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EDITORIAL

The mobilization of resources and their distribution is a central issue in the Bible and African life and culture. Often, there are problems concerning the mode of resource mobilization that either make the poor poorer or the rich richer, and how to effectively and evenly distribute these resources to alleviate or mitigate the suffering of the poor. The ancient Mediterranean society “was divided into the ‘haves,’ who are the elite and reside in cities, control the financial wealth of society and are economically endowed; and the ‘have nots,’ who live in villages and work for the elite and wealthy. The ‘have nots,’ who are usually the poor, practise reciprocity and hospitality where the problem of one family became the problem of all the families of the village.” The situation in the ancient world shares some degree of similarities with economic issues in contemporary African society.

In many cases, the poor complain of exploitation by the rich/wealthy or lack of attention towards their economic survival by the political class. The papers in *IBSA-West Africa Journal* Vol.1 examine economic issues in the Bible; and how they can be harnessed to provide some suggestions towards to lessen the economic tension on poor persons in Africa to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 1 – No Poverty in Africa by 2030.

The contributors in this volume approach their topics from either an exegetical perspective (interpretation of a biblical passage), methodological directions for the study of economic issues in the Bible, or a study of the economic phenomenon in the Bible. The findings in each paper engages with African realities of economic conditions.

*Dr. Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh,
Managing Editor,
August, 2023.*

Ecclesiastical Involvement in the Promotion of Human Dignity in Nigeria: The Theology of Wealth and Poverty in James' Epistle

Tom Udo Tom Ekpot, PhD

School of Biblical Studies, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria.

Email: tom_ekpot@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Nigeria is one of the countries so blessed with abundant material and human resources, yet majority of the population continues to live below the poverty line. The gap between the rich and poor continues to widen because of the absence of moral and ethical principles governing both the economic and spiritual life of humanity. The tangibility of poverty confronting Nigeria is not an optical illusion, but a stark reality. The church in Nigeria fails to see the connection between the social and the spiritual lives of people, even the large span of farming lands which can be used for farming purposes to help in reducing food scarcity is now allocated for prayer grounds. While the government leaders continue to owe workers and mismanage public funds, the church is comfortable when such leaders donate large sums of money to the church. This paper therefore argues that the economic crises attacking Nigeria is caused by mismanagement of resources and aggravated by the church's idea of disconnection between the spiritual and the socio-economic lives of humanity. This article adopted an expository approach as the method of study, which is a pedagogical term for any form of writing that conveys information and explains ideas as one of the traditional modes of discourse. Analyzing the teaching on wealth and poverty in the Epistle of James, this paper drew a paradigm to the situation in Nigeria and challenges the church needs to identify in order to solve community problems through collective actions that will neutralize or eliminate the immediate or radical causes of the poverty and constraints to a wholistic quality of life in their host community.

Key Words: *Ecclesiastical, Human Dignity, Wealth, and Poverty.*

INTRODUCTION

The plight of poverty has no justification in Nigeria, a country so blessed with abundant material and human resources, but now its people are among the poor in the world. Poverty is socially as cruel and blind as the practice of slavery at the dawn of civilization.¹ Many young Nigerians are now accepting all manner of inhumane treatment in foreign nations because of the grip of poverty in Nigeria. Chacko observes that there is a widening gap between the rich and the poor, practically because of the absence of moral and ethical principles governing the ecological, economic and spiritual life of humanity,² causing man to miss his ethical foundation. The worrisome part is that the church³ puts up an indifferent attitude about this social aspect of life because the church does not see the interconnectivity of religious faith and social life.⁴ A few times, charity work is extended to a few poor people by way of providing some necessities of life as a religious duty.⁵ Yet this has not diminished the grip of poverty on Nigerians, because what the church needs to do is more than extension of hand of charity.

¹ Martin Luther King, Jr. Quoted in: Jordan Weissman, "Remembering Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Solution to Poverty," (The Atlantic, Jan 20, 2014), <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/01/remembering-martin-luther-king-jrs-solution-to-poverty/283193>

² Simon Chacko. "Ecclesiastical Response on Economic Justice – A Biblical Theology of Wealth." *Biblical Study Journal -BSJ*. Vol 3, no. 4, (2021), 8-22.

³ The word church is used in the work to refer to the Christian faith in general. It is not used in reference to any specific denomination.

⁴ Duane Warden, "The Rich and Poor in James: Implications for Institutionalizes Partiality," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43, no. 2 (2000): 247.-257.

⁵ M C Onukwuba, "Poverty In Nigeria: The Role Of The Church," *Journal of Positive School Psychology* 6,no.8 2022): 1253–1260.

Despite the progress of Christianity in many parts of Nigeria, the grip of poverty on millions of Nigerians involving severe cases of malnutrition, illiteracy, disease and starvation remains a stark reality. In this line of thought, Chacko notes that the tangibility of the economic crisis confronting many countries around the globe is not an optical illusion but rather a sensible reality.⁶ To resolve this crisis, Christians must first acknowledge the reality of such a problem. Unfortunately, as it is today, there is a separation between spiritual life and the social lives of people in the church. The church apparently is more concerned with the spiritual message in the claim that “this world is not our own,” ignoring the fact that Christians will have to stay in the physical world to prepare for the spiritual home. Spans of land that should have been used for agricultural purposes to fight hunger have been turned into prayer grounds, yet the average Nigerian is facing hunger and starvation on a daily basis. Quality time that should have been put into production is lavished on endless fasting and prayer where the men of God place poverty under a curse, yet the average Nigerian is still objectively poor. Therefore, the scale of poverty today in Nigeria is not by accident; there has been gradual progress in the wrong direction, which has finally brought this country to this state of economic poverty in the world and the church has played a role in this. Hence, the time has come for the church to civilize itself by engaging in activities that will help in reducing the power of poverty on Nigerians.

It is time for the church in the twenty-first century to realize that living in a democratic society involves contributing to a constructive, informed, and Christian discourse in public, social, economic, and political policies.⁷ Interconnecting public policy especially on education, politics and economy, with religious faith is a disagreeable task for some Christians. By its nature, religious faith rests on uncompromising pronouncements that are founded on God’s being and the necessary order of the world he has created; by its nature, public policy rests on compromise. Thus, politics and religion tend to vilify one another when they meet.⁸ However, the church cannot stand aloof while people are suffering social and economic injustice and still believe that the spiritual message alone will combat the force of evil in Nigeria, or things will turn out right on their own. As Bauckham rightly observes, “. . . fundamental New Testament principles for life in the Christian community extend in principle to life in the human community as such, and therefore have political relevance.”⁹ The purpose of this article is to seek a biblically informed, Christian perspective on matters of social life relating to labour, poverty, wealth, and the power from wealth. In doing this the article presents the New Testament theology of poverty and wealth in the epistle of James in the light of the present-day national economic crisis.

This article adopts an expository approach as the method for the study. The expository approach according to Attuh and Thikan is a pedagogical term for any form of writing that conveys information and explains ideas as one of the four traditional modes of discourse.¹⁰ Nordquist also explains that the expository approach may include elements of narration, description, and argumentation, but unlike creative writing or persuasive writing, its primary goal is to deliver information about an issue, subject, method, or idea.¹¹ It is within this understanding that this paper raises the question of how the church can be involved in the promotion of human dignity in Nigeria. It also raises concern over the separation of the spiritual from the social life of Christians in Nigeria. The study offers a brief overview of the grip of poverty in Nigeria; gives a brief analysis of the book of James with attention to passages that deal with the rich and the poor. It explores the message of James on proper attitude to riches and poverty and examines the implications of these teachings for the way Christians should behave when confronted with wealth, status, and power on the one hand, or poverty, ignorance, and helplessness on the other. Here, the question is what is the New

⁶ Chacko. “Ecclesiastical Response on Economic Justice – A Biblical Theology of Wealth,” 9.

⁷ Mark A Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 175, 221-228.

⁸ Warden, “The Rich and Poor in James: Implications for Institutionalizes Partiality,” 247.

⁹ Richard Bauckham, *The Bible in Politics: How to Read the Bible Politically* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 9. Christianity must not be lived in a vacuum. If the light of the gospel must shine and the salt of the earth must be tasted, Christians cannot withdraw completely from public views and then make the desired difference in the society.

¹⁰ John Arierhi Ottuh and Nathan Doutimiwei D Thikan, “A New Testament View on Church and State Relations in the Modern World: Challenges for the Contemporary Baptist Church in Nigeria,” *International Journal* 3, no. 1 (2015): 96-104.

¹¹ R. Nordquist. “Expository Writing.” In: <http://grammar.about.com/od/e/g/Expository-Writing-term.htm> July 26, 2023.

Testament teaching on wealth and poverty? What does the church in Nigeria as a community say about the social deprivations and economic injustice going on in Nigeria? What does the Bible teach about the economic welfare of people? How can the church play a vital role in the economic welfare of people, reducing the grip of poverty on Nigerians?

An Overview of Poverty in Nigeria

Poverty is complex, multidimensional and multifaceted with manifestations in the economic, social, political, environmental and every realm of human existence.¹² Ucha sees it as the closure of a window of opportunity for the disadvantaged masses, making them inactive in society.¹³ Poverty is seen in the disadvantage position people are placed in and not really by their choice but by the setting of the society. Danaan defines poverty “as a condition in which an individual or household’s income falls short of the average income of the population in the society being considered.”¹⁴ By this, people in relatively poor statuses have their resources lower than those possessed by average individuals to the extent that they are excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities. They lack access to the common needs of life because they cannot afford them. According to the United Nations, ‘poverty is the lack of basic capacity to function effectively in the society.’¹⁵ People’s lack of empowerment limit their choices in almost everything and their lack of security makes them vulnerable to diseases, violence and even crime.¹⁶ Some of the educated people in Nigeria have no life skills as the education they obtained did not arm them with the skills necessary to produce wealth and become job creators.¹⁷ In the end, even though educated, they are still poor because they cannot help themselves.

There is no doubt that many people in Nigeria lack the necessities of life. This is reflected in the high infant mortality and low average life span for men and women.¹⁸ According to the World Resources Institute’s environmental resource portal Earth Trends, 71 percent of Nigerians live on less than \$1 a day and about 92 percent live on less than \$2 a day.¹⁹ Obviously, the average income per capita does not give the real picture of the state of poverty due to Nigeria’s high-income inequality.²⁰ Chacko notes that despite progress in technology in Nigeria, the existence of absolute poverty for millions of people involving malnutrition, illiteracy, disease and starvation is a fact of today’s world.²¹

According to Dauda, the nature of poverty in Nigeria differs from the pattern in many other countries given that even with the economic growth recorded, poverty is still on the increase in the poverty indices.²² This may be true to the extent that Nigeria is endowed with human and natural resources and has had an increasing national income; yet, a good number of its population still remain in poverty due to uneven distribution and allocation of income and wealth.²³ Anyawu mentions that poverty in Nigeria is feminized, and for that reason, majority of the population will remain in poverty for a long time except if conscious effort is exerted.²⁴ Danaan blames the continuous existence of this phenomenon in Nigeria on

¹² Victoria Voelwoen Danaan, “Analysing Poverty in Nigeria through Theoretical Lenses,” *Journal of Sustainable Development* 11, no. 1 (January 30, 2018): 20, <https://doi.org/10.5539/jsd.v11n1p20>.

¹³ Chimobi Ucha, “Poverty in Nigeria: Some Dimensions and Contributing Factors,” *Global Majority E-Journal* 1, no. 1 (2010): 46-56.

¹⁴ Danaan, “Analysing Poverty in Nigeria through Theoretical Lenses,” 20.

¹⁵ United Nations Statement of June 1998, which was signed by the heads of all UN agencies; see: <http://www.helium.com/items/1587576-poor-service-delivery>. July 19, 2023.

¹⁶ Danaan, “Analysing Poverty in Nigeria through Theoretical Lenses,” 20.

¹⁷ O C Uche and Paul A Udogu, “The Role Of The Church In Poverty Alleviation In Nigeria,” *Nigerian Journal Of Arts And Humanities (NJAHA)* 2, no. 1 (2022), 26-36.

¹⁸ Ucha, “Poverty in Nigeria: Some Dimensions and Contributing Factors,” 46.

¹⁹ <https://www.wri.org/povlinks/country/nigeria.php>. July 19, 2023.

²⁰ Ucha, “Poverty in Nigeria: Some Dimensions and Contributing Factors,” 46.

²¹ Chacko, “Ecclesiastical Response on Economic Justice – A Biblical Theology of Wealth,” 8.

²² Rasaki Stephen Dauda, “Poverty and Economic Growth in Nigeria: Issues and Policies,” *Journal of Poverty* 21, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 61–79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10875549.2016.1141383>. July 19, 2023.

²³ Alberto Alesina and Roberto Perotti, “Income Distribution, Political Instability, and Investment,” *European Economic Review* 40, no. 6 (June 1996): 1206, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0014-2921\(95\)00030-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0014-2921(95)00030-5). July 19, 2023.

²⁴ John C Anyanwu, “Poverty in Nigeria: A Gendered Analysis,” *African Statistical Journal* 11, no. 11 (2010): 38–61.

weak governance, impunity, systemic failures, illiteracy, income inequality, unemployment and corruption.²⁵ It is true that over the years, some politicians and government officials are selfish, greedy and corrupt, enriching themselves by looting from the treasury of the country meant for development, thereby entrenching corruption as a norm in Nigeria.²⁶ Unfortunately, the public is unenlightened and gullible to shallow intellectualism and sentimentalism allowing corruption and its fruits to thrive.²⁷ There tends to be no accountability in public and community service. Greed and selfishness are embedded in the mentality of an average Nigerian in a leadership position, who believes it is the national cake, it is their turn, and they must take their share. Public funds meant for development are therefore mismanaged and embezzled by corrupt leaders. Praise singers who feed on the crumbs drum praises for them. Good values and hard work are unrewarded and ill-gotten wealth is lauded and celebrated, and sometimes by the church when such rich people enter worship assemblies. Indiscipline, bribery and corruption, extortion, nepotism and tribalism are acceptable norms in every sphere. The rule of law is abused and structures of checks and balances are manipulated to the advantage of the privileged few. The church in all of these is complacent about such evil acts,²⁸ especially when such people are honoured above others in the church. The church recognizes and gives special seats to these leaders who owe workers' salaries for months when they enter church assemblies, but disregards and refuses to assist poor members who have not paid their tithes. On the other hand, the continuous silence by the church on the atrocities committed by these political leaders against the poor shows the lack of involvement of the church when human dignity is trampled upon. The church thus loses sight of the purpose of its existence in the world, being the light of the world.

The James Theology of Wealth/Poverty

The Epistle of James provides a window into the early Christian economic world view. It pays special attention to the piety of the poor believers as they were tested by economic exploitation and experienced marginalization as they were subjected to harsh oppression by the rich. Before this time, the Roman general Pompey had cut the territory of Judea and rendered some Jewish peasants landless. The high taxation had driven many small business people and farmers out of business.²⁹ The setting of the epistle of James then shows how the life of the early church was affected when Christians were struggling with the attendant effect of poverty caused by the government policy. The rich explored the poor believers even when the disadvantaged poor were struggling and working hard to survive. The privileged rich people took advantage of them, humiliating them. James speaks out against economic injustice because keeping quiet in the face of such injustice will amount to complacency with the situation. He challenges the church to stop showing favoritism against the poor while honouring the rich.

It is worth noting that the economy of Palestine in the first century was largely agrarian,³⁰ like in some regions in Nigeria. Patronage or tenancy was the order of the day.³¹ Most of the people were peasants and tenants. The peasants were small-holders who owned small pieces of land and worked on them with their families and perhaps with some hired labourers as in the Gospel narratives (Matt 13:1-9; Mk 4:1-9; and Lk 8:4-8), while the tenants worked the land in proxy for the absentee landlords (as in Luke 16:1-9; Matt 21:33-46; Mk 12:1-12; Lk 20:9-16). There were very wealthy people who provided the mass majority of the peasants who were landless with land and other farming implements including seeds, and these in return worked for a specified share of the harvest.³² Most of the people James addressed were made up of

²⁵ Danaan, "Analysing Poverty in Nigeria through Theoretical Lenses," 24.

²⁶ Victor E Dike, "Corruption in Nigeria: A New Paradigm for Effective Control," *Africa Economic Analysis* 24, no. 08 (2005): 4; Kempe Ronald Hope, "Corruption in Nigeria," in *Corruption and Governance in Africa* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 125, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-50191-8_4. July 23, 2023.

²⁷ Segun Oshewolo, "Gallopings Poverty in Nigeria: An Appraisal of Government Interventionist Policies," *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* 12, no. 6 (2010): 264-274.

²⁸ Danaan, "Analysing Poverty in Nigeria through Theoretical Lenses," 24.

²⁹ Craig S Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1993), 688.

³⁰ Olu E Alana, "A Word with the Rich (James 5: 1-6)-Part II," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 24, no. 2 (2003): 292-308.

³¹ S. J. Joubert, *Modelling early Christianity. Social-Scientific studies of New Testament in context*, 23-46. (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), 213; Bruce J Malina, *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels* (London and NY: Routledge, 2002), 143.

³² Malina, *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels*, 143.

poor people who are experiencing some significant discrimination as earlier mentioned, including the mistreatment of agricultural day labourers at the hands of their wealthy landlords.³³ Warden believes that James was against readers being among those who controlled the power inherent in wealth³⁴ because the rich are set over against the poor, they blaspheme the name of God and took poor believers to the court and of course, the court was on their side. The force of James's words grows from his understanding that he and the people he addresses are poor.³⁵ They lack the resources, the influence, and the power to challenge the great men who control lands and market places, James however was not against riches. James rather shows that those who have wealth can control the society.³⁶ It is important however to note that the letter is not seeking charity for the poor; it is about justice and equity for the working poor. People who had worked honestly yet were marginalized by the rich by not paying their dues. James reassures his readers in words that working people deserve to be paid their wages. By that James encourages the poor Christians to work hard despite their maltreatment. But who were these poor people James is talking about?

The poor in the book of James are not beggars, but they are people who understand the rigors of hard labour even when they are oppressed as mentioned before. Being involved in labouring, they knew about the waves of the sea (1:6), possibly referring to a fishing expedition; the farmer waiting for his fruits (5:7); the value of a spring of water (3:11), the mowing of fields (5:4), and the produce of the fruit trees (4:12), all reflecting agrarian activities.³⁷ James is not sympathizing with his readers because they are poor, but because despite their hard work, they are being oppressed. Hard work is in line with the theology of faith, where James writes that faith without work is dead (Jam. 2:20, 26). Paul the Apostle writes, those who are unwilling to work should not eat (2 Thess. 3:10). Cymbaluk mentions that the church in the 21st century had not been the source of much teaching on the subject of work.³⁸ This is also true of the church in Nigeria that continues to emphasize fasting and prayers and even acquires hectares of farmland as prayer grounds. The church has not actively been involved in the act of teaching and encouraging members to engage themselves in hard work. The church has not exposed Christians to how to contribute meaningfully to the economy of the nation, yet expects members to be faithful in paying tithes. The church recognizes those who pay huge amounts of tithes, not minding their sources of income. Many young people have thus found alternative and quicker means of making money that are against Christian principles because they know that the church will respect their huge tithes and offerings.

Implication for the Church in Nigeria

The textual and cultural analyses of the Epistle of James show that James' displeasure was directed against all categories of the rich of his days for their ostentatious living and wicked oppression of the poor. He did not protect the rich so that they could be his patrons. Rather, he elected to protect and comfort the poor who had been so culturally, socially and economically degraded by the rich.³⁹ The liberation of the poor was his chief concern. Onukwuba writes that the issue of handling poverty in Nigeria requires the church's effort as well.⁴⁰ It is time for church leaders to rebuke governors who are owing workers' salaries. It is time the church stop giving special seats to political leaders who embezzle government funds meant for the development of the nation.

The current situation in which the rich in the church behave like the rich of James' days calls for sober reflection. The rich characteristically use their social, political, and economic influences, which were

³³ Craig Blomberg, "Matthew," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Beale and D. Carson (Baker Books, 2007), 173-174.

³⁴ Warden, "The Rich and Poor in James: Implications for Institutionalizes Partiality," 247.

³⁵ But there are instances in the writing that suggest that the rich oppressors were in the church as well. Looking at passages like: James 1:9-11; 2:1-12; 4:13-5:6.

³⁶ If Christians are to contribute meaningfully in determining the value system of the society, they must be distinguished as well.

³⁷ Warden, "The Rich and Poor in James: Implications for Institutionalizes Partiality," 250.

³⁸ Gary Cymbaluk, "Work Matters: The Christian Understanding of Labour," 2.

<http://dspace.pacuniversity.ac.ke:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/572/Gary-Pac%20journal.pdf?sequence=1> July 23, 2023

³⁹ Alana, "A Word with the Rich (James 5: 1-6)-Part II," 303.

⁴⁰ Onukwuba, "Poverty In Nigeria: The Role Of The Church," 1255.

acquired through corrupt means, and some at the expense of the poor in the first instance, to humiliate the poor. This is even evident in the church today where it appears some religious leaders apart from condoning this inhuman behaviour, also encourage such by recognizing the presence of the rich in the assembly because of the huge tithes and contributions they enjoy from the rich. The contributions of the poor, though given with pure heart, are no more appreciated in the church today. It is the wealthy that are “begged” with religious titles and positions just for the sake of their money and influence even when it is known that most of them are morally and spiritually corrupt.⁴¹

More fashionable patterns are now found in the gospel of prosperity ministry. Christians who must prosper now have to “sow seeds” so that they could be “blessed abundantly.” The announcement of such contributions is largely publicized as a motivation for prospective contributors. The idea of sowing seeds with a specified amount becomes a common practice. The poor who have nothing extraordinary to offer have nothing tangible, if anything at all, to receive as a blessing. Jesus’ gospel for the poor has been reversed. It is now the gospel for the rich.

James’ denunciation of the rapacious rich of his days is a challenge to the church to rethink and strive for individual and corporate moral renewal that will ultimately lead to a change of social value. It is time church leaders began to make amends. The church as the body of Christ must not be associated with social distinctions nor any behaviour that humiliate the poor in the church or society.

The widespread terrorist activities in the farm area have made it difficult for farmers to engage in their farming business. Acquiring land in the city area for farming is an impossible venture because of the cost implication. The church as a matter of necessity should relinquish some of the hectares of land acquired for praying ground for Christian farmers to cultivate and increase food production in the country. Additionally, it will not be out of place for the Christians to initiate Micro-Finance Scheme (MFS), to boost food production in Nigeria. This will help in creating job opportunities through the setting up of mini-industries. Soft loans can be given to sincere people to develop their businesses, by so doing, contribute to the economy of the nation.

God called and equipped the church not to minister to its members only, but to reach out and minister in a holistic way to needy people who are outside the church. The mission of the church is to declare and demonstrate the gospel of salvation (Matt.28:18, 19; Matt.22:37-39) holistically to a sinful and suffering world, unto the building of the Kingdom of God.⁴² The church has failed in alleviating poverty in Nigeria and instead has plunged some people into poverty. It is sad that some of the schools built by the church cannot offer admission opportunities to the poor members’ children because they cannot pay the huge school fees. Instead of being busy with the ministry of popularity and enrichment of the church, which has no direct effect on the economic state of man, the church needs first to plan programs that will impact people’s social life as well as their spiritual life. The church needs to realize that Jesus fed the hungry and healed the sick (Matt. 14:13-21; John 9:6-7). Church schools should accommodate the poor, otherwise, the huge school fees presently charged in nearly all the private Christian universities will make university education exclusively for the rich.

CONCLUSION

There is a need for the church to identify and solve their community problems through collective actions that will neutralize or reduce the immediate or radical causes of poverty and constraints to a holistic quality of life in the community. The church in Nigeria must understand that Jesus established the church to care for the total man. Its mission includes the spiritual, social, and economic emancipation of man. The early church in Acts understood this concept of a holistic mission that speaks to the soul and body of man.⁴³ Early disciples provided spiritual, social and material nourishment to the disciples such that no one lacked anything. Wealthy members contributed part of their wealth to ensure that all were taken care of. The church in Nigeria needs to provide a functional and affordable education that will equip people with knowledge

⁴¹ Warden, “The Rich and Poor in James: Implications for Institutionalizes Partiality.” 250.

⁴² Onukwuba, “Poverty In Nigeria: The Role Of The Church,” 1258.

⁴³ Uche and Udogu, “The Role Of The Church In Poverty Alleviation In Nigeria,”33.

and skill to become productive and self-reliance. It will not be out of place also for the church to help in training people to acquire relevant skills that they can use in helping themselves. When the poor and unemployed are armed with the necessary skills, they will be able to fend for themselves. The salvation of Christ was to set man free from the bondage of sin. Man's mind will be free to serve God when he has the freedom of will as well.

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Work as a Response to Poverty in Africa: An Analysis of Proverbs 6:6-11

Julius Ndishua, PhD

The Cameroon Baptist Theological Seminary, Ndu, Bamenda Cameroon.

Email: ndishuajulius@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Many factors contribute to poverty, including systemic discrimination, unequal opportunities for education and work, and economic inequality. While individual effort and hard work are essential, addressing these systemic issues is crucial in reducing poverty and promoting equality. Proverbs 6:6-11 provides valuable insight into responding to poverty. The text encourages people to learn from the example of ants, who work diligently to prepare for the future. Proverbs 6:6-11 also highlights the importance of hard work, planning, and self-discipline in combating poverty. The text emphasised personal responsibility and the importance of taking proactive steps to improve one's situation. The paper used the historical-critical method in its analysis. The findings revealed that individuals and communities could better understand the biblical perspective on poverty and gain insights into effective responses. They also guide individuals and organisations in developing practical solutions to address poverty and improve lives.

Keywords: Analysis, Poverty, Proverbs 6, Response, Work

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a persistent and widespread problem affecting millions of people worldwide. It is a complex issue driven by various social, economic, and political factors, including inequality, limited access to resources, and lack of education and employment opportunities. There are numerous strategies to address poverty; one of the most effective and sustainable solutions is through work and economic empowerment. Work provides individuals with a sense of purpose, dignity, and self-worth. It also allows individuals to earn a living and support themselves and their families. When people have access to employment opportunities and can work, they are less likely to fall into poverty and more likely to build a better life for themselves and future generations. Also, when people are employed, they are more likely to contribute to their communities, pay taxes, and participate in the economy. This can increase economic growth, social cohesion, and well-being. The paper used the historical-critical method to analyse Proverbs 6:6-11.

Work and Poverty in the Old Testament

Work and poverty in the Old Testament are complex, multifaceted, and interdependent, demanding careful consideration in society's economic affairs. In the Old Testament, work was seen as a divine mandate given to humanity by God, and people were expected to work hard to provide for themselves and their families. According to Douglas J. Schuurman, work is participation and continuation of the creator's work, giving life full meaning in society.⁴⁴ The researcher admits that work is any manual or intellectual activity performed by a human being that glorifies God for financial gain or just out of a desire to serve others. Christopher J. H. Wright notes that the Old Testament's depiction of work shows that God is a worker and wants mortals to work.⁴⁵

Tremper Longman III adds that God is a worker and is curious about human attitudes about work in society. Humanity owes itself to model and promotes willingly engaging in socially beneficial activities. This shows that even after the fall, God still intended for work to be a component of society. Work was originally a part of God's design for humanity. In other words, Wayne Grudem avers that work is part of

⁴⁴ Douglas J. Schuurman, "Work," in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity Vol. 5*, ed., Erwin Fahlbusch and others (Leiden: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 757.

⁴⁵ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, rev.ed., (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 148.

what God planned for man in his fantastic creation, not just a painful aspect of the fallen human situation.⁴⁶ This implies that work was humanity's responsibility before the fall of man. According to Grudem, God included a necessity for productive work in the Ten Commandments and explained in Exodus 20:11, which states that the work of man should mimic his work.⁴⁷ This suggests that work is a necessary element of society that mankind needs to exist. One strategy that humanity can use to combat poverty in the present and the future is through work.

Numerous words describe poverty in the Hebrew Bible. According to Eben Scheffler, the words *ani/anw*, *ebjon*, *dal*, and *rasj* denote poverty. He notes that the words *anw* and *ani*, "poor" or "humble" with the same root and similar meanings, are found in the Old Testament respectively 21 times and 75 times (Lev. 19:10; Num. 12:3; Pro. 15:15; Eccl. 6:8; Am 2:7; Ps. 149:4). The word "*ebjon*" appears 61 times in the Old Testament, first referring to "beggars" and later designating someone who is "socially weak," "miserable," or "poor" (Job 31:19; Deut. 15:7, 9, 11, and 15). Also, the Hebrew word *dal*, "low," "helpless," "insignificant," or "poor." is used 48 times in the Bible (Lev. 14:21; Ps. 41:1-2; Isa. 14:30; Pro. 14:31), while *rasj* appears 21 times. The Hebrew *rasj* usually refers to a lack of material possessions (2 Sam 12:3, 2 Sam 13:8, Eccl. 4:14, and Ps. 82:3).⁴⁸ Samuel Waje Kunhiyop notes *ani* could mean one who occupies a lowly position and depends on others is used about seventy-one times. He further observes that *dal*, which refers to a sick person and one who lacks material blessings, and the word physically poor, is used about forty-one times. At the same time, *ebjon* suggests a *beggar* is used about sixty-one times, and *rush* refers to a needy – Exodus 23:6-11.⁴⁹ One can conclude that poverty is the state of being so poor as to leave one despairing and unable to live his expected social life.

Perspectives on Poverty in Africa

Structural Perspective

Structural perspective is perhaps one of the factors perpetuating poverty in Africa. It argues that poverty is not just a result of individual behaviour or lack of effort but is also influenced by political, economic and social systems that are not working for the benefit of people experiencing poverty. This perspective emphasises the need for systemic change and reform to address poverty in Africa. Addae-Korankye points out that proponents of the "structural" school of thought contend that most poverty can be linked to structural elements of the economy or some interconnected institutional environments favouring groups over others, typically based on gender, class, or race. Discrimination based on race and gender is the most pernicious barrier among the numerous institutional contexts that frequently perpetuate various economic barriers to diverse groups. As a result of patriarchal society's ongoing resistance to women's inclusion in areas of society that have historically been dominated by men, the disproportionately high rate of poverty among women may be seen as a result. As a result, welfare programmes have been created in a way that

⁴⁶ Wayne Grudem, *Christian Ethics: An Introduction to Biblical Moral Reasoning* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2018), 1025.

⁴⁷ Grudem, *Christian Ethics: An Introduction to Biblical Moral Reasoning*, 1026.

⁴⁸ Eben Scheffler, "Poverty Eradication and the Bible in Context: A Serious Challenge," Department of Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa (2012): 3-11; also see Olusola Igbari, "Poverty and Corruption in The New Testament Perspective," in *Open Access Library Journal* (2016): 2-24; Ernest Dube, "Rarity or Reality of Some Theories of Poverty in Explaining the Poverty in Africa," *Journal of Rural and Community Development* (2019):48-60; and Hazel M. McFerson, "Poverty Among Women in Sub-Sahara Africa: A Review of Selected Issues," *Journal of International Women's Studies* Vol. 11 no 4. (May 2010): 51-61.

⁴⁹ Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics* (Nairobi, Kenya: Hippo Books, 2008), 143; also see Joshua O. Ayiamba et. al., "The Mandate of the Christian Church in Poverty Alleviation: The Case of the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) in Maseno and Winam Division of Kisumu District, Kenya," in *International Research Journal of Arts and Science* Vol. 4. no.2 (2015): 44-51; Alex Addae-Korankye, "Causes of Poverty in Africa: A Review of Literature," *American International Journal of Social Science* Vol. no 7 (December, 2014):141-152; and Adedayo Oladele Odesola, "Poverty in Nigeria: A Missiological Response," *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology (OJOT)* Vol. 20, no. 2 (2015): 15. Joshua O. Ayiamba et. al., "The Mandate of the Christian Church in Poverty Alleviation: The Case of the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) in Maseno and Winam Division of Kisumu District, Kenya," *International Research Journal of Arts and Science* Vol. 4. no.2 (2015): 44; Alex Addae-Korankye, "Causes of Poverty in Africa: A Review of Literature," in *American International Journal of Social Science* Vol. no 7 (December, 2014):147; Adedayo Oladele Odesola, "Poverty in Nigeria: A Missiological Response," *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology (OJOT)* Vol. 20, no. 2 (2015): 15-22.

stigmatises public support for women as opposed to marital support, both of which tend to reinforce patriarchy.⁵⁰

Cultural Perspective

This perspective focuses on the cultural values and beliefs contributing to Africa's poverty. It argues that poverty is perpetuated by cultural practices such as bride price, dowry, and gender discrimination, which limit opportunities for women and contribute to gender-based poverty. This perspective emphasises the need for cultural change to address poverty in Africa. According to Addae-Korankye, cultural anthropology is essential for the culture of poverty approach to be relevant. Citing renowned anthropologist Oscar Lewis, who stated in 1961 that poverty was an adaptation to various objective conditions in the larger society, Lewis asserts that poverty was culturally self-reinforcing and that its incidence was directly related to societal structural conditions. However, once poverty exists, it tends to persist from generation to generation because of its impact on children.⁵¹

Human Development Perspective

The human development perspective emphasises the importance of education, healthcare, and social services in addressing poverty in Africa. It argues that poverty can be reduced through investments in human development, which can lead to increased productivity and economic growth. According to Addae-Korankye, corruption and poor governance, inadequate land use and tenure systems, civil wars and protracted political conflicts, poor infrastructure, diseases, and inadequate health facilities all contribute to poverty in Africa.⁵²

Aid and Development Perspective

The aid and development perspective emphasises the role of foreign aid and development assistance in addressing poverty in Africa. It argues that poverty can be reduced through investments in infrastructure, agriculture, and other development programs. This perspective emphasises the need for increased foreign aid and international cooperation to address poverty in Africa. Addae-Korankye observes that there are numerous and intricate causes of poverty. The lack of information, knowledge of market prices for the items they deal in, health-related problems, a lack of access to public services, and violations of their rights are the root causes of these complex problems. There is a political minority that is marginalised and voiceless concerning the institutions that affect their daily life. It is often claimed that low-income individuals lack access to essential education, training, and personal development opportunities that could enhance their livelihoods.⁵³

O'Donovan notes that many African cities are populated by destitute individuals who lack many necessities for human life.⁵⁴ Given the difficulties that African people face—such as a lack of access to electricity, food, and clean water—and the fact that many are considered to be living below the average in several African contexts, this claim sounds plausible; due to their extreme poverty. O'Donovan asserts that poverty is one of Africa's most significant issues.⁵⁵ Because of their persistent poverty, some Africans live in abject poverty. Also, Lechion Peter Kimilike points out that poverty jeopardises a person's well-being and is not regarded as a virtue in Africa.⁵⁶ Even if impoverished persons may not be aware that they are destitute, it may be concluded that poverty is neither admired nor desired. With the prevalence factor, Africa may discover a way to alleviate poverty. Africans have considered poverty a factor in creating a culture

⁵⁰ Addae-Korankye, "Causes of Poverty in Africa: A Review of Literature," 151.

⁵¹ Addae-Korankye, "Causes of Poverty in Africa: A Review of Literature," 151.

⁵² Addae-Korankye, "Causes of Poverty in Africa: A Review of Literature," 150.

⁵³ Addae-Korankye, "Causes of Poverty in Africa: A Review of Literature," 149.

⁵⁴ Wilbur O'Donovan, *Biblical Christianity in Modern Africa* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 2000), 141.

⁵⁵ O'Donovan, *Biblical Christianity in Modern Africa*, 141.

⁵⁶ Lechion Peter Kimilike, "An African Perspective on Poverty Proverbs in the Book of Proverbs: An Analysis for Transformational Possibilities," (Doctor of Theology Dissertation: University of South Africa, June 2006), 87.

with a strong moral ethic of involvement and solidarity.⁵⁷ One may argue that one of the factors contributing to Africa's lack of basic amenities is poverty.

Exegesis of Proverbs 6:6-11

The Hebrew word מִשְׁלָּה “proverb” is the source of the book's title. According to McKenzie and Kaltner, the Hebrew root of the word מִשְׁלָּה “proverb”, has to do with likeness and comparison. The book of Proverbs explains what everyday life may teach about life and human nature. It comprises a selection of proverbs and aphorisms, most observations about interpersonal interactions and how the world functions.⁵⁸

Authorship of the Book of Proverbs

The authorship of the book of Proverbs remains a subject of debate among scholars. McKenzie and Kaltner note that King Solomon composed the first two collections of Proverbs (Prov. 1:1; 10:1) and a later collection that was copied by Hezekiah's officials (Prov. 25:1). The narrative of Solomon's rule elsewhere in the Bible also aids in explaining how he and the book of Proverbs are connected (1 Kings 3).⁵⁹ Gleason L. Archer, Jr. avers that the number of Proverbs in Solomon's original collection was at least three thousand, according to 1 Kings 4:32. Two further passages are credited to the wise men. There are also the uncertainly-Israelite-origin sayings of Agur, the son of Jakeh and the sayings of King Lemuel as potential candidates.⁶⁰ Solomon's significance in Israel's proverb traditions is mentioned multiple times in the book of Proverbs, according to Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer.⁶¹ The argument might imply that Solomon, along with other wise men, is the primary author of Proverbs.

Date of the Book of Proverbs

It is quite challenging to accurately date the book of Proverbs, probably due to the items it contains. The many collections that makeup Proverbs developed from various situations. The opening section and subsequent parts of the book frequently utilise the words “father,” “mother,” and “child/children,” which shows that some of Proverbs' content originated in families. Israelite parents taught their kids how to live righteously and behave appropriately by teaching them through proverbs and other sayings, much as is done today. The royal court was another setting where some of this content originated.⁶² The home and the royal court are the two social contexts connected to the book of Proverbs. Proverbs 25:1 makes it evident that the book could not have been finished before Hezekiah's period (about 715–686 BC), according to LaSor et al. It's possible that the latter two chapters were added during or soon after the Exile (about 500). Most likely, Hezekiah's reign saw the editing of chapters 10-29 and the addition of the introduction and concluding chapters in the two centuries that followed.⁶³ This discourse may suggest that 726-686 B.C. is the reasonable date.

⁵⁷ Kimilike, “An African Perspective on Poverty Proverbs in the Book of Proverbs,” 87; Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Value: An Introduction* (Accra, Ghana: Sankofa Publishing Company, 1996), 96., cited in James Nkansah-Obrempong, *Foundations for African Theological Ethics* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Langham Monographs, 2013), 183.

⁵⁸ Steven L. McKenzie and John Kaltner, *The Old Testament: Its Background, Growth and Content* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 311; Gleason L. Archer, Jr. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), 465; and William Sanford LaSor et. al., *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 547; Andrew E. Hill and John H Walton, 2nd ed. *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 443-444.

⁵⁹ McKenzie and Kaltner, *The Old Testament: Its Background, Growth and Content*, 311.

⁶⁰ Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* 468.

⁶¹ Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament* 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2015), 299; also see Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* 2nd ed. (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007), 267.

⁶² McKenzie and Kaltner, *The Old Testament: Its Background, Growth and Content*, 315-316.

⁶³ LaSor et. al., *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*, 558; also see A.S. Van Der Woude, *The World of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 278-279.

The Purpose of the Book of Proverbs

The book of Proverbs is written to advise on the values of wisdom. LaSor et al. contend that Hebrew wisdom is the art of success and that Proverbs is a manual for leading a successful life. Proverbs explain appropriate and inappropriate behaviour in various circumstances by mentioning and illuminating negative and positive norms. The authors are not assumed to have been ignorant of Israel's history or the major prophetic themes if no references exist. Instead, they sought to incorporate the covenant faith's tenets into commonplace beliefs and practices.⁶⁴

Syntactical Analysis of Proverbs 6:6:11

The Diligent Behaviour of the Ants

לְךָ־אֵל־נְמִלָּה עֲצָל רְאֵה דְרָכֶיהָ וְנַחֲמֶם:

Translation: Go to the ant, you sluggard, see her ways and be wise.

The verse begins with the word לך from the root הלך a Qal verb imperative masculine singular, which means “Go” prefixed by a maqef to א particle preposition “to” and נמלה “ant” a common noun feminine singular absolute. The narrator used the clause לך־אל־נמלה “Go to the ant” as a portrait to address the עצל “sluggard or lazy person” with a message. The sluggard is advised to emulate self-motivated נמלה “ant” by studying them. Sampson S. Ndogo claims that the phrase “Go,” an imperative in construction, was ingeniously placed at the start of the chapter to introduce the lesson on diligence. The order appears to rouse the “sluggard” or “lazy person” focused on falling asleep. The instruction also considers ants an illustration tool to deliver a moral lesson. The suggestion that the “sluggard” learn from the “ant”—a feminine singular word in this instance—is sarcastic.⁶⁵ The ant is seen as a self-motivated worker who doesn't require outside supervision or encouragement to put in long hours. The sluggard needs to take note of the ant's example because of how hardworking the ant is compared to how lazy the sluggard is.

אֲשֶׁר אֵין־לָהּ קָצִין שֹׁטֵר וּמֹשֵׁל:

Translation: Which has no chief, officer or ruler.

The words קצין “chief,” שטר “officer,” and מושל “ruler” were employed by the narrator as synonyms to characterise the ant's governing structure. The way these phrases interact suggests that nobody should be in control or, even better, that nobody should tell the נמלה “ant” what to do, although they always appear to be busy. This suggests that they are always taking action to satisfy their desires. The נמלה “ant” knows what to do, and even when their hills are destroyed, they don't abandon their task; instead, they return to work. This behaviour shows that the נמלה “ant” is always active, motivated by themselves, independent, and persistent in their task without fear of being intimidated or bothered. This mentality of the נמלה “ant” is in contrast to individuals who require motivation, lack initiative, and work only when someone is watching them (eye-servants). Others must not be overseen until the right thing is done since they are eager to work and show initiative. This kind of person sees a task, jumps to it without waiting for instructions, and completes it. Additionally, if given the proper encouragement, they might work.

תִּכְוֶן בַּקִּיץ לְחֶמֶה אֲגַרָה בְּקִצִיר מֵאֲכָלָה:

Translation: Prepares her food in the summer, and gathers her food at the harvest.

The narrator states that the נמלה “ant” is aware that they have a finite window of opportunity to prepare for the winter. They are continually preparing for the winter. The נמלה “ant” may be self-motivated since they are aware of the impending winter and work extra hard in the summer to complete their tasks. Solomon wanted his son to understand the value of hard work. Even as the son of the most prosperous monarch in history, work is noble and is not beneath him. Solomon undoubtedly wanted his son to appreciate the effort

⁶⁴ LaSor et. al., *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*, 548.

⁶⁵ Sampson S. Ndogo, “An Analysis of Proverbs 6:6-11 as a case for a Christian Leadership Mindset Characterized by Productivity,” *The South African Baptist Journal of Theology* (2012):109.

and understand that God values it. The passage describes the ant’s behaviour in more detail, highlighting its ability to prepare for the future by storing provisions in the summer and gathering food at harvest. This behaviour is presented as a model of wisdom and foresight, encouraging the reader to adopt a similar approach to their work and preparation for the future. Adam, Cain, and Abel were all employed; Adam and Cain were farmers, Abel was a keeper of flocks, and Moses was a shepherd. In contrast to his attitude, a sluggard is a person who is lazy or idle; he is not disabled or old; instead, he is a person who has the strength to work but is unwilling to do so. The sluggard’s personality suggests that he is not a self-starter because he is in bed, saying that he will get out of bed later and is not proactive.

The author compares and contrasts sluggards with ants. The sluggard is not motivated, in contrast to the ant. The ant doesn’t require a boss watching over it to make it do the right thing. The sluggard’s “timing problem” was brought to light by yet another problem. He has a far shorter horizon than the ant. The ant demonstrates the capacity to foresee future requirements and the willingness to make accommodations to satisfy those requirements. It works arduously throughout the summer to prepare its food for the winter. On the other hand, the sluggard chooses to focus only on the here and now. He enjoys his sleep and is unwilling to give it up for something as unimportant as the food supply for the coming winter. When he works, he tends to perform an enjoyable job rather than the necessary labour, which is another component of his time issue.

Madipoane Masenya opines that the wise believed that the ant knew how to act and when to act. She was thus able to take the appropriate actions at the right moment. According to the sages, one of the qualities of a knowledgeable person is the ability to predict the type of activities that will be taken and when they will be taken. Because the ant behaved according to the cosmological cycles of the seasons, one becomes wise by copying her methods (Prov. 6:8). She responded to nature’s seasonal cries.⁶⁶ It’s also important to note that, in addition to serving as an example of perseverance, the ant also serves as an illustration of a creature with forethought. According to Duane A. Garrett, the ants are examples of diligence since they toil tirelessly despite the lack of a taskmaster to push them along and prepare for the winter despite the absence of a government to set up financial plans.⁶⁷

Admonition to the Sluggard in Society

עַד־מַתִּי עֲצֵלוּ תִשְׁכַּב מְהִי תִקְוִים מִשְׁנָתְךָ:⁹
 מְעַט שְׁנוֹת מְעַט תְּבוּמֹת מְעַט חֶבְק יָדַיִם לְשִׁכָּב:¹⁰

Translation: How long will you lie there you sluggard; When will wake up from sleep. A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest.

The narrator used a hypothetical question to trap the lazy person who stayed in bed all day. The sluggard doesn’t comprehend time the way the ant does, which works in the summer to prepare for the winter. The ant works with the future in mind while the “sluggard” spends his time in bed. The terms עַד־מַתִּי “How long” and מְהִי “when” are used interchangeably. These inquiries imply that the sluggard does not manage his time well. Ndogo notes that Proverbs 6:9–10 warns against compliant behaviour and procrastination for the lazy individual. This may imply that one should not tolerate excessive poverty-related procrastination.⁶⁸ The narrator asks the sluggard rhetorically how much longer he plans to sleep and be lazy. The sluggard may be tempted to explain their lethargy by claiming they are simply resting or taking a little vacation, as suggested by the repeated word “a little.” Equally, “a little” bit of idleness can result in poverty and shortage, which will occur to the sluggard unannounced, like a thief or an armed person.

⁶⁶ Madipoane Masenya, “In the Ant’s School of Wisdom: A Holistic African-South,” in *Ants’s School of Wisdom*, OTE 28/2 (2015):425-432.

⁶⁷ Duane A. Garrett *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1993), 96.

⁶⁸ Ndogo, “An Analysis of Proverbs 6:6-11 as a case for a Christian Leadership Mindset Characterized by Productivity,” 113.

The Out-come of sluggishness in Society

וּבֵאֵר־כְּמֶלֶךְ רֹאשֶׁהוּ וּמִקְרָהוּ כְּאִישׁ מִגֵּן: פ

Translation: Then will poverty come on you and scarcity like a man with a shield?

The clause וּבֵאֵר־כְּמֶלֶךְ רֹאשֶׁהוּ, “Then poverty will come on you” is a simile to the clause וּמִקְרָהוּ כְּאִישׁ מִגֵּן “and scarcity like a man with a shield”. The regretful results of careless behaviour are highlighted in Proverbs 6:11. Effectively deployed as stark reminders of the nearly certain outcome of a protracted unproductive disposition are the images of a thief and an armed warrior. In addition to having disastrous effects on the individual, laziness impacts the entire community, which not only loses out on the opportunity to make a positive contribution but also has to take care of the sufferer.⁶⁹ This description suggests that poverty not only strikes unexpectedly but also without warning. The sluggard believes that his acts could not have been the reason for his poverty, much like the robber’s victim believes that nothing he did could have caused the robber to take his money. Garrett notes that being lazy inevitably results in disaster and poverty. It is preferable to interpret verse 1 as saying that poverty would arrive like a “vagabond” and a “beggar” rather than “like a bandit” and an “armed man”. It will not strike abruptly, like armed bandits waiting in ambush, but instead that poverty and debt cling to the slothful like irredeemable beggars who constantly loiter around the house and want more. Laziness will drain resources away until there are none left for the lazy.⁷⁰

Inferences from Proverbs 6:6-11

Diligence and Hard Work Are Virtues

The ant is portrayed in Proverbs 6:6 as an example of diligence and productivity; similarly, the text exhorts Africans to approach their work like ants. This shows that in the context of the book of Proverbs, dedication and hard work are viewed as virtues.

Self-Motivation is Important

The ant can work hard and make plans for the future without supervision or outside motivation, according to Proverbs 6:7. This implies that it’s crucial to develop attributes like self-motivation and a concrete work ethic.

Preparation for the Future is Necessary

The ant is used in Proverbs 6:8 as an example of wisdom and forethought because of its capacity to stockpile food throughout the summer and gather it during the harvest. This implies that planning for the future is crucial to leading a sensible and responsible life.

Procrastination is Dangerous

The word “a little” is used several times in Proverbs 6:9–10, suggesting that sluggards may be tempted to rationalise their sloth by insisting that they are simply resting or taking a brief respite. However, the scripture cautions that even a small indolence might have unfavourable effects. This implies that delaying tasks and making excuses are considered risky behaviours that can have unfavourable effects. Even a little sloth, according to Proverbs 6:11, can cause poverty and shortages. This suggests that in the context of the book of Proverbs, being lazy is seen as a bad quality and that its repercussions are grave.

Implications for the African Christians

Diligence in Service Among African Christians

Working hard and being diligent are highly regarded in many African communities. The importance of these qualities is emphasised in Proverbs 6:6–11, which encourages African Christians to develop a strong work ethic. Christians throughout the world place a high priority on service, and African Christians are no

⁶⁹ Ndoga, “An Analysis of Proverbs 6:6-11 as a case for a Christian Leadership Mindset Characterized by Productivity,” 114.

⁷⁰ Garrett, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, 76-97.

different. Since it is viewed as an expression of their religion and a way to glorify God, many African Christians prioritise being diligent in their service. They know that their service's purpose is to benefit God and others, not for their own benefit or attention. They also think that being diligent in their favour is a way to express their love and care for their neighbourhoods and positively influence others in them. Many African Christians take pride in completing their work effectively and frequently have excellent work ethics. Additionally, they know the value of teamwork and collaboration and often go above and beyond to complete their assignments to the best of their skills.

Self-Motivation and African Christians

Self-motivation is essential for success in any field and is no different for African Christians. Many Africans believe that self-motivation is an essential aspect of their faith, as it helps them to stay focused on their goals and to persevere through difficult times. Additionally, they can work hard and prepare for the future without external oversight or motivation. This suggests that African Christians should cultivate a strong sense of self-motivation and take responsibility for their success.

Preparation for the Future and African Christian

Preparation for the future is an essential aspect of life for African Christians. They believe their faith calls them to be responsible and proactive in preparing for what lies ahead, both in this life and the next. In any African society, there is a strong emphasis on preparing for the future. African Christians often prioritise education and training to prepare for the future. They understand that acquiring knowledge and skills can help them pursue their goals and succeed in their chosen careers. African Christians often focus on financial preparation for the future. They understand the importance of saving money, investing wisely, and being responsible. Also, Proverbs 6:6-11 highlights the ant's ability to store provisions in the summer and gather food at harvest as a model of wisdom and foresight. African Christians should take this advice seriously and prepare for the future by working hard and being prudent with their resources.

Procrastination and African Christians

Procrastination is viewed as a negative behaviour among African Christians, as it can have negative consequences for individuals and communities. African Christians believe procrastination goes against biblical teachings, emphasising the importance of diligence, responsibility and accountability. One consequence of procrastination is that it can lead to missed opportunities and a lack of progress in one's personal and professional life. African Christians understand that taking action and being proactive is critical to achieving success and fulfilling one's responsibilities. They believe that procrastination can lead to missed deadlines, incomplete projects, and a lack of productivity, preventing individuals from achieving their goals. Procrastination can contribute to a lack of productivity and economic growth, leading to poverty; Proverbs 6:6-11 also warns against deceit and dishonesty. African Christians should strive to be people of integrity and avoid engaging in deceitful behaviour.

CONCLUSION

The paper has examined that work is a powerful tool in the fight against poverty. By providing individuals with access to employment opportunities and empowering them to earn a living, Christians can help to reduce inequality, promote economic growth, and improve overall well-being. Work provides economic benefits and fosters a sense of purpose, dignity, and self-worth, which are critical for individuals to lead fulfilling lives. In continuing to address the complex issue of poverty, it is essential to remember the power of work as a response. By prioritising inclusive economic growth and empowering individuals to earn a living, stakeholders can create a brighter future for future generations. With dedication, hard work, and a commitment to justice and equality, a society can be created where poverty no longer hinders living a happy life.

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The Role of Governments in Regulating Economic Activity: An Analysis of Genesis 41:47-49

Philip Jonah Maken

Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Email: shavehibnshevah@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper analysed the roles of governments in regulating economic activity by examining Genesis 41:47-49. In this passage, Joseph, an administrator in Pharaoh's court, implemented a policy to store surplus grain during years of abundance to prepare for future famine. The paper explored the abstract roles of the government in regulating economic activity, drawing on scholarly sources from various disciplines, including biblical studies, history, and economics. The analysis showed that governments' role in economic regulation can be categorised into three areas: stabilisation, redistribution, and provision. The passage demonstrated the importance of planning and foresight in monetary policy. It served as an early example of government intervention in economic affairs to ensure social welfare and economic stability. The paper concluded by highlighting the relevance of this passage in understanding the government's role in regulating economic activity in ancient and modern times.

Keywords: Economic Activity, Genesis 41, Government, Role

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, governments have intervened in economic markets, from controlling prices to implementing policies promoting economic growth. However, the appropriate role of governments in regulating economic activities remains a topic of discussion and debate. This work aims to explore this question in light of an analysis of Genesis 41:47-49, a passage in the Bible that describes how Joseph, a governor in ancient Egypt, regulated the grain markets during a famine. This book of Genesis (Pentateuch) is traditionally a script to Moses, however, it had been questioned and largely rejected by the leading scholars of the seventeenth century,⁷¹ due to studies from leading scholars like Jean Astruc and Julius Wellhausen who presuppose four originally independent literary sources (JEDP). This passage provides insight into how governments can and should control economic activities and how this regulation can promote economic stability, fairness, and public welfare. The paper used the historical-critical method⁷² to seek to understand the meaning of a text in its historical and literary context.

Historical Analysis of Genesis 41:47-48

The story of Joseph is set against the backdrop of ancient Near Eastern history, precisely the period known as the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1550 BCE). Egypt was one of the major powers in the region at this time, and its economy was based on agriculture. The Nile River provided water and fertile soil for farming, but the annual flooding could also cause devastating famine.⁷³ It was, therefore, crucial for the Egyptian government to develop strategies to manage the food supply and ensure that the population had enough to eat during times of scarcity.⁷⁴ The story of Joseph reflects this historical context and shows how the Egyptian government tried to manage food shortages. The story of Joseph is part of the larger narrative of Genesis, which emphasises the importance of family, faith, and the fulfilment of God's promises.⁷⁵ Joseph is portrayed as a wise and virtuous man who can navigate the complex political landscape of ancient Egypt

⁷¹ Joel S. Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 13.

⁷² John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 453.

⁷³ Wright, J. Edward. "Joseph in Egypt: Part I." In *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Collected Essays*, edited by J. Edward Wright (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 277-304.

⁷⁴ Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2003), 137-141.

⁷⁵ Walton, John H., *Genesis: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 47.

and use his skills to benefit himself and his people.⁷⁶ Genesis 41:47-49 tells how Joseph, an enslaved person rose to become a governor in ancient Egypt, and prepared Egypt for a great famine by storing grain during seven years of plenty. When the famine arrived, Joseph sold the stored grain to the people of Egypt, effectively regulating the grain market to ensure an adequate food supply.⁷⁷ This passage highlights the importance of planning, preparation, and regulation in times of economic crisis.

Genesis 41:47-49 is a fascinating passage that offers important insights into the role of governments in regulating economic activity. In this passage, the Pharaoh of Egypt implemented a government policy to regulate the economy during a time of abundance. By collecting and storing excess grain, the Pharaoh ensured that there would be enough food to feed the people during the years of famine that followed. This passage can be viewed as a paradigm for the role of governments in regulating economic activity. Specifically, it highlights three essential functions governments can play in this regard, like planning for the future. First, this shows how Pharaoh plans to store excess grain during years of abundance. This indicates how governments can help prevent crises and ensure economic stability. Another function is ensuring equity- Pharaoh is seen to have collected and stored excess grain in the cities, ensuring that it is available to everyone, regardless of social status or wealth. Governments can similarly regulate economic activity to ensure that resources are distributed fairly and equitably among all members of society. Lastly, providing social safety nets, the passage highlights the importance of governments in providing social safety nets during times of economic hardship. In this case, the stored grain provided a critical food source for the people during the famine. Governments can similarly provide social safety nets, such as unemployment benefits and food assistance programs, to protect vulnerable populations during economic hardship.

GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN REGULATING ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Governments play a crucial role in regulating economic activities. While the specific nature of this role may vary depending on the country and the time in question, three broad objectives are typically identified:

a. Maintaining Economic Stability and Growth (Stabilisation)

The first function of government in regulating economic activities is to maintain macroeconomic stability. This involves ensuring the economy remains stable, with low inflation, unemployment, and sustained economic growth. Governments can achieve this by implementing policies such as monetary policy, fiscal policy, and exchange rate policy.⁷⁸ The stabilisation role of resources has been debated among economists and policymakers for decades. This article explores the government's economic functions in stabilising resources, focusing on the role of government in managing market failures and achieving macroeconomic stability.⁷⁹ The government's role in stabilising resources, including fiscal and monetary policies,⁸⁰ government intervention in markets, and the importance of government institutions in creating an enabling environment for economic growth and development.⁸¹

b. Market Failures and Government Intervention

Market failures occur when the allocation of resources by the free market fails to achieve economic efficiency. These failures can arise from various factors, including externalities, public goods, and asymmetric information.⁸² In such situations, the government can intervene to correct these failures and promote efficient resource allocation. The government can intervene through fiscal policies such as taxation

⁷⁶ William H.C. Propp, *The Anchor Yale Bible: Exodus 1-18* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 6-10.

⁷⁷ C. F. Keil, D. D. and F. Delitzsch, D. D., *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch* vol. 1 Trans., James Martin, B. A. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951), 352-353.

⁷⁸ N. Gregory Mankiw, *Principles of macroeconomics* (Cengage Learning, 2016), 56-76.

⁷⁹ O. Blanchard, *Macroeconomics* (Pearson Education Limited, 2019), 87-90.

⁸⁰ A. Alesina, & Perotti, R., "Fiscal expansions and fiscal adjustments in OECD countries." *NBER Macroeconomics Annual*, vol. 10 (1995): 131-167.

⁸¹ S. Fischer, "The Role of Macroeconomic Factors in Growth." *Journal of Monetary Economics*, Vol. 32, no. 3 (1993): 485-512.

⁸² J. E. Stiglitz, "The Causes and Consequences of the Dependence of Quality on Price." *The Journal of Economic Literature*, vol. 25, no. 1 (1987): 1-48.

and public spending.⁸³ Taxes may be used to correct negative externalities, such as pollution, by imposing taxes on firms that produce pollution. The revenue generated from these taxes can then be used to fund public goods such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure. Public spending can also be used to promote macroeconomic stability by stimulating aggregate demand during times of economic recession.⁸⁴ The government has additional options for getting involved. By regulating the money supply in the economy, interest rates can be utilised to reduce inflation and foster economic growth. Inflation can be controlled by raising interest rates, which reduces aggregate demand and slows down economic growth.⁸⁵ Equally, interest rates can be lowered during a recession to stimulate aggregate demand and promote economic growth.

The government's role in stabilising resources extends beyond fiscal and monetary policies.⁸⁶ Governmental institutions, including the judicial system, regulatory agencies, and infrastructure, are essential in fostering the development of the economy. The legal system is essential in protecting property rights and enforcing contracts. This creates the certainty and predictability necessary for businesses to invest and innovate.⁸⁷ Regulatory bodies, such as competition authorities, can also promote economic efficiency by preventing monopolies and promoting market competition. Also, infrastructure, including transportation, communication, and energy networks, is critical for economic growth and development. Adequate infrastructure reduces transaction costs and allows businesses to access markets and customers more efficiently. This, in turn, promotes economic efficiency and growth.

c. Promoting Fairness and Equity (Distribution)

Governments play an essential role in the economy by allocating resources to meet the needs of society. This includes providing public goods and services, redistributing income, and regulating economic activity. The distribution of resources by governments is influenced by various factors such as political ideology, societal values, economic conditions, and globalisation.⁸⁸ This role of governments in the distribution of resources focuses on taxation, public spending, and regulation. One of the primary functions of governments in the distribution of resources is to reduce income inequality and poverty.⁸⁹ Governments can use various tools to achieve this goal, such as progressive taxation, social welfare programs, and redistribution policies. Progressive taxation is a type of taxation in which those with higher incomes pay a larger percentage of taxes than those with lower incomes.⁹⁰ This system is designed to ensure that the burden of taxation falls more heavily on those with greater financial means. Social welfare programmes include measures such as cash transfer programs, unemployment benefits, and food assistance programs, which assist individuals and families in need. Redistribution policies involve transferring resources from one group to another, typically from the wealthy to the poor, to promote greater economic equality.

Taxation

Taxation is a critical tool for governments to redistribute resources and reduce inequality. By imposing taxes on individuals and businesses, governments generate revenue that can be used to fund public goods and services. In addition, taxes can be used to encourage certain behaviours and discourage others.⁹¹ For example, taxes on cigarettes and alcohol can discourage consumption, while tax breaks for renewable energy can promote investment in clean energy. The distributional effects of taxation depend on the design

⁸³ R. H. Coase, "The Problem of Social Cost." *The Journal of Law and Economics*, vol. 3 (1960): 1-44.

⁸⁴ J. E. Stiglitz and C. Walsh, *Principles of Macroeconomics* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2006).

⁸⁵ B. S. Bernanke et al., *Monetary policy transmission mechanisms in the United States: An overview. In Monetary policy transmission mechanisms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001): 21-78.

⁸⁶ P. Bardhan, "Institutions matter, but which ones?" *Economics of Transition*, vol. 13, no. 3 (2005): 499-532.

⁸⁷ Bardhan, 532.

⁸⁸ R. Bird and E.M. Zolt, "Redistribution via taxation: The limited role of the personal income tax in developing countries." *World Development*, vol. 117 (2019): 281-294.

⁸⁹ Bird & Zolt, "Redistribution via taxation.." 281-294.

⁹⁰ J. D. Ostry, A. Berg and C. Tsangarides, "Redistribution, inequality, and growth." *IMF staff discussion note*, vol. 14, no. 02 (2014): 1-19.

⁹¹ J. Slemrod and J. Bakija, *Taxing ourselves: A citizen's guide to the debate over taxes* (MIT Press, 2018), 87-134.

of the tax system. Progressive tax systems are often regarded as more equitable than regressive tax systems, where individuals with lower incomes pay a greater rate of their income in taxes. Also, people with higher incomes pay higher taxes—the proportion of their income in taxes under progressive tax systems.⁹² However, if certain exemptions or loopholes the ability to prevent the wealthy from paying their fair share, the effectiveness of progressive tax schemes may be constrained.

Public Spending

Public spending is another essential tool for governments to redistribute resources. Governments provide public goods and services such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure that benefit society. Public spending can also provide targeted assistance to those in need, such as social welfare programs and unemployment benefits.⁹³ The distributional effects of public spending depend on the allocation of resources.⁹⁴ For example, public spending can exacerbate inequality if resources are allocated to programs that primarily benefit the wealthy, such as tax breaks or subsidies. However, if resources are allocated to programs that primarily benefit low-income earners, such as social welfare programs or affordable housing, then public spending can help reduce inequality.

Regulation

Regulation is another essential tool for governments to redistribute resources. Governments can use regulation to ensure that markets operate reasonably and efficiently and prevent abuses of market power that harm consumers and workers. Regulations governing minimum salaries and working conditions, for instance, can assist in guaranteeing that employees are paid fairly and are provided with a safe work environment.⁹⁵ The distributional effects of regulation depend on the design of the regulations. If regulations are primarily designed to benefit large corporations and wealthy individuals, then regulation can exacerbate inequality.⁹⁶ However, if regulations are intended to protect consumers and workers, then regulation can help reduce inequality.

Providing Public Goods and Services (Provision)

Governments are vital in controlling how resources are provided for use in economic activity. This is because externalities or the provision of public goods and services cannot always be addressed by the market alone. Government intervention can help address market flaws and guarantee that resources are distributed effectively.⁹⁷ One way that governments regulate the provision of resources is through taxation. Governments can raise revenue by taxing certain economic activities to provide public goods and services such as roads, schools, and hospitals. Additionally, taxes can discourage the consumption of harmful products such as tobacco and alcohol, which have negative externalities. Governments can also regulate the provision of resources through subsidies. Subsidies are financial incentives given by the government to certain economic activities or industries to promote their growth or provide public goods and services.⁹⁸ For example, governments may provide subsidies to renewable energy companies to encourage the development of clean energy sources. Another way that governments regulate the provision of resources is through regulations. Regulations are rules and guidelines imposed on economic activities to ensure they are conducted safely and efficiently. For instance, governments may put environmental rules on enterprises to

⁹² Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). *Income Distribution - Income inequality* (2021). Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/social/income-distribution-database.htm> July 12, 2023.

⁹³ S. Galiani, P. Gertler and R. Bando, “Non-contributory pensions” in *Handbook of Development Economics*, vol. 5 (2016): 461-520.

⁹⁴ A. Fiszbein et al., “Conditional cash transfers: Reducing present and future poverty.” *The World Bank Research Observer*, vol. 24, no. 2 (2009): 233-246. doi: 10.1093/wbro/lkp008.

⁹⁵ D. Rodrik, “New technologies, global value chains, and the developing economies.” *Global Policy*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2018): 131-137.

⁹⁶ A. B. Atkinson, *Inequality: What can be done?* (London: Harvard University Press, 2015), 45-76.

⁹⁷ J. E. Stiglitz, *People, Power, and Profits: Progressive Capitalism for an Age of Discontent* (NY: WW Norton & Company, 2019), 47-98.

⁹⁸ N. Gregory Mankiw, *Principles of microeconomics* (Boston, Massachusetts: Cengage Learning, 2016), 261.

cut pollution and save the environment. Economic government action is not without detractors. Some argue that government intervention can lead to inefficiencies and reduce economic growth. However, others argue that government intervention is necessary to ensure the market operates fairly and efficiently.⁹⁹

Relevance of Genesis 41:47-49 to Government Regulation of Economic Activity

Genesis 41:47-49 guides how governments can regulate economic activities to achieve these objectives. By examining the passage in detail, one can draw lessons about the role of government in ensuring food security, preventing market failures, and promoting economic growth.

Ensuring Adequate Food Supply

The most obvious lesson from Genesis 41:47-49 is ensuring an adequate food supply. Joseph's grain storage was essential in preventing famine and ensuring that the people of Egypt had enough to eat. Similarly, modern governments must ensure that food supplies are sufficient and accessible, particularly in times of crisis. This may involve regulation of food prices, farmers' subsidies, and infrastructure investment to facilitate food distribution.

Preventing Market Failures

Genesis 41:47-49 also highlights the importance of preventing market failures. By regulating the grain market, Joseph prevented shortages and hoarding, which would have resulted in market failures. Similarly, modern governments must take steps to avoid market failures in various sectors. This may involve antitrust regulations, consumer protection laws, and oversight of financial markets to prevent economic bubbles and crashes.

Encouraging Economic Growth

Finally, Genesis 41:47-49 suggests that governments must take steps to encourage economic growth. By storing grain during times of plenty, Joseph ensured that the economy would remain stable during periods of scarcity. Similarly, modern governments must invest in education, healthcare, and infrastructure to promote economic growth. This may involve incentivising private sector investment, providing grants and tax breaks for new businesses, and investing in research and development.

CONCLUSION

The paper focused on the claim that governments are supposed to be preoccupied with controlling economic activity to make sure that resources are distributed fairly and efficiently, that market imperfections are fixed, and that harmful externalities are addressed. This involves using various tools such as taxation, public spending, and regulation to promote economic growth, reduce poverty and inequality, and create an enabling environment for businesses to thrive. Governments' specific approaches can vary depending on their political ideology, societal values, economic conditions, and globalisation trends.

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⁹⁹Wallace E. Oates, "An essay on fiscal federalism." *Journal of economic literature*, vol. 37, no. 3 (1999): 1120-1149.

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Intercommunal Wars, Rural Economy and Women in the Old Testament: Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo Communities in Perspective

Uzoma Amos Dike, PhD

Department of Religious Studies, National Open University of Nigeria.

Email: udike@noun.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

The history of wars has never left participants any richer but poorer. The most devastating effects of wars have adversely affected women who have either been left widowed or childless. The study is lensed through the Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo intercommunal clashes that have lasted for more than fifty years. The academics, religious institutions, Ebonyi state government and other stakeholders have in one way or the other thrown their weight towards ending the conflicts to no avail. While women are not enlisted for wars in rural communities, can there be useful in negotiations to end wars? Research has shown that women are scarcely pictured in peace talks and conflict resolution processes. However, studies on some feminine biblical characters reveal women who mediated and facilitated peaceful negotiations. Therefore, this paper sought to examine the potential for women's involvement in conflict resolution. The study adopted a descriptive research methodology as existing works on the subject matter were reviewed and analyzed. The paper discovered that apart from being sufferers and victims of wars, women's engagement in peace-building works is invaluable in facilitating peace in the events of intercommunal wars or conflicts. The study maintains that gender inclusiveness can serve as a veritable means of ending intercommunal wars.

Keywords: Intercommunal Wars, Rural Economy, Women in the Old Testament, Gender-Inclusive Strategy, Ezza-Ezillo

INTRODUCTION

Intra or inter-communal war is as old as human existence. Ancient Israel for instance has records of raids and foreign invasion of her territories starting much early in her history.¹⁰⁰ No doubt, the global community has started enlisting women as combatants during wars. However, in an ideal traditional setting, war is viewed as a man. Hence, men take the centre stage as far as the decision making for war, planning, fighting, dying, dividing the spoils and sharing power in case of victory or negotiating peace to end an ongoing war is concerned. On the other way round, women are active recipients of the most devastating effects of wars as they are being left either widowed or childless.

Ebonyi state is currently plagued with an ever-increasing conflict among rural communities. A case study focuses on the Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo incessant communal clashes. It has become a concern to see people who are seemingly homogeneous in their cultural identity, ethnicity and religious affiliation being involved in re-current communal conflicts. Various stakeholders have in one way or the other made commitments towards ending the conflicts to no avail. Therefore, this study solicits a gender-inclusive perception for negotiating or ending conflicts and wars. The study adopts a descriptive research methodology as existing works on the subject matter are reviewed and analyzed. Through this research design, the researcher is to test the varied theoretical models that explained the necessity of gender inclusiveness as a strategy for

¹⁰⁰ The Pentateuch narrative (Genesis 14:1ff) and the history of the conquest of the land of Canaan are good examples of communal clashes in the Old Testament.

ending inter-communal conflicts in Ebonyi State. As a qualitative research design, the study uses a secondary method of data collection. Sources include textbooks, journal articles, government documents, periodicals and internet materials which were subjected to qualitative data analysis; data processing, data analysis and data interpretation.

Conceptual and Theoretical Clarifications

For a proper appreciation of the subject of discussion, it is necessary to review and determine the following concepts:

Intercommunal Wars

War is defined as a state of declared armed hostile conflict between groups, states, or nations.¹⁰¹ This definition implies that there can be conflict without war. As a concept, conflict refers to divergent interests, ideas, ideologies, orientations and worldviews of groups of people. That is why conflict is also viewed from the perspective of a clash of interests which is common to human existence. Further, wars erupt where conflicts are not well managed. It is important to note that conflicts are inherent at all levels of social and economic interactions of humans.¹⁰² Notice that war is not just conflict but a qualified one – ‘armed conflict.’ It carries the same connotation as clash which involves violent conflict. Leaning on the definition of communal conflict, inter-communal wars are presented in this study as armed conflicts between communities living within a given locality with shared tribal and ethnic identities.¹⁰³ Hence, a group of communities could be described as being in war when violence has been introduced into an existing conflict. Conflict arises from differences which if not properly handled lead to disagreement and sometimes violent clashes.¹⁰⁴

Wars and Rural Economy

Development is hardly possible in an environment of war. Leaning on the World Commission on Environment and Development definition of sustainable development is development which meets the present without compromising the ability of future generations to their needs.¹⁰⁵ War by all standards constitute a major distraction to sustainable development hence, a compromise to the ability of future generations. For instance, while the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) pledges to ‘leave no one behind,’ reports from International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) on SDG progress show that millions of people living in conflict, and/ or who are displaced within their own countries or across borders are lagging from the goals.¹⁰⁶

It is also on record that the incessant communal violent conflicts in several communities within the Ebonyi State have had some devastating effects on governance and economic

¹⁰¹ Merriam Webster English Dictionary. [https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/war#:~:text=%CB%88w%C8%AF\(%C9%99\)r,or%20for%20a%20particular%20goal](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/war#:~:text=%CB%88w%C8%AF(%C9%99)r,or%20for%20a%20particular%20goal)

¹⁰² Sunday O. Onwe., David M. E. Nwogbaba and Michael C. Nwakamma. Effects of Social Conflicts on the Sustainable Development of Ebonyi State, A Study of Ezillo-Ezza Ezillo Conflicts (2008-2014). “Developing Country Studies.” Vol.5, No.3, 2015. www.iiste.org

¹⁰³ Johan Brosché “Causes of Communal Conflicts – Government Bias, Elites, and Conditions for Cooperation” Development Dissertation Brief 2015:06. <http://uu.divaportal.org/smash/get/diva2:677431/FULLTEXT01.pdf>.

¹⁰⁴ Isaiah Anumah, “CRS472 Conflict Management” (Abuja: NOUN Press, 2020).

¹⁰⁵ World Commission on Environment and Development's 1987 Brundtland report. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu > legal-content > glossary > sust...>

¹⁰⁶ Emma Samman, Jessica Hagen-Zanker, Susan Nicolai, Elizabeth Stuart ‘SDG progress; Fragility, crisis and leaving no one behind. ODI & IRC (2018). <https://odi.org/en/publications/sdg-progress-fragility-crisis-and-leaving-no-one-behind/>

development. Focusing their study, particularly, on the performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprise (SMEs) in Ebonyi, Iroegbu, Okwor and Azubike observed that communal clashes lead to disruption of production processes, no patronage, expiration of abandoned goods, no cash flow for loan repayments and total extinction of some SMEs.¹⁰⁷

Theoretical Framework

The functionalist theory emphasizes the value of consensus in the society, without recognition of the possibility of the occurrence of conflict. When conflict occurs, it is viewed as temporary and counteracted, as society becomes better. Thus, for the functionalist, though there can be conflicts, these are of little significance compared to the general need for consensus and stability.¹²⁸ On the contrary, Marxists insist on the fundamental conflict between different groups in the society. Taking its name from its founder – Karl Marx, Marxism claims that all societies contain contradictions which in turn create a conflict of interests. As opposed to the functionalist theory, Marxists argue that individuals and groups within society interact based on conflict rather than consensus.¹²⁹ Conflict, therefore, is construed as an instrument of social change it produces contradictions which are sometimes resolved, creating new conflicts and contradictions in an ongoing dialectic. Marx's Structural Theory of Conflict is relevant to this study since the conflicts between the Ezza and Ezza-Ezillo communities are as a result of clashes of interests. Conflict in itself is not an end but a partway to social change. Hence, it should be expected that the Ezillo and Ezza-Eillo communities having dwelt so much on intercommunal conflicts are ripe for embracing some social changes that are necessary for restoring and maintaining peaceful coexistence.

Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo: Their Identity and History of Clashes

The Ezillo community in Ebonyi Central senatorial district is one of the seven ethnic communities in the Ishielu local government area of Ebonyi State. It is strategically located along the Enugu Abakaliki expressway, hosting both people and infrastructural facilities such as the Ezillo farm settlement and Ezillo regional water scheme among others. Some schools of thought connect Ezillo to the Mgbom Eze in Ishieke Izzi in the present Ebonyi and Ikwo local government areas.¹⁰⁸ It is gathered that the Ezza – Ezillo people came from the Ezza south and Ezza north local governments area of Ebonyi State on the invitation of the Ezillo people to help them wage war over a land dispute between them and their Ngbo neighbour at EguEchara in the early 1930s.¹⁰⁹

At the expiration of the war, the Ezillo people gave the Ezza-Ezillo people some parcel of land at the embattled Egu–echara for their settlement as compensation or reward for their contribution, also having the intention that they will continue to act as buffers against their adversaries from Ngbo clan.¹¹⁰ Thus, the two clans began to live together in the Ezillo community for more than fifty years; though not in a harmonious relationship.¹¹¹ Hence, suffice it to say that the Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo people are two communities or groups living within the same geographical location.

¹⁰⁷ N. F. Iroegbu, E. E. Okwor, & N. U. Azubuike. JETMASE Vol 4(1): 235 –247, June, 2022. <https://www.jetmase.com>

¹⁰⁸ Sunday O. Onwe, David M. E. Nwogbaba and Michael C. Nwakamma. Effects of Social Conflicts on the Sustainable Development of Ebonyi State, A Study of Ezillo-Ezza Ezillo Conflicts (2008-2014). "Developing Country Studies." Vol.5, No.3, 2015, 79. www.iiste.org

¹⁰⁹ U.C Chukwu. A supplementary memorandum presented by Ezza–Ezillo people to the peace committee on Ezillo Communal disturbances in Ezillo, Ishielu Local Government Area, and Ebonyi state, 2008.,2.

¹¹⁰ Chukwu, 3.

¹¹¹ R.O. Oji, O.I. Eme, and H.A. Nwoba. "Communal Conflicts in Nigeria: AN examination of Ezillo and Ezza – Ezillo conflict of Ebonyi State (1982-2012)," *Kuwait chapter of Arabian journal of business and management review*,2012 vol. 4, No. 1, 514-526.

It has been gathered that the confrontational phase of the Ezillo-Ezza occurred on the 10th of May 2008, following a dispute between an Ezillo boy and an Ezza man over the erection of a telephone booth at Isinkpuma motor park. This degenerated into a communal clash between the two groups of people – Ezillo and Ezza. Though there was a timely intervention by the Ebonyi state government to resolve the conflict, however, several reprisals have been recorded leading to the loss of lives and properties. The socio-economic development of the area in particular and Ebonyi State, in general, was equally truncated.¹¹²

Unfortunately, the clashes have persisted to the present times with records of wanton killings and loss of properties. Part of this has been blamed on biased historical information handed to the people by their ancestors. For instance, the present Ezillo people insist that the Ezza must leave their land as a result of biased history/stories handed to them that the Ezza people are war-mongers and land usurpers who have forcefully occupied other Ezillo lands other than the Eguechara that was originally given to their ancestors.¹¹³ Another factor that contributed to the Ezillo–Ezza communal conflict was the indigene-settler conundrum owing to the inability of the settler or migrant community (Ezza-Ezillo) to be fully integrated with the host Ezillo community through acculturation. Thus, there are allegations and counter-allegations of the desecration of Ezillo cultural symbols and traditions by the Ezza-Ezillo.¹¹⁴ There is also the case of conflict of cultural and traditional interests aggravating the violent armed conflicts between the two communities. No doubt, the culture, customs and traditions of a people govern their way of life. It has been noted that the Ezillo attributes the denigration of their cultural and traditional heritage by the Ezzas as some of the causes of the disputes between them. They allege that the Ezza-Ezillo people flout their new yam festival rules by bringing new yam into the Ezillo market before the cultural rites of new yam in Ezillo, killing fish in sacred ponds and rivers and desecrating the chieftaincy institution. This is evident in the beating of the traditional ruler of Ezillo, Eze Chima Onyibe and his wife in 2008.¹¹⁵

Political underpinning is equally a major contributor to the Ezillo–Ezza communal conflict. Ajeli reports that Ezillo and Ezza have often alleged marginalization against one another. He cites an instance of the Ezillo people holding claims of the forceful acquisition of 12.3 hectares of land they donated for Federal Government use by the Ezza-Eillo people coupled with their attempt to create an Izzo community within the Ezillo community. All of these were perpetrated when Ezza people were at the helm of affairs. Conversely, the Ezza people allege marginalization and were denied infrastructural amenities because their Ezillo counterparts were occupying strategic positions in government.

As should be expected, the consequences of Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo intercommunal conflicts have left devastating effects on the communities in particular and Ebonyi state at large; including insecurity, armed robbery, prolonged dislocation of families, poverty, violent struggle for power, low infrastructural development among others. Unfortunately, it has continued unabatedly as those that suffered more losses in the conflict would always be getting ready to revenge, while those who may have gained an advantage prepare for more adventures.

¹¹² Oji, et.al., “Communal Conflicts in Nigeria: AN examination of Ezillo and Ezza – Ezillo conflict of Ebonyi State (1982-2012),” 517.

¹¹³ Sunday O. Onwe and others, 80.

¹¹⁴ Chukwu,4.

¹¹⁵ Festus Chimezie Ajeli. Brothers At War: A Historical Assessment of The Implications of Communal Conflicts on Sustainable Development of Ezillo–Ezza Communities, 2008-2018, “Ochendo: An African Journal of Innovative Studies. VOL. 4 NO. 2, 2023. P. 49. ISSN: 26814-0788 (Print) 2814-077X (e). Viewed 7 May, 2023 www.apas.africa/journals.php”

It has been observed earlier that there have been commitments towards ending the clashes from various sectors and fields of human endeavour. For instance, volumes have been written on the Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo conflicts some of which are cited in this work. The government at different levels have equally intervened in various occasions of clashes to no avail. However, none of these efforts has given any special consideration or recognition to the place of the most affected victims or sufferer of the effects of wars – the women. This has led to the discovery of new perspectives to ending the long existing communal conflicts, hence the introduction of gender-inclusive approach in which women are considered as part of the negotiation process for restoration of peace and order in an embattled community.

Women in the Old Testament

The world of the Old Testament is obviously a patriarchal one in which women are meant to be seen and not to be heard. However, Dike has observed that despite the cultural challenges of patriarchy, some female folk were able to press their marks in Old Testament history; urging contemporary women to queue into their strength to realize the Sustainable Development Goal.¹¹⁶ In this section, two of such biblical female figures are considered. Turning to 2 Samuel 20:16ff presents a story of a woman identified as a “wise woman” of Abel Beth-maacah – her city. The city of Abel apparently joined the revolt along with all the northern Israel tribes against David. There, Sheba had taken refuge. The passage has it that while Joab was in pursuit of Sheba the traitor to the King of Israel and discovered he had hidden within the walls of Abel Beth-maacah. Joab and his troop began to build ramps to lay siege to the city walls. It is at this point in the story that the wise woman intervened; thus, “*Then a wise woman called from the city, ‘Listen! Listen! Tell Joab, ‘Come here, that I may speak to you.’*”¹¹⁷

She called out to the leader of the attacking army in the midst of the walls of her city being battered. This is an incredibly bold move for a woman in a patriarchal setting. Could she have been dismissed because of her gender? Possibly, yes. Yet, it does not seem to matter to her as She courageously continued shouting out to the warriors besieging her city walls until an audience was given to her. She forbids Joab from seeking to destroy the city she described as “a mother in Israel” and negotiated to deliver the head of the traitor in exchange for amnesty.

Commenting on this text, it has been observed that the Wise Woman of Abel Beth-maacah was skilled in the art of persuasive conversation – a master of rhetoric; having also the endowment with incredible courage and impeccable timing.¹¹⁸ This is indeed an encouragement to the women folk to seek wisdom, guard it as a precious jewel, and use it with courage and patience.

Another woman of seeming characteristic of the wise woman of Abel is Abigail of Moan, the wife of a great man – Nabal.¹¹⁹ The passage praises Abigail as intelligent and good-looking and Nabal as a hard man and an evildoer. He was also described as a person who is nasty or ill-natured.¹²⁰

These descriptions are further expounded in the passage as David sends a number of his young men to greet and bless Nabal with good wishes for peace expecting to be paid for their contribution to a successful season of sheep grazing. Nabal’s response was that of contempt as he

¹¹⁶U. A. Dike. “The Biblical Deborah: An Inspiration to Womanhood for Sustainable Development in Nigeria.” *International Journal of Gender and Development Issues*” (IJGDI), 2020. Vol. 1 No. 9, 158.

¹¹⁷ 2 Sam 20:16.

¹¹⁸ Daughters’ Dialogue. Brutal Peace: The Wise Woman of Abel . Posted on November 15, 2014. Viewed on 8 May, 2023 <https://daughtersdialogue.wordpress.com/2014/11/15/brutal-peace-the-wise-woman-of-abel/>

¹¹⁹ 1 Sam 25:1ff

¹²⁰ 1 Sam 25: 2-3,25.

dismisses David's request labeling him as a nobody. In retaliation, David takes great affront and prepares to wipe out Nabal and his household.¹²¹ This plan was made known to Abigail by one of Nabal's young men who provided an objective assessment of the scenario from the angle of David with regards to his loyal service to Nabal.

On hearing this narrative from the young man, Abigail immediately swung into action even without recourse to her husband who at that moment was busy celebrating the shearing season. She sent great quantities of bread, meat, and fruit to David to try and appease David. Not only that, she followed up in person, seeking to pacify David, describing her husband as a fool. Not counting on the possible imminent danger to her life, Abigail threw herself at David's feet and urged him to reconsider his plan. Her words were truths though seemingly flattery. Nabal was obviously ignorant of David's true identity but Abigail recognized David as the future king of Israel. Commenting on Abigail's counsel to David, Jan P. Fokkelman has succinctly observed that the "unity of Abigail's speech lies in the fact that she appealed to David's self-interest. Abigail was so convincing to David because she illustrated that David will be fouling his own nest if he spilt blood."¹²² She concluded with a statement representing her own self-interest that David should remember her when he prospered in the future.¹²³

Interestingly, Zucker notes that though years separate these two narratives of the Wise Woman of Abel and Abigail, they both address moral-cum-religious-cum-political decisions about when and how best to address the matter of politically-motivated violence.¹²⁴ He went further to observe that while Abigail seeks to protect David's reputation and his goal to achieve royal power; the Wise Woman of Abel attempts to preserve and protect David's rule. Underlining also the fact, that on the surface, each woman, stands unarmed and alone; and in an inferior position compared to the heavily armed forces being faced. However, they relied on their courage and their persuasive argument.

It is obvious from these passages, that these women appealed to political reason and self-restraint in managing the indiscriminate expression of anger being portrayed. They used the weapon of truth (devoid of any inclination to self-interest) by speaking it to the powers that be without compromise. Victoriously, these women through their peace negotiating abilities and strategies boldly imply that both in the short and long term, it is ethically and politically better to refrain from wanton bloodshed.

Gender-Inclusive Strategy in Peaceful Negotiation

The critical question here is, why engage women in the conflict negotiation process? To address this, it is important to recognize the contemporary global phenomenon of gender inclusiveness. SDG 16 focuses on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provision of access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. Before SDG 16 came, the Convention on Elimination of all Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform of 18 December 1979. CEDAW is an international legal instrument that requires countries to end every form of discrimination against women and girls and promotes women's and girls' equal rights. Interestingly, the World Summit of 1995

¹²¹ 1 Sam 25:17

¹²² J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analyses*, Vol. 2, Aasen: The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1986, 510.

¹²³ 1 Sam 25: 25-31.

¹²⁴ David J. Zucker. *Abigail of Maon and the Wise Woman of Abel: Speaking Truth to Power*, "Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary e-Journal" Volume 17 Number 2 (2020) ISSN 1209-9392.

defines an inclusive society as a society for all in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play.

Moreover, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) came up with a new resolution - UNSC Resolution 1325 concerning women, peace and security in the year 2000. Prominent in the resolution are four ground pillars consisting of prevention, participation, protection and peacebuilding/recovery. This resolution was necessitated by the recognition that women are mostly excluded from the peaceful negotiation processes in the aftermath of a conflict. The resolution, therefore, was created to establish the important role women could play in the prevention and resolution of peace, both in negotiating for and building peace.¹²⁵

In a background paper for the United Nations, Crespo-Sancho has made the following discoveries:

- i. Women's participation in peace processes has a positive impact on the durability of peace agreements, thereby preventing the reoccurrence of conflict.
- ii. Women's inclusion as negotiators, mediators, signatories, and witnesses increases the probability of a lasting agreement.
- iii. Recognition of the positive relationship between the inclusion of women in peace negotiations and the result of the peace deals.¹²⁶

To substantiate further the need for a gender-inclusive perspective to peaceful negotiation, UNWOMEN stresses the transformative role many women play in urging an end to conflict because the different experiences of wars give them different perspectives on the social and economic ills to be addressed in any peace accord.¹²⁷ With these platforms operative, it becomes unconventional to exclude women in any facet of human society.

Analyses of Women's Potentials in Conflict Resolution

Anchoring on the Old Testament portrait of two women – the Wise woman of Abel and Abigail, and on the UN Women Policy Briefing Paper Gender and Conflict Analysis, the potential of women in conflict resolution cannot be overemphasized. These women dared to speak truth to power. Each woman employed the wisdom of a moral appeal to the male aggressor's better inclinations to de-escalate a situation where her community was seriously threatened with violent and immediate annihilation.¹²⁸

What could have made them this daring? Their different perceptions of wars - the imagination of widowhood and childlessness. They are both described as “figures who stand so boldly before a king and a general.”¹²⁹ Commenting on Abigail's use of the spoken word in 1 Samuel 25, Claassens observes that her word reveals an important perspective on the nature and

¹²⁵UN Women 2016, Peace and Security, viewed 11 May 2023,

<<http://www.unwomen.org//media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2013/12/un%20women%20briefthematicpsuswebrev3%20pdf.pdf?la=en>>

¹²⁶ C. Crespo-Sancho. “The Role of Gender in the Prevention of Violent Conflict.” Background paper for the United Nations-World Bank Flagship Study, Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict. World Bank, Washington, DC. 2017.

¹²⁷ UN Women. Policy Briefing Paper Gender and Conflict Analysis, 2012, viewed 11 May, 2023.

<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2012/10/WPSourcebook-04A-GenderConflictAnalysis-en.pdf>

¹²⁸ David J. Zucker. Abigail of Maon and the Wise Woman of Abel: Speaking Truth to Power. “Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary e-Journal” Volume 17 Number 2 (2020). Viewed 11 May, 2023. file:///C:/Users/USER/Downloads/dina,+wij-articles-2ready+for+pdf-Abigail,+Wise+Woman++FINAL+++25+April+2021+++++.pdf

¹²⁹ Camp, Claudia V. “The Wise Women of 2 Samuel: A Role Model for Women in Ancient Israel?” Women in the Hebrew Bible, Alice Bach, Ed., (New York: Routledge, 1999), 196, 197, 199 [195-207]. Reprinted from the Catholic Bible Quarterly, 42 (January 1981), 19. Though the focus of Camp is on the Wise Woman, however, her observations also describe Abigail's actions

significance of female resistance in the Hebrew Bible. Moreso, Abigail's words are best described as life-giving in nature against the backdrop of presenting herself as a victim who is helpless to change her own situation as well as the situation of others around her. Remarkably, she emerged as the quintessential embodiment of Wisdom, a prime example of what it means to do justice, to show kindness—in the process serving like Woman Wisdom as counselor to kings¹³⁰ in Proverbs. The same description is also true of the Wise Woman of Abel and aligns with the self-description of the woman wisdom of Proverbs chapter 8; “I, Wisdom live with prudence... Mine are counsel and resourcefulness... courage is mine.”¹³¹

Abigail's stance against David cannot be considered less courageous compared to the self-description of the woman's wisdom. Like Abigail, the Wise Woman of Abel offered “persuasive counsel, presented in a compelling manner.”¹³²

Bringing these women's resistance to the threat of overwhelming male violence side by side with contemporary realities, James C. Scott, “Weapons of the Weak”¹³³ quickly comes to mind. This piece describes the agency and activism of those whose status, such as slaves or women, structures their asymmetrical dependence on arbitrary authority and the brutal power of others possessing a higher status, such as masters or patriarchs. This is viewed as a daily strategy for maintaining one's dignity, sidestepping punishment, or coopting the self-understanding of the authority figure for the benefit of those who are relatively disempowered. For these women, their weapons of weakness are their persuasive counsel presented with courage in a compelling manner, coupled with their experience.

CONCLUSION

The paper so far has been focused on the potentialities of a gender-inclusive approach to intercommunal conflict resolution. Women in ideal rural and traditional communities are not enlisted for wars but are major victims being left widows and childless. A study of available works of literature revealed that women are scarcely pictured in peace talks and conflict resolution processes. However, the portrait of some women in the Old Testament and the global projects on gender championed by the SDG 16, CEDAW, UNSC and the Beijing Platform of 18 December 1979 reveal the ability of women in mediating and facilitating peaceful negotiations. This paper discovered that apart from sufferers and victims of wars, women's engagement in peace-building and also as agents of peaceful negotiation are invaluable in facilitating peace in the events of intercommunal wars or conflicts such as the ongoing turbulence between the Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo communities. The study maintains that gender inclusiveness can serve as a veritable means of ending the Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo intercommunal clashes.

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¹³⁰ Juliana M. Claassens, *Claiming Her Dignity: Female Resistance in the Old Testament*. (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier/Liturgical, 2016), 28. Claassens' direct reference is to Abigail and Rizpah (2 Sam 21).

¹³¹ Prov 8:12, 14

¹³² Camp, Claudia V. “The Wise Women of 2 Samuel: A Role Model for Women in Ancient Israel?” p. 20.

¹³³ James C. Scott. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985). 16.

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Jesus and the Temple Offerings: An Exegetical Study of Luke 20:45-21:4 and its Socio-Economic Implication for African Christianity

Ernest Jnr Frimpong and Jonathan E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, PhD

Department of Religious Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana.

Email: littleernest5@gmail.com / jkadjaottor@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The Bible gives several instances to validate the essentiality of money and offering towards the work and house of God. Nonetheless, it is also unarguable from the scriptures that God prefers good and peaceful interpersonal relationships such as helping the needy and establishing reconciliations as needful priorities to offering one's gift in the Temple. Similar to Jewish religiosity, African Christianity faces a huge religious problem. Religio-economic hypocrisy is increasingly predominant such that while there are (might be) needy, sick, poor and widowed believers in the congregations and in the household of faith, some affluent believers ignore these ones and rather offer huge financial offerings for recognition. Sadly, some would even exploit the homes of these marginalized to enrich themselves and the poor remain suffering. In addressing this problem, the study exegetically examined the contextual relevance of the case of Jesus and the temple offerings in Luke 21:1-4 in the light of Jesus' judgments on the background and motives of the religiously rich and the religiously poor widows to African Christianity. Results indicated that Jesus condemns the rich as being religio-economic hypocrites seeking recognition, according to the exegetical background in Luke 20:45-47. However, he commends the offering of the poor widow for her genuineness, pure motive characterized by humility, dependency and faith in God despite her economic challenge. Implicatively, the source of giving as African Christians should be genuine, having the sole motive to please God and to show humility and trust in him; and alleviating poverty by helping the needy, but neither giving from exploitation nor on the basis of pride.

Keywords: *Religious hypocrisy; Temple Offerings; African Christianity; Religiously Rich; Religiously Poor.*

INTRODUCTION

Biblical studies is the study of the Judeo-Christian Bible and related texts.¹³⁴ The Bible offers numerous pieces of evidence to support the religio-socio-economic necessity of money for both humanity and the growth of Christianity. Notwithstanding, the scriptures give prime attention to the right way of making money, the motive behind offerings, good interpersonal relationship; and also considers how the religiously rich is expected to lessen the economic burden of the religiously poor. This concern is investigated. Similar to Jewish religiosity, African Christianity faces a huge religious problem. And Mbiti worries about the African milieu.¹³⁵

These phenomena are evident in the situation of African Christianity in which economic exploitation and religious hypocrisy are shown during church offerings and prayers. Religio-economic hypocrisy is increasing among African Christians so much that, while there are economically deprived Christians who are widows, sick and poor in the church and communities of believers, the religiously affluent believers easily ignore them. Meanwhile, they proudly make huge monetary offerings and extra contributions, in the name of building and supporting God's church.

Sadly, some would even exploit the homes of these marginalized to enrich themselves while the poor remain suffering. In addressing this problem, the study exegetically examines the contextual relevance of the case of Jesus and the temple offerings in Luke 21:1-4 in the light of Jesus' judgments on the

¹³⁴ Jonathan E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics: A Current Trend in Biblical Studies in Ghana," *ERATS* 3 (2012): 575-579.

¹³⁵ John Mbiti, "Christianity and African Religion", 313. cf. John Mbiti, "The Encounter between Christianity and African Religion," *Temenos – Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion* 12 (1976): 131-132.

background (Lk. 20: 45-47) and motives of the religiously rich and the religiously poor widows to African Christianity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper presents a relationship between religion, human behaviour and economic issues from a biblical perspective. Scholars have written extensively in these areas and on the link they share. Hart in emphasizing Durkheim,¹³⁶ concludes that Religion connects and ties humanity to an external force and also causes people to act.¹³⁷ Thus, religiosity comes with a general or particular way of life in which one is expected to act. And one of such ways is the act of offerings, hence religious offerings. In many instances in which religious offerings are and have been made, money is key. Meanwhile, for centuries, money was demonized by some agrarian ideologues like Aristotle.¹³⁸ However, unlike these, Keith Hart thinks otherwise. Like language; money, according to Hart, is an aspect of human personality.¹³⁹ In other words, he thinks that money is both a social need as well as a physical need for humanity. With that, Rappaport persuades that religion should necessarily affect and concern the totality of things – *a holiness*. Thus, to him, religiosity should be concerned about the economic situation of humanity – the human economy, as well.¹⁴⁰ And agreeing with Rappaport, Hart amplifies that money even possesses some redemptive and liberating abilities.¹⁴¹ Interestingly, he reminds that money gives some level of ability to humanity both to acquire things for themselves and to also lessen the burdens of the deprived and needy, hence a humanitarian value of money. Thus agreeably, the possession of money should be driven by a human-centered goal and behavior, such that, having money teaches people to become human.¹⁴² Thus, being religiously rich should become a valuable opportunity for one to express genuine humanness toward others. Having said that, it is equally imperative that the religious person should consider the means and sources of their enrichment as far as Christianity, Godliness and motives matter.

The biblical case in Luke 20:45 – 21:4 presents one of the Jewish Temple rituals – *offerings*, in which Jesus Christ creates awareness and draws urgent attention from the congregation to listen to what he had to say about it. He mentions two personalities, namely, the religiously rich people¹⁴³ and a religiously poor widow. Jesus judges that the offering of the poor widow into the Jerusalem Temple Treasury¹⁴⁴ was more than that of the others (21:2-3).¹⁴⁵ Scholars have commented on this passage from various perspectives. Jaja emphasizes that the story focuses more on the spirit within which the offerings were given than the amounts given. She added that the means should guide people's offerings and almsgiving. This article agrees with this notion. However, she looked at general contemporary whiles this paper considers the relevance of the case study to the context of African Christianity.

¹³⁶ Emile Durkheim, *The elementary forms of religious life* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1965).

¹³⁷ Keith Hart, "Money is how we learn to be human," (2019): 3.

¹³⁸ Hart, "Money is how we learn to be human," 3.

¹³⁹ Hart, 10.

¹⁴⁰ Roy A. Rappaport, *Holiness and Humanity: Ritual in the Making of a Religious Life* (Cengage, 1979); Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); See Berghahn Human Economy Series: https://www.berghahnbooks.com/series/?pg=huma_econ.

¹⁴¹ Keith Hart, "Money is how we learn to be human," (2019): 4.

¹⁴² Hart, "Money is how we learn to be human," 3.

¹⁴³ These included the Scribes, Chief Priests, Pharisees and Elders – see Lk 21:1, *NRSV*.

¹⁴⁴ Bethel Onyechere Jaja, "The Widow's Mite and the Controversies associated with its interpretation: Mark 12: 41-44 and Luke 21: 1-4," *Advance Journal Of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences* 6, no. 02 (2023): 13-18.

¹⁴⁵ In reference to the rich people – see Lk 21:1, *NRSV*.

METHODOLOGY

The research critically examined the contextual pericope of Luke 20: 45-21:4 through biblical exegesis. Specifically, the study employed the Historical-Critical Method¹⁴⁶ which aided investigations into the background of and historical antecedent to the text as well as the wording of the text for contextualization. This method investigates the meaning of a text from the intended meaning of its author.¹⁴⁷ Thus, to accurately derive a textual meaning, it calls for critical observation of the historical facts and grammatical principles applicable to the understudied text. Since the study focused on investigating both the historical antecedents as well as the wording of the text for its contextual relevance, the Historical-Critical Method was justifiably appropriate. The exegetical conviction inspired by this method emphasizes the need to consider the author's world, language, culture, audience, setting and social environment of the biblical text. Thus, any exegetical attempt to derive the meaning of a text of the Bible for today's context must first investigate the historical understanding of the immediate readers of that text.¹⁴⁸ An integrated approach to the historical-critical method was employed to look at the form, genre and morpho-syntactic analysis.

EXEGETICAL FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Greek Text is from the Society of Biblical Literature Greek New Testament (SBLGNT) and the analysis is from the Nestle Aland, NA 27. The selected Lukan text is a synoptic gospel narrative. The exegetical work was in two parts, namely; the antecedent – Luke 20: 45-47, and the case study – Luke 21: 1-4.

Exegesis of Background: Greek Text and Transliteration

⁴⁵Ἀκούοντος δὲ παντὸς τοῦ λαοῦ εἶπεν τοῖς μαθηταῖς· ⁴⁶Προσέχετε ἀπὸ τῶν γραμματέων τῶν θελώντων περιπατεῖν ἐν στολαῖς καὶ φιλοῦντων ἀσπασμούς ἐν ταῖς ἀγοραῖς καὶ πρωτοκαθεδρίας ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς καὶ πρωτοκλισίας ἐν τοῖς δεῖπνοις, ⁴⁷οἱ κατεσθίουσιν τὰς οἰκίας τῶν χηρῶν καὶ προφάσει μακρὰ προσεύχονται· οὗτοι λήμψονται περισσότερον κρίμα. (Luke 20:45-47).

Transliteration

⁴⁵Akouontos de pantos you laou eipen tois mathetais: ⁴⁶Prosechete apo ton grammateon ton thelontōn peripatein en stolais kai philountōn aspasmous en tais agorais kai protokathedrias en tais sunagōgais kai protoklisias en tois deipnois, ⁴⁷hoi katesthiousin tas oikias ton chērōn Kai prophasei makes proseuchontai: outoi lēmpsontai perissoteron krima.

Textual Variations and Analysis

There exist some variations in the above-quoted Lukan verses. According to the critical apparatus¹⁴⁹ to these verses, τοῖς μαθηταῖς has been changed since the 25th edition of Nestle-Aland's *Novum Testamentum Graece*, to appear as τοῖς μαθηταῖς [αὐτοῦ] "to the disciples of him," in the NA27 as witnessed by the uncials B D and lectionary 2542. However, the witness Q for the Lukan and Johannine Gospels replaces τοῖς μαθηταῖς with πρὸς αὐτοὺς "to them." Employing such a replacement would render v.45 as having just one object, *the people*, instead of two – *the temple people and the disciples*. Meanwhile, the text τοῖς μαθηταῖς [αὐτοῦ] is maintained in and supported by the Majority Text and thus witnessed in the uncials A L W (Γ) Θ Ψ as well as the minuscule families f¹ and f¹³ (f^{1.3} 33), Syriac and Coptic versions (lat sy co). Completely, v.45 should be formed and established as: Ἀκούοντος δὲ παντὸς τοῦ λαοῦ εἶπεν τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ.

In v.46, the dative feminine singular noun στολαῖς has a varying reading as στοαις witnessed in Syrus Sinaiticus (sy^s) and Syrus Curetonianus (sy^c) of the Syriac versions – *Vetus Syra*. However, since this

¹⁴⁶ Cosmin Daniel Pricop, "The Historical-Critical Method and the Holy Fathers: A brief history of a mutual reception with ecumenical implications at the level of biblical studies," RES 6 (2014): 354-377; Edgar Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977); Wolfgang M.W. Roth, *The Historical-Critical Method and its function in Biblical Interpretation*, 51-58.

¹⁴⁷ Henry A. Virkler, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 73.

¹⁴⁸ Patrick Yankyera, Jonathan E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Emmanuel K. E. Antwi and Frimpong Wiafe, "A Historical-Critical and Morpho-Syntactic interpretation of Luke 4:18-19," *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies* 6, no. 6 (2020): 326.

¹⁴⁹ Nestle-Aland, NA 27th Edition, KATA ΛΟΥΚΑΝ 20: 45-21: 11.

variant is not witnessed and supported by the Majority Text which maintains στολαῖς, such alternative reading has no strong bearing on the establishment of the text, hence no appropriation of such alternative.

In v.47, there are three variations. Firstly, the present active indicative third person plural verb κατεσθίουσιν has an alternative reading in which the conjugated ending – ίουσιν is replaced with οντες to form κατεσθοντες witnessed in Codex Bezae, D, as appearing in the Gospels, and also testified in few manuscripts P Ψ pc which differ from the Majority Text. However, since this variation has no support from the *textus*, Majority Text, the alternative reading κατεσθοντες cannot be established. Secondly, while majority of manuscripts maintain καὶ before προφάσει, it is omitted in the manuscript of Codex Bezae, D, et cetera, but such omission is not supported by the Majority Text. Thus, such a variant has a lighter bearing on the text rendered in NA27. Lastly, προσεύχονται has another reading with an ending – χομενοι which is seen in parallel passages of the Gospels, listed in the margin at the beginning of the *pericopes*. Greek codices that bear witness to this alternative (parallel) word are D P Θ and witnessed also in the minuscule family 13 (f¹³ 1542) with other few minuscule (e q r¹ s). With these numerous witnesses, προσεύχονται could be rendered alternatively as προσεύχομενοι to establish the text.

The Text Established (Luke 20:45-47)

⁴⁵Ακούοντος δὲ παντὸς τοῦ λαοῦ εἶπεν τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ· ⁴⁶Προσέχετε ἀπὸ τῶν γραμματέων τῶν θελώντων περιπατεῖν ἐν στολαῖς καὶ φιλοῦντων ἀσπασμούς ἐν ταῖς ἀγοραῖς καὶ πρωτοκαθεδρίας ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς καὶ πρωτοκλισίας ἐν τοῖς δειπνοῖς, ⁴⁷οἱ κατεσθίουσιν τὰς οἰκίας τῶν χηρῶν καὶ προφάσει μακρὰ προσεύχομενοι· οὗτοι λήμψονται περισσότερον κρίμα.

The Established Transliteration

⁴⁵Akouontos de pantos you laou eipen tois mathetais autou: ⁴⁶Prosechete apo tōn grammateōn tōn thelontōn peripatein en stolais kai philountōn aspasmous en tais agorais kai prōtokathedrias en tais sunagōgais kai prōtoklisisias en tois deipnois, ⁴⁷hoi katesthiousin tas oikias tōn chērōn Kai prophasei makes proseuchomenoi: outoi lēmpsontai perissoteron krima.

Morpho-Syntactic Analysis

v. 45 – Ακούοντος δὲ παντὸς τοῦ λαοῦ εἶπεν τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ·

Ἀκούοντος /Akouontos/ is a masculine singular present active participle in the genitive case of the verb ἀκούω “to hear”. Thus, its singular genitive state indicates that Ἀκούοντος “hearing” is a collective action being possessed or done by παντὸς τοῦ λαοῦ. The adjective παντὸς “of all” is also a genitive masculine singular of πᾶς “all” thus referring to a group classified as a unit. The definite noun τοῦ λαοῦ “of the people” is a genitive masculine singular of the nominative singular λαός “a people.” Clearly, in v.45, reference is made to the masculine gender. Thus, specifically pointing to the male audience in the temple as defined in 20:1 and which comprised the chief priests, the scribes and the elders who questioned the authority behind Jesus’ teaching ministry. And these classes of people are all males, and they are classified as a people of the temple. The conjunction δὲ is the word “and” instead of its usual “but,” according to the context.

εἶπεν is the aorist active indicative third person singular of the present active indicative verb λέγω “to say, speak.” Thus, εἶπεν has the translation “he spoke.” The definite noun τοῖς μαθηταῖς is a masculine plural in the dative case, hence being the indirect object receiving the effect of the speech. Thus, τοῖς μαθηταῖς means “to the disciples.” And these disciples were all males. The pronoun αὐτοῦ is a genitive masculine singular which means “of him,” hence dynamically implied as “his,” in possession of τοῖς μαθηταῖς. Therefore, v.45 has the translation, “And in the hearing of all the people, he spoke to his disciples.”

v. 46 – Προσέχετε ἀπὸ τῶν γραμματέων

From the verb Προσέχω “to pay attention to, be aware of, give heed to,” Προσέχετε is a present active imperative second person plural. Therefore, in its imperative mood, it means “You, beware!” referring to his disciples. The preposition ἀπὸ is in the genitive case which means “from,” emphasizing and pointing to the object of which the disciples should be aware. It thus indicates a withdrawal or carefulness on the part of the addressees. Thus Προσέχετε ἀπὸ together forms the prepositional imperative “You, beware of!” The

definite plural noun τῶν γραμματέων is in the genitive case. And it means “of the scribes or grammarians or clerks.” Thus, v.46a is translated as “You, beware of the Scribes!” The speaker is hereby giving an unchangeable instruction that his disciples must be very careful about the scribes, especially, their characters and deeds.

v. 46 – τῶν θελόντων περιπατεῖν ἐν στολαῖς καὶ φιλοῦντων ἀσπασμοὺς ἐν ταῖς ἀγοραῖς καὶ πρωτοκαθεδρίας ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς καὶ πρωτοκλισίας ἐν τοῖς δεῖπνοις, θελόντων is a present active participle, genitive masculine plural of the verb θέλω “to wish, desire.” Thus, the definite τῶν θελόντων gives the translation “who wish [desire] and are wishing [desiring]...” However, since the opening statement is in the imperative mood, the command was implied after “Scribes” so that the following adjectives become the characteristics of the Scribes. Therefore, instead of “who wish [desire] and are wishing [desiring],” it will be a pronominal statement: “They wish [desire] and are wishing [desiring]...” Being the present active infinitive of the verb περιπατέω “to walk,” περιπατεῖν similarly means “to walk.” The preposition ἐν means “in” in the dative case pointing to the indirect object στολαῖς “garments, robes.” And φιλοῦντων is a present active participle genitive masculine plural of the verb φιλέω “to love,” hence translating as “loving.” They love ἀσπασμοὺς [greetings] ἐν [in] ταῖς ἀγοραῖς [the market-places] καὶ [and] πρωτοκαθεδρίας [highly esteemed places, chief seats] ἐν [in] ταῖς συναγωγαῖς [the synagogues] καὶ [and] πρωτοκλισίας [chief places] ἐν [in] τοῖς δεῖπνοις [the banquets]. Meanwhile, ἐν τοῖς δεῖπνοις in its dative case implies the meaning “at banquets” to make specific reference to all the banquets attended by the Scribes.

The sentence from v.46 ends in v.47. The word οἱ means “who” and κατεσθίουσιν is a present active indicative participle third person plural verb and it means “[are] devouring” τὰς οἰκίας [the houses] τῶν χηρῶν [of the widows] καὶ [and] προφάσει [in a pretense] μακρὰ [long] προσεύχομενοι [they pray].

οὗτοι indicates an emphasis “For this” in reference to the above-mentioned characteristics of the Scribes. Also, λήψονται is a future middle indicative third person plural form of the present active indicative verb λαμβάνω “to receive, take” hence, giving the translation “they will receive [unto themselves]” or “they [themselves] will receive.” Περισσότερον (Mk 12:40 cf. Mk 7:36, Lk 12:48, 1Cor 15:10) is from a comparative adjective περισσός and it means “greater, even more, so much more” and κρίμα means “judgment, condemnation.”

The Established Translation of Luke 20: 45-47

And in the hearing of all the people, he spoke to his disciples: You, beware of the Scribes! They wish [desire] and are wishing [desiring] to walk in garments [robes] and chief places at banquets; who devour and are devouring [exploiting/looting up] the houses of the widows and in a pretense, they pray long. For this, they will receive [unto themselves] greater [even more, so much more] judgment [condemnation].

Exegesis of Case Study Luke 21: 1-4 – Greek Text and Transliteration

¹Ἀναβλέψας δὲ εἶδεν τοὺς βάλλοντας εἰς τὸ γαζοφυλάκιον τὰ δῶρα αὐτῶν πλουσίους. ²εἶδεν δὲ τινα χήραν πενιχρὰν βάλλουσαν ἐκεῖ λεπτὰ δύο, ³καὶ εἶπεν· Ἀληθῶς λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἡ χήρα ἢ πτωχὴ αὕτη πλεῖον πάντων ἔβαλεν· ⁴πάντες γὰρ οὗτοι ἐκ τοῦ περισεύοντος αὐτοῖς ἔβαλον εἰς τὰ δῶρα, αὕτη δὲ ἐκ τοῦ ὑστερήματος αὐτῆς πάντα τὸν βίον ὃν εἶχεν ἔβαλεν.¹⁵⁰

Transliteration

¹Anablephas de eiden eius ballontas eis to gazophulakion ta dōra autōn plousious. ²Eiden de tina chēran penichran ballousan ekei leptā duo, ³Kai eipen. Alēthōs legō humin hoti hē chēra hē ptōchē hautē pleion pantōn ebalen: ⁴pantes gar houtoi ek tou perisseuontos autois ebalon eis ta dōra, hautē de ek tou husterēmatis autēs panta ton bion hon eichen ebalen.

Textual Variations, Analysis and Establishment

¹⁵⁰ SBLGNT, Lk 21: 1-4

The textual apparatus to Luke 21: 1-4, according to NA27, revealed some necessary variations to the text. First, “λεπτά δύο” should be transposed as δύο λεπτα, as witnessed by the Majority Text - uncials A D W, minuscule families 1 and 13, and in textus Codices κ B L Q Θ Ψ 33. 579. 892. 1241. 2542 *pc lat*.

Insertion of ο εστιν κόδρα της as witnessed in Codex D (a s) could not make any changes to the text since the Majority Text has no attestation to such a variant. However, in v.3, the expression αυτή η πτωχή should be transposed as η πτωχη αυτη as cited in the Majority Text - A W Θ Ψ *f¹, txt* κ B D L Q *f¹³* 33. 579. 1241 *pc lat*.

In v. 4, several variants were effected on the text according to the Majority Text. First, πάντες has to be απάντες while the definite του Θεου is to be inserted after τὰ δῶρα in the genitive. Similarly, πάντα should be read as **απάντα**.

Thus, the established text becomes: ¹Αναβλέψας δὲ εἶδεν τοὺς βάλλοντας εἰς τὸ γαζοφυλάκιον τὰ δῶρα αὐτῶν πλουσίους. ²εἶδεν δὲ τινα χήραν πενιχρὰν βάλλουσαν ἐκεῖ δύο λεπτά, ³καὶ εἶπεν· Ἀληθῶς λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἡ χήρα ἢ πτωχὴ αὕτη πλεῖον πάντων ἔβαλεν· ⁴απάντες γὰρ οὗτοι ἐκ τοῦ περισσεύοντος αὐτοῖς ἔβαλον εἰς τὰ δῶρα του Θεου, αὕτη δὲ ἐκ τοῦ ὑστερήματος αὐτῆς απάντα τὸν βίον ὃν εἶχεν ἔβαλεν.

Morpho-syntactic Analysis of Luke 21: 1-4

v.1 – Αναβλέψας is an aorist active participle, nominative masculine singular, and introduced by the conjunction δὲ “but,” they mean “But [He] having looked up.” It acts as a subject in reference to the subject in Lk 20: 45. Also, εἶδεν is an aorist active indicative third person singular verb and it means “he saw.” The definite τοὺς βάλλοντας is a present active participle, accusative masculine plural, which means “throwing or casting” as an action being done by αὐτῶν πλουσίους “those [who are] rich.” Thus, the phrase means “But [he] having looked up, he saw those who are rich casting...” τὰ δῶρα “gifts [sacrifices]” εἰς “into” τὸ γαζοφυλάκιον “the treasury.”

v.2 – the phrase εἶδεν δὲ is used again, but at this point, it indicates a pause or an intentional act. It is read as “But he saw...” to imply a special gazing that kept his eyes fixed to keep on looking. He saw τινα χήραν “a certain widow” described by the adjective πενιχρὰν “poor [needy]” βάλλουσαν “casting” δύο λεπτά “two smaller coins” ἐκεῖ “there.” The adverb ἐκεῖ is used intentionally to point to τὸ γαζοφυλάκιον “the treasury” into which the religious sacrifices [gifts] were being cast.

v. 3 – in response to what he saw, καὶ εἶπεν “And he spoke.” And these were his words: Ἀληθῶς λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι “Truly, I say to you that,” ἡ χήρα “the widow.” And as if the audience could not identify who he was referring to, he [Jesus] decides to describe her more by the definite adjective ἡ πτωχὴ which is nominative feminine singular, meaning “the poor woman.” Moreover, in throwing more emphasis to make her out as his case study, Jesus uses the definite relative article αὕτη “this [she]!” while pointing at her to the audience. Therefore, having succeeded in showing her to everyone listening to him, Jesus [he] creates a surprise: πλεῖον πάντων ἔβαλεν “much than all [of them], she has cast in.” Thus, from his judgment, the poor widow gave a better sacrifice than the rich.

v. 4 – the wording has been restructured to reflect the meaning of the statement without any manipulation done to the words. In v. 4a, only three words are plural – απάντες “all,” ἔβαλον “they cast,” and δῶρα “gifts of.” And these words put the entire v. 4a into a plural meaning. The definite genitive του Θεου “of God” is added to define τὰ δῶρα “the gifts” in relation to God, hence making specific reference to Temple gifts – “offerings or sacrifices.” Therefore, v. 4a is restructured as απάντες γὰρ “for [they] all” ἔβαλον “cast” τὰ δῶρα του Θεου “the gifts of God [offerings]” εἰς “into” οὗτοι “this” [as he points to the treasury] ἐκ “out of” τοῦ περισσεύοντος αὐτοῖς “the abundance of him [as if he is pointing at them one by one].” Then, he switches focus through the conjunction δὲ “but” and points to the poor widow: αὕτη “this [I mean, she],” ἐκ “out of [in spite of]” τοῦ ὑστερήματος αὐτῆς “the lack, need and want of her,” ἔβαλεν “[she] gave” απάντα τὸν βίον ὃν εἶχεν “all the life [livelihood] that she has [as if afterward she returns to starve and dies]. This gesture reflects the sacrificial kindness of the widow of Zarephath towards Elijah in 1 Kings 17, how she offered the first meal out of all her remaining livelihood to the prophet with no hope of living afterward. Similar is the case of this religiously devoted widow in the Temple who is acknowledged by Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth (Mt. 21: 11).

The Expanded Background of Luke 20: 45-45

The background, Luke 20: 45-47, can be understood from Jesus' address to the Jewish Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23: 1-7, 13-14 and Mark 12: 37b-40. In Matthew 23: 1-7, Jesus speaks to both the crowd and his disciples about the Scribes and Pharisees who represent Moses. However, while Jesus admonishes the audience to listen to their teachings, he vehemently [in the imperative mood] warns them to unfollow the character and lifestyles of the Scribes and Pharisees because, according to Jesus, they do not practise what they teach (vv.1-3). More sadly, regarding their character, instead of loving and caring for the people, these scribes and Pharisees rather bind heavy loads on the shoulders of others (v.4). They are hypocrites, very pretentious people, direly hungry of public praise (v.5). Similarly as recorded in Luke 20: 45-47, they seek public attention and are self-esteemed, drunk in self-acclaimed accolades – *Rabbi*, yet they do not qualify. Also, the Scribes and Pharisees want people to identify them with prestige. So they are everywhere in the market-places and banquets (vv.6-7). Similar to the Lukan text, Matthew's rendering of them putting heavy burdens on others includes their grievous exploitation and devouring of widows as stated in Luke 20:47. Jaja agrees to this.¹⁵¹ Being obsessed with their smelling character, Jesus emphatically calls them "You, hypocrites!" (vv.13, 15)

Also, in Mark 12: 37b-40 – a synoptic account, as the crowd paid delightful attention to Jesus while he taught them (v.37b), he cautioned loudly, "Beware of the Scribes!" (v.38). Similar to the Lukan account, Mark shares all the characteristics of the Scribes including how they greedily loot out [empty and exploit] even the houses of widows who struggle to live. Thus, while the widows struggle to have and to live on their little, the scribes easily and dubiously make abundance to enrich themselves from merciless exploitation of the suffering widows, hence disqualifying their sources and substances of giving – even in the temple. For this reason, Jesus justified the widow and condemned the dubiously enriched scribes and Pharisees who gave at the expense of others such as poor widows.

Eventually, the widows are poor because these hypocrites have wickedly exploited them. It should be noted that, the context of this *pericope* does not project a general situation to classify all rich believers as disqualified. Instead, the context emphasizes the special case of the Scribes and Pharisees whose character and jobs are identified with such scrupulous deeds. And therefore, when they presented their offerings in the temple, and compared with the widow and her genuinely earned [obtained/raised] mite, Jesus the just judge could pronounce no better judgment than:

Truly [justly] I tell you [all], this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for all of them have contributed [cast in this] out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty [lack, need] has put in all she had to live on. (Lk 21: 3-4).

Moreover, the definite noun ἡ χήρα ἡ πτωχή has two specific accusatives which are in the feminine singular forms: ἡ χήρα "the widow" and ἡ πτωχή "the poor woman." This definiteness singles a particular feminine person among all those in the temple who caught Jesus' attention and thus in telling the audience about her, he might have pointed at her saying, "This poor widow; that poor widow; the widow, that poor woman; I mean this poor widow, yes, she!"

This poor widow, according to Jesus, had given all she had to live on. Meanwhile, she could have had enough if the rich scribes and Pharisees had been merciful to her – not [probably] exploiting her, and rather taking care of her, but all of which they did not do. Other widows might have likewise been suffering the same, but probably she was the one noticed by Jesus to have given all she had to live on, thus implying the abject poverty in which she was. Yet no one cared about her, not even the rich who only wanted a public show and acknowledgement of their wealth. Surprisingly, both the rich and the poor were all believers in YHWH (God), peculiarly Judaists.

The African Context

The understudied case is applicable to the context of Africa as far as Christianity and faith in God is concerned. Also, in the churches in Africa, believers may comprise religiously rich and religiously poor

¹⁵¹ Bethel Onyechere Jaja, "The Widow's Mite and the Controversies associated with its interpretation: Mark 12: 41-44 and Luke 21: 1-4," *Advance Journal Of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences* 6, no. 02 (2023): 13.

worshippers. John Mbiti has indicated how religious the African is, and that according to him, the only way there can be an authentic African Christianity is when the African church responds to the needs and culture [livelihood] of the African people.¹⁵²

Jesus' judgments on the background and motives of the religiously rich and the religiously poor widows, in the above-studied Lukan texts supported with synoptic accounts from Matthew and Mark, are relevant to African Christianity. African Christians, in their desire to serve God and in his temple with their offerings, must note that it is primarily imperative to carefully consider the source(s) of their financial/economic wellness. Also, they should care for others who are in need and may not need to ask for their help when they already know. And instead of thinking that giving to the church/temple must be the first focus, religious African Christians should rather hold in high esteem the poor and uncomely nature of their neighbours and environment, which includes poor widows and other marginalized persons. It is for this imperative necessity that Jesus echoes the response of the Lord of judgement that, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do [it] to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." (Mt. 25: 45). Moreover, John, who had followed and learned the meekness and compassion of Jesus and understood the tenacity of authentic love, gives this dear admonishment to all believers from all cultures or race, including Africans that: "Those who say, 'I love God', and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen..." (1 Jn. 4: 19-21).

CONCLUSION

Serving God is good. Giving is also good. However, religious persons, especially Christians, should first be humane before thinking about spirituality in their acts of giving. African Christianity needs to practise love for one another rather than just professing faith. And in any case, being religiously rich gives a person a humble privilege to be human to others especially the poor. However, in many cases, motives behind religious offerings in the Temple are self-centered, fame-seeking and pride-driven, as if God and the church need their gifts irrespective of how they make them. Having exegetically studied an ancient case in a Jewish temple about Jesus and offerings in the temple, the results indicated that Jesus condemned the rich as being religio-economic hypocrites seeking recognition, according to the exegetical background in Luke 20:45-47. However, he praised the genuineness of the poor widow's offering and for her pure motive characterized by humility, dependency and faith in God despite her abject poverty. Implicatively, the source of giving as African Christians should be genuine, and must have the singular motive of pleasing God to show humility and trust in him; and alleviating poverty by helping the needy, but never exploiting the poor and others through various professions or vocations, all in the name of giving to God or financially helping to build the church. The truth must remain clear that, love for one another and especially the needy is as God's heartbeat as winning souls. Love indeed is the greatest.

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¹⁵² Mbiti, "Christianity and African Religion", 313. cf. John Mbiti, "The Encounter between Christianity and African Religion," *Temenos – Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion* 12 (1976): 131-132.

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Work Ethics and Economic Fortunes: An Analysis of Proverbs 24:30-34

Ochenia Faith Opade, PhD

Biblical Studies Department, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Email: ocheniadey@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The quest for wealth is common in many cultures and age groups. Even though hard work and discipline are needed to succeed, appropriate work ethics seem lacking among many Africans. This paper focuses on the work ethics and economic fortunes discussed in Proverbs 24:30-34. The text narrates a lazy person who neglects work and ethics, leading to poverty and ruin. The passage also emphasises the importance of hard work and responsible stewardship of resources to achieve economic prosperity. The paper used the historical-grammatical method to examine the passage's cultural and historical context of the text. The analysis explored the biblical principles of work ethics and their relevance to contemporary economic systems. The findings revealed that the passage advocates for a proactive approach to work and stewardship of resources, which has significant implications for individuals, communities, and nations seeking economic prosperity.

Keywords: Analysis, Economic Fortunes, Proverbs 24, Work Ethics

INTRODUCTION

The quest for wealth is common in many cultures and age groups. Even though hard work and discipline are needed to succeed, appropriate work ethics seem lacking among many Africans. Work ethics refers to the set of moral principles and values that guide an individual's behaviour in the workplace. This involves being responsible, reliable, honest, and diligent in carrying out duties and responsibilities. It is essential for maintaining a positive work environment, fostering teamwork, and achieving productivity. On the other hand, economic fortune refers to the economic well-being of individuals, organisations, and nations. It is the state of having a stable and growing economy that provides opportunities for employment, income and growth. Work ethics and economic fortunes are closely related as the former is essential in achieving the latter. Good work ethics create a positive work environment that promotes productivity, efficiency, and innovation. If employees are diligent and responsible, they are likely to perform better and contribute to the growth of the organisation, which in turn, can lead to increased profits and economic growth. Similarly, economic fortunes can influence work ethics. Regarding economic prosperity, individuals may struggle to maintain a positive work ethic due to uncertain job security and financial stability.

Equally, a lack of work ethic can significantly impact economic fortunes. Neglecting work can lead to a loss of productivity and value, potentially resulting in economic ruin. Proverbs 24:30-34 warns against laziness and neglect and emphasises the importance of diligence, responsibility, and hard work in achieving economic success. This paper focuses on the work ethics and economic fortunes discussed in Proverbs 24:30-34. The paper used the historical-grammatical method. By examining the passage's cultural and historical context, the analysis explores an overview of ethics and work in the Old Testament; youths and the quest for wealth; exegesis of Proverbs 24:30-34, draws inferences, implications, and concludes.

OVERVIEW OF ETHICS AND WORK IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

This section presents a brief overview of ethics and works in the Old Testament (OT). According to Allen Verhey, "ethics may be defined as disciplined reflection concerning moral conduct and character."¹⁵³ Similarly, Lin Johnson avers that "ethics is a discipline dealing with what is morally right and wrong. It is

¹⁵³ Allen Verhey, "Ethics in Scripture," in *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, edited by Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2011), 5.

a moral system expressed in a person's actions and attitudes."¹⁵⁴ Equally, J. T. Oderinde opines that ethics concerns the question of right and wrong in human behaviour.¹⁵⁵ According to Verhey, Johnson, and Oderinde, these descriptions of ethics suggest that ethics refers to how and why people behave in specific ways, whether good or bad, right or wrong. Moreover, Verhey notes that the OT ethics is built on the ancient suzerainty treaty between God and His people whom He called, redeemed and covenanted with, with specific laws governing their lives.¹⁵⁶ Also, Temba L. J. Mafico maintains that the corpus of ethics of the OT is found in the Torah, which initially meant 'teaching,' 'instruction,' and 'direction' and not law as it is translated into English.¹⁵⁷

Further, the code of ethics is not just limited to the Pentateuch; it is common in the Prophets and the Writings. The prophets of Israel were known and believed to be messengers of Yahweh. The prophets in the OT were perhaps social reformers with the duty to remind the people of the story and covenant [treaty] and to call them to respond faithfully to their King whenever they stray away. Also, as the sages from their experiences, the Wisdom Literature appealed directly to Torah or the covenant, with great advice concerning moral character and conduct.¹⁵⁸ The ethics of the OT was not limited to those in leadership positions but to all who had a leading role in the family circle of the Kings. Mafico notes that parents were to instruct their children (Deut. 6:1-4); the judges like Deborah ministered justice and taught the Torah during the time of the tribal league (Judg. 2:17-19); the sages were paid to teach morals to youths and children of the rich (Job 8:8-10; Eccl. 7:5; 9:17-18); the priests focused their teaching on matters concerning the sacrifices and other ritual acts of worship (1 Sam. 6:33), and the Prophets were concerned to call the people to return to God, their king as they interpret the Torah in a way that was amazing to the people.¹⁵⁹

The ethics of the OT focused on God as the Creator and owner of all things (Ps. 24:1). The ethics were based on a people who lived by the laws and instructions given by their King because of the contextually understood covenant; the suzerainty treaty. Christopher J. H. Wright notes that the moral values and ethics of the OT, whether in the narratives, worship and prophecy, are built upon Israel's worldview, apparently of God and about life.¹⁶⁰

Work remains an economic and social activity vital to surviving in society. According to Kojo, work is a significant economic and social activity in the modern world. The relationship between the production and consumption processes defines both the local economy and the global economy economically. Again, the main activity is what determines how international trade is shaped. Work provides social benefits, including self-worth, fulfilment, identity, recognition, and financial security. Also, it is one of the primary ways that people interact with one another. The fundamental reason all societies have various diverse institutions to regulate the many dimensions of work is because of these essential social and economic duties. Work served as an important social institution in ancient countries, especially Israel. One may learn a lot about the importance of labour in the life of the ancient Jews from the Hebrew Scriptures.¹⁶¹ Similarly, T.O. Ebhomielen observes that Globalization has led to the cultural colonisation of young people in Nigeria. They now copy European culture and values while emulating their language, dress, dance, and other behaviours. It is notable how foreign culture has influenced African religion.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁴ Lin Johnson, "Ethics," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education*, edited by Michael J. Anthony (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2001), 259.

¹⁵⁵ J. T. Oderinde, "Ethics of Work and Economic Poverty in Contemporary Africa," in *Practical Theology: A Journal of Baptist College of Theology Lagos*, No. 7 (2014): 43.

¹⁵⁶ Verhey, "Ethics in Scripture," 5.

¹⁵⁷ Temba L. J. Mafico, "Ethics (Old Testament)," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 2, edited by David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 645.

¹⁵⁸ Verhey, "Ethics in Scripture," 6.

¹⁵⁹ Mafico, "Ethics (Old Testament)," 651.

¹⁶⁰ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, rev.ed., (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 17.

¹⁶¹ Kojo Okyere, "The Rhetoric of Work in Proverbs 24:30-34," in *Theoforum* 4(2013):158; <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/268518284> accessed April 14, 2023.

¹⁶² T. O. Ebhomielen, "Negative Attitude of Modern Youth on African Ethical Values: Its Detrimental Blow on the Esan Nation of Nigeria," in *International E-Journal of Advances in Social Sciences*, Vol III, Issues 8 (August 2017): 691.

Equally, Christopher J. H. Wright observes, “the command to ‘fill the earth and subdue it’ inescapably entailed hard work.”¹⁶³ Work was there before the fall of man, and it could be said it is part of humanity “for God, as presented to us in the creation narratives, is a worker; thinking, planning, deciding, executing, evaluating, and then resting from work.”¹⁶⁴ This means that the OT provides a rich source of guidance on ethics and work, which is reflected in the values and practices of the Israelites. It also provides a foundation for ethical behaviour in the workplace that emphasises honesty and integrity (Prov. 11:1; Lev. 19:35-36), fairness and justice (Deut. 24:14-15; Prov. 22:16), diligence and excellence (Prov. 10:4; Eccl.9:10), and stewardship (Gen. 2:15; Deut. 22:1-4). These passages suggest that work is crucial in the OT and relates to youths and the quest for wealth in Africa.

Youths and the Quest for Wealth

The age range of youths and the quest for wealth remains a perennial issue worldwide, especially in Africa. Grace Ifeoma Egwu asserts that there is ongoing disagreement among various people, governments, and non-governmental groups on what constitutes youth. To define youth, the United Nations and the Commonwealth used the age ranges of 15–29 and 15–36, respectively. The Nigerian government has chosen the commonwealth range of 15–36 to define a youngster. Youth empowerment, according to Egwu, is also about being creative to repurpose their potential and energies for peace and stability to reduce poverty, unemployment, and crime.¹⁶⁵ Also, Egwu focuses on empowering people to enhance their lives through strategies for creating, building the skill base, protecting the weak, and promoting peace and security, quoting the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy. This is an effort to remove all forms of marginalisation and neglect of young people and to give them equal access to leadership, political engagement, financial control, and education regardless of their gender or educational level. Youth who are empowered economically are better able to make decisions that will improve their quality of life and personal growth. The political and economic heart of a country is where the youth are the pivotal trustees. Despite the general view of Nigerian youth as sluggish, youth in Nigeria can be described as enthusiastic, full of life, vigour, energy, vitality, gifted with drive, and fearless. If not employed for beneficial endeavours, these potentials and ingenuity could be negatively applied to undermine social, economic, and political structures.¹⁶⁶

According to Alcinda M. Honwana, youth is a crucial barometer of a country’s health, including its politics, economy, and social and cultural life. In addition to examining young people’s lives in all their richness, studying youth entails comprehending adults’ social, political, economic, and cultural concerns. The two generations are involved in intricate social building and reconstruction processes shaping and reshaping society. Most African youngsters today are battling a lack of employment opportunities and inadequate education. They cannot get employment after high school because they lack the skills to sustain themselves and their families, get married, have families, and become socially accepted as adults. They are also unable to assist their relatives.¹⁶⁷ Honwana further points out that, according to standard definitions, youth is the time between childhood and adulthood, accounting for chronological age and biological maturation. Youth is typically a highly intensive time characterised by high vigour, enthusiasm, and creativity. Also, according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria’s National Youth Policy, the definition of youth varies across many societies and cultures. In most Nigerian civilisations, the shift from childhood to youth has traditionally involved certain formal rites of passage. The rites are symbolic because individuals

¹⁶³ Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 148.

¹⁶⁴ Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 148. Also see Doug Sherman and William Hendricks, *Your Work Matters to God* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Navas Press, 1987), 77-86.

¹⁶⁵ Grace Ifeoma Egwu, “Youth Empowerment, Wealth Creation and Security as Key to National Development,” in *UJAH* Vol. 21. No. 2 (2020):93-94; <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ujah.v21i3.5> accessed April 13, 2023.

¹⁶⁶ Oluwasola Festus Obisesan, “The ‘#tag Generation’: Social Media and Youth Participation in the 2019 General election in Nigeria” in *Africa Development/Afrique et Développement* Vol. 47. No 2 (2022):108; <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48682668> accessed April 13, 2023.

¹⁶⁷ Alcinda M. Honwana *The Time of Youth: Work, Social Change, and Politics in Africa* (Boulder: Kumarian Press, 2012), 3.

can change their status and position by participating in them. This new status becomes legitimate by receiving solid support and action from the community.¹⁶⁸

Youths and people of various ages and cultures share a common theme: the pursuit of riches. The OT offers some direction on this subject, stressing the value of prioritising wisdom and purity over wealth (Prov. 23:4-5; 28:19 and Eccl. 5:10). This passage suggests that pursuing wealth should be rooted in honest work and productive activity rather than in “worthless pursuits.” No human being on the face of the earth desires poverty, especially young people. The desire for wealth by contemporary youths is geometrically on the rise. Wilbur O’Donovan says there is a yearly shift in the African population from the old to the young, as more than 60% of the population is under 21 years old in many African countries.¹⁶⁹ As the population is more of youths, so is their strong desire for wealth. Unfortunately, their quest for money does not consider social and moral values, leading them into many juvenile delinquencies and illegitimate acts like sexual immorality and drug abuse.¹⁷⁰ Therefore, the mad rush for wealth in Africa has caused a lot of harm to them and society itself. Their longing for new ideas and excitement, as O’Donovan says, has worked negatively as socialisation and urbanisation’s effects grow.¹⁷¹ The exegesis of Proverbs 24:30-34 is considered in the next section.

Exegesis of Proverbs 24:30-34

Authorship of the Book of Proverbs

The Book of Proverbs is typically regarded as an anthology written by several authors throughout various periods. Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard note that the book of Proverbs is divided into sections, each identified with a caption that suggests authorship. A few sources of the wisdom in the book are mentioned, for example, “the wise” (22:17; 24:23), Argur (30:1), King Lemuel (31:1), and Solomon (1:1, 10:1, and 25:1), except for Proverbs 1:1-9:19 and 31:10-31, which lack an explicit authorship attribution. Moreover, Longman III and Dillard point out that more of the book, in the opinion of conservative scholars, was written by Solomon.¹⁷² With several nameless “wise” people and “men of Hezekiah,” Solomon is the primary author of the book of Proverbs. In the opinion of Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, the book of Proverbs is the literary heritage of the Hebrew sages or wise men. The sages completed the Israelite society’s four primary leadership classes with the priests, prophets, and kings. The “wise men” or “counsellors,” as depicted in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, were royal court members. They were “compilers” and “assemblers” of Hebrew and foreign nations’ wisdom literature. Furthermore, according to Hill and Walton, the book of Proverbs comprises a preamble (1:1–7) and eight collections of wise sayings, five of which have brief beginnings.¹⁷³

Furthermore, according to Favour Chukwuemeka Uroko, Proverbs is a collection of texts containing Hebrew wisdom, and the listener is urged to accept this wisdom. This knowledge covers morality, marriage, diligence, integrity, and respect for established authority, among other topics. The purpose of the book of Proverbs, which applies to all social classes and historical eras, is to teach people how to live wisely and steer clear of foolishness.¹⁷⁴ According to Hill and Walton, the location of the two collections of the anonymous sayings (22:17–24:22 and 24:23–34) may have been influenced by

¹⁶⁸ Federal Republic of Nigeria National Youth Policy: Enhancing Youth Development and Participation in the context of sustainable Development 2019, 24.

¹⁶⁹ Wilbur O’Donovan, *Biblical Christianity in Modern Africa* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 2000), 205.

¹⁷⁰ Rufus Ajayi Alonge and Ayobami Foluso Adanikin, Morality, Sexuality and Quest for Money among University Undergraduates: Social Values System as a Panacea,” *European Journal of scientific Research* Vol. 157, No. 1(2020): 77-78.

¹⁷¹ Donovan, *Biblical Christianity in Modern Africa*, 207.

¹⁷² Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* 2nd ed. (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007), 267.

¹⁷³ Andrew E. Hill and John H Walton, 2nd ed. *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 356.

¹⁷⁴ Favour Chukwuemeka Uroko, “Proverbs 28:20, 22 and Nigerian Youth’s Drive for Rapids Money,” in *Scriptura* 121(2022):2; <http://dx.doi.org/10.7833/121-1-2061> access April 13, 2023.

Hezekiah's scribes' work and the reign of Solomon.¹⁷⁵ Solomon is perhaps the author of this section under consideration.

Date of the Book of Proverbs

Dating biblical books remain a bone of contention among scholars. According to Dillard and Longman III, the book of Proverbs was written over a long period as an anthology. According to these scholars, the precise date of the final editing is unknown, except for the portion relating to Solomon (Tenth century BC) and Hezekiah's men's redactional work (around 700 BC), who likely organised the entire book and provided the brief introduction (1:1-7). Additionally, they contend that dating the book is nearly complicated, even when the other chapters were written. It's frequently considered that 1:8-9:18 is the book's most recent section.¹⁷⁶ Parallel to this, Archer thinks that Proverbs 22:17-24:34 was likely written sometime during the Exilic period, although some scholars, like Genung, place chapters 22-24 as having been written earlier than chapters 1-9.¹⁷⁷ The post-Exilic era, during the rise of "the wise," may be the period for the event.

Purpose and Message of the Book of Proverbs

The Proverbs message is based on the idea that information may be taught and passed down from generation to generation (Pro. 4:1-9). Because knowledge and wisdom are heirlooms more valuable than jewels, gold, and silver, young people must pay attention to, accept, and obey their parents and elders' lessons (Prov. 1:8-9). The desire and decision to comprehend and apply "the fear of the LORD" to daily life form the basis of Old Testament wisdom instruction (Prov. 2:1-6). This means disliking and opting to travel the path of integrity, righteousness, justice, and life (Pro.2:11-15) (Prov.2:1-10). Similarly, Uroko points out that the teacher's aim in the book of Proverbs is to encourage a life of righteous wisdom that pleases God. It allows the audience to make moral decisions because it touches on nearly every area of the practice of human life. Uroko adds that the socio-cultural context of Proverbs is instructive. It demonstrates how those who engage in rapid money-making participate in injustice by using unethical tactics to increase their property income at the expense of their labour income.¹⁷⁸

Literary Genre

A unique genre is proverbs (a type of literature). They belong to a specific category of a figure of speech. A comparison is the meaning of the Hebrew word translated "proverb" מִשְׁלֵל. Yet, over time, usage expanded its meaning to include any significant proclamation, such as maxims, observations, and sermons.¹⁷⁹

Masoretic Text of Proverbs 24:30-34¹⁸⁰

עַל-שֹׁדֵה אִישׁ-עֵצָל עֲבַרְתִּי וְעַל-כֹּרֶם אָדָם חִסַּר-לֵב:³⁰
 וְהִנֵּה עֵלָה כְּלוֹל קַמְשָׁנִים כָּסוּ פָנָיו חֲרָלִים וְגִדְרָ אֲבָנָיו נִהְרָסָה:³¹
 וְאַחֲזָה אֲנֹכִי אֲשִׁית לִבִּי רְאִיתִי לַקְּחֹתִי מוֹסֵר:³²
 מֵעֵט שָׁנוֹת מֵעֵט תְּנוּמֹת מֵעֵט חֲבִקֹן יָדַיִם לְשֹׁכֵב:³³
 וְבֹא-מִתְהַלֵּךְ רִישָׁהּ וּמִחֲסִיף כְּאִישׁ מֵגֹן: פ'³⁴

¹⁷⁵ Hill and Walton, 357; Gleason L. Archer, Jr. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), 452; Steven L. McKenzie and John Kaltner, *The Old Testament: Its Background, Growth, and Content* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 311; and Michael B. Dick, *Reading the Old Testament: An Inductive Introduction* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2008), 287.

¹⁷⁶ Longman III and Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* 2nd ed, 268.

¹⁷⁷ Archer Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 453.

¹⁷⁹ Thomas L. Constable, "Proverbs" 2023 edition

¹⁸⁰ Bibleworks-[c:/program files/bibleworks7/init/bw700.swc]accessed April 13, 2023

Translation

- 24:30 I passed by the field of the sluggard and by a vineyard of a man lacking sense
- 24:31 And behold, it was overgrown everywhere. Its surface was covered with thorns, and its stone wall was broken down
- 24:32 Then I applied my heart to what I saw and received instruction
- 24:33 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest
- 24:34 Then poverty will come on you and scarcity like a man with a shield

Structural Analysis of Proverbs 24:30-34

Proverbs 24:30-34 is a brief but powerful passage that warns against laziness and the consequences of neglecting one’s responsibilities. The Passage begins with the author describing a scene where he is passing by the field of a sluggard, someone who is habitually lazy and avoids work, and the vineyard of someone who has no sense, which may refer to someone who lacks wisdom or discernment. Proverbs 24:30-34 emphasises the importance of hard work and diligence, warning against laziness's dangers, and gaining wisdom.

**Syntactical Analysis of Proverbs 24:30-34
The Attitude of a Slothful Person in Society**

על-שדה איש-עצל עברתי ועל-כרם אדם חסר-לב:³⁰
והנה עלה כלו קמשנים פסו פגיו חרלים וגדר אבגיו נהרסה:³¹

Translation: I passed by the field of the sluggard and by a vineyard of a man lacking sense. And behold, it was overgrown everywhere. Its surface was covered with thorns, and its stone wall was broken down

The clause עברתי a Qal perfect verb first person common singular from the root עבר meaning “I passed over” describe the state of the subject in this poetry. Sluggards are people with big dreams, great expectations, and inflated self-esteem. They are willing to scheme and dream than work; they never actually accomplish anything of value. Their lack of diligence results in the degradation and ruin of what surrounds them (vineyards, walls, relationships, and lives). The sage notes that the field of איש-עצל “the sluggard or a lazy person,” was overgrown with קמשנים “thorns”, and the ground was covered with חרלים “weeds”. This may suggest that the sluggard has not taken care of his field or worked hard to maintain it, resulting in neglect and disrepair. Similarly, the כרם “vineyard” of someone who has no sense has a ruined stone wall, indicating a lack of care and attention to detail. The comparison between “lazy man” and “devoid of understanding,” according to J. A. Motyer, makes clear that laziness in view results from a weak back but a hollow brain. The issue was a lack of will, not strength.¹⁸¹ In this book, the sluggard is both ignorant and lazy.

The Wise and the Sluggard in Society

ואחזקה אבגיו אשית לבי ראיתי לקחתי מוסר:³²

Translation: Then I applied my heart to what I saw and received instruction
In verse 32, the author reflects on what he has observed and draws a moral lesson from it. He notes that he has “applied (his) heart to what (he) observed” and “learned a lesson from what (he) saw”. This suggests that the author is paying close attention to the world around him and using his observations to gain insight and wisdom. According to Tokunboh Adeyemo, the sage first described what he observed in the lazy person’s neglected field. He then summarises the knowledge gained and presents his conclusion to his followers.¹⁸² The wise man compared the mindset of a lazy person to a typical image of a family vineyard. The Israelites’ society recognised the value of owning a field and vineyards. They recognised the

¹⁸¹ J.A. Motyer, *The Message of Proverbs* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 151.
¹⁸² Tokunboh Adeyemo, *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi: Word Alive Publishers, 2008),806.

significance of the investment, preparation, forethought, diligence, and perseverance required to cultivate and manage a piece or plot of land for a successful crop. The Israelites valued their vineyards as a vital source of income for their families and society. As a result, the heir was expected to look after the property and pass it on to the following generation. Yet, this lazy person doesn't recognise this responsibility in the situation, and slothfulness is used to represent the pinnacle of his dumb actions. The sage claims that "seeing and learning" happened independently in this passage. The second line, "I saw and received instruction", according to Okyere, mediates the act of vision and reflection, which, through parallelism and hypozeuxis, conveys to the audience how a daily experience is potentially a platform for the discovery of wisdom." The connection between wisdom and time is highlighted in Proverbs 24:33.

The Consequences of Slothfulness in Society

מַעַט שְׁנוֹת מְעַט תְּנוּמֹת מְעַט חֲבִיק יָדַיִם לְשָׁקֵב:³³

Translation: A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest

The refrain in verse 33, "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest", emphasises the ease with which one can slip into laziness and neglect. The author warns that even small indulgences in laziness can have significant consequences.

The imagery of the neglected field and vineyard is a metaphor for the consequences of laziness. Just as the field and vineyard have become overgrown with thorns and nettles due to neglect, so will a person's life become overgrown with difficulties and hardships if they fail to put in the necessary effort and hard work. A godly work ethic is an antidote to slothfulness. God designed us for hard work and productivity, and we can see that right at the start of creation when God told Adam and Eve.

וְכָאֵלֶּיךָ מִתְהַלֵּךְ רִישׁוֹךְ וּמִחֶסֶדְיָךְ כְּאִישׁ מִגֹּן:³⁴

Translation: Then poverty will come on you, and scarcity like a man with a shield

The passage also suggests that laziness is a choice and that people can choose to be diligent and hardworking. The author's observation and reflection indicate wisdom and insight can be gained by carefully considering one's surroundings and circumstances. Okyere notes that "the diction of the speaker is also significant in many respects. The Hebrew term פְּרוֹיִשׁ "poverty" and מְחֶסֶד "scarcity or need" are the two of the several words used to refer to the poor and the state of poverty in the Hebrew Bible. Other words used in the scriptures are *ani* and *ebyon*. פְּרוֹיִשׁ and מְחֶסֶד are commonly used in the wisdom books to describe one who is in a state of poverty due to laziness, while the others are referred to poverty due to economic exploitation. This description suggests that a lazy person who fails to work is destitute in society.

Inferences from Proverbs 24:30-34

Laziness Leads to Poverty

The passage warns that a little sleep, slumber, and folding of the hands to rest can lead to poverty and want. This suggests that laziness is a significant factor in determining one's financial well-being.

Diligence is Essential for Success

The passage emphasises the importance of hard work and diligence in avoiding poverty and achieving success.

Observation and Reflection Lead to Wisdom

The author's observation and reflection on the neglected field and vineyard suggest that wisdom and insight can be gained by carefully considering one's surroundings and circumstances. This indicates that wisdom is not solely an intellectual pursuit but also involves observing and reflecting on the world around us.

Poverty is a Consequence of Neglect

The imagery of the neglected field and vineyard serves as a metaphor for the consequences of neglect. This suggests that poverty is not just a matter of circumstance but can also result from failing to take responsibility for one's life and work.

Personal Responsibility is Essential

The passage suggests that laziness is a choice and that people can choose to be diligent and hardworking. This means that personal responsibility is essential for achieving success and avoiding poverty.

Implications for the African Youths

Proverbs 24:30-34 has several implications for African youths. The following are considered the importance of hard work; laziness leads to poverty, personal responsibility, observation and reflection, and the need for discipline.

Importance of Hard Work

African youths can learn from this passage the importance of hard work and diligence in achieving success. Many African countries face high levels of unemployment and poverty, and the passage emphasises the need to work hard to avoid poverty and achieve success.

Laziness Leads to Poverty

The passage warns that laziness can lead to poverty and want. This is particularly relevant for African youths who may face significant challenges in finding employment and building a stable financial future. The passage emphasises the importance of avoiding laziness and working hard to succeed.

Personal Responsibility

The passage suggests that personal responsibility is essential for achieving success and avoiding poverty. This is particularly relevant for African youths facing significant structural and societal barriers to success. The passage emphasises that personal responsibility and hard work are necessary for success.

Importance of Observation and Reflection

The author's observation and reflection on the neglected field and vineyard suggest that wisdom and insight can be gained through careful consideration of one's surroundings and reflecting on their experiences to gain wisdom and insight.

Need for Self-Discipline

The passage emphasises the importance of self-discipline in avoiding laziness and achieving success. African youths can learn from this passage the need to develop self-discipline and avoid distractions that prevent them from achieving their goals and avoiding poverty.

CONCLUSION

The paper has examined that work ethics and economic fortunes are interdependent, with good work ethics being essential for economic success and a healthy economy promoting good work ethics. Strong work ethics are crucial for creating a positive work environment, fostering teamwork, and achieving productivity. At the same time, economic prosperity can provide individuals with the security and motivation to work harder and contribute to the growth of organisations and the economy. Thus, individuals, organisations and nations must prioritise the cultivation of a strong work ethic as a critical factor in achieving economic prosperity and growth; valuing and promoting work ethics, can create a positive cycle of productivity and economic success that benefits individuals and society as a whole. The findings reveal that the passage advocates for a proactive approach to work and stewardship of resources, which has significant implications for individuals, communities, and nations seeking economic prosperity.

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Moral Agency in Genesis 2:8-15 and its Implications for the War Against Corruption in Nigeria

Okechukwu Nzenwa Okorie, PhD

Biblical Studies Department, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria.
Email: okeynokorie@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to identify the source and nature of the dissonance between the perception of corruption among various indigenous communities and the official policies and interventions of the Nigerian government's anti-corruption war. Hence, locating the role of moral agency is critical to identifying and resolving this dissonance. The nature of moral agency is identified through a narrative analysis of Genesis 2:8-15. The study found that the dissonance can be resolved through the understanding of how Nigerian indigenous communities determine good and evil. This understanding of moral agency should guide inclusive government interventions in the anti-corruption war. This study recommends that the Nigerian church, an indigenous community of its own, should be in the vanguard of resolving this dissonance and leading the way in the anti-corruption war in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Corruption, community, dissonance, moral agency*

INTRODUCTION

Globally, there is a growing recognition of corruption as the foremost hindrance to the development of nations no matter the prevalent political or ideological persuasion. Nigeria is not different. Corruption has become a front-burner issue in Nigeria. For instance, the campaigns preceding Nigeria's national elections of 2023 witnessed the seeming elevation of corruption to unprecedented levels. Since then the nation has been inundated by the shocking revelations of billions of Naira and Dollars used to purchase delegate votes during party primaries, recruitment scams, and Presidential Villa entertainment scams among others.

Nigeria's corruption battle suffers from the perception that it is politically motivated and therefore designed to further some yet to be delineated agenda. Whatever corruption battles may be considered to have been won, clearly the perception battle is all but lost. Perception, it appears, is fundamentally important in any corruption battle. It would appear that the struggle against corruption suffers from a fundamentally flawed perception of evil.

For instance, in November, 2005, while forfeiting his bail bond, Diepreye Alamieyeseigha escaped from Britain while disguised as a woman. He had been charged by the police with money laundering following the discovery of one million pounds sterling in cash at his London property worth ten million pounds sterling. He had apparently escaped Britain by dressing as a woman and using a forged passport. He had taken a train to Paris, from where he had boarded a flight to Douala, Cameroon. From Douala, Alamieyeseigha had taken a speedboat journey to his hometown Amassoma in Bayelsa State Nigeria. Thousands lined the streets leading to his village cheering and waving leaves as they welcomed Alamieyeseigha as a community folk hero. On the 22nd of November 2005 Alamieyeseigha was back at his desk as the governor of his state, pledging his commitment to work for his people and thanking God for protection.¹⁸³ The celebration and acclaim with which Alamieyeseigha was greeted upon the culmination of his daring escape from justice raise pertinent issues as to his community's perception of good and evil particularly in relation to corruption. Alamieyeseigha's community is not alone in suffering this curious ambivalence towards evil.

It appears that in Africa, moral agency rests in the community and though this has been a source for much that is good in the lives of Africans, it is also evident that this responsibility to determine what is

¹⁸³ Rory Carroll, "Nigerian state governor dresses up to escape #1.8m charges in UK," *The Guardian*, November 23, 2005, accessed September 14, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/nov/23/hearafrica05.development>.

good and evil is open to abuse with its accompanying disastrous consequences.¹⁸⁴ This abuse is most readily seen in the dialectic surrounding the fight against corruption in Nigeria. Where moral agency is out of sync with the perception of good and evil in the corruption crusade, there is likely to be a dissonance in the dialectic that identifies corruption for the evil that it is, and subsequently results in a diminished will and commitment to fight and defeat corruption. Authority, therefore, to determine good and evil appears to be vested in power structures indigenous to particular communities. This will generate contradictions when communal morality conflicts with the stipulated or prudential morality¹⁸⁵ of legal or penal codes. This will deprive the corruption struggle of the moral legitimacy necessary for a systematic and comprehensive application.

This study seeks to re-invigorate Nigeria's corruption dialectic by first, identifying the source and nature of the dissonance between the perception of corruption among various indigenous communities and the official policies and interventions of the Nigerian government's anti-corruption war. Second, this study intends to renew focus on the role of moral agency in resolving the dissonance that cripples Nigeria's anti-corruption efforts. The analysis employed by this study will include a narrative analysis of Genesis 2:8-15 in order to examine the origin of evil and hence, identify the role of moral agency in the context of good and evil.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

The term 'moral agency' typically refers to the position or ability to exercise choice. Usually, a moral agent is "someone (or something) capable of doing things rightly or wrongly. Typically, this is understood to mean acting with the ability to freely choose (within parameters) what to do."¹⁸⁶ Moral agency often implies the awareness "of the concepts of rightness and wrongness, or of what actions are considered right and wrong."¹⁸⁷ Parthemore and Whitby assert that moral agency is a subset of conceptual agency. In other words, conceptual agency is necessary for moral agency though the reverse is not necessarily the case. This relationship is apparently valid since pre-lingual and non-lingual agents (such as children and, in some cases, animals) may be capable of conceptual agency and yet are incapable of moral agency. However, in insisting on the relationship between moral agency and conceptual agency a need to define the appropriate conceptual constituents necessary for moral agency becomes apparent. For an agent to exercise moral agency such an agent must first possess a fully developed concept of self. In simpler terms the agent (where human) must be able to understand, 'what makes me, *me*.' Second, an agent must possess a concept of morality situated in a fully developed moral domain all tethered to a fundamental commitment to such a moral system. Finally, a moral agent must possess a concept of a *concept*. In other words, moral agency is also necessarily predicated on an understanding and appreciation of the structures and mechanisms of thought and the interrelatedness of the propositions that drive thought structures. Hence, a moral agent is an agent that is capable of *akrasia*, that is, an ability to act for the good even against the agent's own enlightened self-interest.¹⁸⁸ Moral agency is also associated with responsibility or accountability for choices made and actions taken. This study defines the term "moral agency" as the ability of a conceptually endowed agent to make choices and take actions based on a moral standard embraced by the agent *a priori* to the exercise of agency.

In their work entitled *Corruption in the Context of Moral Tradeoffs* James Dungan, Adam Waytz, and Liane Young reference the ongoing debate in moral psychology seeking to identify the decisions that lead to the committing of moral violations by people. In the case of corruption as an aspect of moral

¹⁸⁴ The Church as a "community" in Africa may be unable to escape the sordid embrace of this problem. Arguably, the response of the church in the past to corruption, particularly in Nigeria, may be described as ranging from erratic at its worst to muddled at its best.

¹⁸⁵ Charles Tay, "Machiavelli: A Prudential Morality," *E-International Relations Students*, June 21, 2012, accessed September 30, 2017, <http://www.e-ir.info/2012/06/21/machiavelli-a-prudential-morality/>.

¹⁸⁶ <https://philosophy.stackexchange.com/questions/8388/what-does-moral-agent-and-moral-agency-mean-respectively>.

¹⁸⁷ <https://philosophy.stackexchange.com/questions/8388/what-does-moral-agent-and-moral-agency-mean-respectively>.

¹⁸⁸ Joel Parthemore and Blay Whitby, "What Makes Any Agent a Moral Agent? Reflections on Machine Consciousness and Moral Agency," http://projekt.ht.lu.se/fileadmin/user_upload/project/ccs/moralagency.pdf, 2-6.

violation, they assert that the choice by people to engage in corrupt behavior may not necessarily point to some perceived decision to choose what is good or evil. Rather, the choice to engage in corruption may actually be viewed in the context of a tradeoff between competing moral options such as impartiality or loyalty to some community.¹⁸⁹

Recent research has shown that people are likely to exercise what may be called “benevolent dishonesty” when engaging in unethical conduct that they feel may benefit or help others. The moral value of loyalty is a universal value that can be observed across all cultures. Potentially, loyalty values have the capacity to exert influence well in excess of deep-lying affinity for the moral value of fairness.¹⁹⁰

John Mbiti’s 1969 classic *African Religions and Philosophy* brought renewed focus on the concept of selfhood and community that characterizes most African societies. Mbiti’s “I am because we are...” remains a fundamental tenet of any consideration of African thought.¹⁹¹ By this Mbiti probably inferred that selfhood for the African was essentially located in community. This sense of community proved to be pervasive in African life, influencing such aspects as religion, culture, self-consciousness, and moral agency. Of particular interest to any consideration of African thought is Mbiti’s assertion that this sense of community transcends all levels of existence. Even the dead are extensions of the living community and the material is undeniably locked in communion with the immaterial. Since this seminal treatise on the conception of the African community, African scholars appear to share substantial agreement with a considerable number of Mbiti’s assertions, particularly in relation to his consideration of the nature of the relationship between the African person and their community. One apparently inescapable implication of the African conception of community highlighted by Mbiti is that “the reality of the communal world takes precedence over the reality of individual life histories, whatever they may be.”¹⁹² Furthermore, this primacy of the community in African life is not only ontological in nature but also relates to the manner in which it grants epistemic access. Hence, the individual then comes to a realization of both selfhood and moral consciousness through the instrumentality of the community to which they belong. This belonging to a community is concretized through bonds that are not only genetic but extend to language, mental disposition and attitude. This would imply that the individual in the African society cannot be understood without first recognizing the collective from which ontologically related aspects of personhood are derived. The concepts of selfhood and moral consciousness are hence, extensions of a “psychophysical” commonwealth shared through a communal history individuated in personal histories spanning the past, present and future.¹⁹³

Additionally, the possession of moral function should be an essential aspect of any understanding of personhood. Moral agency is bound up in acknowledging that a person possesses the moral equipment to make choices based on a commitment to some ethical schematic. In the case of the traditional African society, the ethical schematic is provided by the community. It is evident in the philosophy of most traditional African communities as expressed in their proverbs. For instance, the Igbo of southeast Nigeria assert that “it takes a whole village to bring up a child.” This strong sense of community is also evident in the Yoruba (southwest Nigeria) proverb that says, “The river that forgets its source will soon dry up.” For traditional African society, therefore, the community is the source of being and provides the framework for the acquisition and exercise of moral agency.

The World Bank defines corruption as the practice of “offering, giving, receiving or soliciting, directly or indirectly, anything of value to influence improperly the actions of another party.”¹⁹⁴ This mirrors very closely the general definition often espoused in delineating this phenomenon. Transparency

¹⁸⁹ James Dungan, Adam Waytz, & Liane Young, “Corruption in the Context of Moral Tradeoffs,” accessed September 27, 2017, http://www.moralitylab.bc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Dungan_Corruption_IDS.pdf.

¹⁹⁰ Dungan, Waytz and Young, “Corruption in the Context of Moral Tradeoffs,” 11.

¹⁹¹ John S. Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969), 171.

¹⁹² Ifeanyi A. Menkiti, *Person and Community in African Traditional Thought*, <http://www2.southeastern.edu/Academics/Faculty/mrossano/gradseminar/evo%2520of%2520ritual/african%2520traditional%2520Othought.pdf>, 171.

¹⁹³ Menkiti, *Person and Community in African Traditional Thought*, 172.

¹⁹⁴ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/about/unit/integrity-vice-presidency/what-is-fraud-and-corruption>

International, while agreeing that corruption is “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain,” goes on to further classify corruption as: grand, petty, and political.¹⁹⁵ Grand corruption points to acts “committed at a high level of government that distort policies or the central functioning of the state, enabling leaders to benefit at the expense of the public good.”¹⁹⁶ Petty corruption, on the other hand, is used to denote the “everyday abuse of entrusted power by low- and mid-level public officials in their interactions with ordinary citizens, who often are trying to access basic goods or services...” while political corruption refers to the “manipulation of policies, institutions and rules of procedure in the allocation of resources and financing by political decision makers, who abuse their position to sustain their power, status and wealth...”¹⁹⁷ In this study “corruption” is defined as any inappropriate manipulation of communal and societal systems for personal gain, and “corruption” is seen as an offshoot of evil.

Since independence, many African states have had the opportunity to make amends as it were for the failures in leadership that have plagued the continent and perpetuated the vicious cycle of poverty, corruption and bad governance. Unfortunately, those opportunities for renewal have been squandered. Corruption in present day Nigeria is considered to be both endemic and systemic in both the public and private sectors. Public funds have been pillaged and salted away leaving the nation and citizenry grappling with poverty. Ironically, the destitution of the people leaves them susceptible to further ravages of corruption.

The cost of corruption for Nigeria has been in terms of expanded or renewed corrupt practices. For instance, the depletion of national resources has meant that scarce resources are used by irresponsible governments to prosecute high profile projects that may not eventually prove to be priorities for the nation. Hence, corrupt governance leads to economic corruption which inevitably leads to more poverty. Additionally, cronyism, nepotism, and bribery would have characterized the awarding of such contracts.

Another cost of corruption that Nigeria is grappling with is the loss or waste of natural resources. Undoubtedly, the access that corruption grants to illegitimate wealth means that resources will be wasted in such endeavours as “grandiose building projects, scandalous inflation of contracts, ostentatious lifestyle, [and] lavish services and programmes.”¹⁹⁸ Further waste comes indirectly through the prevalence of social evils that are equally linked indirectly to the prevalent corruption in the Nigerian society. These indirect results of corruption include an increased occurrence of the following: “armed robbery, sexual promiscuity, ritual killing and assassination.”¹⁹⁹

Arguably the greatest price that Nigeria has paid for endemic corruption is the people’s loss of trust in the political and economic system. This is manifest in the eroding of a unified sense of nationality or loyalty to the ideal of the nation. From an economic perspective, corruption has apparently discouraged “industry and excellence” in Nigeria. A new generation of Nigerians is being raised in a system that trains them from a very early age to exploit the system to gain advantage. The emergence of the notorious “Advanced Fee Fraud” (419) and “Yahoo Boys” criminalistic elements of the Nigerian society are stark pointers to the total destruction that corruption is insidiously bequeathing to Nigeria.²⁰⁰

Okolo and Akpokighe suggest that Nigeria can overcome corruption through the restoration of indigenous values and institutions; the strengthening of formal, informal, and non-formal educational processes; the utilization of religion as an institution for nation-building; the promotion of the “African” nation state as opposed to the artificial states foisted on Nigerians by colonial agendas; the strengthening of anti-graft institutions; and a renewed commitment by the government to the eradication of poverty.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁵<https://www.transparency.org/what-is-corruption/#define>

¹⁹⁶<https://www.transparency.org/what-is-corruption/#define>

¹⁹⁷ <https://www.transparency.org/what-is-corruption/#define>

¹⁹⁸ Simon A. Kolawole, *The Interplay of Philosophy, Gospel Ministry and National Transformation* (Ibadan: Sceptre Prints Limited, 2012), 46.

¹⁹⁹ Kolawole, *The Interplay of Philosophy*, 46.

²⁰⁰ Kolawole, *The Interplay of Philosophy*, 48.

²⁰¹ Philips O. Okolo and Akpokighe Okiemute Raymond, “Corruption in Nigeria: The Possible Way Out,” in *Global Journal of Human-Social Science: F Political Science*, Vol. 14, No. 7, (2014), 30-38, https://globaljournals.org/GJHSS_Volume14/4-Corruption-in-Nigeria-The-Possible.pdf.

Analyzing the Text

The book of Genesis has been outlined in a number of ways. One instance was the book's division into two sections: Primeval history (Gen. 1-11) and Patriarchal history (Genesis 12-50). While providing an outline whose breadth sufficiently incorporates all the contents of the book, this outline lacks any plausible thematic relationship between the two divisions. However, Genesis was also divided, according to internal evidence, into eleven sections: The creation narratives (Gen. 1:1-2:3); and ten other divisions both identified and introduced by the formulaic phrase ('*elleh toledot*) meaning, "These are the generations of..." One unique feature of the narrative in the ten *toledot* divisions was the *movement* evident in the literary flow of the text. A clearly discernible pattern emerges as the writer or narrator or editor constantly developed a plot with themes marked by a repeated flow from "source to stream, from cause to result, from progenitor to progeny." Hence, the formulaic *toledot* divisions provided the literary context through which the redemptive-historical conceptions of the narratives of Genesis were fully realized in the portrayal of its developing series of interrelated events.²⁰²

A narrative analysis of an Old Testament text such as the Garden narrative in Genesis 2 would entail an understanding of the conventions that determine meaning for the original writer and original audience of the narrative in question. This recognition of convention grants access to an understanding of the significant patterns of "repetition, symmetry, [and] contrast" and also makes possible the discrimination of the nuances related to depth and degree.²⁰³

The first notable literary convention evident in the "recurrent narrative episodes" of the Old Testament text is the narrative type-scene. Instances of such type-scenes evident in the Old Testament text include the following: the annunciation type-scene; the encounter with a future spouse in the vicinity of a well type-scene; the encounter or epiphany in some field or grassland type-scene; the initiation by trial type-scene; the danger in the wilderness and discovery of some form of sustenance type-scene; and the dying testament of the valiant hero type-scene.²⁰⁴

Another literary convention evident in the text of the Old Testament is the supremacy of dialogue. Apparently, dialogue assumed such a primary position in the text that narration was often simply employed to both elaborate on a plot already anticipated by dialogue, or affirm claims made with explanations that provided bridges to cultural meaning. The direct speech served as the primary literary instrument for illuminating the various, nuanced relationships between the characters and their actions.

A third literary convention used by the Hebrew writers is repetition. Repetition utilizes analogy to enhance meaning. Hence, repetition through analogy - which is often apparent in certain contrastive forms such as the juxtaposition of similarity with dissimilarity; confrontation with concretization; and contradiction with illumination - serves in aiding the Hebrew writer's quest for deeper meaning.²⁰⁵ Additionally, repetition serves the purpose of redundancy, particularly in contexts where oral traditions dominate learning systems.

A fourth literary convention evident in the Old Testament text is the employment of characterization. This characterization was often done through the use of indirect speech which the Old Testament narrative is renowned for and which Alter refers to as artful or purposeful reticence that manifests humankind's paradoxes.²⁰⁶

In conclusion, it is pertinent to note that these literary conventions and a number of others not highlighted were supported by a unique fixture of biblical literature.²⁰⁷ The Hebrew writers' apparent

²⁰² Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2012), 1-3.

²⁰³ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 47.

²⁰⁴ Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 51.

²⁰⁵ Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1985), 365.

²⁰⁶ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 114.

²⁰⁷ For instance, Yamasaki proposes what he refers to as a cinematic-story paradigm for analyzing biblical narrative. Beginning with the premise that biblical narrative can essentially be viewed as storytelling, and finding storytelling parallels in the process

preference for the use of parataxis lent a succinct, abrupt and sincere quality to the Old Testament narrative. This enhanced the perception of indeterminacy and unpredictability evident in the Old Testament text.

The passage in consideration belongs to the first portion of a two-fold division of Genesis. This first portion – often referred to as “Primeval History” – has been perceived as employing a structure utilizing forward symmetry with at least one instance of transposition. The passage (Genesis 2:4b – 3:24) can be perceived as displaying a reverse symmetry as to its structure in the chiasmic form ABCDC’B’A’. This structure would appear as follows:

- A. Man is put in the Garden – Gen. 2:4b–17
- B. Characters develop relationships in harmony – Gen. 2:18-25
- C. The serpent makes statements to the woman – Gen. 3:1-5
- D. The man and his wife eat of the fruit of the tree – Gen.3:6-7
- C’ Yahweh Elohim asks questions of the man – Gen. 3:8-13
- B’ Characters re-develop relationships in disharmony – Gen. 3:14-21
- A’ Man is driven from the Garden – Gen. 3:22-24²⁰⁸

The scenes of this structure betray the flow of the narrative. Obviously, the flow begins from outside the Garden and then moves into the centre of the Garden (A to D). Subsequently, the narrative flows in reverse beginning from the centre of the Garden and flowing to a place out of the Garden.²⁰⁹

The passage being considered (Genesis 2:8-17) is also embedded into the larger structure of the *toledot* divisions of the Genesis narrative. In particular, it fits into the creation narratives highlighted by the first *toledot* division. It comes at the beginning of the first of these divisions. It also fits seamlessly into the composite structure characterizing the creation accounts and is arguably perceived as the introductory section of the second creation account in the Genesis narratives. The outline for a narrative analysis of Genesis 2:8-17 would follow this structure:

- I. The Garden’s Location and Characters - Gen. 2:8
- II. The Trees at the Centre of the Garden - Gen. 2:9
- III. The River in the Garden – Gen. 2:10-14
- IV. Yahweh’s Command and the Man’s Choice in the Garden – Gen. 2:15-17

Each level of this structure employs narrative elements of its own that contribute to the flow of the narrative. The first level of the structure considers the narrative elements of location, time and character development. The next two levels reflect the plot developments in the account and how they thematically influence the narrative's core thrust. The final level looks at the narrative element of dialogue and what illumination it brings to the characters and theme of the narration. It is pertinent to also keep in mind the fact that the text carries within it the burden of certain historical and theological purposes.

Narrative Analysis

The narrative of Genesis 2:8-17 can be perceived as a plot within a plot. This much larger literary framework, however, does not diminish the potency of the developing plot within this passage nor its ability to existentially engage the reader as a stand-alone unit. The narrative analysis of this passage will be introduced by an effort to distinguish the type-scene to which it may be related. This will be followed by an analysis of the setting; the *lead-words* particularly in relation to an analysis of the main characters; an analysis of the main thematic element in the narrative; a consideration of some further indirect plot developments; and the use of dialogue for both plot support and to drive the narrative.

1. The Type-scene: As noted previously in this study, the prevalent inclination among scholars is to treat narratives that appear to mirror themselves in the Old Testament as duplications. However,

of filmmaking, Yamasaki argued that understanding the components of the cinematic-story would aid narrative-critical analysis of biblical texts. [Gary Yamasaki, *Insights from Filmmaking for Analyzing Biblical Narrative* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2016), 38-43].

²⁰⁸ Jerome T. Walsh, *Style and Structure in Biblical Hebrew Narrative* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 22-23

²⁰⁹ Walsh, *Style and Structure in Biblical Hebrew Narrative*, 22-23.

literary conventions employed by Old Testament writers identify such similar narratives with variations built upon the framework of set motifs as type scenes (a device evident in other forms of ancient literature). The narrative of Genesis 2:8-17 appears to correspond with a Test-of-Faith type scene that may be readily discerned in other narrative paradigms of the Old Testament. The basic, fixed elements of this type-scene are the character(s) to be tested; Yahweh doing the testing; two options from which a choice can be made (sometimes obvious and at other times concealed); the momentous nature of the choice to be made, the far-reaching consequences related to each choice; and Yahweh's clear instruction on which choice should be made. A parallel account that employs this type-scene is the account of Yahweh's command to Abraham to offer up his only son Isaac in Genesis 22:1-19.

2. Analysis of Setting: The Hebrew terms [jn (to plant) and ~d<Q<+mi !d<[ePB.-!G (garden of Eden, in the east) suggest that the setting or location for the events that are about to be narrated are actual physical places associated with coordinates that would align with a compass. The action of "planting" relates to an agrarian setting and context and would immediately create images of cultivation and working intimately with the soil. In particular, the use of the term invokes the sense of not just the action but a love for and inclination towards the soil as evidenced in another instance where the term was used. In Genesis 9:20, Noah is not only described as engaging in the act of "planting," but the act itself appeared to be an outward manifestation of his inclination towards being a "husbandman," or a "man of the soil." The elements involved in this introduction appear to point to a practical, mundane, earth-story with cosmic implications.
3. Character Analysis: A consideration of the two characters in the narrative of Genesis 2:8-17 would necessarily include the fact that their two Hebrew names would arguably be perceived as the *lead-words* of the passage: one directly and the other indirectly. Just as in the case of location, there appears to be a sharp distinction between the names of Yahweh in the two creation accounts. Whereas Genesis 1 refers to Him as Elohim, the narrative in Genesis 2:8-17 refers to Him with a compound name: (Yahweh Elohim). Typically, Hebrew nouns appear together in particular combinations that highlight the construct relationship. This appears not to be the case in the combination of the names for the Name. 'Yahweh' is the personal, covenantal name of the true God, while Elohim – though used to refer to a plurality of gods – is the common noun in Hebrew used as a 'majestic plural' to refer honorifically to the true God. The relationship that appears to best define this combination could be termed "apposition." In apposition, one noun is used to provide elaboration and expansion for another noun.²¹⁰

Evident in the Hebrew term ~d'a' (earthy, red, man, mankind) is the hint of a relationship with another term hm'd'a] (red earth/ground/ of blood). The first term appears to be a play of words on the second term. Another apparent play of words may be perceived in the meanings found in the Hebrew terms ~d'a' (earthy, red, man, mankind), hm'd'a] (red earth/ground/ of blood), and md (blood).²¹¹ Further consideration of the use of the two terms indicates a much closer relationship than appears immediately apparent. 'Man' was formed from the 'ground' (Genesis 2:7) hence, 'adam' may be referred to as the 'earth-man.' The close relationship between the Hebrew terms ~d'a' and hm'd'a] is further highlighted by Yahweh's decision to make the earth-man a steward-ruler exercising dominion over the created world (Genesis 1:26-30).

4. Analysis of Central Plot Theme: In the narrative of Genesis 2:8-17 can be found the central focus of this account and indeed the entire garden narrative in the creation accounts of Genesis. In Genesis 2:9 Yahweh is depicted as the fundamental cause behind the otherwise straightforward biological

²¹⁰ Mark D. Futato, "What Does Yahweh Elohim Mean?" *Ask a Scholar*, September 21, 2010, https://www.nas.org/articles/Ask_a_Scholar_What_Does_YHWH_Elohim_Mean. Accessed: July 6, 2018.

²¹¹ Eli Lizorkin-Eyzenberg, "How Adam got his Name?" in *Discovering the Hebrew Bible*, http://www.library.eteacherbiblical.com/content/lp_dhb_adam_adamah-en?pid=2255&cid=31063

reality of growing trees. However, the narrative's use of something akin to meiosis²¹² in this introduction alerts the careful observer to the significance highlighted by the understatement.

5. Analysis of repetition as an intensification of developing plot: Undoubtedly, the narrative of Genesis 2:8-17 employs repetition to achieve the dual goals of confrontation and concretization. Additionally, repetition is used to introduce a necessary amount of redundancy and to induce fresh insights into meanings apparent in the text. The repetitions employed in this narrative are apparent in both Genesis 2:8: "...and put there the man whom he formed" (rc")y" rv<ia] ~d"Pa'h'(-ta, ~v'ê ~f,Y"âw:); and in 2:15: "And the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it" (Hr"(m.v'l.W Hd"Ëb.[!l. !d<[eê-!g:b. WhxeäNIY:w:). The verb stems employed for the term translated "put" in English by the two identical clauses appear to parallel each other in terms of their mood and perspective. Granted that they are not identical terms, the use of the *hiphil* stem in 2:15 as against the *qal* stem in 2:8 serves to simply intensify the sense of causation behind the earth-man's location in the garden and his role of steward and ruler over Yahweh's temporal domain.
6. Analysis of dialogue as support for the thematic emphasis of the plot: Yahweh Elohim's command to the earth-man brings the narrative intensity in Genesis to its peak. The dialogue of Genesis 2:15-17 provides a guide to the earth-man's relationship with the trees as a steward representing Yahweh Elohim.

Inferences

1. The supremacy of dialogue that is evident in the narrative of Genesis 2:8-17 serves to highlight the fact that the relationship between Yahweh Elohim and the earth-man is the truly central theme running through the entire narrative. This is clearly the reason for the garden in the first place and the trees at the centre of the garden simply serve as a focus for all the tensions, abstractions and possibilities inherent to this relationship. It would appear that eating from the tree was not the origin of evil, rather evil was born in the moment the earth man chose to reject the direct instructions of Yahweh Elohim and undercut his related role as Yahweh Elohim's steward and ruler. Hence, Genesis 2:8-17 infers that evil originates in the thwarting of the dominion and purpose of Yahweh Elohim existentially realized through man in his position as steward and ruler.
2. In the matter relating to moral agency, it can be deduced from the narrative of Genesis 2:8-17 that the status of moral agency was bequeathed on the earth-man. This implies that the earth-man is a moral agent in the sense that he has been authorized to exercise moral choice and to take action in a manner that manifests an ethical consideration of the options available.

Addressing the Dissonance

Highlighting the deficiency in the dialectics of the anti-corruption struggle in Nigeria must begin with the recognition of this dissonance or gap in the perceptions of corruption by the stakeholders in this struggle. That this dissonance is recognized is evident in the policy guidelines in the anti-corruption struggle. For instance, Nigeria's National Anti-Corruption Strategy document notes that to the "average Nigerian, corruption is essentially a public sector phenomenon where acts of bribery, fraud, extortion, inducements, embezzlement, and influence peddling occur." Furthermore, there appears to be "little or no demand for accountability by the citizens, as they feel alienated from governance processes." The strategy asserts that the reason for this apparent apathy on the side of the citizenry is due to "widespread ignorance, illiteracy and a culture of patronage."²¹³ Yet there is a failure to recognize the dissonance due to the role of moral agency in Nigerian communities.

²¹² Meiosis as used here carries the sense of rhetorical understatement. Meiosis is derived from the Greek *meioo* meaning "to diminish" or "make smaller" and refers to an understatement used to diminish or belittle and hence give the impression that something or someone is not as significant as it or they really are.

²¹³ Federal Ministry of Justice Nigeria, *National Anti-Corruption Strategy (2017-2020)*, (February 10, 2017), 5, www.justice.gov.ng/index.php/national-anti-corruption-strategy-nacs.

Hence, this study argues that the bridging of the gap can be achieved through a comprehensive and effective community-led or community-driven approach to the issue of tackling corruption. By ‘community-led’ this study refers to an approach that involves various segments of the community as participants in the anti-corruption struggle. In a recent study of the impact of civil society organizations on the anti-corruption struggle in Nigeria, it was reported that civil society involvement in the struggle to eradicate corruption has been largely ineffectual.²¹⁴ More importantly, studies have shown that in countries such as Nigeria, the entire system of “anti-corruption laws and policies can operate more effectively if these are more deliberately premised on influencing collective behavior in a desired direction[through addressing the individual as a moral agent].”²¹⁵

This study contends that the Church would undoubtedly prove to be an effective means of mending the dissonance in the discourse on corruption. The church and its various organs would do this by recognizing the role of the individual as a moral agent while not negating their place in the community. The church can leverage its status as a *community* in its own right to strive for the realization of harmony within related communities and assume its role as a catalyst for the development of ethical norms that would guide and empower anti-corruption efforts.

CONCLUSION

An understanding of evil and moral agency highlights the deficiencies in the dialectics of corruption in Nigeria. The first dissonance is the lack of a realization that a disconnect exists in the perceptions of the stakeholders to the anti-corruption struggle. Another form of dissonance is evident in not recognizing that the traditional community still exerts an enormous amount of influence on contemporary Nigeria. Moral agency exercised by individuals through their communities including the church will heal the dissonance and offer comprehensive and effective community-led or community-driven approaches to the issue of tackling corruption in Nigeria.

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²¹⁴ Lafenwa Stephen Akinyemi, “Civil Society and the Anti-Corruption Struggle in Nigeria,” in *International Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, Vol. 7, No. 3, (March 2016), 122, https://ijbssnet.com/journals/Vol_7_No_3_March_2016/12.pdf.

²¹⁵ Leena Koni Hoffman and Raj Navanit Patel, “Collective Action on Corruption in Nigeria: A Social Norms Approach to Connecting Society and Institutions,” in *Chatham House: The Royal Institute of International Affairs*, (May 17, 2017), 33, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/2017-05-17-corruption-nigeria-hoffman-patel.pdf>.

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Interface Between Injustice in Amos 8:1-10 and Economic Disintegration in Africa

Olufemi Emmanuel Eniola

Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, Nigeria.

Email: olufemieniola155@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Injustice has become a significant issue in the contemporary African society. This menace has eaten deep into the fabric of the society and is a factor that cripples the economy. In the eighth century, Israel experienced political and economic stability during the time of Prophet Amos, which made trade and commerce flourish. Despite economic prosperity, wealth did not spread equally. Marginalisation in the land was apparent; small groups of influential land owners and merchants lived in luxury while the rights and needs of the poor were ignored. This study seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge by underscoring the need to promote Justice in all spheres of human lives in Africa. Through the historical-grammatical analysis of Amos 8:1-10, this paper demonstrates that injustice, if unchecked, will continue to strain the economic stability and peaceful coexistence that should exist within the contemporary African society.

INTRODUCTION

The motivation for this paper arose from the prevalent evils that have besieged the African continent due to the practice of injustice. Perpetrators' conduct has removed harmony, balance and sustenance that should have existed within the society. The reign of Jeroboam II (793-753 BC) in Israel and Uzziah (791-740 BC) in Judah was a period of political expansion and socio-economic prosperity during the time of Amos. The expansion and prosperity resulted from the relative peace they enjoyed from going to war. Unfortunately, this economic buoyancy resulted in moral, social and religious decadence.²¹⁶ Manipulation of the poor farmers, buying their crops at lower prices, high-interest rate loans, cheating and displacement of landowners, bribery and perverting justice characterised the injustices of Amos' time.²¹⁷ As in the days of Amos, Africa has become a household name in matters of injustice. There are cases of cheating, discrimination, deprivation and unequal distribution of wealth. It has eaten deep into the fabric of governance. Injustice is prevalent in the house, on the street, in offices, law courts and marketplaces. This study seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge by underscoring the need to promote justice in all spheres of human lives in Africa. Through the historical-grammatical analysis of Amos 8:1-10, this paper demonstrates that injustice, if unchecked, will continue to strain the economic stability and peaceful coexistence that should exist within contemporary African society. To achieve this, the writer examined the concept of injustice, investigated the nature of injustice in Amos 8:1-10, discussed the nexus between injustice and economic meltdown in Africa and made recommendations.

Overview of Injustice

It is not an overstatement to say that injustice has long existed and thereby plagued almost every section of the society and has punctured humanitarian values. Social injustice is the expression of unfairness and unkindness in any society.²¹⁸ These expressions range from denial to violation of the economic, socio-cultural, political, civil or human rights of the citizens of a country. Cafferky defines social injustice as wrongs done in the context of social groups and institutions like businesses, government, and non-profit organisations.²¹⁹ He also regards injustice as unfairness, partiality, inconsistency, inequality, lack of rights and uneven distribution of resources. Mott defined justice as the standard by which the benefits and

²¹⁶ George Olufemi Folarin, "Threat of Judgment in Amos and its Lessons for Nigeria", *European Scientific Journal* Vol. 10No 26 (2014), 245. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2014.v10n26p%25p>

²¹⁷ Job Oluremi Okunoye, "The Relevance of Prophet Amos' Message in Reviving Nigerian Society" (Paper Presentation at School of Arts and Social Sciences, Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, 2014), 4.

²¹⁸ Helen Ishola-Esan, "Christian Education Response to Social Injustice in Nigeria," *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* Vol XIX No 2 (2014), 113.

²¹⁹ Michael E. Cafferky, *Business Ethics in Biblical Perspective* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 212.

penalties of living in the society are distributed.²²⁰ It also includes meeting the needs of the oppressed with particular attention to the poor, widows, fatherless, enslaved people, resident strangers, wage earners, and physically disabled persons. It can also be defined as Satan's attempted distortion of God's image, evident in oppressive activity by humans against others.²²¹ Social injustice includes unsustainable economic policy, racial/tribal discrimination, bribery and corruption, sexual harassment, unequal distribution of national resources, impunity (thinking one is above the law), and Nepotism (showing unmerited favour to relatives). Other types are exploitation of the masses, illegal detention, unfinished or abandoned projects in the society, marginalisation of disabled individuals, non-payment of workers' salaries, partiality in serving justice and embezzlement of public funds. In this paper, the writer defines injustice as denying or violating fundamental human rights, partiality, and unfairness among social groups and institutions, which is an immoral act against God.

The concepts of equality and inequality as an academic discourse have taken a different direction from an emphasis on political rights to economic and social rights since the late eighteenth century till date. Jones, Brown, and Bradshaw, quoting R. H. Tawney's work in the early 1930s, describe the ravaging nature of inequality, as a disease perpetually misdirected towards most of the population.²²² Danny Dorling affirmed that it is generally accepted that huge inequalities between the rich and the developing nations of the world result in great injustice and is abnormal. Some linked it to genetic factors, the effect of market forces and globalisation. However, Dorling said there is no scientific basis to substantiate this claim.²²³ According to Ruston, the unfairness of injustice has degenerated to a state that those with access to wealth preserve it and did explain away and justify the poverty of those who don't have it.²²⁴ He defined social injustice as a systematic, largely impersonal and chiefly imposed harm by one identifiable clan of people or another who are disinterested in the wellbeing of others.²²⁵

Further, Nwadiolor and Nweke discussed a clear theology on the development of liberation praxis born out of the experience of African people to combat abject poverty and misery like the situation of Latin America. For a long time, Africans had been struggling for liberation from political decolonisation, freedom from economic independence, structural violence, oppression, hunger, disease, unemployment, and a yearning for self-assertion and control of their affairs.²²⁶ African liberation theology has been borne out of the need to abolish unjust domination politically, systemic exploitation, extreme oppression, structural poverty and violent brutalisation to build a free and more human society. This unpalatable situation is not a new development; it has been in existence even in Bible times.

Analysis of Amos 8:1-10

Israel experienced political and economic stability in the eighth century, which made trade and commerce flourish. During this period, relative peace and stability allowed Jeroboam II to extend his frontiers and led to the emergence of powerful merchants in Samaria. Despite economic prosperity, wealth did not spread equally. Marginalisation in the land was apparent; small groups of influential landowners and merchants lived in luxury while the rights and needs of the poor were ignored.

Furthermore, Israel's religious worship was characterised by superstition, hypocrisy and degrading immoralities with oppression, injustice and dishonesty. The poor were manipulated, evicted from their properties, confiscated or sold by greedy money lenders who charged exorbitant interests. They were not granted Justice in court because the elders were corrupt. In the land of Israel in Amos' time, the rich

²²⁰ Stephen C. Mott., "Justice," in Harper's Bible Dictionary, ed. Paul J. Achtemeier (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1971), 519.

²²¹ Yvonne Mildred and Fiona Hahn eds., *A Biblical Basis for Social Justice* (Paper Presentation, Micah Network Triennial Consultation, 2010), 2.

²²² Kathleen Jones, John Brown and Jonathan Bradshaw, *Issues in Social Policy*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Plc, 1983), 10.

²²³ Danny Dorling, "Growing Injustice: Six myths about Inequality," <http://www.newstatesman.com> (accessed August 8, 2018), 17.

²²⁴ Roger Ruston, "Political Theology 3: Injustice," *New Blackfriars*, Vol 62, no 728 (1981): 52, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43246193>.

²²⁵ Ruston, "Injustice," 53.

²²⁶ Kanayo Louis Nwadiolor and Charles Chukwuemeka Nweke, "The relevance of the Church in Oppressive Situations: The Praxis of Liberation Theology in Africa," *Ogirisi Journal of African Studies* Vol 10 (2013): 80.

oppressed the landless poor by selling grain at excessive prices and forcing them to sell themselves into slavery.

Verse 2: *Then He said, Amos, what do you see? Then I said a Basket of summer fruit:* The waw consecutive on the imperfect verb “he will say” differs from a simple waw conjunction on an imperfect. The waw is pointed with a *patah* and followed by a *dagesh-forte* in the first consonant of the verb. This typically follows another phrase in the sentence (Then I said) that establishes the action as completed.²²⁷ Amos was asked to ascertain if he had seen what God showed him. Amos clearly saw what he was caused to see and replied correctly.

The message's significance would probably be why God wanted to be sure he saw the right thing. *Then the Lord said to me; the end came to my people Israel;* God declared that the end had come on the Israelites. Amos could not have understood the meaning of the vision until God spoke further. Israel's wickedness would result in a harvest of judgment.²²⁸ This is a wordplay, a pun between “summer” and “end” was used to drive home his message. The pun makes it clear that the people of Israel's spiritual and moral failures have reached the point where consequences are inevitable.²²⁹ The Israelites were expecting the fall, which is the beginning of their year, but God is saying the end has come in contrast to their expectation. This is a case of diametrically opposite outcomes.²³⁰ The verb used was a perfect verb indicating a completed action. The end had already come. The Hebrew concept of time considers the content or what took place within the time, not a linear progression.²³¹ Amos was so convinced about the end for Israel. *I will not cause to continually increase to pass over them.* The endurance of God's patience had been exceeded. The verb is cohortative in the hiphil stem with a negation (an emphatic one) which implies that God had resolved in His heart. They are ripe for judgment just as ripe fruit is due for consumption. It means that God will not turn away the judgment.

3 והילילו שירות היכל ביום ההוא נאם אדני יהנה רב הפקר בכל מקום השליך הם: פ

Translation: Then they will cause the singers of the temple to wail in that day, says the Lord God; the carcass shall be many in all of the places you were caused to cast out silence!

Verse 3: *Then they will cause the singers of the temple to wail in that day, says the Lord God:* The word ‘then’ shows a continuation of the pronouncement in the previous verse. The sin of the people will cause songs of joy and celebration sung by the singers to turn to wailing. Wailing refers to an inarticulate, shattering scream, such as is found in primitive funeral laments and the face of sudden catastrophe.²³² *in that day* meaning ‘in that day’ refers to a specific day of judgment. *The carcass shall be many in all of the place you were caused to cast out silence!* The wailing is connected to the scale of the casualties.²³³ Dead bodies will be lying around everywhere because no one can bury them. The massacre will go beyond the leaders; it will be nationwide. Silence חס caused by death is the appropriate response to such devastation. The silence is a warning to bow beneath the tremendous severity of divine judgment; it is an interjection, a warning not to mention the name of *Yahweh* in the time of judgment.²³⁴ It is an oppressive silence which characterises any great calamity.

שמעו זאת השאפים אביו עניי (ולשבת): ארץ

²²⁷ Robert R. Ellis, *Learning to Read Biblical Hebrew: An Introductory Grammar* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2006), 162.

²²⁸ Earl Radmacher, Ron Allen and H. W. House, *Compact Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 625.

²²⁹ Brian Wintle, Gen. ed., *South Asia Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 1149.

²³⁰ J. A. Motyer, *The Day of the Lion: The Message of Amos* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1979), 178.

²³¹ Roy L. Honeycutt, *Amos and His Message: An Expository Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1963), 147.

²³² Billy K. Smith and Frank S. Page, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological exposition of Holy Scripture Amos, Obadiah, Jonah* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 143.

²³³ Francis I. Andersen and David N. Freedman, *Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, (New York: DoubleDay, 1989), 798-799.

²³⁴ G. C. D. Howley, F. F. Bruce and H. L. Ellison eds., *The New Layman's Bible Commentary in One Volume* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 969.

Translation: Hear this, the ones trampling the needy, to make to cease the poor of the land.

Verse 4: *Hear this, the ones trampling the needy*: Hear this שָׁמְעוּ זֶאת a verb qal imperative masculine plural from שָׁמַע “he heard”, begins an exhortation or accusation. It expresses a volition in the form of a positive command. Here, it is an accusation against the guilty ones, those who perpetrated social injustice. It is a herald’s summons to his audience to heed the message about to be announced. The ones trampling refers to those who met out harsh and unjust treatment to the less privileged in the society. They pant after the poor, like a beast, with the idea of destroying them. *To cause to cease the poor of the land*: The infinitive suggests the intention of the ones trampling, which is to eliminate the needy from the society by impoverishing them, and then seeing them off to foreign masters.²³⁵

לֹאֲמַר מִתִּי יַעֲבֹר הַחֹדֶשׁ וְנִשְׁבְּרָה שֶׁבֶר וְהַשַּׁבָּת בְּרֹגְוֹנָתָהּ לְהַקְטִין אִיפָּה וּלְהַגְדִּיל שֶׁקֶל וּלְעַוֵּת מֵאֲזוּגֵי מִרְמָה

Translation: Saying, when will the new moon pass over, and we will cause to sell grain? And the Sabbath, and let us open grain to cause ephah to decrease and to increase shekel and to falsify scales indiscriminately deceitfully.

Verse 5: *Saying when he will pass over new moon and we will cause to sell grain and the Sabbath and let us open grain*. לֹאֲמַר is a prepositional infinitive phrase serving as a direct speech introducing conjunction.²³⁶ It is an infinitive construct in the qal stem which can connote boasting. The continuous tense of the sentence shows that it was recurrent. The merchants took pride in it. The attitude of the merchants to worship was wrong. They dutifully closed their shops to obey the New Moon and Sabbath ordinances. They were more concerned about making money that they considered their religious festivals as nuisances because they interfered with their businesses.²³⁷ The new moon is not as prominent but merely a family celebration, a reminder that God had created an orderly world, and takes place on the first day of every month with special offerings (1 Sam. 20: 5, 34; Num. 10:10; 28: 11-15). It is also a means of predicting Hebrew months based on the appearance of the visible part of the moon (the crescent). It was an effort to bind the Jews together in their identification of time wherever they were on Earth.²³⁸ It resembles Sabbath in that no work is done when it is observed.

In Israel, commercial activity was forbidden on the Sabbath (Neh. 13: 15-22). Their worship was formal but superficial, not the priority but the selling of grain.²³⁹ They pray to God on the Sabbath and defraud the poor in every transaction for six days. *To open grain*: what Joseph did for the benefit of the poor, they did for their advantage making gains from other’s poverty. Amos mentioned three means by which the merchants perpetrated injustice. *To cause to decrease ephah*: Ephah was a standard unit of dry measure, a half bushel. Using a container that would hold less than half a bushel in measuring bulk commodities allowed the merchants to cheat the customers (skimping the measure). Smith and Page noted that the measure may be original but not give complete measurement, while Andersen and Freedman stated that putting wax in the bottom to reduce capacity is an old trick.²⁴⁰ *And to increase shekel* (boosting the Price); before minted coins, a shekel served as a standard weight to measure the silver used to purchase commodities. An enlarged shekel on the scale weighed against the customer’s silver meant that he was paying more than he should pay for his purchase.²⁴¹

Yates described the merchant's attitude that they make it heavier to require the buyer to place more silver on the balances.²⁴² *And to deceitfully falsify scales indiscriminately*: the balance beam was tampered with, perhaps by shifting the fulcrum from the middle of the beam. Tullock commented that the merchants used a large measure and weighed out the poor farmer’s money on rigged scales. When they, in turn, sold

²³⁵ Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 805

²³⁶ James D. Price, *An Exegetical and Expository Syntax of Biblical Hebrew* (np, 2016), 180.

²³⁷ Tokunboh Adeyemo ed., *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi: Word Alive Publishers, 2006), 1039.

²³⁸ William F. Dankenbring, “What is the Biblical New Moon?” <http://www.triumphpro.com>

²³⁹ Smith and Page, *American Commentary*, 145.

²⁴⁰ Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 807.

²⁴¹ Smith and Page, *American Commentary*, 145

²⁴² Kyle M. Yates Jr., *Studies in Amos* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1966), 112.

to the ordinary people, they sold rotten and full of shaft grain and used substandard measures but charged inflated prices.²⁴³

i לִקְנוֹת בְּכֶסֶף דְּלִים וְאֶבְיוֹן בְּעֵבֹר נְעִלִים וּמִפֶּל בָּר: נִשְׁבֵּיר

Translation: To buy the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and we will cause to sell chaff of grain.

Verse 6: *To buy the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals*: Apart from profiting from deceptive methods of buying and selling the poor. They take over their properties as payments for debts. A pair of sandals or a small amount of money is collected as a bribe, which does not reflect the price of the person oppressed, but the price of the integrity of the judges.²⁴⁴ It can also mean that the judges have sold the righteous. Sometimes the debt could be as trivial as a pair of sandals or the price of it, yet they are not spared.²⁴⁵ The poor have become merchandise like the sack of grain, a means of the highest possible profit, a thing and no longer treated as a person.²⁴⁶ *And we will cause to sell chaff of grain*: Chaff is the remains of winnowing wheat. It may be removed with clean grain or sold to the desperately poor.²⁴⁷ The merchants pushed, and compelled themselves to sell the wheat refuse.

יִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה בְּגִאוֹן יַעֲקֹב אֲשֶׁכַחֵם לְנֹצָח מִעֲשֵׂיהֶם: כֹּל

Translation: The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: “I will never, never forget all of their deeds.

Verse 7: *The Lord was Sworn by the Pride of Jacob* The word יִשְׁבַּע is a Verb Niphal perfect third person masculine singular from the root word meaning “he swore, take an oath”, hence “he was sworn”. The phrase ‘Pride of Jacob’ is peculiar since God never swears by somebody or something. ‘Pride of Jacob’ also signifies the presence of God with the Israelites as established through God’s covenant with Jacob (Israel). It could refer to the Lord as the Glory of Israel in the descendants of Jacob (1 Sam 15:29). It could also mean that the children of Israel had become so consistently wicked that God could swear by their settled condition of overestimating themselves (cf. 6:8).²⁴⁸ Assyria did not seal the fate of Israel but by God Himself. *Surely I will never forget all of their deeds*. This a very strong and emphatic statement to show the irrevocability of the judgment that will follow.²⁴⁹ Their deeds refer to the economic injustices Amos spoke against in verses four to six, as well as other sins, including unfaithfulness.²⁵⁰ He would deny His glory in Israel by overlooking such sins or leaving them unpunished.²⁵¹

An unusual phenomenon...v9

יְהוָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא נֹאֵם אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה וְהַבֵּאתִי הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בְּצַהֲרֵימָּה וְהַשְׁכַּתִּי לְאֶרֶץ בַּיּוֹם: אֹר

Translation: Then it will come to pass in that day, says the Lord God, then I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and then I will cause to darken the earth in daylight.

Then it will come to pass; Then I will cause the sun to go down at noon

The word יְהוָה a verb qal perfect with a verb consecutive from the root meaning “he was, he existed, connotes that the judgment is already completed. It can be referred to as a “prophetic perfect statement”.²⁵² יְהוָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא translated as in that day connotes definiteness. וְהַבֵּאתִי Waw consecutive meaning “and, then” prefixed to verb hiphil perfect first person common singular from the root word meaning “he came in, he went down and הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בְּצַהֲרֵימָּה meaning the sun at noon.

"I will cause the sun to go down at noon, is a paradoxical juxtaposition of ideas. God Himself made the declaration. One knows it is noon because the sun is in its highest position in the skies, but that is when the sun will set. The sun is a strong regulator of earthly activities, and its setting at noon would interrupt

²⁴³ John H. Tullock, *The Old Testament Story*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1987), 177.

²⁴⁴ Honeycutt, *Amos and His Message*, 154.

²⁴⁵ Richard S. Cripps, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos*, (Britain: SPCK, 1955), 245.

²⁴⁶ Motyer, *The Day of the Lion*, 182.

²⁴⁷ James L. Mays, *Amos: A Commentary*, (London: SCM Press, 1968), 144-145.

²⁴⁸ Finley J. Thomas, *The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary Series: Joel, Amos, Obadiah* (Chicago: Moody Press. 1990), 3.

²⁴⁹ Robert B. Chisolm, Jr. “Does God Change His Mind”? *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152 (1995), 392.

²⁵⁰ Radmacher, Allen and House, *Compact Bible*, 626.

²⁵¹ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the OT in Ten Volumes* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1982), 316.

²⁵² Robert R. Ellis. *Learning to Read Biblical Hebrew: An Introductory Grammar*. (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2006), 224.

many natural processes. This refers to an eclipse which occurred in 763 BC and which Amos adopted as a sign of God's judgment.²⁵³ The scenario points to Jeroboam's reign, the Zenith of Israel's prosperity, power and glory. Israel's sun will not reach the West; it will end prematurely, suddenly and tragically.²⁵⁴ The imagery symbolises the sudden unexpected setting of Israel's sun. *Then I will cause to darken the earth in daylight*: Most versions translate the phrase as אֶרֶץ בַּיּוֹם daylight. However, the Hebrew text indicates that the two nouns are in a construct relationship and as such, the second noun light functions genitively with the construct noun prefixed with a preposition meaning 'by day of'. This indicates that the earth would be dark while it was still day. The *earth* will be *darkened in daylight*, which makes the earth dark when there is no light, but God says when the day is bright, He will bring the darkness of judgment. The sun going down and the earth darkening is connected. One will be inconceivable without the other.²⁵⁵ So then, Israel amid prosperity, when borders have been enlarged, when most comfortable and things appear bright, judgment will come.²⁵⁶ This day could also refer to the day of the Lord.

Hope for the future extinguished...v10

כִּמְחֹגֵי וְהִפַּכְתִּי לְאֵבֶל - שִׁירֵי־כִמְנוּכָל לְקִינָה וְהָעֲלִיתִי - מִתְנַיִם־כְּלִי־עַל שֶׁק - רֵאשִׁי־כְּלִי־וְעַל קִרְחָה
יִהְיֶה־שִׁמְת פְּאֵבֶל יָחִיד וְאַחֲרֵיהָ בַיּוֹם מָר:

Translation: Then I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all of your songs into lamentation; Then I will cause to bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; then I will set it like the mourning for a beloved, and its end like a bitter day.

This verse is marked by concise poetic parallelism and an ironic litany of reversals. *Then I will turn your feasts into mourning*: The events here are a sequel to the abovementioned ones. 'I will turn' reveals God's active participation in the judgment declared on the people. God would turn their festivals into funerals and melodious singing into mourning, meaning times would change from good to bad. Instead of celebration, festivals will become rituals for mourning. The reference to their festivals (in plural) that would be turned to mourning (in singular) shows that the judgment would affect the different areas of their lives for which they celebrated. *Then I will cause to bring up Sackcloth upon all loins and baldness upon every head*: This implies that God caused the action and the people had no option. Sackcloth was a rough garment worn at the hips to symbolise mourning (Joel 1:8, 13). It is also coarse, made of goat or camel hair, and uncomfortable to wear. Thus it was worn next to the skin as a sign of mourning or great distress.

The disasters will be widespread that all people will put Sackcloth on. That the people would wear Sackcloth means that anything that will come out of their loins, instead of bringing joy, will bring sorrow. Sorrow and gloom will fall upon their reproductive capabilities. Shaving of the head is another symbol of mourning (Ezra 9: 3, Is. 22:12, Jer. 48: 37), so everyone will feel the impending grief. Baldness refers to unproductivity and fruitless efforts in all endeavours. *Mourning for a Beloved*: "Mourning" will come because judgment has come. It could also refer to the pulling of the hair as a sign of mourning (Micah 1:16; Ezek. 7:18). It would be a sad situation like the death of a beloved. A beloved could be someone very dear, a family member or an only son. This means extinguishing hope for the future and the loss of provision for one's old age. A day for this type of mourning will end as a bitter day because there will be no relief, a physical and irreparable loss.²⁵⁷

Inferences

Amos 8:1-6 highlights God's way of revealing his mind about human activities on earth, particularly when it is against His commandments. The merchants transact deceitfully, falsify scales, and sell adulterated

²⁵³ Honeycutt, *Amos and His Message*, 157

²⁵⁴ H.D.M. Spence and Joseph S. Excell, *The Pulpit Commentary: Amos to Malachi* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011), 158, 164.

²⁵⁵ John P. Lange *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal and Homiletical, Ezekiel, Daniel and the Minor Prophets*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960), 52.

²⁵⁶ Garth Hutchinson, "When God turns Away Amos 8:7-14." Sermon outline Ontario FFBCA, 2006. <http://www.faith-baptist.aurora.org>

²⁵⁷ Spence and Excell, *The Pulpit Commentary*, 164.

goods. They sell the poor and members of their families because of failure to pay trivial debts. God pronounced judgment on them in verses 7ff. God will not deny Himself as His holiness binds him. Though He is merciful and gracious, a time will come that He will not erase sin. As God will not forget any good done, He will bring justice to those who commit crimes of exploitation against the poor as the Israelites did. The Law commands that the people use balanced weights and Ephah (Lev 19:35-36), but they did otherwise. God pronounced fear and trembling, natural disasters that will have a great impact. Also, God would bring down the rulers of the land who allowed social evil to prevail among the people over whom they had responsibility.²⁵⁸ The acts of injustice resulted in the loss of the prosperity they once enjoyed.

Nexus Between Injustice and Economic Meltdown in Africa

According to the United Nations report, Africa has been rated high as one of the most unequal continents in the world.²⁵⁹ This is because the organic structure of most of them is in bad shape. Hence economic disturbances and instability take over. According to Wilhelm Ropke, the shifting state of international economic relations, oscillation of economic activity in different countries, political disturbances, and other phenomena are the leading causes of economic disintegration.²⁶⁰ Africa's economic plight has been stagnant or deteriorating, evidenced by the per capita income and gross national product (GNP). According to the report released by the International Monetary Fund as of April 2023, the GDP per capita of the African continent was estimated at the value of 2.14 thousand, the lowest compared to other continents of the world.²⁶¹

The richest 0.0001% in Africa own 40% of the entire continent. Africa is rapidly becoming the centre of global extreme poverty, with more people living on less than \$1.90 daily. The World Bank estimates that, by 2030, 87% of the world's extremely poor will be from the continent if the current trend of economic inequality, deterioration and other cases of instability continues.²⁶² It was also reported that West Africa trails behind in tackling inequality. On average, West African governments are said to be the least committed to reducing inequality across all regions of Africa because they ignore the crisis rather than address it.²⁶³ This will not speak well for the economic viability of the continent. For the situation to get better, there must be a paradigm shift.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Africans, especially those who control the market and have developed a taste for obscene profiteering, should be conscious that God detests every form of injustice and will bring every action, good or bad, to judgment because it cripples the economy one way or another and reduces the standard of living. The church, as well, must preach against every act that violates the right of another person. Abuse and disregard for the essential roles of human and material resources should be avoided. Traders who knock the bottom of their measures upward to cheat unsuspecting customers, those who adjust their scales so that they do not show correct weights, those who place defective or small pieces of goods like potatoes, oranges, tomatoes, fruits, foodstuffs at the bottom of the bag while claiming that everything is the same and okay should desist from such acts.

Marketers whose measuring containers or parameters are smaller than the government standard should not consider their shady business dealings unimportant. God does not see it as minor or unimportant because it affects the poor significantly, and He will gradually bring a nation neck-deep in injustice to

²⁵⁸Roger E. Dickson, *Dickson The Teacher's Bible* (Cape Town: African International Missions, 2011), 1016.

²⁵⁹ United Nations, "Inequality in a Rapidly Changing World: World Social Report 2020," <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2020/01/World-Social-Report-2020-FullReport.pdf>

²⁶⁰ Wilhelm Ropke, *International Economic Disintegration*, (London: William Hodge & Company, 1942), 1-5.

²⁶¹ International Monetary Fund,

https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDPDPC@WEO/OEMDC/ADVEC/WEO_WORLD?year=2023.

²⁶² Emma Seery, Joab Okanda & Max Lawson, *A Tale of Two Continents: Fighting Inequality in Africa*, (Oxford: Oxfam GB, 2019), 3.

²⁶³ Christian Hallum & Kwesi W. Obang, *How West Africa Governments are Failing to Reduce Inequality and What Should Be Done About It*, (Oxford: Oxfam GB, 2019), 7.

judgment if they fail to repent. Sin disturbs harmony and peaceful coexistence. At a point, the repercussions of sin's course are catastrophic and damaging. God forbids oppression, and His judgment will take perpetrators by surprise. He will not forget these sins against the poor and the needy because they have a right to a better living.

African governments and leaders should get it right with God by seeking Justice across all levels irrespective of their wealth, status, or influence so that time of peace and God's blessings will abide with the nations. Attention should be given to the social welfare of the citizens and regard given to the less privileged in society. There must be intentional efforts to tackle inequality, provide quality health care, provide employment, boost the economy locally, invest in agriculture, strengthen the labour markets and preserve the fundamental human rights of the citizens by maintaining law and order, ensuring justice in the law courts by not mismanaging, abuse or maligning justice during arrest and prosecution. Also, oppressive regimes, policies and actions should be reversed to cater for the plight of the citizens.

CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed the relationship between injustice and economic disintegration in Africa through analysing Amos 8:1-10. As in the days of Amos, Africa has become a household name in matters of inequality. Many prevalent evils have besieged the continent due to the practice of injustice. The citizens and the government should embark on concerted and intentional efforts to stem the tide of this vice. Maintaining justice is the right process to ensure stability and peaceful coexistence in the contemporary African Society.

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Loose Tongues and their Implications: Lessons for Life Security (1 Samuel 1:12-18)

Livingstone Torsu, PhD

Department of Theology and Ministry, Heritage Christian College, Accra- Ghana.

Email: lyt018a@hcuc.edu / livingstonetorsu@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Reading 1 Samuel 1:12-18 in some translations shows that Eli was blessing Hannah in the Temple of Shiloh. But critical analysis of the text revealed that the use of the Hebrew word Sakar on three occasions in a negative sense within verses 13-16 suggests otherwise. Meanwhile, Hannah was despised instead of the honour she deserved in the house of God. It appeared that the author sought to dignify the priesthood by changing the conversation in verse 17 instead of presenting Eli as an impatient and apathetic leader to Hannah. This presents a problem concerning the connectivity of concepts in verses 16-17. The study concludes, that leaders should mind their speech when addressing their subordinates. Again, leaders like priests should learn how to empathize with their subordinates in their situations and address their concerns aptly to maintain existing rapport and confidence. For this reason, the study will employ an analytical approach of mother tongue hermeneutics to the texts to unveil embedded lessons.

Keywords: *Double Tongues, Glossolalia, Mother tongue, Sakar, Eirene, Shalom.*

INTRODUCTION

The term tongue means language. The loose tongue is described as saying something without thinking thoroughly about its negative implications. It is a way of speaking ‘anyhow.’ It is commonly known in local diction as mouthwatering. In Ewe diction, it is *nya ge le nu* (which literally means word drops from his mouth or the word comes out of his mouth). Some even refer to this loose tongue as *ade ge le nu* (saliva came out of his mouth). This type of speech is usually forgiven and accepted in the community no matter how heavy and derogatory it is in some cases. On other occasions, the speech is considered painful. Sometimes the outcomes of the loose tongue produce war and all other forms of conflict if it is not well taken by the victim. The tongue as it is known produces life and can also destroy life. Proverbs 15:2 says *the tongue of the wise disperses knowledge but the mouth of fools pour out folly*. This shows that the tongue plays an important role in human lives and the society. Varied tongues have been identified such as double tongue, mother tongue and speaking in tongues. These are subsequently explained.

Double Tongues

Double tongues are likely to be understood as speaking two languages. Meanwhile, that is not its implication. The term double tongue is generally understood as saying different things at the same time. It is also considered as telling lies. The term is also seen as a falsehood expression because it does not go directly to the point of intention. The double tongue is a kind of expression used to hide the real feelings of the person. In some respects, double tongues are considered idiomatic expressions revealing a concept of deception. The double tongue is an act of saying one thing but doing the opposite. Such statements usually create confusion in the dialogue. The double tongue is thus claiming one set of beliefs or intentions but acting according to another.²⁶⁴ This kind of expression is not direct to the point and cannot either be linked with speaking in tongues or mother tongues. That notwithstanding the double tongues can be seen in both of them. In most cases, this kind of expression has ambiguous meanings. The paper focuses on loose tongues which is saying something without holding onto it. Or frequently changing statements without standing by one’s own point. This often occurs in every language spoken by people if the speaker means it. In the same way, double tongue can occur in the mother tongue, local or foreign language with intention.

²⁶⁴ Double-tongue - Idioms by The Free Dictionary

The mother tongues

Mother tongue is all about the birth language of a person. Normally it is the language of the biological parents of a person which in effect becomes the person's own language. Hence it refers to one's native language.²⁶⁵ The mother-tongue of a person is that person's native language, the language that one is born into, as it were, and grows up with.²⁶⁶ It is a person's first language as compared to the other languages one might learn later in life, for example, in school.²⁶⁷ The mother tongue of a person is different from vernacular which is the common language of a region, or group, no matter how naturally such a language and its usage may come.

Speaking in tongues

Speaking in tongues is unfamiliar language being spoken by someone filled with the Holy Spirit. Historically, "tongues" or "glossolalia" (a broader term for the phenomenon based on the Greek words "to speak" and "tongue") has not been unique to Christianity.²⁶⁸ However, the concept of "spirit controlled" speech (whether real or purported) in an unknown language or gibberish was familiar to many different religious persuasions.²⁶⁹ What must be known is speaking in Tongues" is generally referred to as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12: 10 "...to another the ability to speak in different kinds of tongues" (NIV).²⁷⁰ In effects the ability to speak in the language that the speaker has not learned, that he does not understand, and that is incomprehensible to the hearer".²⁷¹ Elsewhere speaking in tongues was described as "gift of tongues" for the word, glossolalia, "which combines two words: lalia, signifying any utterance of sound, whether intelligent or un intelligent and glossa, meaning literally "tongue," but implying "language."²⁷² So if the two Greek terms are put together it becomes glossolalia. Though, glossolalia nowhere appears in the New Testament; usually, the Greek word translated "tongue(s), is glossa"²⁷³. For this reason, double tongue can be referred to as double glossa or dual glossa. Using glossa wisely generates merits in multitudes. It shares wisdom and builds relationships among people in varied perspectives.

In this paper tongue is considered as language and how it is uttered basically between the priests and their followers. The texts depicting Eli and Hannah's interaction in the Temple of Shiloh. In this case the issues are about the priesthood and the followers. Those who discussed this text from literary perspective came out that Eli acted externally towards Hannah. Others who approached the text from historical perspective conclude on the blessings offered by Eli to Hannah. However, this study likes to examine the texts using mother tongues hermeneutical approach using Anlo perspective of priesthood. The study will engage the discourse with intercultural approach because it is a tool that invites the interpreter to find their established homes of interpretation strange by adopting a posture that problematizes their relationships with other cultures and seeks to establish relationships of liberating interdependence. This will help the reader to explore the role of priesthood in both Biblical and Anlo contexts.

²⁶⁵ Aidan Kwame Ahaligah, *Mother-Tongue Theology: Akan Christian Christological Re-interpretations*, ISSN 2720-7749 Volume 1 Issue 2 Pentecostalism, Charismaticism and Neo-Prophetic Movements Journal– July 2020 pp 10-18 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.38159/pecanep.2020071>

²⁶⁶ Quarshie, J.Y., "Doing Biblical Studies in the African Context – The Challenge of Mother-tongue Scriptures," *Journal of African Christian Thought*, vol. 5, 1, (2002), 4-14.

²⁶⁷ Jonathan E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, *Patronage and Usage of the Mother-Tongue Bibles in Kumasi*, (Ghana. Kumasi, Ghana; Kwame Nkrumah).

²⁶⁸ Chuck Gianotti, *Biblical Tongues: Clear Teaching on A Confusing Subject*, (Cross road: Bible Fellowship, 2000), 2.

²⁶⁹ Gianotti, *Biblical Tongues: Clear Teaching on A Confusing Subject*, 2.

²⁷⁰ John Sirengo, *The Meaning of Speaking in Tongues: A Practical Strategy for the 21st Century Church*. East African Journal of Traditions, Culture and Religion ejtcr.eanso.org Volume 3, Issue 1, 2021 Print ISSN: 2707-5362 | Online ISSN: 2707-5370 Title DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37284/2707-5370>

²⁷¹ Sirengo, *The Meaning of Speaking in Tongues*, 2.

²⁷² Sirengo, *The Meaning of Speaking in Tongues*, 2

²⁷³ Sirengo, *The Meaning of Speaking in Tongues*, 2.

Anlo Traditional Concepts of Priesthood

The traditional concepts of Priesthood here is to present general understanding of priesthood in the Anlo context. Priesthood is a revered institution where much respects are accorded due to the services they render to human community. Scholars like Ekem did extensive work on priesthood in context. In his book he took the pain to talk about priests in traditional setting and relates it to Christian priesthood. He mentioned that the priests function as intermediaries between their communities and the deities into whose service they have been called.²⁷⁴ These individuals who occupied this office are seen to be sacred especially their close relationship with the spirits worlds. Their words, and actions therefore carry much weight in the society.²⁷⁵ The above description of the priests is not different from Anlo context. It is revealed during an interview with a converted traditional priest from the Anlo who shared his experience that priests are revered people in the communities because they are religious leaders.²⁷⁶ The interviewee notes that traditional priests are considered in the community as kings based on the roles they played by seeing to the well beings of the people. Priests who acknowledge the authority of the spirits they believe in command respects for the deities. The priests do not speak hush to the followers because it is through the interaction that they dignify their religious authorities. It is unfolded that as part of having many followers in traditional contexts, priests act submissively towards them and even engage them in informal counselling sessions in order to empathize and sympathize with their concerns. Contrary to that priests who are quick tempered usually do not have much followers because many people do not appreciate public reprimand.²⁷⁷

Describing the conducts of the followers the interviewee notes that they call the priests fathers because they see themselves as slaves to them. Based on the notion of slaves, that is why they usually kneel down before speaking to the priests. The followers are submissive to the priests in all respects by virtue of their religious offices.

Priesthood in the Church

and Christians views on the priesthood. According to him Christian priesthood and Christian ministry are referring to “clergy persons” even though Christian churches used various titles for ordained representatives: priests in the Roman Catholic tradition, ministers/pastors in the protestant tradition, prophets/pastors in some African independent churches. He intimates that their common role as mediating servants of God in relation to the laity explains why they can be uniformly categorized as a Christian priesthood or Christian ministry.

Ekem discussing the Basel mission heritage, notes that presbyterian church of Gold Coast (1926) remained essentially a product of Basel missionary influence. With the attainment of complete autonomy in 1950 and the adoption of a revised constitution, both missionary bodies (i.e Basel and Scottish) were fully integrated into the young church. The fact remains, however, that the Presbyterian church of the Gold Coast (now Ghana) has stood in historical as well as theological continuity with the Basel Evangelical Missionary Society. This is reflected in its understanding of ministry which is directly traceable to the ideas of Protestant Reformation shared by the Basel Missionaries themselves. In reaction to the sharp differentiation between the clergy and laity in the contemporary Roman Catholic tradition, Martin Luther and other Protestant Reformers drew attention to the common vocation of Christians in proclaiming to the world God’s saving deed in Christ. They upheld the common priesthood of all believers, i.e. Christians through the common experience of baptism, as well as the sacred privilege of proclaiming the Gospel to the others. Yet the Reformers were careful enough to acknowledge that a ‘representative priesthood’, not essentially superior to that exercised by other believers, was desirable for teaching and preaching the word, administering the Sacraments and for preservation of order in the church. Those called into such a ‘representative priesthood’ were servants or ministers of God and in relation to the *ecclesia Dei*, ministers

²⁷⁴ J.D.K. Ekem, *Priesthood in Context: A Study of Priesthood in some Christian and Primal Communities of Ghana and Its Relevance for Mother Tongue Biblical Interpretation*. (Accra, Ghana; SonLife Press, 2009), 53.

²⁷⁵ Ekem, *Priesthood in Context*, 53.

²⁷⁶ This information is received from a traditional priest who live in the volta region particularly the Anlo community. He is well known traditional priest who an experience practitioner.

²⁷⁷This information is received from a traditional priest through Interview.

of the Word and Sacraments rather than priestly mediators in the Roman Catholic sense of the word. He said although the Lutheran and Reformed confessions differ in certain respects regarding classification of democratic participation by both laity and the ordained in church government. The ecclesiastical structure introduced to the Gold Coast by the Basel missionaries was a blend of Lutheran and Reformed ministries.²⁷⁸

Of the afore citation, it comes up that those who are called into the ministry are the servant of God. what is important about the above quote is the clarification of the duties of the clergy and the laity. He notes that the reformers are mindful of the fact that a representative priesthood is not essentially superior to that exercised by other believers.²⁷⁹ He then enumerated the areas of equal responsibilities such as desirable for teaching and preaching the word, administering the Sacraments and for preservation of order in the church. Although in some churches laity is not allowed to do the sacrament. The other thing observed in the citation is the priesthood are the servants of God and the *ecclesia Dei* rather than Roman Catholic understanding of priesthood as the mediators of the word. This clarification makes it imperative to look at leadership theory of servant leadership.

Theory of Servant leadership

The servant leader is someone who is known to have made himself a servant assuming the leadership position. The servant leader is fair, vulnerable and humble.²⁸⁰ Servant leaders do not center attention on their own accomplishments, but rather on other people. This kind of a leader is people centred interest achiever. This servant leader's concentration on service limits the negative effects of self-interest, and humility counteracts that self-interest.²⁸¹ Such servant leaders exhibit humility as listen willingly, feel accountable to those served and openly receive criticism and advice as a welcomed opportunity to better serve²⁸². Servants leaders with humble behavior of this type builds consensus with followers.²⁸³ In excising Humility they compel modesty by shunning public adulation and not being boastful, by demonstrating calm determination, relying on inspired standards, setting up of successors for great success, and looking to the people of the company to appropriate that success.²⁸⁴ Servant leaders are not arrogant, they observe things from another's perspective and show appreciation and respect for leadership within the organization.²⁸⁵ Such servant leaders are not interested in their image or in being exalted, rather being more interested in being accountable²⁸⁶. Because of this attitude, one observes serving from as authentic desire to help others and searching for ways to serve others by staying in touch with people. This however presents humility as a test of leadership, differentiating the good from the great.²⁸⁷

In all these commitment to the work of services, Servant leaders realize they do not have all the answers.²⁸⁸ It now suggests to every one that the greatest gifts a servant leader can give the follower is the gift of the self; this shows care and takes place with reverence, respect, and humility.²⁸⁹ Observing this value in the servant leaders, Swindoll notes that the giving of the self-shows humility of the servant, also pointed out that this humility is not to be equated with poor self-esteem because humility is consistent with

²⁷⁸ Ekem, *Priesthood in Context*, 102-103.

²⁷⁹ Ekem, *Priesthood in Context*, 103.

²⁸⁰ Swindoll, C. R., *Improving your serve*. (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1981), 69.

²⁸¹ Fairholm M.R., & Fairholm. G. *Leadership amid the constraints of trust*. Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 21, (2000). 102.

²⁸² Blanchard, K., *Leadership by the book*. Executive Excellence, 17, (2000), 4.

²⁸³ Story, M., *A breakfast briefing that unscrambled Auckland's road-jam*. New Zealand Management, 49, (2002). 39.

²⁸⁴ Collins, J. *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't*. (New York: Harper Collins Publishing 2001).

²⁸⁵ Crom, M. *The leader as servant*. Training, 35, 6. Daft, R.L. Mason, (Ohio: South-Western, 1998), 6.

²⁸⁶ Swindoll, *Improving your serve*, 69.

²⁸⁷ Collins, J. *Good to Great*, 5.

²⁸⁸ Kathleen Patterson, *Servant Leadership: A Theoretical Model*, Regent University, 4, patterson_servant_leadership.pdf.

²⁸⁹ Covey, S. *Servant-Leadership and community leadership in the twenty-first century*. In, Spears, L. (Eds). Focus on Leadership: Servant Leadership for the 21st Century. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2002), 27-34.

a healthy ego.²⁹⁰ For this reason, servant leaders can be both confident and unassuming, maintaining a healthy self-image but not being haughty, arrogant, or pretentious.²⁹¹

The text analysis

The implication of sakar in the context

The Hebrew word sakar is consistently used in 1 Sam. 13-16. The word sakar implies to drink to the full, to drink to hilarity or to drink deeply, to be filled with drink, to be drunken or intoxicated.²⁹² In all of these instances sakar creates problem in the text because of its used in negative purpose. The statement sounds as mockery and derogatory. To the large extent, Eli's statement 'how long are you going to stay drunk. Put away your wine' is judgemental as well. Scholars argue that very few exceptions of sakar and its derivatives are used in a highly unfavorable and negative context²⁹³. This statement if subjected to the conduct of priesthood and servant leadership discussion above it will be very clear that he acted contrary to the normal role of priesthood. No wonder that Murphy argues that on any literal reading of the scene between petitioner and priest, Eli initially misinterprets Hannah's act of private prayer as a drunkard's talking to herself; for the literal reader of this portion of scripture, Eli steps into the role of so many biblical characters who look at the externals, not at the heart.²⁹⁴ The use of sakar in verses 13-16 before verse 17 cannot be left out in the attempt to understand verse 17.

It can be observed that Eli changed his statement upon hearing the explanation from Hannah. It reads 'But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time' (vrs 15-16). According to the author, upon hearing this explanation from Hannah, Eli realises that his impression about her was wrong. Yet refused to apologise to her and pretended to bless. This is one of the attitudes the servant leadership theory and Anlo concept of priesthood frown upon. The interviewee in the Anlo points out that the humble priest would admit that he has erred and apologize for the offended (follower of the priest) and urge the offended to move on. But here are other arrogant priests who by the virtue of pride will never accept their mistake and let alone apologize for it. The interviewee remarked that he observed that normally those who act pretentiously or with pride towards their followers usually ends have few followers while the submissive priests attract more followers. Should the word sakar be considered as loosely came out Eli's speech, it will also have implication within the context of priesthood because priests are expected to control their speech. So, if he did that, it is of his low standard before Hannah. Somehow, it appears that Eli realised that he had erred and changed the statement in verse 17.

Eli changed sakar to shalom

Shamefully, Eli turned out under pretence, blessing Hannah instead. Eli changed sakar to shalom. This also brings to the fore the need to evaluate the context of using the word shalom in the Anlo context. Evans asserts that Eli gives Hannah his blessing and she receives this as God's blessing, apparently taking it for granted that her prayer has been heard.²⁹⁵ Evans contends that there is no evidence in the OT that the prayers of religious professionals are to be seen as more effective than those of any sincere believer.²⁹⁶ Nevertheless, it is possible that Hannah believed that Eli had exceptional powers. It is also possible that the peace she felt

²⁹⁰ Swindoll, Improving your serve.

²⁹¹ Bower, M. *Developing leaders in a business*. The McKinsey Quarterly, 4, (1997), 14.

²⁹² William Wilson, *Wilson's Old Testament Word studies: A Valuable aid that will help you understand the precise meaning of Hebrew words used in the Bible*, (USA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1961), 134.

²⁹³ Harris, R. L., Archer, G. L., Waltke, B. K. Jr. (Eds.). *Theological Wordbook 310 of the Old Testament Vol.1&2*. (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute 1980), 926.

²⁹⁴ Murphy, F., A. *1 Samuel: Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids; Michigan: Brazos Press, 2010), 13.

²⁹⁵ Evans J. M., 1 & 2 Samuel. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Publishing Group, 2012), 17.

²⁹⁶ Evans, 1 & 2 Samuel. 17.

was a result of having expressed herself to God. She was comforted as much by her conviction that she was understood and accepted by God as she was by any conviction that a child had been promised.²⁹⁷

The interaction between Eli and Hannah can be seen as social engagement despite that they were in the temple. The conversation is between two individuals i. e. between Eli and Hannah making the context of expression social. Therefore, one can conclude that *shalom* is used in a social context. VanGemerén confirms the above prepositions by iterating that the use of *shalom* is classified according to the context of usages.²⁹⁸ This means that context should be taken into consideration whenever it comes to the use of the word *shalom*. Thus, it should not be taken for granted that once *shalom* is used, the same meaning should apply irrespective of its context. VanGemerén maintains that the nominative *shalom* is used in a material or secular sense to designate wellbeing, prosperity, or bodily health (e.g. Gen 29:6; 43:27).²⁹⁹ This suggests that when *shalom* is used for the purpose of material concern, all that it implies is wellbeing, health or prosperity. This view alone cannot justify the usage of the word and, therefore, reflects in the translation, especially in view of already highlighted postulations that *shalom* can express the state of mind or internal condition of being at ease, satisfied, or fulfilled. This implies that in social context *shalom* can also mean something different from well-being and prosperity. Nevertheless, VanGemerén intimates that, in such instances, the word *shalom* is accompanied with the verb ‘go’ or ‘come’ (e.g. Gen. 26:29; Exo 18:23), to designate the sense of a state of mind or condition of internal.³⁰⁰ With this, one will agree that the Hebrew word *shalom* in 1Samuel 1:17 is used in a social context but functions as nominative absolute.

How is *shalom* then used in the sentence under consideration? It is used with the verb ‘go’. From this discovery, one can convincingly argue that, despite the position of many translators arguing that the translation is well-being, *shalom* can appropriately be translated to convey the internal concern of Hannah. If not, then, the current translation in Ewe can be interpreted as a translation depicting Eli taking the condition of Hannah for granted by referring to her from the beginning as a drunkard. It suggests that Eli rather considers the condition of Hannah from a human perspective instead of the religious dimension. If Eli is to view Hannah’s condition in a religious dimension, probably, he will not have described her in that manner. This understanding must now lead into how Hannah’s speech could be interpreted.

Reflections on the pericope

Careful reading of the pericope indicates that Eli erred by reacting to Hannah harshly. Referring to her as a drunkard in their immediate contact sounds awkward and disheartening. A word from no mean person than a priest to his follower was unfortunate and need condemnation at all front. Subordinates or followers are not slaves to that extent to be treated with such a contempt as Eli did to Hannah in the temple at Shiloh. Such a discourse in the episode is of no emulation not in Anlo context alone based on the social worldview about priests be it in the Christianity or traditional settings but other ethnics groups as well. The tone of the language was not even lowered to depicts Eli’s remorsefulness toward Hannah and deserve to be contemned in uncertain terms. The act of pretence in leadership should not be tolerated and promote in the church.

Approaching issues in the leadership position with loose expressions may cause damage and provoke anger as exhibited in the speech of Hannah in response to Eli. Though Eli tried to cure the damage he caused by blessings, it has not fully worked until God came in. The impression created in this pericope shows that priests erring is normal but it is not applicable in every context. As it known in some contexts that the priest has no molecule to render apology to the subordinates even if he sees his mistake, the study found that in some places it is otherwise in order to maintain harmony and promote growth.

²⁹⁷ Evans, 1 & 2 Samuel. 17.

²⁹⁸ VanGemerén, W. A., *New International Dictionary of the Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* Vol. 4. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997b), 132.

²⁹⁹ VanGemerén, W. A., *New International Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 132.

³⁰⁰ VanGemerén, *New International Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 132.

CONCLUSION

It is revealed that the utterances of Eli as a leader to the subordinate who happened to be Hannah was hushed. Such a loose tongue from Eli who was the priest at the time Hannah came to the temple is an affront to him and many leaders who may act like him. Leaders are to be mindful of the words they use both in public and private conversation in order to earn respect and dignity for themselves. This study recommends that such expressions should not be accepted and encouraged because it can expel members from the church. Even when a leader realises his mistake yet fails to apologise to the subordinate, such a leader must know that he is destroying his image before the subordinates because that is not the conduct of servant leadership. For this reason, the study recommends that leaders should be circumspect in the action they take at every situation. They should admit the fact that they are human and accept their mistakes and apologize to show respect to the subordinates.

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“Whoever Does Not Work, Let Him Not Eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10) in the Context of the African “Aka Aja Aja Na-Ebute Onu Mmanu Mmanu”

Dominic Obielosi, Ph D

Department of Religion and Human Relations, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria.

Email: dobielosi@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Misinterpretation and the consequent misrepresentation of some biblical passages while advantaging the proponents have made a shipwreck of the faith of most Christians in Africa. This is seen especially within the ambient of ‘prosperity’ preaching. The audience is cowed into believing and accepting literally some scriptural provisions. The repercussion is that most abandon what they ought to do while waiting on God to do everything for them. Laziness, frustration and decadence in the faith have always been the result. Paul faced similar situation in his own time and so he gives resounding instruction that whoever does not work must not eat. Africa has similar belief as Paul. This paper uses exegetical lens to interpret 2Thessalonians 3:10 and then gets it contextualized. The researcher believes that an understanding of the passage will push people back to work and alleviate economic challenges in Africa.

INTRODUCTION

“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.” This is God’s injunction to man in Gen 1,27-28. In chapter 3 of the same book, God cursed the ground because of man after the original sin that he could only eat out of the sweat of his brow. These two accounts not only lay manifest the ambiguity of work as to whether it is a blessing or a curse, but also bears an irrefutable witness to this fact that work is a fundamental dimension of man’s life on earth. A look at the different disciplines that study man namely- Anthropology, paleontology, History, sociology, psychology attest to this claim. If work then is a dimension of human existence, then the following questions flow necessarily- does man live to work or work to live? Does some form of working belong to the achievement of life or could we ideally get along without working? Any answer we give to any of these questions is no longer on the academic level, but has obvious consequences for our view of society, our ideal of education and our perception of the human person. This paper settles for the opinion that work is not just part of and parcel of the human person. It perfects man. It gives meaning to the man’s life on earth. It defines the human person and distinguishes him from the rest of creatures. Other animals labour to some extent but only instinctually. Only man understands the reason for his work and so decides on what type of work and how he does it. The researcher moves from philosophical views to exegetical analysis of 2Thes 3,10 to demonstrate that work is not a curse but in the nature of man for a better man and society. The paper contextualizes 2Thes 3,10 within the framework of the Igbo philosophical adage: “aka aja aja na ebute onu mmanu mmanu” to prove the point that it is only when Africans take up the challenge of working out their salvation without depending on God for miracles that they will begin to live and exit the economic quagmire.

The paper is structured to give insight into clarification of terms by having an excursion into historical views on work; nature of work; elements of work; work as part and parcel of human existence examined from different angles; exegetical interpretation of 2Thes 3,10 and then its hermeneutical application to the Igbo philosophical proverb followed by the conclusion.

Some Historical Views on Work

Ancient

In the ancient and classical period, a negative concept of work is always prevalent. They were always hostile to manual work. This is evident from the Greek, French and Latin word for work. The Greek word for work is avscolh (aschole) which is a negation of scolh (schole) meaning leisure. Similarly the Latin term “laborare” designates work and suffering or even their word for business “negotium” which is opposite of

“otium” meaning leisure. The French “inavail” which is similar to “tripallium” in Latin, which means that used in holding stubborn horse so as transport them.

The Greeks see work as suffering that should be done by slaves as opposed to the contemplative activity of the noble men, which helps them forget their incarceration in the geosphere. Thus, Plato excludes machines from the government of the state. Even in his dialogue “Gorgias” he is very contemptuous to engineers and said “you can neither give your dough to his son nor marry his own daughter” Aristotle held that every work is vile in as much as it oppresses the intelligence. Cicero and Seneca extolled idleness as superior to work.

In the Ancient Near East as epitomized in the Gen 3 work is seen as punishment. However, in the New Testament a new evaluation of work is given. Work is ennobled by making it a moral and soteriological criterion insofar as work frees man from sloth and prepares him for reward. Thus, St Paul enjoined the Christians who do not work, to go on working than interfering with another’s else. And those who do not, he said should not eat (2 Thes 3:10-13).

The Middle Ages

UNESCO’S declaration that “everyone has right to work,” would have been as unintelligible in the earlier part of the middle ages as in the ancient Greek. This is because they also evaluated work negatively, at least initially. St Thomas allowed four grounds which could make a work morally justified.

- Necessary for most to maintain life
- Necessary for many to avoid illness and sin
- It is a form of penance
- It enables us to give alms

The age of the renaissance protestant reformation criticized by the cult of the will and romanticism i.e. anthropocentric mentality, extolled work. Work is then seen as something important and fundamental in the realms of activities for man’s development and his eternal salvation.

It came to be regarded as a kind of predestination by Calvinism. It belonged for them to the reign of the elect or the reign of the heavens.

Voltaire and the illuminists exalted and recommended scientific and technological work to make civilization progress. For him according to Mondin (1975), work in fact eliminates 3 great evils of humanity; bored on vice and need.

Equally, the church in her social teaching via the writings of the Fathers and Magisterium, instructs that, should one have a stranger, who should stay with him long, he should secure a work for him and let him earn his living.

This means that one should be allowed to exercise his responsibility, put in Heideggerian Language, we should leap-ahead and not leap-in for one (Heidegger, 1962).

Modern Era

With the position of John Calvin in the middle epoch that God should no more be seen as an absolute truth to be contemplated at leisure, but rather as an architect to be imitated, work became cultural. Nature was desacralized and was then seen as something to be dominated and conquered. The earth exists for man, as such, the onus lies on him to transform it and make it habitable. Man therefore became a worker, a producer. Those who do not work are either seen as anomalous or unable to work. The young are unable to work. The old have worked and retired for age. The unemployed are so because of temporal economic instability. The Hippies are voluntary drop-outs and have no positive regard in the society. Man exploits and constrains every possible mean to reveal all the mysteries of nature. In such a way, man “little by little rebels against the destiny that fell upon his shoulders and wishes to escape from the fatality that from time immemorial, he was taught to believe in as invincible (De Lubac, 1950) little wonder then, why Marx (1863) categorized man as essentially a labourer.

Work And Labour Distinguished

Generally, people take both to be synonymous but Arendt (1958) distinguished between both. Obsessed with *figura etymologica*, she appealed to ancient and European etymologies to show that work and labour are 2 different words though we use them synonymously. The Greeks has *ponein* (*ponein*) and *evrghzestai* (*ergezesthai*), meaning work and labour respectively; Latin has *laborare* or *facere* meaning to labour and fabricate respectively. French has *travailler* and *ouvez* meaning to labour and to work respectively. The Germans talk of *arbeiten* and *werken* referring to labour done by serfs and to work respectively. The distinction between working hands and laboring bodies is akin to Greek *cheirotechne* and craftsmen and those who like slaves and tamed animals work to supply the necessities of life.

The Greeks did not despise only labour but also craftsmen. This is because such works are not done for their own sake. They are done for the provision of the necessities of life, and as such depict the materialization of man and the suffering nature of his, whereas for theirs, a noble man should engage in contemplative activity and forget material pursuit. With this, they justified slavery. This is more because men possess slaves in order to be free from the distraction of the pursuit of the things of life, hence enabling them engage in a more ennobled work-contemplation. Thus employment of slaves for them is not against nature. For the Greeks any menial work or work done with body is servitude because it is not specific to man. Men should be contemplative. The former is denoted as *Homo laborans*.

The modern epoch did not distinguish between man as *homo laborans* and *homo faber*. They extolled the former and only distinguished between productive and unproductive, manual and intellectual. They based their thesis on the productive and unproductive as is observable in Karl Marx (1863) so that productivity becomes the yardstick. The most radical view in the modern idea of labour is Marx's (1863) who said that labour distinguishes man from animals. Marx and Smith despised maids and servants as unproductive and therefore parasitic. They only work to sustain their master. This means that the moderners only re-echoed what the ancient Greeks have said. What the latter call slavish work, the former identify as unproductive. From the above, Arendt concluded that the distinction between productive and unproductive is also that between work and labour. For her what characterizes all laboring is that its fruit is only but for a moment as it is motivated by a stronger drive namely necessity of life.

Identification of labour and work as synonymous for Arendt is a mistake of modality. For her labour implies the physico-biological activities of the human body. It means the human condition. Arendt distinguished between labour and work based on her understanding of the world of *homo laborans* and *homo faber*. The world here is different from nature and universe. It is man-made home which is constructed with the materials provided by nature. This means that these materials are not for human life. The world makes up the condition for exercising that life. For the *homo laborans*, the things of the earth are just provided. He mixes up with them for consumption. But the earth seen through the eye of a *homo faber* consists of things ready to hand for use. He creates a new world from these materials, making the world, a more habitable place. While *homo laborans* does not change the earth, *homo faber* changes it, makes it more suitable, durable, and stable. For him, the earthly materials are useless. Their values lie in the work done on them. For them, the material things of the earth are for use. Through them, better things are created and hence their values specified. They provide the durability needed by Locke to posit his private property, value needed by Smith for market exchange and the productivity needed by Marx to show the taste of human nature. The proper use and reconstruction of these natural things, make them more durable. It does not cause them to disappear as in the case of *homo laborans* where the consumption of these things, makes them vanish.

Arendt's definition could then be said to be based on crude and uncivilized man, the *homo erectus*, *Australocanpithecus* and *Pithecanthropus erectus*, who was used to roaming about eating whatever he saw. He is the *homo laborans*.

The *homo faber* could be said to be *techne-man*. A civilized and civilizing man, who can transform nature, make the world a home and habitable. For her then, work becomes an activity which corresponds to the unnaturalness of human existence. Man unlike animals that work only to eat (*laborans*) man changes things for better (*faber*). In the modern epoch, and in this paper however, we use work and labour synonymously.

Nature of Work

Like language, work is a means of communication. Work is natural to man and belongs to man as such. Animals do not work. They only act instinctively. Man goes beyond the instinct and seeks self-realisation which work offers. In the words of Pope John Paul II (1981, n.1), “work is one of the characteristics that distinguish man from the rest of creatures, whose activity for sustaining their lives cannot be called work. Only man is capable of work, and only man works, at the same time, by work occupying his existence on earth”. So that for some people like Marx (1863), work is the essence of man. Equally for Struhl Rothenberg (1975), “among the activities most peculiar to humans, work probably defines man with the greatest certainty” (p.273). Taking bearing from Arendt’s distinction between work and labour, those of animals are *laborans* while man’s is *faber*.

Some religions see work as something ordained by God. E.g is Christianity. God condemned man to eat only out of the sweat of his brow. Moreover, man is *imago Dei*. As such, he should work in order to participate in the creative act of God. Thus there had been too many definitions of work,

It is defined as an activity which enables man proposes a human milieu and transcends natural givenness in humanizing nature.

Work is the application of both the bodily and spiritual powers of man to actualize an intended goal that can be reached or produced. Here prayer becomes true work. This definition takes note of the composite nature of man.

Composta Dario (1988) has a similar notion of work, when he wrote, “work is the occupation of human energies, be they physical and intellectual, for a proper social utility” (p.138). Mondin (1985) in his definition said that it is a material/spiritual activity tending to a useful result or a fatiguing activity intended to modify things through the use of the body and instruments with which man searches to satisfy his own needs.

The last two definitions depict work as an interaction with nature. It is a transformation of nature. It is not any kind of transformation but an intelligent one. Comte (1875) was of this view. He said it is the useful modification of exterior milieu operated by man. The human sense of work is utility. Any work done by one without useful result is no work. E.g is the myth of Sisyphus where this man makes tireless and fruitless effort to roll a big stone up a high mountain.

According to John Paul II, “man is born to work, as well as called to it. Work is for man and it is a lifelong activity which man must pursue”. Human work transforms and blends new nature to man’s likening and wishes unlike animals which is static without any development E.g. a bird must always make nest. It does not develop in that. It is only in metaphorical sense that animals could be said to work as they are operated by man. Man in his work makes present at hand, objects, ready-to-hand. He makes raw materials become useful. Thus for Marx (1863), work ceases things and raise them from death. Example the tar used to tar roads is bitumen which is a by-product of oil.

Elements of Work

Man is the worker and he works with and on something. For there to be work, two elements are indispensable. The worker and the worked or that with which he works. Where the former is the subjective the latter objective.

Objective

Work is a transitive activity. i.e. it begins in man and goes towards an external object. Work, according to John Paul II is objective when it “finds expression in different stages of culture and civilization. It goes from stage to stage. Man first takes the sea and land creatures for domestication and food. He goes further to cultivate the earth and transforms its products and adapts them for use. He goes further to the industrial stage where he employs machineries. So that as Marx (1863) noted, he only “has the unique capacity of not only using but also creating instruments to provide for his basic needs.” The objective element therefore refers to activities of man done in ever changing modality, with the intention of subduing the earth. It includes all the modern techniques and machineries man uses to achieve such purpose. All the technologies

as well as the products of man's brain that facilitate man's work are included in this element. They are generally called technology. They find expression in all human epoch. They are only ancillaries and not aptitudes for work.

As such they should be for man, not man for them. Man should be their master and not their slave. If the later ever sets in, man's pride in work goes into oblivion. What Heidegger says then crops in. This means that technology is double edged sword. It can help or kill pending on the manipulation.

The hand is a natural living instrument. Thus we often talk of the labour of our hands. Aquinas also regarded it as the most essential of all the external senses. Moreover, the tools have direct or indirect connection with the hand. They either ape its structure or depend on it for their manipulability. The hand grasps, strikes and divides. Thus the activity of the instruments as the mediator between man and work and a helper to man is recognizable in all the ages of man. Ranging from the epoch of the Neanderthal man to the stone-sharpening age heightening to a larger degree in this technological era. Instruments also modify working condition. Milton Friedman (1962) was then right to say that tool serve not to suppress man's part in production.

More so, man's ability to use and fabricate tools intelligibly marks man's crossing of the threshold between the instinct and intelligence. This is why for Bergson, intelligence is the ability to fabricate tools. So that a *homo sapiens*, is at first a *homo faber*. Tool is a sign of intelligence because it is a means. Hammer is not consumable. Its meaning therefore is manifested in its in order to. This means that tools are signs of human intelligence which works indirectly to transform nature. Thus while man is capable of representing nature, animals are only in nature. Thus Marx (1863) said that What distinguishes a most unskilled architect and a most clever being is that the architect carries first the house in his head. Similarly, Buber (1945) was right when he said that man's ability to discover, construct and use tools marks his emergence over animals and above all has the idea of better ones in his head.

Subjective Dimension

Work is also an immanent activity. Hence the subjective element in work. It refers to man as a person. Work is done by man. Since man is a rational being, a being with intelligence having, will, ability to choose and also a worker, then these internal attitudes of his are bound to come into his work. Such attitudes are - I.Q, temperament, character etc. As a person with free will of self decision, he is the subject of work. He originates, controls, determines and regulates the work to its end. As these internal subjective attitudes influence man's work, so they are influenced by work. Theirs is a kind of addition to their perfection. Thus, through such, he becomes truly human. Thus for Mounier (1989), all work worth to make a man as well as a thing. Similarly for Fischer Ernest (1973) maintains that by this acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature. The dignity of work then comes in here, since man is solely involved. Work should be for man and not the reverse.

It is this subjective element that gives work its ethical nature because according to the Pope, it is linked to the fact that he who does it is a person, a self conscious and free subject, that is to say one who reflects upon himself. Work in the subjective sense remains the same but in the objective it changes with time. There are three main spheres in this subjective element- personal, familial and natural.

Work as a Dimension of Human Existence

In the words of Francis Cardinal Arinze, "Nobody was called a worker because everybody was a worker". (The Encyclical *Laborem Exercens* in African Context). If Arinze's view is correct, then, work becomes a fundamental dimension of human existence. The fact is made evident in the patristic and scholastic writings and amplified by Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* of May 1891. Pope John Paul II (1981) writing on it said, that the church finds already in the first pages of the book of Genesis the source of its conviction that work constitutes a fundamental dimension of human existence on earth. Different and myriad disciplines that study man - Paleontology, Anthropology, Sociology, Psychology bear witness to this. It is also validated by the Judaeo-Christian tradition as seen in the book of Genesis 1:28.

Man is also expected to participate in the creative activity of God and by so doing, prolongs the creative act. The Pope expressed this in his *Laborem Exercens*. Man is the image of God partly, through

the mandate received from the creator, to subdue and to dominate the earth. In carrying out this mandate, every human being reflects the very action of the creator of the universe (John Paul II, 1981).

Marx (1863) also in his study of man in the concrete situation saw him as an essentially working animal. An act specific to him and distinguishes him from other animals as do thoughts, wills, words and freedom. Mondin (1985) alluding to the above adds that just as we cannot identify man merely as a willing animal, or a playing or religious animal - so we can't just say he is only and solely a working animal "*homo faber*, is the man himself, in one of his essential expressions, on a level with *homo sapiens*, *homo liber*, *homo volens*, *homo ludens* and *homo religiosus*. But just as we have not identified man with the dimensions of willing, thinking and speaking, so we cannot identify him also with the dimension of doing.

Because work is dimensions of human existence, we shall consider it in its many dimensions - natural, personal, social and metaphysical.

Natural Dimension

If man continues to live, he must always eat. As long as he remains rational too, decency demands that he must clothe himself and live under a shelter for protection against natural forces like rain and artificial ones like robbers. To provide these primary needs, he must work to transform what is already provided in raw form in nature, to suit him. Man constructs tools which lighten his toil and help him to produce more than meets his daily needs. "Working" produces "works". He does not merely catch dinner to be eaten but constructs barns to store surplus food. He is no longer content with shelter for his head but needs more worthy building in which to worship, hold assemblies, to defend himself against enemies who want his wealth. He does not merely repeat to tales around the fire, he makes paper and records works of literature. Through work, life becomes less ephemeral and more perennial. The signals turn into cars and telephones. This is quite unlike in animals; whose needs are readily supplied by nature. Man must therefore be a Prometheus to adapt to his nature. In doing this, he creates a second nature which is culture. A 2nd nature that is unnatural, unique and suitable for him alone, for sustenance of life. Culture is therefore the 2nd nature that is human. One created by him in which only he can live. And the unnatural culture is a product of a being-in-the-world. Unique, unnatural himself i.e. constructed in contrast with the environment exactly there, where for the animals the environment is situated, world of culture is for man that is to say the sector of culture, dominated and maintained by him in sustenance of life (Gehlen 1988).

Man therefore works because the nature is estranged to him. He changes it through his work and makes it familiar. He gives form to the indeterminate and makes natural force his true and obedient servants. From the famous formula of Descartes work makes us master and possessors of nature.

Man needs to actualize a nature that is human. This he does through his artifacts and work. Thus for Hegel (1820), in working man reveals himself. By working man projects in advance what he is lacking now. Through it he satisfies his interests and desires. This means that he adapts the materials to suit him. Thus work is nature penetrated by subject subjectivity. Jean Lacroix (1966) on this wrote that the vital activity of animal is not work, the contemplation of pure spirit is not work. Work is always the spirit penetrating with difficulty into matter and spiritualizing it. Work fashions a new nature. Through it that which is pure and undivided but divisible assumes a variety. This is the creative aspect of work. This is why Locke saw it as conferring ownership on the individual because in working, one mixes his nature with labour. This is why for some, work is an externalization of the self. This last point leads into seeing the dialectics of alienative and re-intergration and humanization in work. Marx saw man as animal with need. The needs to eat, shelter and cloth. To supply these, he must work. In working too, he does so consciously to make something human than animalistics. This means that in working, man humanizes and naturalizes himself.

Taking from the physiological perspective, man's nature supports work. His external senses - vision, auditory system, manipulability of his hands, his erect position, brain, central and peripheral nervous systems, all support the work he does. This is why David Meakin (1977) said in his man and work that work is a depth part of us which depicts not our relation to, but also our possession of consciousness which is born out of confrontation with nature.

A critical look at all proffered so far reveals that work involves alienation and re-integration of man. The former because of the physical and mental stress involved in trying to transform the more or less dormant, passive and dogged nature. Re-integration of man which is the joy that follows the eventual success.

Personal Dimension

Man does his work with the help of some parts of his body. The latter, since it is material alone, should be inactive without the spiritual aspect of man. This means that both aspects of man are involved in man's work. i.e the whole person is involved. Therefore it has tremendous personal dimension. Work comes from and for man. So that as noted by Vatican II as human activity proceeds from man, so is it ordered towards man. This means that it is work for man and not man for work.

The personal dimension of work is also seen in its process and end. Many traditions see it as punishment. Something reserved for animals and slaves. A kind of alienation. it is also a remedy of alienation in the end. This is the position of Jean Lacroix (1966). For Christians too, work is not punishment. Thus St. Paul in one of his letters advises Christians to go on working to earn their living (cf. Eph 4:28). For Hegel too, work liberates as is seen in his dialectics of the master and the slave.

Man by engaging in work dispenses energy which is under the control of the body and intelligence. Because work needs the involvement of the whole man, man concentrates. His being becomes organized. He is no more scattered. He realizes himself having forgotten his being through his whole engagement in work. Thus through work, one liberates from the shackles of earthly distractions. He also recreates and perfects himself. So that as noted by Elliot (1961), a man's work does not satisfy his material needs alone. In very deep sense, it gives him a measure of his sanity. Work is therefore man's mirror because it is nature controlled by reason and transformed. So that a good work attracts praises for the doer - the heavens proclaim the greatness of God. Work enables man. This why modern technology, though should help man, must not be allowed to become means of subjugation and human programming. For Evan Illich (1971), this constitutes the error of modern industrialism. With Heidegger (1962) then we say that, Man must say 'yes' to technical utensils, but he must say 'no' to their pretences of monopolizing all the meanings of being. Through work then, man puts value in things. For oneself, liberation, for others, recognition; for production in itself; it then becomes a monumentalization and immortalization of the self.

Metaphysical Dimension

The metaphysical is not severed from the personal. The spiritual aspects of man, will, reason etc involved in work show the spiritual aspect involved. Metaphysical is that beyond matter. The spiritual is beyond matter and therefore metaphysical.

The metaphysical dimension seeks to demonstrate that man is not pure spirit, whose activity will not meet any obstacle or just more matter which cannot in any way transcend nature. Thus Jean Lacroix (1966) noted that the vital activity of an animal is not work. The contemplation of pure spirit is not work. Work is always the spirit penetrating with difficulty into matter and spiritualizing it. Work therefore shows the condition of man as incarnate spirit. Equally from the religious point of view, man is an incarnate spirit. This is because, he is created in God's image and God is a spirit. Since man who has matter is created in the image of the matterless God, it means that some form of matterlessness must be in him in order to have the divine image. Since we see only the material part of him that matterless part, must be in the matter. Man therefore is an *imago Dei* (John Paul II, 1981).

Moral Dimension

This is inseparable from the metaphysical dimension. Just like other activities of man, human work can also be good or bad according to the good or evil end for which the person works. E.g. production of medicine is not automatically good work. Its goodness or badness depends on whether it is produced to cure or poison someone. In the words of Pope Leo XIII (1891), the ethical value of work "without indefinite statements and directly speaking, remains bound to the fact that he who fulfills the task is a person, a cognizant and free subject that is a subject who decides for himself.

Work is morality in act because morality according to Mondin (1985) is only an incarnation of value in reality. Work not only humanizes the universe, it also perfects man. Thus for Mounier (1989), all work, worth to make a man as well as a thing, work is the best exorcism for egoism. Though man works subjectively for utility, there is also the objective end which is realized in the product of the work because working is to quit oneself, to externalize oneself. It helps man regain some equilibrium. This is why psychiatrists use ergo therapy on some on their patients showing the therapeutical value of work.

Work gives order and balance to existence. An idler or a loafer has time disjuncted and discontinuous. It is heterogeneous and runs like capricious rhythm of passions. The worker whose time is regulated is more organized, stable and experience regular rhythm of things. Comte gave a good formular for the psychologists, “regulate the inside through (on) the outside”. Regulation here does not mean programming but as free act. Thus an adage has it that idle -hand, foolish heart.

Another aspect of the moral dimension of work is the condition of work. This was pointed out by Mondin (1985). Man is capable of both noblest and basest action. Thus for work to be ethical and perfective to the performer, it is necessary for it to be firstly morally healthy. This is founded on the fact that man is a free subject who decides for himself.

In concluding this section, we document with John Paul II (1981) that though work is an arduous good, it needs be done, not just for the joy of the fruit but that through it man solves his needs and that of others and also humanizes nature. Such work must, however, recognize the dignity and perfection of the human person.

Social Dimension of Work

For struhl and Rothenberg (1975), work is an activity that produces something of value for other people. This means that although work emanates from a human person, it is nevertheless social. Almost every person testify to this. Freud saw love and work as the foundation of the society; Marx (1863) said it is an activity done in association with others in which man reflects himself as a special being. John Paul II said that the building of the society is its primary task. Vatican II *Gaudium at Spes* is of similar view. It says, “By his work, man ordinarily provides for himself and his family, associates with others and his brothers and renders them service (G.S no 67).

Work is not only a personal activity. It brings one into the interior of social organism in which all the component parts are in solidarity. Mondin (1985) expresses this more apophantically when he said that work has a social value because the work one does not only perfects or damages the door, but extends to other members of his kit and kin. This is very true especially for work as a transient action. This social dimension of work can be seen from six different perspectives which can be merged into three or more greater wholes.

From the viewpoint of actual working process

Result of work

Division and organization of labour

Realization of collective interests

Social right

Economic and political organization of society

The process of work proves work to be social activity. Though some productions go without help of others, most is conjoined effort of many people. Working then becomes a unifying activity. Camaraderie is encouraged through work. Work therefore becomes a communicative endeavour. This is why Rousseau said that the first language is a product of work as people shouted and Nyerere’s view of *Ujamaa* is also based on this view of work as a social activity. Work then needs complementarity, to make up for the lacks. Hence the idea of the division of labour in which everyone offers his own quota for the realization of a project.

This is akin to the idea of division of labour and human solidarity discoverable in work. Thus John Paul II in his address to Nigerian workers on the 16th February, 1992, held that work is a way of helping others. One’s work affects the other and so they build up the society, so that one who works conscientiously

can claim to be contributing immensely to the society and towards a better world. Work therefore, is an act of solidarity and this is observable in the mutual help we give to one another. Solidarity may be horizontal or vertical. The former is the mutual help workers render to each other. Leon Bourgeois noticed this when he said that men cannot accomplish the simply ordinary actions like lighting a lamp, drinking a cup of water without making use of the others contributions. So that one's work is only a remuneration one gives for making use of others work. This means that duty is infinitive debt. This is solidarity seen horizontally.

Vertical enables one benefit from the sweat of his fore-fathers, and consequently binding him with stronger fetters to work for his posterity. This is why Comte said the inventor of the plough labours invisibly at the side of the labourer and humanity is made up of more of the dead than living.

A family if any, without means of sustenance can last only but a moment. There is no other means of income for sustaining the family except through work. Thus for John Paul II as for Freud, work makes up the foundation for the family. The family is a miniature nation. It is the nucleus of the nation. Work also influences the education in the family. This is because; one works to become human and the reason for education is to make one human. A combination of the above 2 views lays bare the 2 aspects of work - formation of the family and actualization of the purpose of the family. The family is a community made possible by work and the first school of work made possible within the home for every person. Since the nation develops out of the family and the latter through work, it means also that the mainstay of the nation is also geared to work. The nation is then a concatenation of a broken or unbroken line of historical and social incarnation of work of all epochs. A nation cannot be without productive forces and economic base and the latter are only sequent to work. if these are true, then men form society through work.

Thus by identifying himself with his community and working for the common good together with his compatriots and through such dominating and conquering nature, a second or cultural world is created for better human living and subsistence.

It is only through work that the human person is both phenomenologically and socially realized, starting from the first emergence of society in the unity in the family when people work for common good, till its graduation into state and nation. This is because the more living organisms unite into a social whole, the more progress is affected and this is via work. The scope created by work may be advancing from crude to technological scope. Pope John Paul II (1981) was of like opinion when while supporting Pius IX (1931) noted that work has as its characteristic that first of all, it unites men and in this consists its social force to construct a community. Definitely in this community those who work must in some way unite themselves as much as do those who dispose of the means of production who are its proprietors.

Civilization Expression and Fruit of Work

Though work is not the sole or ultimate end of existence, the development of man both psychologically and technologically is because of his work. Wherever the urge for work has remained stagnant and primitive, the development has remained considerably low. John Paul II (1981) holds that, it is by his work that he must help raise ever higher the moral and cultural standards of the society in which he shares his life with brothers and by work he raises the standard of civilization.

Metaphysically, if one refuses to work, he has also refused using the essential and personal forces. This is because work needs both the physical and spiritual aspect of the subject. Civilization is the terrestrial end of man because it takes up and expresses the becoming and expansion of the spiritual energy which God have given man. Also we strive to go to heaven because it is a place of eternal joy. Similarly, no one prefers living in a crude and primitive place. Civilization makes a place less crude and primitive and civilization come only through work. Therefore civilization which makes the temporal world habitable and happy to be lived in should be the terrestrial end of man.

Civilization is only a gradual external unfolding in time and history of the spiritual being. It is intensification of all that is man and the interior growth of the spirit in itself, development of action and power to triumph over fear and needs. But all these through work.

From the Point of View of Rights and Economic and Political Organisation of the Society

The social and political order has work as an auxiliary to its foundation. Thus, Plato in his Republic organizes his government according to the work done by each group. Equally, the highly intricate and sophisticated and developed society, enjoys higher standard of living than the under. This would have been impossible if not via work. In order to live, one is obliged to work. If this is correct, then work becomes a means of livelihood. This is done by conferring right of ownership to the worker especially of the dividend and remuneration accruing from the work. This is why the U.N.O charter of 1948 holds that everyone has right to just salaries. Writing on work as a duty, John Paul II said that man works because God commanded it and because through it he maintains and develops his being and more for his family, society and posterity as he inherited from anterior. Going further, he said that this obligation to work, guarantees the worker, a right to wage. This presupposes relationship, between workers and employers. Such relationship must be judiciously reciprocated i.e. the worker works conscientiously while the employer gives him his due. This is why in his address to U.N.O on October 2nd, 1979, he argued against exploitation and exaggerated capitalism on the ground that economic strength of a community should be measured on humanitarian basis and not on hegemony or imperialism. This means that man and not the income, should be the centre of consideration. Laws should be made to favour man and the condition of work must be for his good. Every political and economic system must be for man's good, assuring him at least, of the basic necessities of life. These raised a lot of issues on the problem of employment and unemployment, labour and capital etc. capitalizing on what is generally called the antinomy of work in the concrete historical reality. Such antinomies include external values in times freedom in necessity, moral transcendence in contingency of becoming etc

It was to tackle some of these problems that various economic systems have come up.

- 1) Economic liberalism preaching freedom of man in all things. Individualistic self-interest leading to capitalism.

Today it has split into two.

- 2) Libertarians who are conservatives of hard capitalism- inspired by Adam Smith and Locke, defended by Hayek; represented by conservative rightist like-IMF, Conservative party in Britain.
- 3) Mitigated capitalism- initially defended by J.S. Mill; defended in Economics by Haynes and today John Rawl, democrats in U.S.A and labour party in Britain. They uphold State interventionism.

Paul on Work: An Exegesis of 2Thes 3:10

The Greek text reads: *kai gar hote ēmen pros humas touto parēggellomen humin, hoti ei tis ou thelei ergazesthai mēde esthietō*. Nestle-Aland (1998) does not indicate any textual problem with the text. The working translation would look like this: *And also when we were with you, we gave this order to you, that if anyone wishes not to work, let him not eat.*

The text of 2Thes 3:10 is part of the second main point of Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians (vv. 1-5), 'the case of the idlers'. Word has come to Paul (v. 11) orally and by letter to the effect that the idle minority, in spite of his oral (v. 10; 1Thes 4:11) and written (1Thes 4:11-12; 5:14) instructions are still begging and meddlesome, some of them still refusing to obey his epistolary injunctions (1Thes 5:27). Frame (1975) explains that the case having become acute, Paul orders the majority to take severer measures against the idle minority, to add to *nouthetein* (v. 15; 1Thes 5:14), *stellestai* (v. 6) and *mē sunanamignusthai* (v. 14). He still presents the idlers as brothers (vv. 6,15), and observes that the majority have not always dealt tactfully with the excited idlers (vv. 13,15). In vv. 7-12 he gives reasons why he gave the command insisting too that discipline must be metted out in love (vv. 14-15). Paul's attitude in this section depicts that of a brother advising his brothers in the name of a common authority, Jesus Christ.

kai gar hote ēmen pros humas (and also when we were with you)

This phrase is reminiscent of *kai gar hote ēmen pros humas* in 1Thes 3:4 (cf also 2Thes 2:5). The *touto* (this) that follows is resumed by the *hoti* recitative as in 1Thes 4:15. It gives the force of a command (*parēggellomen*). The writer repeats the instruction which they had given by word of mouth (Bruce, 1982). The imperfect tense of *parēggellomen* gives it the nuance of an action that is continuous in the past. It gives that sense of being in the habit of ordering them not to be idle. He has consistently given them that order

and has never relented. The *gar* is parallel to *gar* in v. 7, and the *kai* co-ordinates the first reason for the command of v. 6, namely, the example of industry (vv. 7-9), with the second reason, viz. the oral precept repeatedly given when he was with them (v.10).

Hoti ei tis ou thelei ergazesthai mēde esthietō is a paradosis (cf. v. 6) and an ethical imperative, a Christian golden rule of labour. The *hoti* introduces indirect speech *ei tis ou ...*. By saying this, Paul is true to the traditions of his Jewish teachers (cf. bereshitt bara ... of Gen 1,1-2; 1:26-28; 3:19) and to the example of the Master himself who worked as a carpenter (Mark 6:3). The reprobation here is on refusal to work.

CONCLUSION

African culture encourages hard-work and industriousness. The Igbo proverb: “aka aja aja na ebute onu mmanu mmanu” enshrines Africa’s attitude to work. 2Thes 3:10 is therefore a welcome teaching for the African because even before the advent of Christianity, she encourages undependability, industry and production. Laziness is strange to the African man. Unfortunately, the African’s cultural and traditional belief in man as the architect of his success or failure has become endangered by the most unfortunate and disastrous prosperity preaching in the name of Christianity. The effects are very obvious. Africa has remained in the dungeon of dependence on western overlords because of poverty and prevalent economic issues. She must go back to her drawing board and exhume her ever veritable belief that for man to eat, he must work and be industrious.

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The Effects of the Bible on Economic Issues in Ghana

Anthony Yaw Badu

Department of Religious Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology – KNUST.

Email: tonbadu@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The Bible offers a rich and nuanced perspective on economic issues, highlighting the significance of responsible management, diligence, fairness, and contentment. These principles give guidance in making informed economic choices and working towards a fair and equitable society. Jesus cautioned his disciples against the perils of avarice and materialism, emphasizing the importance of spiritual riches over material ones. However, notwithstanding these biblical admonitions, the accumulation of wealth has become a source of pride or a barrier due to greediness and self-centeredness. This study utilizes a qualitative research methodology to examine the means of economic gains in Ghana and their detrimental effects on society, while considering the aforementioned biblical principles. Findings reveal that resource mobilization in Ghana continues to widen the gap between the rich and the poor and or the marginalized in society. Therefore, it is recommended that the church disseminates a message to address this phenomenon in the society.

Keywords: *Equitable, Resources, Gap.*

INTRODUCTION

In Ghana, a country situated in West Africa with abundant cultural and religious diversity, the Bible holds profound influence and importance as a holy text. With majority of Ghanaians identifying as Christians, the Bible assumes a central role as a guiding principle in their faith and daily existence. Consequently, its impact extends to shaping perspectives on economic matters within the nation. The significance of economic issues in Ghana cannot be overlooked, as the average Ghanaian grapples with the complex interplay of wealth and poverty. In this context, the Bible's teachings play a crucial role in influencing how individuals perceive and navigate these economic challenges.³⁰¹

Ghanaians face a myriad of economic challenges, ranging from poverty and income inequality to corruption and economic policies, which profoundly affect their well-being and livelihoods. In navigating these issues, the Bible emerges as a source of invaluable insights and teachings that can shape their understanding and approach towards the nation's economic landscape.

Though not a traditional economic textbook, the Bible imparts essential principles and values that bear relevance to economic matters, influencing how individuals conduct their daily lives and work.³⁰² Core concepts such as stewardship, work ethics, justice, generosity, and care for the less fortunate are emphasized, carrying significant implications for economic decision-making and policy formation at both individual and societal levels. By engaging with these biblical principles, Ghanaians can tackle economic challenges with a thoughtful and compassionate mindset, striving for a more just and prosperous society.

Moreover, the Bible plays a crucial role in addressing ethical conduct, honesty, and integrity, all of which are vital for the effective functioning of economic systems. It highlights the significance of fairness, accountability, and responsible resource management, directly impacting Ghana's economic well-being. Given the profound influence of Christianity and the Bible in Ghana, understanding the relationship

³⁰¹Justice Anquandah Arthur, Exploring Issues of Wealth and Poverty in the Gospels: A Ghanaian Pentecostal/Charismatic Reading of Luke 16, (2015):1.

https://ocw.danielinstitute.net/media/uploads/researches/research_20210801184046_40c8ba76c0.pdf

³⁰²Victor Serlom Gedzi and Ignatius Nti Abankoro, Christian Faith and Economic Development: A Case Study of Some Christian Workers in Ghana's Public Sector in Kumasi, *African Journal of Religion, Philosophy and Culture (AJRPC)*, vol. 1, no. 2., (2020): 439-60.

between the Bible and economic issues becomes imperative. This understanding serves as a foundation for Ghanaians to introspect on economic practices, policies, and systems through the lens of their faith, aiming to contribute to a just and equitable economic environment for all citizens.

A qualitative approach was adopted in this study to explore the intersection between the Bible and economic issues in Ghana, seeking to gain a deeper understanding of how religious beliefs, particularly those derived from the Bible, influence economic behaviors. The research also aimed to assess the impact of the Bible on economic matters within the country. The study focused on how individuals in Ghana interpret and comprehend economic issues through the teachings of the Bible, and how these interpretations influence economic decision-making and behaviors. Furthermore, it examined how religious beliefs and practices stemming from the Bible shape socio-economic outcomes in Ghana.

Three main issues were discussed in this paper: taxation, responsible resource management, and the concept of "the end justifies the means."³⁰³ The latter concept, often driven by greed and self-centeredness, was explored for its effects on both the church and Ghanaian society. By investigating these critical aspects, the study aimed to shed light on the dynamic relationship between the Bible and economic matters in Ghana, ultimately contributing to a more informed and conscientious approach towards economic practices and policies in the country.

The Socio-economic Structure of the Old and New Testaments

The term 'economy' has undergone numerous definitions, and according to Roger E. Backhouse and Steven E. Medema, its meaning has broadened significantly over the last two centuries. Attempting to articulate a single definition would be futile.³⁰⁴ As a result, the concept of economy encompasses a country's comprehensive business, industrial, and trading activities, encompassing the production from material resources and the effective management of entrusted resources.³⁰⁵

In the Old Testament, individuals were identified by their affiliation with particular groups. Whenever a name was mentioned, the person's kinship was also specified for identification purposes. Brenda B. Colijn explains that Israelite communities were structured around kinship, with individual identities closely tied to their membership in tribes, clans, families, or households.³⁰⁶ Moreover, the connection between individuals and their landholdings was inseparable, as families relied on their lands as the material basis for their survival.³⁰⁷

Turning to the New Testament, Raymond E. Brown describes the society in the provinces of the Roman Empire during Paul's missionary activity as highly stratified. The upper class consisted of individuals appointed by the Emperor to serve administrative purposes in the Senate.³⁰⁸ Next were the privileged class, who enjoyed status and influence due to their hereditary or affluent positions in society. Additionally, there were individuals engaged in small-scale businesses, freed men and women who had been emancipated from slavery, and a segment of the population forced into slavery due to their economic circumstances.³⁰⁹

METHODOLOGY

The study employs a qualitative research approach, which is a meticulous and thorough method of delving into the intricate and multifaceted relationship between the Bible and economic issues in the Ghanaian context.³¹⁰ This approach allows for a profound exploration of individual perspectives, experiences, and

³⁰³Tibor Mahrik, "The End Justifies the Means – Ethical Analysis," *Researchgate*, (2018): 126.

DOI: 10.24917/20838972.14.8.

³⁰⁴Roger E. Backhouse and Steven G. Medema, "Retrospectives On the Definition of Economics," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol 23, no.1, (2009): 221.

³⁰⁵Backhouse and Medema, "Retrospectives On the Definition of Economics," 221.

³⁰⁶Brenda B. Colijn, "Family in the Bible: A Brief Survey," *Ashland Theological Journal*, 2004, 73.

³⁰⁷Colijn, "Family in the Bible: A Brief Survey," 73.

³⁰⁸Raymond Edward Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, (New York, USA: Doubleday, 1997), 503.

³⁰⁹Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 503.

³¹⁰John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, (London: SMC Press, 2006), 31.

interpretations surrounding these matters. The research involved conducting semi-structured interviews with diverse participants, selected based on a range of backgrounds, including varying socio-economic statuses, age groups, educational levels, and geographical locations. This comprehensive selection ensures a holistic understanding of the subject.

The study aimed to explore participants' interpretations of biblical teachings related to economic issues, as well as their personal experiences and how these beliefs and experiences influence their economic decision-making. The interviewees comprised a diverse group of individuals, including market women, kaya yoos, pastors, traditional leaders, ex-convicts, and leaders of religious bodies. By including this diverse array of perspectives, the research sought to shed light on the manifold ways in which the Bible intersects with economic matters in Ghanaian society.

The Relevance of Economic Issues

According to Fiona Bowie, Bronislaw Kasper Malinowski emphasized the enduring relevance of economic issues, noting that economic organization is an integral part of a cohesive whole, impacting both the present and future generations.³¹¹ He asserted that existing economic structures persist because they continue to fulfill vital functions; otherwise, they would hold no significance for the succeeding generations. Moreover, economic activity is regarded as fundamental to human life and culture, extending beyond the mere exchange of goods to encompass services and social relations like gift-giving and reciprocity.

In the context of Ghana, a country facing significant challenges of poverty and income inequality, the teachings on economic matters found in the Bible hold relevance. Many Ghanaians grapple with making ends meet, and the biblical insights on economic issues can provide valuable guidance and wisdom. These teachings have the potential to address the economic struggles faced by individuals and the nation, offering relevant solutions to foster a more equitable and prosperous society.³¹²

Biblical Examples of Taxation

Taxation has been a significant source of income generation for successive governments since ancient times, with roots dating back to the Biblical era. Theodore U. Dickson and Appolos N. Nwaobia have observed that past and present governments often employ the rhetoric of "development and improvement" to justify imposing taxes on citizens yet fail to demonstrate tangible improvements in their well-being.³¹³

An example from the Biblical era can be found in King Solomon's tax system. He levied taxes on the Israelites to support his ambitious building projects and cover the expenses of his government. Solomon's thriving trade network with neighboring nations brought substantial wealth to Israel, while imports of goods like gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks further enriched the nation. Simultaneously, Israel exported goods like wheat, olive oil, and wine, contributing to its economic prosperity.³¹⁴

Solomon's reign saw the implementation of large-scale building projects, including the construction of the temple in Jerusalem and his grand palace. These ventures created job opportunities and bolstered the economy. Additionally, Solomon invested in agriculture, promoting crop cultivation and livestock raising.

Overall, the Bible portrays Solomon as a wise and prosperous king who undertook various economic measures to strengthen his kingdom. However, the heavy taxation required to maintain a considerable number of horses and chariots led to unrest among the people. Despite his achievements, this financial burden strained the relationship between the government and its citizens.³¹⁵

³¹¹Fiona Bowie, "Anthropology of Religion" *Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. Robert A. Segal, (Blackwell Publishing, MA: USA, 2006), 9.

³¹²Edgar Cooke, Sarah Hague and Andy McKay, *The Ghana Poverty and Inequality Report: Using the 6th Ghana Living Standards Survey*, UNICEF, (2016), 1.

³¹³Theodore U. Dickson and Appolos N. Nwaobia, "Impact of Heavy Taxation on Israel During Solomonic Era: Implications for Nigerian Tax System," *Asian Economic and Financial Review*, vol. 2, no.2, (2012):337.

³¹⁴Bruce Barton, *Life Application Bible, New King James Version*, (Carol Stream: Illinois, Tyndal House Publishers, 2016), 576.

³¹⁵Barton, *Life Application Bible*, 576.

Under Solomon's reign, the country experienced a period of security, prosperity, and international recognition due to remarkable economic and diplomatic achievements.³¹⁶ His exceptional leadership paved the way for the establishment of a great Empire. According to Biblical records, Solomon appointed twelve district governors over all of Israel, responsible for supplying provisions to the king and the royal household, with each governor contributing supplies for one month each year. These officials were also tasked with collecting taxes from the people.

Additionally, Solomon received tribute from surrounding nations, amounting to six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold annually, excluding revenues from merchants, traders, Arabian kings, and territorial governors.³¹⁷ The New Testament era witnessed taxes being utilized for the development of infrastructure, law enforcement, security, religious freedom, self-government, and other benefits. The collection of taxes was often carried out indirectly, with Roman officials selling the right to collect taxes to the highest bidders among the Jewish publicans, leading to their unpopularity among the populace for collaborating with gentiles.³¹⁸

Overall, these passages illustrate that Solomon implemented a system of taxation to support his government, building projects, and innovative agricultural initiatives that provided job opportunities for the people. However, the pertinent question arises: do Ghanaians perceive the imposition of taxes and do these taxes have positive effects on their lives? Most respondents affirmed that successive governments do impose taxes in the country, but these taxes have not been utilized to significantly improve the living standards of the citizens.

The End Justifies the Means

The concept of "the end justifies the means" is often associated with Machiavellianism, wherein the belief is that achieving a desirable outcome justifies using any means necessary, regardless of whether they are moral or ethical.³¹⁹ Analysing this Machiavellian concept, Tibor Máhrik argues that it can create the appearance of goodness, even when the underlying actions are not truly virtuous, as people tend to focus on the result rather than the process.³²⁰

This moral and ethical philosophy suggests that the outcome of an action or decision is paramount, and the methods or means used to achieve it can be justified, even if they raise moral or ethical concerns.³²¹ The concept has sparked extensive debates across various fields, including philosophy, politics, ethics, and religion. It has been applied to rationalize actions in politics, military strategies, personal decisions, and business practices. Nevertheless, the ethical implications of "the end justifies the means" remain highly contentious.

In society, the emphasis often lies on the realization or fulfillment of one's dreams or objectives, regardless of the means employed to attain them. The focus tends to be on the actualization of goals, rather than the process or the toils and expectations involved. However, such an approach raises questions about the ethical foundations of the actions taken and the potential consequences on individuals and society.

This concept also leads people to forget about memories of the past, as it focuses on achieving something new without much consideration for the means used to attain it. This perception haunted former Ghanaian president John Dramani Mahama when he remarked that "Ghanaians have short memories."³²² Although Mahama was addressing economic challenges such as labor unrest, energy crisis, and other social needs prevalent during his presidency, his outburst suggested that the public prioritized results over expectations or promises. Despite his efforts, the acknowledgment he sought for his "good works" seemed elusive.

³¹⁶Dickson and Nwaobia, "Impact of Heavy Taxation on Israel During Solomonic Era," 340.

³¹⁷Barton, *Life Application Bible*, 563.

³¹⁸Dickson and Nwaobia, "Impact of Heavy Taxation on Israel During Solomonic Era," 339.

³¹⁹Tibor Máhrik, "The End Justifies the Means – Ethical Analysis," (2018): 126. *Researchgate*, DOI: 10.24917/20838972.14.8.

³²⁰Máhrik, "The End Justifies the Means – Ethical Analysis," 126.

³²¹Máhrik, "The End Justifies the Means – Ethical Analysis," (2018): 126.

³²²John Dramani Mahama, "Daily Graphic Online," *Ghanaweb*, December 15, 2013.

Søren Kierkegaard discusses the notion of a 'teleological suspension of the ethical,'³²³ explaining that something deemed unethical by societal norms can only be justified when individuals recognize a higher duty than their social obligation or personal loyalty to God. In such cases, one cannot ethically justify acts that contradict social norms but may attribute them to the will of God. Kierkegaard uses the example of Abraham, who received a divine command to sacrifice his son—an act contrary to societal norms yet deemed obedient to the divine will and beyond ethical justification.³²⁴

Similarly, the story of Rahab, a prostitute who encountered spies from the camp of Israel, presents an ethical dilemma. She lied to protect the spies and misdirected pursuers to save their lives. Ethically, her action was deemed wrong, but some argue that the result—saving lives—justified the means she used.³²⁵ In summary, the concept of prioritizing the end over the means can lead to a forgetting of the past, complex ethical dilemmas, and debates about the justification of actions that might be seen as unethical considering societal norms.

A significant portion of the respondents, especially those with lower incomes, expressed the belief that there is nothing wrong with the concept of prioritizing the end over the means. They cited an Akan adage that encapsulates this viewpoint: "Sɛ yɛrɛtɔn tumi a, tɔn wo maame na kɔtɔ tumi no. Na sɛ wonya tumi no a wode wo tumi bɛgye wo maame." This adage translates to the idea that one can sell their mother to acquire power, and once they possess that power, they can regain their mother with the newfound influence. In other words, individuals may go to great lengths and employ any means necessary to attain wealth and power, as they believe that once they achieve their desired goals, they will be justified. They are confident that others will not question the "how" of their achievements but instead praise them for their accomplishments.

Joseph's Economic Policies

Joseph's economic policy is deeply rooted in strategic thinking, diligence, and responsible resource management. His strategic approach made a significant impact, guiding his followers to identify their challenges and opportunities, enabling them to move forward and fulfill their God-given tasks.³²⁶

In his administration in Egypt, Joseph employed investment strategies and responsible resource management during the period of famine. This biblical economic model set a precedent for sustaining growth and development in a fragile economy.³²⁷

However, some scholars and theologians have raised concerns about the justness of Joseph's economic policy. While it brought relief to the people and saved them from starvation, it also led them to become serfs to Pharaoh. Kilnam Cha notes that Joseph's administration is subject to two morally opposing evaluations.³²⁸

On one hand, Joseph is seen as a redeemer whose policies helped rescue the Egyptians and the world from famine and death, serving as a model of wisdom. On the other hand, Cha argues that Joseph's economic policies cannot be fully justified, as their ruthlessness resulted in making the Egyptians slaves in their own land. Thus, Joseph is perceived as a cunning politician who employed questionable means to

³²³William McDonald, "Søren Kierkegaard," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, eds. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, (USA, 2017),

³²⁴McDonald, "Søren Kierkegaard,"

³²⁵Myron C. Kauk, "Rahab: A Case Study in Old Testament Ethics," *A Paper presented to the 61st Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society –New Orleans, Louisiana*, (2019), 10.

³²⁶Aubrey Mulphers, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*, 2nd ed., (Grand Rapids: USA, 2008), 26.

³²⁷Stephen Oluwarotimi Y. Baba, "Investment Strategies in Joseph's Administration in Egypt as a Model for Sustainable Economic Development and Poverty Reduction in Africa." 4. Stephen Oluwarotimi Y. Baba is an OC Scholar. He is serving with Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) in Nigeria as an Associate Professor of Biblical Studies at the First SIM/ECWA Theological Seminary, Igbaja (ETSI), Kwara State, Nigeria.

³²⁸Kilnam Cha, "Joseph's Unjust Economic Policies in Genesis 47:13-26," *LEAVEN*, vol. 24: Iss.4, (2016), 2. <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/leaven/vol24/iss4/6>

achieve a desired end.³²⁹ The dual nature of Joseph's economic policy sparks a debate on the ethical implications of his actions, revealing the complexities of the biblical narrative and its interpretation.

When evaluating Joseph's economic policies, it becomes evident that his primary intention was to identify and address existing problems. His approach encompassed short, medium, and long-term goals, with the first fourteen years focusing on the short and medium-term objectives, while the long-term goals extended beyond this period. The policy's success endured even after the famine, although Cha suggests that it may have led to the people being bound in their own country.

A thorough examination of Joseph's economic policy reveals its potential for long-term benefits, capable of fostering growth and sustaining the economic situation of any country. It effectively transformed into a form of taxation for the people, encouraging them to become responsible stewards, dutifully caring for the resources bestowed upon them by God.

In essence, Joseph's economic policies served as a proactive measure to provide solutions to prevailing challenges and create a foundation for enduring economic prosperity. By encouraging responsible resource management and stewardship, his policies aimed to ensure the well-being and sustained growth of the nation.

ANALYSIS

Biblical records reveal that after Adam's fall, sin spread throughout humanity, even affecting the land, which once yielded good crops but now produced thistles and thorns.³³⁰ Various social vices such as killings, rape, lies, deception, and injustice emerged in society after the fall. God, in His divine character, did not conceal these flaws but rather exposed them to highlight human depravity and portray Himself as the just God.³³¹

The concept of justice holds a central theme in the Bible and carries significant implications for economic development in Ghana. Jesus' words that "We will always have the poor"³³² suggest that poverty may never be entirely eradicated from the world. However, the Bible emphasizes the possibility of minimizing poverty and promoting justice by ensuring equitable treatment for all individuals, granting access to necessities like food, water, and shelter. In the context of economic development, this means providing equal opportunities and resources for all, irrespective of their socioeconomic status.

In the realm of economic development in Ghana, the concept of "the end justifies the means" can prove problematic, leading to policies that prioritize short-term gains at the expense of long-term sustainability, social justice, and environmental protection. The Bible, on the other hand, emphasizes ethical and moral principles in economic development, such as justice, stewardship, compassion, and fair taxation. These principles prioritize the well-being of all members of society, including the poor, marginalized, and disadvantaged, while promoting sustainable economic growth and environmental preservation.

By embracing these values over the notion of "the end justifies the means," Ghana can foster more inclusive and sustainable economic development, benefitting all citizens in the long run. Implementing policies that prioritize the needs of vulnerable members, promoting responsible resource management and environmental protection, and ensuring equitable and transparent tax policies will contribute to a just and sustainable economic future for all Ghanaians.

CONCLUSION

In Ghana, economic injustice remains a pressing concern, with high levels of poverty, inequality, and unemployment. The Bible provides valuable guidance on addressing these challenges by promoting essential values such as fairness, equity, and solidarity. Prioritizing the needs of the most vulnerable

³²⁹Cha, "Joseph's Unjust Economic Policies in Genesis 47:13-26," 2.

³³⁰Timothy Barga, "Economic Dimension of the Poor in the Old Testament and Its Implication for the African Church," *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*. Vol. 1, no 2, (2018): 104

³³¹Alan M. Dershowitz, *The Genesis of Justice: Ten Stories of Biblical Injustice that Led to the Ten Commandments and Modern Law*, (New York: Warner Books, 2000), 2.

³³²Barton, *Life Application Bible*, 1736.

members of society in economic policies and practices can foster greater economic justice and inclusive development.

Widening the tax net to encompass most self-employed individuals and implementing effective resource management policies are also recommended. Applying biblical teachings on stewardship, work, and generosity can empower Ghanaians to improve their economic situation.

Through practicing good stewardship, individuals can avoid excessive debt and manage their resources more efficiently. Diligent and honest work enables them to provide for themselves and their families, contributing to their well-being. Embracing a spirit of generosity with their resources can also play a vital role in alleviating poverty and uplifting the lives of those around them. By aligning economic practices with biblical principles and values, Ghana can foster a more just and equitable society, where the well-being of all citizens is prioritized, and the benefits of economic growth are shared more inclusively.

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Giving: Our Way To Prosperity

James Edo Ikwulono

School of Biblical Studies Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria.

Email: jikwulono@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Africa continues to be on the receiving end. Even though many African countries are said to be independent as nations but in reality, African countries are not independent socially, politically and economically. The major factor for this is corruption. Corruption, a desire to have only for oneself has made Africa rated high on the poverty scale. The purpose of this study was to study the act of giving as the only way to prosperity. The methodology used for this study was exegetical and it found out that giving gives joy, and that by giving one receives. Also, giving makes God happy and consequently prospers the giver. It was recommended that in order to get out of poverty into prosperity, Christians must learn to give. Also, the attitude of giving helps reduce corruption which in turn helps improve the economy of a nation. Giving is the way to prosperity.

Keywords: *Giving, prosperity, corruption.*

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Summit in 2000 declared eight Millennium Development Goals wherein, the number one goal was to eradicate, by half, the proportion of people living under the poverty line by 2015. Although this effort was worldwide, most of the campaigns on poverty alleviation focused on Africa, where the problem continues to be of the greatest urgency.[1] According to K. G. Beegle et al, estimates from 2015 by the World Bank suggests that although poverty in Africa did decline from 56% in 1990 to 43% in 2012, extreme poverty in Africa increased by more than 100 million people. [2] The question one has to ask is, “What has happened that Africa continues to remain in this dire situation?”

The major factor for this is corruption. Corruption is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as “lack of integrity or honesty (especially susceptibility to bribery); use of a position of trust for dishonest gain.” According to M. Khan, corruption is an act that “deviates the formal rules of conduct governing the actions of someone in a position of public authority because of private regarding-motive such as wealth, power or status.”[3] L. Gbenga also describes corruption as the conscious attempt or deliberate diversion of resources from the satisfaction of general interest to that of self (personal) interest. [4]

Corruption, therefore, is the desire to have only for oneself. As a result of corruption, few individuals lay up excessive wealth for themselves for personal gratification and “for their children to later misuse or squander for purposes that may be to their own ruins” [5] The desire to have only for oneself in a dishonest way and not to give out to others has put Africa high on the poverty scale. Corruption and greed affect not only the individual but the society at large. Sharanya holds that it is a “hard fact of life that pursuit of attaining something in excess leads us to nowhere and ultimately causes stress.”[6] Instead of thinking of hoarding only for oneself, this article calls for a paradigm shift. It is not by keeping for oneself but by giving that one can enjoy true prosperity.

The *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* defines prosperity as ‘the state of being successful, especially in the accumulation of wealth.’ [7] But prosperity as used in this article is beyond the accumulation of wealth. It is holistic. It is physical, spiritual, financial, emotional and relational. It is important to note that this article is not connected to prosperity theology. According to *The Encyclopaedia of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity*, the prosperity gospel can be defined as: “Christian worldviews that emphasize an earthly life of health, wealth, and happiness as the divine, inalienable right of all who have faith in God and live in obedience to His Commands.”[8] The principle employed in this article is that of biblical hermeneutics. The idea is that when one gives, he gets. When one gives of his time, he will have

time. When one gives for his health, he will have good health. When one gives for his family, he will have a good family. When one gives to himself, he will enjoy more. When one gives to people, he will get back from people. When people give for their nation, they will have a better nation. When one gives for learning, he will know. When one gives to God, he will receive from God. Munshi writes, “In our willingness to give that which we seek, we will keep the abundance of the universe circulating in our life.”[9] The principle of life is giving.

God is a Giver

Giving flows from God. In the beginning He created the universe and all that is in it. He made man in His own image and gave him dominion over everything He created (Gen. 1.29). God also gave Jesus to be the Savior of the world. Since God is a Giver, all nations look up to Him. Both man and animals look up to God to give them food. Psalm 104.27 says, “These all wait for You, That You may give *them* their food in due season.”[10] God is the giver of all good things (Jas. 1.17). He is the One that gives the power to get wealth (Deut. 8.18). He gives the former and the latter rain (Jer. 5.24). He gives life to the dead (Rom. 4.17). He gives life to all things (1 Tim. 6.13). He gives man all things to enjoy (1 Tim 6.17). He gives to all liberally. James 1.5 says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” He supplies seed to the sower (2 Cor. 9.8-11). He gives strength and power to people (Psa. 68. 35). The apostle Paul says to the Athenians that God who made the world and everything in it does not need anything “since He gives to all life, breath, and all things” (Act 17:25).

Lincoln Forlong holds that “God is the greatest giver of all, with no mortal limitations, no imperfect motivations, and with no questionable intentions. His giving is selfless, merciful, and expressive of love in ways that the recipients would normally never consider.”[11] God gives freely and joyfully. Apostle Peter writes, “As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1.3). God also gives graciously: “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, (Eph. 3.20). God is the ultimate giver.

Nature Prospers by Giving

When the plants were created, they were commanded to produce fruits. “Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb *that* yields seed, *and* the fruit tree *that* yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed *is* in itself, on the earth;’ and it was so” (Gen 1.11). Since the beginning of this command, every fruit bearing tree that does not produce is said to be barren. The consequence is that it will be destroyed. John the Baptist says to the Jews: “And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (Mat 3:10). Similarly, Jesus warns, “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (Mat 7.19). The author of Hebrews says: “For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end *is* to be burned” (Heb. 6.7-8). Kahlil Gibran holds that the trees, “give that they may live, for to withhold is to perish” [12] (22). Jeremy Hance writes, “Nature remains as giving as ever.”[13] Nature is not depleted because it gives.

Balanced Giving brings Abundance

Jesus taught on how people can prosper by giving. In Luke 6.38 He says, “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” The use of “good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over” is a language of abundance. Abundance comes with giving. King Solomon writes, “The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself” (Prov. 11:25 NKJ). Biblical teaching emphasizes the fact that in giving one receives. This is a lesson one should have learnt earlier in life. Many people started in life without knowing how to give. They don’t give

for several reasons. First, it may be that they are afraid that they will not have enough for themselves. Secondly, it may be as a result of selfishness. Thirdly, they might have felt that it is too small to be appreciated. Because many people don't know how to give, they don't give enough to themselves; they don't give enough for their health, they don't give enough to their families, they don't give enough to others, they don't give enough to their nations and they don't give enough to God. Consequently, they live a miserable life. Miserable people live a poor life. When people give, things about their lives start to change. Humanity has been called to an abundant life. But to enjoy this life there need to be a balance in giving. Balanced giving involves giving to oneself, to others and to God. No area is to be neglected. Unbalanced giving involves giving only to oneself to the neglect of others and God.

There was a time the Israelites made the mistake of not balancing their giving. They were only accumulating for themselves to the neglect of others and God. The consequence was stated in Haggai 1.5-6: "Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Consider your ways! You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; And he who earns wages, earns wages *to put* into a bag with holes.'" The LORD further says in Haggai 1.9-11:

"*You* looked for much, but indeed *it came to* little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? says the LORD of hosts. Because of My house that *is in* ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house. Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of *your* hands."

When people accumulate only for themselves (corruption), the consequence is poverty in the land. But when people give, abundance is circulated and there is prosperity in the land. Sharanya believes that "in sharing what we have, we make it possible for abundance." [14]

Giving brings Joy

Generous souls are always happy that they are giving. Those who do not give grudgingly are always filled with Joy. They are happy that they are able to give. Veny Mike writes, "Knowing that you are contributing and making a difference can provide you with an instant boost in your mood." [15] The apostle Paul tells the elders of Ephesus, "And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Act 20:35). The word "blessed" in this passage has reference to "object of special grace" [16] Giving, therefore, makes one an object of special grace or favor. V. P. Black says that the phrase, "it is more blessed to give than to receive," "is the very center of the Bible." [17] There is blessing in giving. That is what gives the joy. Those who have understood this lesson continue to give even when it hurts. They understand that prosperity can only come in the atmosphere of joy. For that reason, they give and so they have joy and they prosper. Mike suggests that if we want to be happy, "we need to get to work being generous. . . . When we turn our focus on other people, we take it off ourselves. We are able to see how we can be a blessing to someone else. It helps put our problems in perspective when we are intentionally giving to those less fortunate." [18] Madelena Aca Abreu observes, "giving and happiness appear to mix perfectly together . . . an increasing number of research is showing that giving make us happier." [19] Kitty Stafford explains the relationship between giving and happiness in this way: "Your brain's pleasure circuits are stimulated by acts of charity and release good feeling chemicals such as endocrins, which give you a sense of euphoria and oxytocin, which promotes tranquility and inner peace" [20] Anirudh Bhaiya holds that the sense of satisfaction in giving is what gives the joy. "When we have given something or done something for someone it actually gives a sense of satisfaction and makes one feel so positive about oneself." [21] Kishanlal Munshi claims that "Our lives are fulfilling when we give and share, and that great inner joy comes from helping others to better their lives." [22] Munshi further says, "The act of giving kindles self-esteem and brings happiness." Sharanya also shares the same idea: "Truly giving from the heart fills your life with joy and nourishes your soul. Giving provides an intrinsic reward that is far more valuable than the gift." [23] Munshi adds, "The joy of giving lasts longer than the joy of getting." [24] While Stephen R. Palmquist seems to argue that the joy of giving and receiving are the same,

he then writes that “on the whole, most people would agree that giving makes a person happier than receiving” this is because “the happiness of the receiver might be called raw or immediate happiness, while the happiness of the giver is a more self –reflective and longer term happiness generated by the prospect of having made someone else happy; the latter type of happiness is deeper and more fulfilling than the happiness of receiving something you want as a free gift.” [25]

Giving Fosters Receiving

Jesus says, “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you” (Lk. 6.38). When people give for the right reason, they always get a reward. The principle of giving and receiving is unbreakable and true. King Solomon writes several years ago, “The generous soul will be made rich, And he who waters will also be watered himself” (Prov. 11.25). The King James Version puts it this way: “The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that waters shall be watered also himself.”

When one is a cheerful giver, he gets bountifully. Second Corinthians 9.8-10 says,

And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may have an abundance for every good work. As it is written: He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever. Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have *sown* and increase the fruits of your righteousness.

The sower gives to the ground and God blesses it and the ground brings back what is sown in many folds. The secret to receiving is in giving. By giving people receive. And they usually receive more than they give. Madelena writes, “Giving has been proven to decrease blood pressure and reduce stress. This reduction promotes longer life and better health.”[26] In this sense when one gives, he receives in another form. In general “Studies show that when you give to others your generosity is often continued down the line to someone else or returned to you”[27] (par. 5). Munshi holds that “Giving provides an intrinsic reward that is far more valuable than the gift we receive.”[28] Anirudh Bhaiya says, “The more we give to others, the more we get from the universe.” [29]

RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper gives the following recommendations. The first is that for African nations to prosper, the citizens must learn to shun and expose corruption. The second recommendation is that African leaders of all categories should try to serve as examples of giving. The third recommendation is that Africans should imbibe the attitude of giving and not just of receiving.

CONCLUSION

This article, has shown that giving and prosperity are directly proportional. Giving has a lot of benefits. Giving makes abundance go around. Giving brings joy and satisfaction. Those who give receive. These benefits make one prosperous. According to Jonathan Harrison, “Everything points to the conclusion that generosity is the path to wealth . . . especially if you measure true wealth; an abundance of meaningful relationships, contentment, and satisfaction. Giving reinforces the perception of living in a world of abundance and blessing.”[30] The attitude of giving helps reduce corruption which in turn helps improves the economy of an individual or a nation. Giving is, therefore, our way to prosperity.

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A Parable of Ant And Sluggard in Proverbs 6:6-11 as a Prognosis to Building a Viable Economy in Nigeria

Victor Umaru

Department of Biblical Studies and Theology,
Baptist College of Theology, Obinze, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria.
Email: honagombi@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

For the 63 years of Nigerian independence with democratic leadership, especially from 1999, different governments have made efforts to ensure an improved economy through different developmental plans. The Nigerian economy has, however, suffered setbacks due to the maladministration of different governments that climaxed in economic recession between 2016 and 2017. The Federal Government of Nigeria, to improve the ailing economy in 2016, launched the Nigerian Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (NERGP) to enhance better economic conditions that will attract foreign investors and international competitiveness. Besides this Economic Recovery Plan, different governments have initiated and executed many other plans but with unexpected results. Nigeria's economic recovery has challenged scholars of various human endeavours. Hence, the search for a potential remedy has been heightened by recent economic indices that ranked Nigeria as the country with the highest rate of poverty and corruption in the world. This study explores the connection between work and creating a strong economy in Nigeria. The paper employed a diachronic exegetical approach and was fully complemented by the historical-critical method to achieve the study objective and draw inferences for formulating biblical principles for a sustainable economy in Nigeria. The entire discourse pitched its tent on the backdrop of the religious teachings that did not consider hard work as relevant in this millennium. The study highlighted certain traits and principles found in the passage, such as renewal of work ethics; future-oriented perspective; fundamentalism and mysticism perspectives; "word and bread" perspectives; and godly values, that, if adequately renewed, could help to build a viable economy and put the nation on the path to sustainable development.

Keywords: *Ant, Sluggard, Prognosis, Viable economy; Government.*

INTRODUCTION

No doubt, Nigeria is endowed with abundant human and natural resources that can promote sustainable economic development. With over 250 ethnolinguistic groups and a population of about 200,000,000, Nigeria ranks as the most prominent black nation in the world. The country is the 8th largest producer of oil and the 6th most significant gas deposit. Furthermore, it houses over 34 solid minerals, 44 exportable commodities, substantial arable land, and balanced climatic condition.[1]

Regrettably, it has stagnated economically since the country gained independence in 1960, as Soludo rightly observes.[2] Indeed, this postulation is not difficult to accept given the current negative GDP growth, epileptic power supply, the collapse of the educational system, unemployment, culture of impunity, insecurity, weak policies, endemic corruption, poor healthcare system, and most shockingly, the recent economic indices that placed Nigeria as the poverty capital of the world.

In every nation, the government and citizens desire uninterrupted development in all aspects, especially in the economy, which is an increase in the gross domestic product (GDP) plus other desirable societal changes which serve as an indication of fulfilling their mandate to the people with satisfaction, especially in democratic leadership, and for the citizens, a mark of good governance. Democracy should act as a boost to development,[3] and a democratic process with an accompanying well-functional market portends the capacity for engineering economic development and the best platform for attaining rapid development.[4] The situation in Nigeria since 1999 reflects a dire need for recovery of the economy because of the long years of poor economic management, unbridled corruption, and hostility to local and

foreign investors. The economic decline presented different dimensions under different democratic leadership but finally manifested in recession at the beginning of Buhari's regime.

Governments and public sectors have been trying different ways to revamp the economy. However, close observation reveals that besides the efforts, there is a severe lack of understanding of work ethics, as revealed by the author of Proverbs 6:6-11 that most Nigerians demonstrate. This evident poor work ethic has also been a significant factor that has contributed to the problem. Given the above circumstances, taking urgent steps to facilitate her economic recovery and sustainable development has become imperative. This has put scholars of divergent human endeavours to task, and the biblical approach to the economy can play a significant role. The concern of this paper, through a diachronic exegetical approach and complemented by the historical-critical method, is to present biblical principles as stated in the book of Proverbs 6:6-11 as a prognosis for building a viable economy in Nigeria.

The Current State of Nigeria's Economy

Going by the many years of democratic rule, one would have expected a remarkable improvement in the development of the economy. However, internal and external challenges have caused slow growth. The Nigerian economy depends on oil, a single commodity for economic activities, fiscal revenues, and foreign exchange. The oil and gas sector accounts for just 10 percent of GDP but represents 94 percent of export earnings and 62 percent of Government revenue. The economic recovery and growth plan 2017-2020 document states that the oil and gas sector has experienced depreciation since 2011. The foreign exchange reserves declined from USD 32 Billion in January 2015 to USD 25 billion in November 2016. The naira thus depreciated sharply, losing almost half of its value against the dollar. Similarly, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) declined sharply from a peak of USD 8.9 billion in 2011 to USD 3.1 billion and did not recover till 2016.

Nigeria has continued to experience poor management of her natural and human resources, which has plunged the country into serious economic woes. Adeniran and Sidiq observe that Nigeria's economy has stagnated, leading to the 2016 economic recession.[5] Kida et al. acknowledge that Nigeria is presently confronted with the worst economic crises in decades and attribute these economic woes to the highly mono-cultural economy. The economy's political and governance structure is more consumption economic, and high cost of governance.[6]

Ekepenyong and Richard approached the issue from the perspective of development, describing Nigeria as a country not developing because development is measured by an increase in the production of goods and services plus social change that allows people to achieve their human potential.[7] Sanusi observes that since independence in 1960, successive governments in Nigeria have made efforts to pursue the goal of structural changes without much success.[8] He notes that though Nigeria is endowed with natural resources, economic performance has been relatively weak and does not reflect these endowments. For him, the economic decline in the country is due to political instability, lack of focused and visionary leadership, economic mismanagement and corruption, the prolonged period of military rule, poor infrastructure, poor investment climate, the Dutch disease, and low quality of education. Worst still, recent economic indices place Nigeria as the world's poverty capital and one of the most corrupt globally.

Dismembering the problem of poor governance in Nigeria would simply not be an easy engagement. Beginning from over-inflated contracts and political malfeasance, evidenced in the long-drawn budget battle between the Executive and the legislature, and over to the daily high recurrent expenditure over that of capital, one may have to conclude that the nation is hopeless. For an economy that often goes with the paucity of an annual spending plan, retrospective implementation could even be more damaging when statistical, fiscal plans are uncertain. In the face of such horrible figures, it takes the stoic fatalism of Nigerians to keep the nation bustling with activities every day, all year round. This nation has long stretched and groaned under the throes of a home-grown enemy leadership. From all indications, the judicial and penal institutions are unstable accomplices to this trend. It has always boiled down to resource use and not availability. Its management and application have often been derailed and divested against national specifications. Such has affected almost all sectors of the economy; health, education, internal security, manufacturing, and agriculture.

In recent decades, successive governments have made Nigeria a lousy brand, and prolonged economic brutality, inequality in wealth distribution, political emasculation, indiscriminate human rights violation, and blatant denial of rightful desserts by the political leadership condensed and gave voice to eco-terrorism in the nation's Niger Delta areas. Embattled and impoverished, with a marginalized life span, many Nigerians, especially the youths, flee the country immediately in hopelessness, desperation, anguish, and pain. Viewed from any angle, Nigeria is an economic powerhouse whose strength lies in its diverse people and national endowments. Profligate and inept leadership have spread poverty and pain, creating a soft landing, a hatchery for insecurity, and a multi-faceted handshake with terrorism.

Given the above circumstances, it is crystal clear that the Nigerian economy requires urgent steps that could facilitate its recovery and sustainable development. The following section shall be devoted to conceptualizing the biblical principles through the exegesis of Proverbs 6:6-11 for economic revitalization, growth, and sustainability in Nigeria.

Critical Introduction to the Book of Proverbs

“Proverbs” or “book of Proverbs” derives from the Latin Vulgate title, *Liber Proverbiorum*. The title thus associates the book with its most pervasive genre, the proverb—short, pithy observations, admonitions, warnings, and prohibitions.[9] The Hebrew name of the book is מִשְׁלֵי *mišlê*, the first word, which is the construct plural form of מִשְׁלָה *māšāl* and means “proverbs.” In the Septuagint, the book is called Παροιμίαι *paroimiai*, the Greek word used to translate מִשְׁלָה *māšāl* in the first verse. Παροιμίαι *Paroimiai* is close in meaning to παραβολή *parabolē*, “parable,” since both can stand for the Hebrew מִשְׁלָה *māšāl*, both can be translated as “proverb” or “parable,” (that is what informed the title of this paper) and both can refer to a wide variety of figurative language.[10] In sum, the title in Hebrew, Greek, and English tradition all point to the most distinctive genre of the book, the proverb.

Authorship and Date

Proverbs begin with a superscription, which serves as something akin to a title page in a contemporary book the superscription purports to imply that Solomon, the third king of Israel (c. 970–930 BC), at least claims to have created the book if not to have written it. *The Proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel*—Standing at the head of the book.

Indeed, a strong tradition connects Solomon with wisdom, specifically with the proverb form. After all, the book of Kings credits Solomon with pursuing and receiving the gift of wisdom from God (1 Kings 3:1–15). Solomon's fame is associated with his great wisdom in 1 Kings 4:29–34, a wisdom described internationally and includes the fact that “he כָּבַד composed three thousand proverbs, and his songs number a thousand and five” (4:32 NRSV).[11]

Solomon's connection with wisdom is demonstrated by his mention in the superscriptions of Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs. Indeed, one rabbinic tradition offers a sequence for the writing of these three books during the life of Solomon. The Midrash Rabbah talks of Song of Songs, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes as belonging to three phases of his life, with the explanation that “when a man is young he composes songs; when he grows older he makes sententious remarks; and when he becomes an old man he speaks of the vanity of things.”[12]

Even though it might seem as though Solomon wrote the Proverbs at first glance, the reality is much more complicated. The first thing one notices when reading Proverbs is that other book portions are denoted by captions that credit authors other than Solomon. In verses 22:17 and 24:23, for instance, a group referred to as “the wise” is mentioned. Verse 30:1 and verse 31:1 mention two unidentified persons named Agur and Lemuel, respectively. Verse 10:1 and verse 25:1 both mention Solomon again, although the latter also attributes some significance to the “advisers of King Hezekiah of Judah.”

Another challenge in writing is that proverbs are not often written by authors sitting down at a desk. Instead, proverbs frequently originate in an oral setting before making their way into a written collection, such as the Book of Proverbs. The connection between these biblical proverbs and those from the larger ancient Near East is a third thing to remember. Some of the proverbs in the Israelite book are comparable to those in Egyptian and Aramaic collections, which some date from. As a result, Longman III once more

asserts that “thinking of Solomon as the original composer of the book is hard to sustain.”[13] Therefore, it seems reasonable and defensible to recognize Solomon’s hand in the book, but it is also important to honour the other clear compositional indications. According to Longman III, “When we do so, we realize that the book of Proverbs is a collection or anthology that has the following form: Preamble (1:1–7); Extended Discourses on Wisdom (1:8–9:18); Solomonic Proverbs (10:1–22:16; 25:1–29:27); Sayings of the Wise (22:17–24:34); Sayings of Agur (30:1–33); Sayings of King Lemuel (31:1–9); Poem to the Virtuous Woman (31:10–31).”[14]

Exposition of the Text

The structure portrayed here follows the poem’s natural division, with the first half (6:6–8) describing the ant’s enterprise as an example. The sluggard to whom the object lesson applies is the subject of the second section (6:9–11). Some resolution is offered in verse 11. Instruction 6:6–8, Admonition 6:9–10, and Consequence 6:11 can be used to illustrate these divisions:

Instruction verses 6-8

6 לֹדֵ-אֶל-נְמִלָּה עֲצֹל רְאֵה דְרָכֶיהָ וְחָכָם:
 7 אֲשֶׁר אֵין-לָהּ קָצִין שֹׁטֵר וּמְשָׁל:
 8 תִּכְוֶן בְּקִיץ לַחֲמָה אֲגַרְהָ בְּקָצִיר מֵאֲכֹלָהּ:

- 6 Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise,
- 7 Which, having no captain, Overseer or ruler,
- 8 Provides her supplies in the summer, And gathers her food in the harvest

The sage’s advice concerning laziness here anticipates extensive advice with the call to go and observe the activity of the industrious ant; one see here an explicit example of the importance of observation in the development and support of wisdom principles. The sage directs his hearers’ attention to the ant. Studying the ant’s behaviour (the ant’s “paths”) will direct the lazy person to grow wise. In this case, growth in wisdom means giving up lazy behaviour patterns and adopting a hardworking lifestyle similar to the ant.

Verse 7 describes the ant as not having a hierarchy in its social structure. The fact that modern scientific study has uncovered hierarchy in an ant colony is beside the point.[15] This information was not available to the ancient Near Eastern observer, so the sage is speaking from the point of view of naive observation. Furthermore, without apparent social structure, these creatures cope quite well. Amazingly, ants gather enough food through their seemingly ceaseless labor to carry them through the winter. In 30:25, ants are described as having no strength; thus, their success in gathering food is based on their diligence. Clifford rightly points out that Proverbs seems especially concerned about laziness in gathering food during harvest (10:5) since the survival of the individual and the community depends on activity during this time.

Warning/Admonition: verses 9-11

9 עַד-מָתַי עֲצֹל | תִּשְׁכַּב כְּמַי תִּקְוֶה מִשְׁנָתְךָ:
 10 מַעַט שְׁנוֹת מַעַט תְּנוּמֹת מַעַט | חִבְּקֵךְ יָדֶיךָ לְשֹׁכֵב:

- 9 How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep?
- 10 A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to sleep

These final three verses apply the lesson of the ant to the lazy person through contrast. While the ant is industrious, lazy people are ridiculed for not getting out of bed. As is typical of the teaching of sloth in the book of Proverbs, this section uses hyperbole and satire to motivate those lazy to get to work. Verse 9 contains taunting questions, while v. 10 creates an imaginary statement of a lazy person. The lazy person says they want a “little sleep,” but that little nap will become a long sleep to avoid the work necessary to sustain life.

Results: verse 11

וְבָא-כְמַהֲלֵךְ רֹאשׁוֹ אִמְחֹסְרֵךְ כְּאִישׁ מְגֹן: {פ}

11 So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, And your need like an armed man.

Verse 11 describes the results of a lazy lifestyle, which is poverty. The onset of poverty is described by using similes. In the first place, it is likened to a prowler, and in the second colon, it is likened to a man carrying a shield. In both cases, this simile describes individuals whose arrival portends harm. It also suggests that poverty will sneak up on the person and arrive suddenly. Again, this description serves as a warning, with the hope that people who tend to be lazy will stir themselves into activity.

Inferences from the Exposition

1. The Instruction in 6:6–8 emphasises the ant’s future-orientation. Proverbs 30:25 describes her as a creature with limited strength but the capacity to store food in the heat. That is the main point that this lesson from nature highlights. What justification can a sluggard, or someone unwilling to labour, put forward to explain his stance if an ant, in her impoverished situation, has the forethought to meet her needs? This image serves as a suitable warning to a sluggard who consistently lowers himself to such a despicable creature by his behaviours. In order to illustrate the degradation implied in this situation, we are instructed to “go” and learn from her. The community, which could not afford to have even one of its members be idle, depended on productivity. The strategy used in the discourse reported in Proverbs 6:6–11 brings the message home unequivocally. The teacher uses humiliation and indolence to illustrate his points about effort and laziness. The sluggard is mockingly instructed to observe ants for instruction. It appears that the recipient is not currently experiencing hardship and is only being forewarned about the risks his actions may bring. With this viewpoint, one can start to warn the next generation about the unsavoury consequences of idleness for Nigeria and her people.
3. Second, the warning in 6:9–10 cautions the addressee against delaying gratification and becoming docile. The solution to ending poverty in Nigeria also resides at this familial level of the conception of a family as a small community that shared everything it found and obtained and was intent on obtaining food as a unit. The spiritual guidance provided in Proverbs 6:6–11 in this effort to eradicate poverty is appropriate since, as was already mentioned, the task necessitates a multidisciplinary approach.
4. Third, the result in 6:11 underscores the regrettable results of reckless behaviour. The images of a robber and an armed warrior are effectively used as vivid reminders of the almost inevitable outcome of a protracted unproductive disposition. In addition to having disastrous effects on the individual, laziness impacts the entire society, which not only loses out on the opportunity to make a positive contribution but also has to take care of the sufferer.

Prognosis to Building a Viable Economy in Nigeria

Several principles can be learned from the text and, when applied accurately, will create a viable economy in Nigeria. Here are a few of such principles:

Renewal of Work Ethics

Many Nigerians fail to understand that work has a spiritual dimension. God works, and He instructed man to work. This consciousness is seriously lacking from the attitude of most Nigerians. Many of those who are privileged to work in Nigeria see it as an opportunity to share in their little way and “national cake.” When they struggle to get a job in the public or government sector, they demonstrate a non-challant by coming to work at any time and leaving at any time, using the working time for personal activities with the notion that they will be paid at the end of the month. This attitude does not enhance productivity. This explains why they do the same thing in every government without any positive results.

It must be noted that man is a relational being who finds fulfillment in his existence with God, himself, the physical and spiritual world, and fellow humans. Man relates with nature essentially through work. Comblim observes that “human beings are made for a life of communion with the material world, and the basic mode of this communion is work”[16] The institution of work is undeniably one of the chief

integrators of persons in society. It orients lives, organizes time; it puts in touch with people. Thus, through work, humans respond to God's mandate to continue the work of creation by subduing the earth. Humans also realize themselves as image-bearers creature activity; through work, they follow Christ in His example of redemption and serve God and others through work. An important fact that must be noted is that work is significant for human economic, social, and spiritual existence. Economically, a man works to transform nature to meet his basic physical and material needs. Work provides the basic needs of human life- food, clothing, and shelter. It is the ordinary way for human beings to satisfy their material needs.[17]

Like in the case of the ants, hard work is crucial for building a viable economy in Nigeria. The Bible clearly states that "those who refused to work should not eat" (1 Thes. 4:11-12 and 2 Thes. 3:10-12). By this, the Bible endorses the spirit of hard work and rejects all forms of idleness. Regrettably, as Maxey and Ozodo observed, the high value on material success has taken over the center stage of Nigeria's religiosity, thereby displacing the value of the dignity of labour.[18] Before independence, Nigeria arguably occupied a prominent place in the committee of nations because of her contributions to the world's economy, primarily based on agriculture. However, with the rise of the oil boom in the 1970s, Nigeria's socio-economic landscape drastically transformed, and a culture of value for material possession overpowered the culture of the value of dignity of labour. Today, the culture of hard work has become a mirage in Nigeria. Desperation for quick money among the populace has become a normal phenomenon. The fact that the masses celebrate wealthy people over those who work hard has worsened the situation. This partly accounts for the economic woes currently bedeviling the country. Therefore, citizens must embrace their hard work ethic to build Nigeria's viable and sustainable economy.

Renewal of Future-Oriented Perspective

Proverbs 6:6-11 suggests thinking about what it takes to succeed and survive "... but in the summer she prepares her store of food and lays in her supplies at harvest" (NEB). Nigerians must adopt a future-oriented mindset to learn from the parable of the ant. They need to start accounting for the expenses of their actions (Luke 14:28-30).[19] They shall experience poverty if they do not work hard today. Sluggards dislike how ants live. Ants' actions reveal a different perspective on the world and life than sluggards. The sluggard enjoys sleeping. He lets life's happenings pass him by. He erroneously assumes that the tranquility of sleep and leisure pleasure may be obtained for little or little money. There is no impending crisis; even if there were, there would be no way to prepare for it adequately because there is no need to make plans for the future.

Renewal of Mysticism and Fundamentalism Perspectives

Pietism and quietism, which include mysticism and some forms of fundamentalism, concentrate their attention on "spiritual" goals in opposition to "earthly" or material ones. Both groups' members agree that New Testament believers should be passive about what will happen on earth. They mistake Paul's advice to "be careful about nothing," which is more accurately rendered as "be full of care for nothing" or, better yet, "have no anxiety" (NEB) in Philippians 4:6a. They claim Paul intended for people to not invest heavily in planning for the future and making investments based on their plans. Take therefore no consideration for tomorrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself, says Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. According to one interpretation of Matthew 6:34, "Sufficiency unto the day is the evil thereof," all planning is foolish. Christ, on the other hand, stressed the absurdity of constantly worrying about the future because this paralysis results in either poor planning or preparation for emergencies that never materialise. Such anxiety is unnecessary. However, according to Matthew 6:33, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." [20] Financial blessings will follow when men are concerned with creating God's kingdom.

The pietist views the "kingdom of God" as referring to the internal realm. The perspective of a pietist is that God will take care of men when they concern themselves with the details of prayer, church worship, and personal piety. The pietist's faith depends on this conviction. He thinks the ant's attitude represents an outdated Old Testament ideal because it is so pragmatic and grounded in the future. The pietist claims to be equally indifferent to material things as the sluggard. The pietist spends hours folding his hands

in prayer while the sluggard sleeps. The method is the same in both situations on the surface: folded hands. Poverty is the visible outcome.

The ant's behaviour exemplifies the biblical perspective: care for that which gives life. The hand of the diligent makes rich, but the hand of the slack makes impoverished (10:4). Having lax or folded hands leads to poverty. The Bible's "wealth formula" includes diligent effort, a focus on the future, thrift, attention to detail, high income, and contentment in God.

Renewal of "Word and Bread" Perspectives

According to Deuteronomy 8:3b and Matthew 4:48, man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. However, man does not live by the word of God alone if the "word of God" means an "internalised" word—reading, prayer, or preaching only. In the wilderness, manna was provided for 40 years (Deut. 8:3a), and Christ resumed eating after spending 40 days in the wilderness (Matt. 4:2). It is also evident during the Lord's Supper and Passover celebrations. When the manna ran out in the promised land of Canaan (Josh. 5:12), it was not a programme of internal religious practises that brought forth food, but rather an attention to the entirety of God's word, which included biblical law as well as careful consideration of the ant and the sluggard.

Some contend that making such plans for the future demonstrates a lack of faith in God and a humanistic preoccupation with worldly concerns. Their greatest shibboleth is, "God will take care of me!" This implies that when a crisis arises, they will end up at the doorsteps of those who did make preparations, pleading with them to practise compassion on them, as is their Christian duty. The literal meaning of "God will take care of me" is "You ants will take care of me." This is also the cry of the sluggard. The story of the ten virgins, who awaited the bridegroom's return, contains Jesus' response to these hand-folding detractors. Five were sensible and filled their lamps with oil. Five were stupid and did not take any oil. When their lamps went out, the wise were asked to give the foolish some of their oil. However, the wise countered, "Not so, lest there be insufficient for you and us; but go ye rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves" (Matthew 25:8–9).

Consequently, "and while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut" (v. 10). Such is the end of pietists, slackers, and foolish virgins. God does indeed provide for them, but not in the manner they had hoped. Therefore, Nigerians must balance their religious activities with work to make a living and promote their country's economy, bearing in mind that the Bible is not against work but encourages hard work.

Renewal of Godly Values

Godly values such as godliness, contentment, and self-sacrifice are essential to building Nigeria's economy. Godliness is the act of having reverence for God or the Supreme Being, while contentment is the condition of being contented. Contentment is self-satisfaction with whatever one rightfully or lawfully owns rather than being notoriously insatiable with economic and material resources. Arguably, a person who lacks the virtue of godliness and contentment would most assuredly abuse and mismanage economic and material resources put at his or her disposal. This explains why the Christian Bible sees one's possession of this particular religious value as a significant gain (1 Tim. 6:6). The present economic woes in Nigeria, which are majorly caused by a high level of corruption, points to the fact that a large proportion of citizens do not have the virtue of godliness and contentment. Thus, to build a viable economy in Nigeria, all citizens should teach and embrace the virtue of godliness and contentment.

Building a viable Economy in Nigeria would also require citizens to inculcate the virtue of self-sacrifice. Self-sacrifice connotes a phenomenon in which personal benefits are deliberately and decisively forgone for national interest and economic development. The importance of the virtue of self-sacrifice, if inculcated by citizens, is such that it would allow public officeholders to see their positions of responsibility as avenues for service rather than accumulating wealth to satisfy their desires. In this way, public officeholders would be willing to make sacrifices for the common good of everyone. Self-sacrifice can help create a society devoid of corruption, nepotism, bribery, antagonism, and insecurity, which could translate into economic recovery in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

From this study, many principles from the character of the ants reveal ways a viable economy of any nation can be built. She saves food and forgoes current consumption in favour of more consumption in the future. The ant starts working on a solution for the cropless winter in the summer. By storing food in advance for the winter, ants' actions break the annual cycle of hunger and feast. Solomon advises the indolent person to become self-motivated by following the example of the ant.

Lazy people are not tolerated in Proverbs; they are viewed as the height of foolishness. Surprisingly, several proverbs discuss the hard effort and sloth (6:6–11; 10:4–5, 26; 12:11, 24, 27; 13:4–14:23; 15:19; 18:4–19:15, 24; 20:4–13:22:13–29; 24:30–34; 26:13–16:27:23–27; 28:19; 31:27). Also noteworthy is the biting nature of the images used to mock those who are unwilling to put forth the effort. While referring to the indolent person, the sage is at his most satirically comedic:

Lazy people say, "There is a lion cub on the path, a lion on the public square!" The door turns on its hinge, and lazy people on their beds. Lazy people bury their hands into the bowl but cannot return it to their mouth. Lazy people are wise in their own eyes, even more than seven who respond with discernment. (26:13–16).

Because it takes effort to make it in this world, the wise teacher is concerned that the lazy will soon impoverish themselves. Thus, the sages admonish their disciples to work hard (6:6–11. According to a proverb like 22:29, those who work hard get ahead: "Do you see people who do their work with diligence? They will stand before kings; they will not stand before the obscure." It is not surprising to find the following description of the noblewoman in 31:27: "She is a lookout post for the doings of her household; she does not eat the food of laziness."

The paper thus recommends that the government, having put in place the right policies, should have the political will for sustainable implementation. Also, the Nigerian economy be restructured; monetary and fiscal policy sustainability should prevail. There should be inclusive diversification, empowering entrepreneurial growth, and attention to correcting the infrastructural deficit, all under visionary leadership. For these to be productive, the Nigerian people, however, need to have a renewed ethics to work, and penalties should be imposed on those involved in unethical behaviour, particularly in the public sector; which will serve as a deterrent to others. In this way, the government's laudable program can be achieved.

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