, but Mutual Corporation and assistance. (Mutual understanding and trust are often by-products, nevertheless). The fourth dialogue in conflict management is problem solving dialogue – referred to elsewhere in these notes as an analytical problem solving workshops. Such workshops bring disputants together to explore their feelings about the conflict and each other (as it is done in human relations dialogue), but special attention is focused on the parties' fundamental needs, the absence of which is seen to be deep – rooted conflicts. An intense effort is made to jointly re-frame the conflict in terms of needs and then engage in joint problem solving to develop ways to meet those needs and hence, resolve the conflicts.

Dialogue processes are becoming increasingly widely used. Some (especially human relations dialogues) are typically facilitated by therapists, religious leaders and mediators. Problem solving workshops

are typically facilitated by mediators and/or conflict scholars. As originally conceived, these workshops were to be highly analytical. Thus, conflict scholars with an expertise in conflict theory as well as the particular conflict at hand were considered the best facilitators. Many problem solving workshops are still carried out by academicians, but others are facilitated by mediators and other practitioners with less of a scholarly background. Great challenge is the unresolved conflict in Assemblies of God Church because of leadership, all forms of dialogue is used but yielded no result- lets continue to pray (Case study is dialogue in Kwaghas Lahir Mangu Alhaji A Sabo initiative experienced of 2001).

Recommendations

This paper gives the following recommendations:

Since restructuring was a huge factor that the leaders of the early church used to put down the fire of marginalisation in Acts 6:1-7, it is recommended that Nigerian leaders should use restructuring to address the increasing problems facing the country today such as secession threats and so on.

All the regions of the country should have an equal number of states and local governments. The current economic disadvantages experienced by the Igbo in allocation distribution should be brought to an end. The Igbo should have an equal share in the national 'cake' with their counterparts. This will boost job creation, growth and development in the region.

The major reason why there's an increasing demand by the Igbo for secession from Nigeria is that the region is largely underdeveloped due to over-dependence on the federal government. Hence, this paper recommends that the Igbo region should be given more autonomy to operate and control the internally generated revenues in the region.

Corruption begins with delegates. Money changing hands does not amount to credibility. It hides the real motives and ability of the bribe-giver. The givers and the receivers have no moral characters. It redefines democracy. It is no longer Government of the people by people for the people. It is Government of the rich corrupt by the corrupt and for the corrupt rich. Character is superior to Charisma. The Soul of the land is at stake. Lord, please forgive our land, rescue us from ourselves. Nigeria much change from money debate and ratings. This wrong investment process will kill the spirit of development and nation building 26/05/2022 (Dashan). For the disciples they engaged in

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dialogue and all they parties were in agreement with the decision (Acts 6:5).

Conclusion

This paper was a focus on Acts 6:1—7 and intra-church and ethnic conflict resolution in Africa. There is a peace-making force in the Bible that can help us to mutual understanding, joint efforts as a church for peaceful coexistence and genuine humanity. The Gospel calls Christians as salt and light of the earth and to be witnesses for God. The Bible speaks of God who is merciful, just, sovereign and forgiving. If mission, is in God □s name, it must be carried out in God □s way. This means intra-church conflict resolution, dialogue, fairness, respect and the opportunity to respond freely. The issues involved were extensively discussed with open mind by listening to the widow's grievances and suggestions which was welcomed by all (Acts 6:5). It is found out in the course of exegesis of the pericope of Acts 6:1-7 that the problem of marginalisation can rightly be solved through restructuring. Hence, it is demanded that for any church organizations and heterogeneous society to live together in peace and unity, there must be proper restructuring to accommodate everyone's interest. In contrast to the above, it is pointed out in this paper that current structure in operation in the church example Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) in Nigeria poses a serious challenge to her unity and development. The restructuring of the early church by the Apostles in Acts 6:1-7 challenges Nigerian leaders of churches to do the needful to ensure that the church organization in the country is restructured.

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ABOUT THE BOOK

In recent times, the African continent has witnessed a number of religious crises and theological disputes that have led to loss of lives and property. Such religious crises were not only between one religion and the other, but were also found within particular religions. Thus, men of critical minds and intellectual alertness have started to wonder if religion can ever promote peace in the society, thereby, contributing to national development. This book on *Dialogue on Religion, Theology and Development in Africa: Proceedings of the 2022 International Conference of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies,* is *ad rem* as it argues that enough attention has not been given by scholars to the role of religion in the development of growing regions like Africa. It does appear that religion has either been subsumed into ethnicity or that scholars had regarded religion as apolitical. It holds that the life of a developing continent like Africa, riddled with complex moral problems needs religious forces especially now that people are often driven to points when rationality and scientific gadgets fail and raw emotions take over. While religion has often been misdirected into negative roles, this book studies the inherent potentials of religion for meaningful development.

APAS

A Publication Of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies