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Editorial Introduction

The African Theological Journal for Church and Society (ATJCS) is committed to publish high-quality scholarship from and for Africa. The journal is strictly peer-reviewed. It does not charge submission or publication fees and is available open access through its website (www.atjcs.netact.org.za). To increase visibility and access to its publications, the journal recently entered a licensing agreement with EBSCO. It is now featured on EBSCO Essentials (essentials.ebsco.com) and Ultimate (by subscription only) databases.

By God's grace, ATJCS enters its fifth year of publication in 2024. Since the publication of its first issue in October 2020, the journal has published fifty-two articles and nine book reviews. Along with its regular two issues per year, the journal anticipates publication of its first special issue on "Church and Politics" in 2024.

The success of ATJCS depends on the contribution of African scholars—as authors and as peer reviewers. The journal welcomes article submissions that align with the journal's aim and align with its submission guidelines, available at atjcs.netact.org.za/index.php/netact/about/submissions.

The journal is pleased to partner with Langham Publications, W. B. Eerdmans, and Westminster/John Knox Press to make their latest publications available free of charge for review. For more information on requesting a title and submitting a book review, see atjcs.netact.org.za/index.php/netact/reviews.

Finally (and most importantly), the journal continually needs scholars willing to peer review submissions. Please contact the editor by email at atjcs.editor@netactmail.org.za with your name, qualifications, areas of interest, and contact details if you are willing to help in this regard.

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Contemporary Trends and Developments in Pentateuchal Studies

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Abstract

The Pentateuch is a foundational cornerstone within biblical literature, encapsulating a mosaic of historical narratives, legal codes, and theological reflections. This paper presents a vibrant and evolving landscape of contemporary Pentateuchal studies aimed at unravelling its complexities and exploring its multidimensional facets. The study elucidates the challenges and gaps in current Pentateuchal scholarship. It identifies the pressing need to reconcile diverse methodologies, harmonize contradictory theories, and integrate interdisciplinary approaches. Additionally, it addresses the imperative to comprehend the Pentateuch within its socio-cultural context, considering its reception history and relevance in modern academic discourses. To address these challenges, this paper engages in a comprehensive analysis of emerging trends within Pentateuchal studies. It navigates through the evolution of methodologies, from traditional source criticism to contemporary literary and narrative analyses, highlighting the interplay between form, genre, and redactional layers within the Pentateuch. Furthermore, it examines the burgeoning influence of interdisciplinary frameworks, encompassing post-colonialism, feminist criticism, and ecological hermeneutics, which offer new perspectives on the Pentateuch's implications for contemporary societal issues. This study endeavours to synthesize a more holistic understanding of the Pentateuch by meticulously exploring these diverse perspectives. It aims to bridge scholarly divides, reconcile interpretative conflicts, and shed light on the Pentateuch's socio-cultural significance; considering the dynamic interaction between historical contexts and modern

interpretations, it seeks to elucidate the enduring relevance of the Pentateuch in shaping ethical, cultural, and theological discourses. Ultimately, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse within biblical scholarship by providing a comprehensive framework amalgamating diverse methodologies and perspectives. It underscores the need for continued exploration and engagement with the Pentateuch, acknowledging its profound impact on ancient civilizations and its enduring relevance in contemporary societies.

Introduction

The field of Pentateuchal studies is constantly evolving, utilizing various methodologies and approaches to understand the foundational biblical texts. The Pentateuch is central to the religious, cultural, and historical understanding of Judaism and Christianity. This study explores the evolving nature of Pentateuchal studies, focusing on paradigms, methodologies, theories, archaeological findings, comparative studies, contemporary trends, methodological diversity, and connections between Pentateuchal studies and other disciplines.

The study employs a literature review approach to examine and analyse scholarly literature on a particular topic, aiding in understanding the subject's history, identifying research gaps, and incorporating them into various forms of writing. The main focus is on the Documentary Hypothesis proposed by Julius Wellhausen in the nineteenth century, which suggests that the Pentateuch was composed by multiple authors over several centuries. Contemporary scholars continue to explore and refine this hypothesis, often using insights from archaeology, comparative ancient Near Eastern literature, and linguistics. According to Gertz et al,

> In Israeli scholarship, the Documentary Hypothesis in one or another of its classical forms continues to be highly esteemed. Some scholars working at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in particular see the future of pentateuchal scholarship in the refinement rather than the abandonment of the sources J, E, P, and D for the reconstruction of the compositional history of the Pentateuch. (2016:3)

Despite extensive scholarly engagement, contemporary Pentateuchal studies face persistent challenges in reconciling diverse methodologies and theories, integrating interdisciplinary approaches, and addressing evolving societal perspectives. Gaps persist in understanding the text's socio-cultural context, reception history, and relevance to modern ethical and social discourses. This paper aims to critically examine these challenges, gaps, and emerging trends within Pentateuchal studies, providing a comprehensive understanding of the current landscape and charting a course for future scholarship in this dynamic field.

Historical Overview of Pentateuchal Studies

Pentateuchal studies have a long history that dates back to early Christian and ancient Jewish traditions. These texts were revered and regarded as authoritative, with interpretations frequently emphasizing historical narratives, metaphorical interpretations, and religious and moral lessons. Jewish scholars developed exegetical methods, such as Midrash (Plaut 1981:xxvii), to explore the deeper meanings of the text. Like Rashi's, Jewish comments from the medieval era analysed the text using language study, historical context, and religious interpretation.[1] Scholars started analysing biblical texts using critical methodologies during the Renaissance and Enlightenment, starting with Spinoza (2007), challenging traditional authorship and interpretation.

[1] Rashi, also known as Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, was a medieval French rabbi and scholar from 1040 to 1105. He is renowned for his comprehensive commentaries on the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh), particularly on the Torah (the first five books). Rashi's commentary is highly esteemed in both Jewish religious and scholarly circles. His approach to biblical interpretation involved linguistic, historical, and religious analysis. Key aspects of his methodology included word definitions, linguistic nuances, historical context, contemporary events, religious interpretation, and accessibility. Rashi drew upon Midrashic traditions, highlighting moral and ethical lessons and theological emphasis. His commentaries aimed to make the biblical text accessible to a broad audience, making it a foundational work in Jewish biblical scholarship. His ability to blend linguistic precision, historical awareness, and religious sensitivity has contributed to the enduring relevance of his commentaries in the study of the Hebrew Bible (jewishvirtuallibrary.org).

The historical-critical method was developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Law 2012:25-68). It became popular in biblical studies when scholars like Julius Wellhausen proposed the Documentary Hypothesis, which claimed that the Pentateuch comprised several sources (Nicholson 1998:3-4; Friedman 1987a). This theory generated discussion and advanced research on the Pentateuch's textual origins and redaction. Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century archaeological findings shed light on the historical setting of the Pentateuch, with findings from Mesopotamia and Egypt illuminating the social and cultural contexts. Pentateuchal studies have progressed with methods like form criticism (Blenkinsopp 1992), structuralism, literary analysis (Baden 2020:1-3), social scientific research (Matthews and Moyer 2015), feminism (Benjamin 2015), post-colonial readings (West and Dube 2000; De La Torre 2013), and post-colonial perspectives (Moore and Segovia 2005). They looked at issues including religious and social importance, the development of the Israelite identity, and its connections to other ancient Near Eastern literature. Studies of the Pentateuch are evolving due to the emergence of new methods, including presenting scholarly study to comprehend the work's structure, theology, and contemporary significance. A long tradition of interpretation and study has formed this vibrant topic, sparking continuing discussions and discoveries.

The Documentary Hypothesis: Past and Present Debates

The Documentary Hypothesis, also known as the Wellhausen Hypothesis, is a nineteenth-century theory in biblical scholarship that aims to explain the composition of the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, the Pentateuch or Torah (Nicholson 1998:3-4). It was formulated after scholars noticed inconsistencies, repetitions, and variations in style, vocabulary, and theological themes within the Pentateuch. This led to questions about its authorship and composition. According to a renowned Jewish scholar, Rabbi Zev Farber (2014), early observations by scholars like Jean Astruc and Johann Eichhorn in the eighteenth century suggested multiple sources for using different divine names in Genesis. This hypothesis has significantly influenced biblical studies. In his classic work, Cassuto (2005) critiques the Documentary Hypothesis, which posits multiple sources for the Pentateuch and offers an alternative perspective. He argues for the unity and Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch,

making it a fundamental text for understanding the history of Pentateuchal studies.

According to Friedman (1987b:15-32), predecessors to the Documentary Hypothesis included scholars like Thomas Hobbes, Isaac de la Peyrère, Benedict de Spinoza, and Richard Simon, who suggested multiple authors. However, these ideas did not gain widespread acceptance. According to Baden (2012:13-33; see also Nihan 2010), the nineteenth century saw the development of the Documentary Hypothesis, influenced by Jean Astruc, Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, and Wilhelm de Wette. Nicholson (1998:7-20) posits that Julius Wellhausen, the most influential proponent of the hypothesis, refined and popularized the theory in the late nineteenth century that the Pentateuch did not have a single author but was the result of a complex process of composition over several centuries. Wellhausen identified four primary source documents: J (the Yahwist), E (the Elohist), D (the Deuteronomist), and P (the Priestly source). These sources differed in divine names, writing styles, theological emphases, and historical contexts. Wellhausen's work popularized source criticism, a method of analysing biblical texts to identify and separate different source documents. This approach helped explain many textual inconsistencies and repetitions in the Pentateuch, highlighting the importance of source criticism in biblical text analysis.

Scholars like Baden (2012:45-81) challenge traditional Documentary Hypothesis theories and provide a fresh perspective on the composition of the Pentateuch. Baden engages with contemporary debates surrounding the authorship and development of these texts. Despite criticism and alternative hypotheses, it remains a foundational framework for understanding the composition of the Pentateuch. The theory also considers ancient Israel's historical and cultural context when studying the development of sources and their redaction into the Pentateuch.

Scholars have raised several challenges to and critiques of the Documentary Hypothesis, including redaction criticism (Dozeman and Schmid 2011), alternative theories like the Supplementary Hypothesis (Wevers 1970), and archaeological and historical challenges (Finkelstein and Silberman 2002:4-24). Monika Bajić (2016:215-223) and John Van Seters (1999:24-27) critically examine the Documentary Hypothesis, questioning its assumptions and

proposing a different approach to understanding the composition of the Pentateuch, often referred to as the 'Supplementary Hypothesis'[2] or the 'Neo-Supplementary Hypothesis'. Van Seters (1999:24-27) argues that the Pentateuch was compiled much later than the Documentary Hypothesis suggests. Therefore, the final composition of the Pentateuch likely occurred during or after the Babylonian exile (sixth century BCE) rather than during the time of Moses or earlier. Unlike the Documentary Hypothesis, which posits multiple authors (J, E, D, and P), there is the possibility of a single editor or compiler who integrated various sources and traditions to create the Pentateuch as it is known. Van Seters emphasizes the role of redaction and editorial activity in shaping the text. He suggests that the editor(s) were responsible for harmonizing and editing diverse sources, including older traditions, legal materials, and narratives. While acknowledging the presence of diverse sources, Van Seters opines that there is a thematic unity in the Pentateuch, and the final editor(s) worked to create a coherent narrative with theological and literary significance (1999:25-27).

Pentateuchal studies have evolved in recent decades, incorporating insights from archaeology (Levy and Higham 2005), anthropology, and other fields. Scholars like Friedman (2003) and Hagedorn (2007:53-58) continue to defend the Documentary Hypothesis, while others, like Tigay (1985; see also Tov 2001), are concerned about a new model for understanding the composition of the Pentateuch. The study of the Pentateuch and its validity remains a dynamic field with ongoing debates. In the mid-twentieth century, scholars reevaluated the Documentary Hypothesis, developing post-documentary paradigms in Pentateuchal studies. These include the Supplementary Hypothesis developed by Hermann Gunkel (Bajić 2016:215-223; Wevers 1970), which acknowledged additional layers of editing and revision beyond the four primary sources, as supplementary documents and expansions were essential components of the

[2] According to Bajić (2016:217-218), citing Arnold (2003:624), Georg Heinrich August von Ewald proposed a new method commonly named Supplementary Hypothesis (SH). The premise of his theory is 'a single core E document was supplemented by J and strands from the book of Deuteronomy'.

Pentateuchal text,[3] adding to its meaning and understanding (Nihan 2010). Also, the Fragmentary Hypothesis, proposed by scholars like Gerhard von Rad (1966) and Rolf Rendtorff (1990), suggested that the Pentateuchal text was a compilation of smaller, independent fragments, often characterized by unique theological or thematic emphases, brought together over time, challenging the neat division of the text into discrete sources.

Scholars have increasingly focused on the role of editors and redactors in shaping the Pentateuch, focusing on their theological and ideological agendas with canonical criticism that views the Pentateuch as a finished product within the context of the Jewish and Christian canons, focusing on its function within religious communities for teaching, worship, and identity formation (Sailhamer 1995). Baden (2020:3; see also Alter 2010) has adopted literary methods to analyse the Pentateuch's narrative structure, themes, and motifs, often focusing on the literary devices used by the authors and editors. However, these post-documentary paradigms do not represent a unified perspective, as scholars within each paradigm have different views and interpretations. Pentateuchal studies remain dynamic and evolving, contributing to a richer understanding of the composition and meaning of the Pentateuch within its historical and cultural context.

Challenge of Current Pentateuchal Scholarship

Current Pentateuchal scholarship faces several persistent challenges and notable gaps that hinder a comprehensive understanding of this foundational

[3] The Supplementary Hypothesis, attributed to Hermann Gunkel, represents a development in Pentateuchal studies in the mid-twentieth century. This hypothesis acknowledges additional layers of editing and revision beyond the four primary sources proposed by the Documentary Hypothesis. According to this view, supplementary documents and expansions were considered essential components of the Pentateuchal text. Scholars who adhere to the Supplementary Hypothesis argue that the text underwent further editing and addition after incorporating the primary sources. The idea is that various editors or redactors contributed additional material to the existing sources, enriching the Pentateuchal text and adding layers of meaning and understanding. This approach recognizes the complexity and fluidity of the compositional process, suggesting that the text evolved over time through the incorporation of various literary elements.

text within biblical studies. These challenges arise from methodological limitations, interpretative conflicts, and gaps in historical context, among other factors.

The analysis of the Pentateuch faces challenges due to the divergence of methodologies used. Traditional methods like source, form, and redaction criticism often lead to conflicting conclusions, resulting in interpretive impasses rather than consensus. Integrating these methodologies remains challenging, often resulting in interpretive discrepancies and impasses. For instance, Johannes P. Floss (2006) has critically discussed these three 'traditional methods'. Source criticism identifies distinct sources, but it leaves subjective boundaries, while form criticism classifies units without consensus and redaction criticism investigates editing and editorial work, but often leads to conflicting conclusions (Floss 2006). Integration challenges include overlap and contradiction, hindering comprehensive analysis. Interpretive impasses arise from conflicting conclusions and differing interpretations, hindering scholarly consensus and impeding progress in understanding the Pentateuch's development.

Pentateuchal studies face challenges in historical contextualization due to gaps in understanding the socio-political landscape, cultural misinterpretation, and interpretative ambiguities. Inadequate historical context restricts a thorough understanding of the Pentateuch's original meaning and purpose, limiting its relevance to its original audience and obscuring its intended impact. As argued by John R. Bartlett (2006:574), archaeological limitations and debates on the text's historical accuracy also pose challenges in reconstructing the historical setting. A comprehensive historical context elucidates the Pentateuch's original meaning, facilitates its relevance to contemporary ethical, cultural, and social discourses, and serves as a foundation for a more nuanced interpretative framework. Addressing these gaps is crucial for advancing Pentateuchal studies, as it paves the way for a more comprehensive and nuanced interpretation of this foundational text within its original socio-political and cultural milieu.

The Pentateuch is a complex biblical text with numerous duplications, contradictions, and shifts in narrative style, leading to ongoing debates about its unity and coherence. Floss (2006:604) states that '[t]he critical study of the

Bible, led by Hebrew philology, noted duplications and contradictions in the Old Testament text, above all in that of the Pentateuch'. The text contains repetitions of similar stories or laws, contradictions, and narrative style shifts, such as historical accounts, legal codes, poetry, and genealogies. It also features distinct authorial voices, which can challenge maintaining narrative consistency. Interpretative dissonance arises from these issues, leading to divergent theories about the text's authorship, composition, and purpose. Debates on compilation and redactional processes also fuel these debates (Floss 2006:604). Recognizing the Pentateuch's complexity encourages critical engagement and a more nuanced interpretation. Navigating the complexities arising from duplications, contradictions, and shifts in narrative style is essential for a comprehensive understanding of this foundational biblical text.

The reception history and interpretive traditions surrounding the Pentateuch are crucial yet challenging aspects of Pentateuchal studies (Whitelam 2006:261). Despite their significance, comprehensive exploration remains limited, resulting in significant gaps in understanding. These gaps include historical context, transmission and use, interpretive diversity, and the impact on meaning. The Pentateuch has been subject to diverse interpretive traditions across religious and cultural contexts, making it difficult to understand the evolution of these traditions and their influence on interpretations. Fragmented studies and limited historical and interpretive records pose challenges in reconstructing the Pentateuch's reception history. An interdisciplinary approach involving collaboration among historians, theologians, religious scholars, and anthropologists is needed to address these gaps.

Contemporary Methodologies in Pentateuchal Studies

Several contemporary methods and approaches to Pentateuchal studies seek to shed light on its composition, organization, and interpretation; here is a brief survey of some. Some of these methods and approaches help to understand the historical and social background of the Pentateuch. These include looking at gender (Benjamin 2015), post-colonial perspectives (West and Dube 2000), digital technologies and technological advancements (Clivaz, Dilley, and Hamidovic 2017), interdisciplinary methods, and archaeology (Erisman 2014), making it possible to perform more thorough textual analyses. The

Pentateuch's persuasive strategies are examined using rhetorical analysis, which focuses on the intended effect on the audience. Intertextual studies investigate how the Pentateuch may have borrowed from or affected subsequent biblical literature by comparing it to other biblical and ancient Near Eastern works (Dozeman and Schmid 2011; Knoppers and Levinson 2007). The Pentateuch's repeating themes and narrative structures are discernible through structuralist and literary pattern analyses (Kawashima 2010:47-50). In reader-response criticism, the interpretation and application of the text in different situations are examined (Armstrong 1995). In order to uncover hidden voices and viewpoints, post-colonial (Boer 2013:193-220) and feminist (Brenner and Fontaine 2001) approaches to the Pentateuch analyse power relations, gender issues, and social challenges. All these help expose the richness and variety of viewpoints on these fundamental biblical texts, as well as contemporary methodologies in Pentateuchal studies, which improve understanding. Also, other research methods are used to study the Pentateuch, including textual analysis, literary analysis (Crawford 2022), sociolinguistics (Van Seters 1999), cognitive linguistics, and cognitive science, which study the cognitive processes in producing and understanding biblical texts. Reception history (Knoppers and Levinson 2007:18) investigates how various religious communities have altered, implemented, and interpreted the Pentateuch.

Socio-Cultural and Anthropological Approaches

Contemporary approaches to Pentateuchal studies have grown to include interdisciplinary methods, such as socio-cultural and anthropological viewpoints (Hess and Carroll 2012:87). These approaches seek to comprehend the Pentateuch as a religious and literary work that also serves as a window into the anthropological and socio-cultural conditions in which it was created. Placing the Pentateuch into its historical context entails looking at the ancient Near East's political, social, and economic circumstances at its composition (Hess and Carroll 2012:87).

The Pentateuch's social and cultural elements, such as familial systems, religious rites, and societal standards, are examined through socio-cultural study (Hess and Carroll 2012:87). When studying the Pentateuch, anthropological approaches utilize anthropological theories and concepts to examine identity, ethnicity, power dynamics, and ritual behaviour (Hess and

Carroll 2012:87). The interdisciplinary nature of these approaches benefits modern Pentateuchal studies by enabling researchers to develop a more thorough knowledge of the Pentateuch as a religious and cultural text influenced by its historical and social surroundings.

Theological and Hermeneutical Trends in Pentateuchal Studies

Theological ideas and interpretations abound in the Pentateuch. The creation and covenant, the promises made to the patriarchs, the exodus and freedom, the law and commandments, the covenant and obedience, holiness and ritual, the wilderness wanderings, and the renewal of the covenant are essential topics. Exodus centres on the Israelites' deliverance from Egyptian slavery, while Genesis begins with God's creation of the world and covenantal connection with humanity. A significant event is the giving of the Mosaic Law on Mount Sinai, and theological interpretations explore its moral and ethical import. There are reoccurring themes of covenant and obedience, with Leviticus emphasizing ritual purity, sacrifice, and holiness. The narrative of the Israelites' wanderings in the wilderness in Numbers emphasizes divine guidance and tests of faith. The covenant is renewed in Deuteronomy, which also promotes keeping God's rules (Vanhoozer, Bartholomew, and Treier 2008).

There are also eschatological and messianic components, which allude to the anticipation of future events and the advent of a messiah and frequently study the layers of history and theology in the Pentateuch. There are other ways in which contemporary scholars read the Pentateuch, including but not limited to those discussed below.

Ethical and Moral Readings

Theological and hermeneutical trends in ethical and moral readings of Pentateuchal texts are crucial in contemporary scholarship and interpretation. Some of these approaches include contextualization, which emphasizes understanding Pentateuchal texts within their historical, cultural, and social contexts, acknowledging the specific circumstances that shape their teachings. Ethical universalism advocates for a universalist interpretation of ethical and moral principles, while relativism acknowledges the need to adapt ethical teachings to specific cultural contexts. Ethical progressivism suggests that

religious texts contain the seeds of ethical progress (Gentry 2016), suggesting interpreters should identify and emphasize religious teachings' more progressive and compassionate aspects.

Feminism and Gender Readings

One significant development in theological and hermeneutical trends in Pentateuchal studies is the incorporation of feminist and gender perspectives into the study of the Pentateuch. This shift has led to a deeper examination of how gender roles, power dynamics, and patriarchal ideologies are reflected in these foundational texts of the Hebrew Bible. Key trends include reevaluating patriarchal narratives, recovering marginalized female characters, examining gender ideologies, examining legal texts, and considering intersectionality.

Feminist scholars have critically examined patriarchal narratives, such as those of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the institution of polygamy and concubinage (Pilarski 2011). They have also sought to recover and amplify the voices and stories of female characters, such as Sarah, Hagar, Rebekah, Leah, and Rachel. Tikva Frymer-Kensky examined how the Pentateuch reflects and perpetuates particular gender ideologies and power structures, examining how these texts challenge and reinforce traditional gender roles (Pilarski 2011). Feminist and gender perspectives on the Pentateuch also consider the contemporary relevance of these ancient texts, exploring how insights gained from these studies can inform discussions about gender equality, social justice, and ethics today, which have introduced new hermeneutical methods to Pentateuchal studies.

Post-colonial and Liberationist Readings

Post-colonial and liberationist readings emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century, focusing on the Bible's role in colonial history and in justifying colonial oppression. Post-colonial readings prioritize the voices of marginalized groups, explore resistance and adaptation, and deconstruct power structures within the text (Boer 2013). They have led to reevaluating the Bible's role in colonial history and to increased awareness of the need to read the text critically.

Liberationist readings, influenced by the mid-twentieth century theological and social justice movements, seek to find elements of liberation and social

justice within the Pentateuch and apply them to contemporary struggles for justice and equality (De La Torre 2013). They often focus on the Exodus narrative as a symbol of liberation from oppression, emphasizing the Pentateuch's teachings on justice, compassion, and caring for the vulnerable (De La Torre 2013). Liberationist readings encourage the ethical application of biblical principles to contemporary issues, inspiring activism and social change. Both post-colonial and liberationist readings of the Pentateuch represent attempts to engage with the text beyond traditional, historical-critical approaches, challenging readers to consider how the text can be a force for justice and liberation in a modern context.

Interfaith Dialogue Readings

Mary Callaway explores interfaith dialogue, focusing on the Pentateuch, examining perspectives from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions (2009:248-268). Understanding the Pentateuch has become essential for fostering meaningful conversations between religious traditions in a globalized world with increased interfaith dialogue. Pentateuch studies have evolved through various theological and hermeneutical trends, intersecting with the growing importance of interfaith dialogue. Scholars and religious leaders engage with the Pentateuch to build bridges between different faiths, promote tolerance, and deepen their understanding of its enduring significance.

Contemporary Debates on Pentateuchal Studies

The Pentateuch has been the subject of scholarly inquiry and debate for centuries. Contemporary debates include the Documentary Hypothesis, which suggests the Pentateuch is composed of multiple source documents (Nicholson 1998:3-4; Friedman 1987a), the debate over the date and authorship of the Pentateuch, the extent of editing and redaction, the literary structure, theological themes, the relationship between the Pentateuch and archaeological findings, the genre and purpose of the Pentateuch, its reception history, gender and ethics, and comparative studies. These have given birth to various theological interpretations of the Pentateuch that continue to surface, particularly concerning issues such as ethics, covenant theology, and the portrayal of God. Archaeological and historical evidence are also debated, as is the genre and intended audience of the Pentateuch. The field of Pentateuchal studies is dynamic, with new research and perspectives emerging from

scholars from diverse backgrounds and disciplines. Other significant areas of debate include but are not limited to those below.

The Debates of Historicity of the Pentateuch

The debate is between the traditional view, which sees the Pentateuch as historically accurate, and critical scholarship, which suggests it is a composite work with multiple authors and editors. The Documentary Hypothesis, proposed by scholars like Julius Wellhausen, suggests the Pentateuch is a compilation of several source documents, each with a distinct theological and historical perspective. Archaeological evidence has been used to support or challenge the historical claims of the Pentateuch (Schmidt 2007:23-25). Amihai Mazar (1992) has pointed to stories within the Pentateuch, such as references to camels in the patriarchal narratives before they were domesticated in the region. Some scholars argue that the Pentateuch should be read as theological literature primarily focusing on religious and moral teachings rather than a strictly historical account. Oral tradition and memory are sometimes emphasized in preserving accurate historical details over time, but critics question the reliability of oral transmission for extended periods. Alternative theories, such as the Supplementary Hypothesis (Bajić 2016:218) and the Fragmentary Hypothesis (Cassuto 2005), offer different explanations for the composition and editing of the Pentateuch. Theological implications of the debate over the historicity of the Pentateuch are significant, particularly for religious traditions that view these texts as divinely inspired and historically accurate.

Exodus and Conquest Narratives Debates

The historicity of the exodus and conquest narratives in the Pentateuch has been debated among scholars and theologians for centuries. Some proponents argue that the lack of concrete archaeological evidence does not necessarily discredit the historicity of these events.

Minimalists question the historical accuracy of the exodus and conquest narratives, pointing to the absence of direct archaeological evidence supporting the large-scale events described in the Bible (Schmidt 2007:23-25). These narratives might blend mythology, folklore, and historical elements. Maximalists argue that elements of the exodus and conquest narratives could have a historical basis, suggesting that the lack of direct evidence may be due

to methodological issues in archaeological research or that the events might not have left substantial archaeological traces (Thompson 2000). The argument between these two schools of thought continues despite the ample efforts of archaeological discoveries.

Patriarchal Narratives Debates

The historicity of the Pentateuch is a contentious issue. The patriarchal narratives, primarily found in Genesis, focus on the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph (Hagedorn 2007:53-58). There are various perspectives on the historicity of these narratives. Based on faith and religious tradition, traditional belief sees the figures as literal history. Thomas L. Thompson (2016) argues that these stories are primarily legendary and were written later than the described events. Archaeological and historical research has provided some insights into the historicity of the Pentateuch, but definitive answers remain elusive. The historicity of the patriarchal narratives in the Pentateuch is a complex and debated issue influenced by religious beliefs and scholarly analysis that will continue for decades.

The Debates of Date and Composition of the Pentateuch

The Pentateuch's historicity is contentious, with various theories and perspectives. The traditional view attributes the text's authorship to Moses, who wrote it during the thirteenth century BCE. The Documentary Hypothesis, developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, suggests the Pentateuch is a composite work of multiple source documents edited over centuries (Sweeney 2017). James Kugel (2007) suggests that additional layers of editing and redaction may have occurred. He suggests that the Pentateuch may contain a mix of historical events, traditions, and legends and should be approached cautiously. Continued debates like these do not suggest a near end to academic discourse. Notwithstanding, the Documentary Hypothesis and its variations have significantly influenced modern biblical scholarship.

Theology and History Debates

Theological perspectives view the Pentateuch as sacred scripture containing significant historical events for religious faith and practice (McDermott 2002). They believe it contains a divinely inspired account of the world's origins, the history of the Israelites, and the covenant between God and the people of Israel (Sweeney 2017). On the other hand, historical perspectives analyse the

Pentateuch as a historical document, using methods of historical criticism to examine its origins, sources, and authorship. It considers the Pentateuch a composite work, likely written and edited by multiple authors over centuries. Challenges and debates arise between theological and historical perspectives. Theological scholars often seek to harmonize the various elements of the Pentateuch and maintain its divine inspiration, while historical scholars may focus on discrepancies and contradictions within the text. Contemporary scholarship recognizes that theology and history can coexist in the study of the Pentateuch, aiming to approach the text with both theological and historical sensitivity.

Oral Debates in the Formation of the Pentateuch

The Pentateuch has been a subject of scholarly debate for centuries, particularly regarding the role of orality in its formation. Orality refers to transmitting stories, traditions, and knowledge through spoken communication. Schniedewind (2004) affirms the transition from orality to literacy in ancient Israel and its impact on forming biblical texts, including the Pentateuch. Understanding the role of orality in forming the Pentateuch is crucial for assessing its historical accuracy. It played a significant role in ancient societies, especially before the widespread use of writing. Traditional scholarship often viewed the Pentateuch as authored by Moses, but contemporary scholarship emphasizes a more complex process of compilation and transmission (Baden 2020:1-14). One such scholar is Sailhamer (1995), whose work challenges traditional views of Mosaic authorship. Some scholars argue that oral traditions were passed down through generations before being written down, including stories of ancestral figures like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. One such example is Baker et al (2020), who represent a traditional perspective by defending the view that Moses was the sole author of the Pentateuch. They present arguments against the Documentary Hypothesis and support the idea of Mosaic authorship.

Postmodernism and Deconstruction

Postmodernism and deconstruction have significantly challenged traditional approaches to interpreting ancient texts, including religious ones like the Pentateuch. Postmodernism is a philosophical movement that emphasizes the fluidity of language and the multiple interpretations of texts. It promotes a relativistic view of truth, suggesting that there is no single objective truth but

rather a variety of perspectives and interpretations (Castelli et al 1995). Deconstruction, a literary theory, focuses on language's inherent ambiguity and instability, leading scholars to question the stability of the text's historical claims and explore alternative interpretations. Postmodern scholars have examined the composition and authorship of the Pentateuch, proposing that it may have been written and edited by multiple authors over time. This has led to questions about the historical reliability of the Pentateuch, as scholars now consider it a product of ancient cultural and religious traditions.

Emerging Paradigms in Pentateuchal Studies

Academic engagement and discussion in Pentateuchal studies continue to evolve as the years pass. Below are some of such emerging paradigms in the Pentateuchal studies.

Eco-Critical Approaches

Theodore Hiebert (1996:88-96; see also Santmire 2011) is one of the promoters of eco-critical approaches to Pentateuchal studies, new approaches in biblical scholarship that focus on the ecological dimensions of the Hebrew Bible. These approaches explore the theological foundations of the environment, ethical imperatives, theological anthropology, land theology, covenant and responsibility, and future directions in environmental crisis and climate change (Habel and Trudinger 2008). They often focus on Genesis' creation accounts, divine stewardship, and humanity's role in caring for the earth (Lawrie 2011). They challenge interpretations promoting unchecked natural resource exploitation and analyse the covenantal relationship between God and Israel (Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate 2010). Future directions in eco-critical Pentateuchal studies will involve addressing contemporary environmental crises and comparing the Pentateuch's teachings with other religious traditions.

Cognitive Science and the Pentateuch

One recent development is integrating cognitive science into the analysis and interpretation of Pentateuchal studies. This interdisciplinary approach offers insights into the cognitive processes involved in the Pentateuch's composition, transmission, and reception (Canale 2013). Cognitive science can shed light on the mental processes of the authors or communities behind the Pentateuch,

such as memory, attention, and cognitive biases. It can also help scholars explore oral tradition and memory, focusing on the role of mnemonic devices, repetition, and communal memory (Brettler, Enns, and Harrington 2012:210). Cognitive narratology can be employed to analyse the narrative structure of the Pentateuch, highlighting the psychological dimensions of storytelling (Barrett 2011). It can also provide tools for understanding the cultural and cognitive context in which the Pentateuch was produced, including the cognitive frameworks, beliefs, and worldviews that influenced the authors and original audiences. It can also help understand how later generations have received and interpreted the Pentateuch, providing insights into its enduring significance. Collaborations between biblical scholars, cognitive scientists, anthropologists, and psychologists are crucial for advancing this interdisciplinary approach.

Digital Humanities and Pentateuchal Research

Pentateuchal studies have seen significant advancements due to the integration of digital humanities approaches. Digital textual analysis tools enable scholars to identify patterns, linguistic features, and textual variations more precisely and efficiently. Digital databases of ancient manuscripts and textual variants have made it easier for researchers to compare different versions of the Pentateuch and analyse textual changes (Clark and Lindsey 2022). These digital textual analytical approaches include computational linguistics and natural language processing (NLP) techniques applied to Pentateuchal texts to analyse vocabulary usage, stylistic features, and authorship attribution. Geographic information systems (GIS) and digital mapping allow scholars to explore the geographical aspects of the Pentateuch. Social network analysis and graph theory study the relationships between characters and groups within the Pentateuch (Clark and Lindsey 2022:219). In studying sacred texts, there are ever more ethical concerns about data privacy, cultural sensitivity, and responsible technological usage. Future research will include machine learning and artificial intelligence with Pentateuchal study.

Multimodal and Multimedia Interpretations

Traditional approaches in Pentateuchal studies have primarily relied on linguistic and historical-critical methods. However, emerging paradigms and future directions in Pentateuchal studies have begun incorporating multimodal and multimedia interpretations, offering new perspectives and insights into

these ancient texts. Key aspects of this evolving field include visual analysis, material culture, spatial analysis, digital humanities, and interactive multimedia.

Visual analysis involves examining art, iconography, and ancient illustrations to understand the visual culture surrounding these texts (Sabharwal 2022). Material culture involves examining archaeological finds, artifacts, and inscriptions related to the Pentateuch. Spatial analysis uses GIS technology to map geographical locations and analyse their significance in the narrative. Digital humanities tools enable scholars to analyse large datasets, track linguistic patterns, and compare variations in ancient texts (Sabharwal 2022). Interactive multimedia platforms allow scholars to present research findings in engaging and accessible ways.

Interdisciplinary Collaborations and Global Perspectives

The study of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, has evolved significantly in recent years. Interdisciplinary approaches have enriched Pentateuchal studies, including collaboration with scholars of archaeology, anthropology, sociology, and comparative religion (Sabharwal 2022). Global perspectives have led to a more inclusive and comparative understanding of the Pentateuch, fostering new insights and interpretations.

Advances in manuscript research and textual studies have led to a better understanding of the transmission and textual history of the Pentateuch. Digital humanities tools are increasingly crucial in Pentateuchal studies, enabling data analysis, textual comparison, and visualization. Pentateuchal studies have evolved significantly, embracing interdisciplinary collaborations and global perspectives. These paradigms and future directions enrich one's understanding of the Pentateuch and its continued relevance in a diverse and interconnected world.

Prospects for Pentateuchal Studies

In light of all that, this survey has discussed Pentateuchal studies, which involve disciplines like biblical scholarship, theology, archaeology, linguistics, and literary analysis, and which has been influenced by source criticism, theological and religious perspectives, textual criticism, and interdisciplinary collaboration,

shedding light on shared cultural and literary themes, gender roles, social structures, and power dynamics in ancient Israel.

Prospects in this field will likely involve continued interdisciplinary research, technological advancements, and ongoing engagement with theological, interdisciplinary approaches, digital humanities, global perspectives, ethical considerations, and relevance to contemporary issues like social justice, ethics, and interfaith dialogue.

Therefore, the future of Pentateuchal studies will continue to be explored, but not without challenges, including the contentious questions on authorship and dating, historical accuracy, theological interpretations, and the complexity of texts. Despite these challenges, ongoing scholarship and interdisciplinary approaches offer promising prospects for the future of Pentateuchal studies. Since continuous moral and religious ethical questions exist, the Pentateuch is relevant to these conversations and debates, and its centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam fosters interfaith communication.

Conclusion

This survey on the contemporary trends and development of Pentateuchal studies has examined the emerging landscape of Pentateuchal studies, focusing on the methods, theories, and insights that have shaped the current understanding of the foundational text in the Hebrew Bible. It has examined various approaches, from source criticism to literary analysis, historical context, and intertextuality, to unravel the complexities of the Pentateuch with contemporary trends such as post-colonialism, feminist criticism, and ecological hermeneutics that have reshaped the discourse around the Pentateuch, contributing to understanding. It emphasized the importance of ongoing research and scholarship as discoveries and insights emerge, ensuring the continued relevance of Pentateuchal studies in the academic, religious, and cultural spheres. The goal is to provide a deeper understanding of the Pentateuch's significance and innovative approaches to engage with this ancient text in the modern world.

Integrating interdisciplinary perspectives in Pentateuchal studies, including feminist criticism, post-colonial readings, and ecological hermeneutics,

presents opportunities and challenges. Traditional methodologies often involve specific textual or historical aspects, making it difficult to maintain coherence in analysis. To overcome this, strategies include dialogue between scholars, blending diverse perspectives, identifying complementary aspects, and synthesizing insights. This approach enriches the understanding of the Pentateuch by offering multidimensional insights into gender dynamics, power structures, colonial influences, and ecological themes. A holistic interpretation transcends disciplinary boundaries and connects ancient texts with contemporary ethical, social, and environmental discourses. Understanding these dimensions within the Pentateuch contributes to its relevance in addressing modern societal concerns.

The Pentateuch is crucial in contemporary ethical, social, and cultural discourses. However, it faces challenges such as cultural and temporal divides, changing ethical frameworks, and balancing historical context. To overcome these, researchers must understand the text thoroughly, engage in ethical dialogue, and develop application frameworks. Balancing historical integrity is essential for preserving interpretation authenticity, avoiding misrepresentation, and reflecting human universals. Researchers can better understand the Pentateuch's relevance by ensuring interpretations remain faithful to the original historical context, avoiding misinterpretations, and identifying ethical principles that resonate with modern challenges. This requires a concerted effort within Pentateuchal scholarship, navigating methodological differences, interdisciplinary collaboration, and exploring the text's reception across diverse traditions. This will enrich interpretations, offer a more nuanced understanding, and facilitate its relevance in contemporary dialogues.

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Jesus's Encounter with The Samaritan Woman as a Model for Christians Engaging in Interreligious Dialogue

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Abstract

This article proposes a model for interreligious dialogue that might have more promise than previously applied models. This model uses Jesus's encounter with the Samaritan woman as an example. In this context this article encourages everyone, especially Christians, to take Jesus's approach as a new model for interreligious dialogue. Such a reading of this narrative counters those who interpret the Gospel of John as anti-Jewish. Prominent among them is Adele Reinhartz who believes that the text embodies and teaches interreligious hatred (2002). The first major section reviews different scholars 'views on the anti-Jewish interpretation of John. Next the critical issue of the history of the strained relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans is discussed. Then follows a look at the person of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, which highlights him as an example of interreligious dialogue. After that, the place and the kind of people needed for successful interreligious dialogue are outlined. The penultimate section looks at Jesus's encounter with the Samaritan woman in some detail. The article ends with a recommendation that invites everyone, especially Christians, to always be open to dialogue with other religions.

Introduction

In his inaugural address as president of Nigeria in 2015, Muhammadu Buhari made the compelling statement 'I belong to everybody, and I belong to nobody '(Ezeanya 2015). This statement was assuring that no one will be

discriminated against, thus providing a backdrop of thinking and ascertaining the oneness of everyone irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, tribe, and religion. Though coming from a particular region, culture, and religion, Buhari sees himself as one who is for the good of everyone despite their backgrounds. This seems to resonate with how Jesus was set to relate with the Samaritan woman who shared neither religious nor cultural background with him. The resonance is particularly apparent when one considers the patriarchal society of Jesus's time, the strained religious and cultural relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans, and the disciples looking to Jesus as an example. However, I think Jesus would rephrase Buhari's statement to say, 'I belong to everybody, and I belong to somebody'. This extraordinary character of the personality of Jesus transcends every religion, culture, background, and gender. This is the reason his encounter with the Samaritan woman makes a significant difference as a model of both interreligious and intercultural dialogue. This narrative contradicts the view held by some scholars that the Fourth Gospel promotes anti-Semitism. Conversely, the gospel shows Jesus as extraordinary, as some scholars point out. Representing these scholars, Harold W. Attridge (2019:21) said: 'The Gospel expresses their claims about the extraordinary status of Jesus', which is revealed in his miraculous works and significant encounters with people. He references Bultmann in support. Bultmann describes the Fourth Gospel as a collection of miracle stories that celebrated the power of divine man, whose discourses entirely defined his message that the revealer was the revelation (Attridge 2019:24).

It is within this framework that the gospel contradicts the position of some scholars who argue that the Fourth Gospel has an exclusive character. The most prominent voice among them is Adele Reinhartz, whose work *Befriending the Beloved Disciple* constructs different readings of the Fourth Gospel. She finds that a compliant reading of the Fourth Gospel identifies Jews as nonbelievers, thus excluding them from a relationship with God and the salvific grace of God/Jesus (Reinhartz 2002:99). Against this position, using a chapter from the Fourth Gospel,[1] I will attempt to deconstruct the idea that this gospel has an exclusive character that promotes the alienation of non-Christians. Through *Nostra Aetate*, the Roman Catholic church supported an irenic

[1] It might be fair to argue that what we find in John 4 represents the entire Johannine corpus.

approach to relating to non-Christian religions. Pope Paul VI in *Nostra Aetate* would encourage the church to relate to other religions in a more significant and pragmatic way that reflects the way Jesus would relate to people of other faiths and cultures. Within this framework and context, the Catholic church reveals a similar inclusive attitude to what we find in the Fourth Gospel and sets Christians an example. Considering this, the church further proclaims, and ever must proclaim, that Christ is 'the way and the truth and the life '(John 14:6, NIV), in whom humans may find the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to himself. To this effect, the Catholic church calls its sons and daughters to be the bearers of this truth when engaging in dialogue with other religions. The above quote from *Nostra Aetate* reflects all that Jesus's encounter with the Samaritan woman represents.

Jesus's initiation of the dialogue by requesting water from the Samaritan woman (John 4:7), and Jesus's endurance despite her initial reticence (4:9b),[2] reveal his character to us. Rather than taking offence, he stayed in the conversation and, eventually, a change of narrative ensued. He did not concern himself with the strained relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans or society's general attitude towards women, especially those considered to have low moral character. Peter F. Ellis (1984:69-70) calls Jesus's actions boundary-crossing:

> Jesus, as his manner of acting here indicates, is not concerned with rules of uncleanness (cf. Mark 7:1–15). Nor is he concerned about the impropriety of speaking with a woman—a matter that surprises His apostles (John 4: 27–28 NIV). As the Savior of the entire world, He is concerned with all men and women, regardless of social distinctions.

The phrase 'Savior of the whole world', with which Jesus is known in the Fourth Gospel (1:29), makes John 4 a veritable resource for Christians dialoguing with others.

[2] 'How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?' (John 4:9b).

From another perspective, Jesus's reaction and attitude give this encounter a theological character through the content of this conversation (Ellis 1984:70-71).

> If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water. (John 4:10)

At this point, Jesus reveals himself as the source of God's living presence to all persons, despite their backgrounds. Thus, he establishes himself as a saviour and God of all, as John's prologue also claims. In this narrative, Jesus leaves us an example for interreligious dialogue: to appreciate, value, and love one another. With this, let me turn to the issues raised here, beginning with the anti-Jewish narrative in the Fourth Gospel.

Anti-Jewish Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel

Scholars debate whether the Fourth Gospel has an anti-Jewish character or not. For some, its salvific point of view is exclusive, while some argue that it has an inclusive character. These two views are in opposition. Those who claim it has an anti-Jewish character point to chapter 8 of the gospel, where Jesus is allegedly referring the Jews as children of the devil (John 8:44). However, other scholars disagree with this by referencing the fourth chapter of the gospel to counter their position, as it highlights that salvation is from the Jews (John 4:22).

Unfortunately, some scholars did not see this as substantial enough to counter the perceived anti-Jewish character of the Fourth Gospel. At this point, it must be understood that most of these scholars have been influenced by Culpepper's contention that the Gospel creates a dangerous potential for anti-Semitism (Bieringer, Pollefeyt, and Vandecasteele-Vanneuville 2001:13). In its detailed discussion, the editors of the book *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel* pose five questions to substantiate Culpepper's claim. In doing this they try to convince the reader that denying the anti-Jewish element of the Fourth Gospel is impossible. They believe that the text of John's Gospel is 'intrinsically oppressive', that is, 'human sinfulness has in some way touched the core of biblical texts '(Bieringer, Pollefeyt, and Vandecasteele-Vanneuville

2001:13,18,32). Secondly, the texts are not revelatory, and thirdly, they reject the idea that a later redactor inserted the anti-Jewish text (Bieringer, Pollefeyt, and Vandecasteele-Vanneuville 2001:32). However, they are of the opinion that the gospel should not be reduced to its anti-Jewish elements, as 'the text projects an alternative world of all-inclusive love '(Bieringer, Pollefeyt, and Vandecasteele-Vanneuville 2001:37).

However, Dunn (2001:59) suggests an approach that is a shift from the positions of both schools of thought. According to him what we have is not an anti-Jewish polemic in the Fourth Gospel but an intra-Jewish polemic, in the sense that the fourth evangelist was warning his fellow Jews not to follow what was emerging as the dominant view of Judaism. In agreement with J. Louis Martyn, Culpepper (2001:81) further states that the Johannine anti-Jewish element is rooted in the historical conflict between the 'Johannine community and the Jewish synagogue', thus finding John to be thoroughly Jewish and trenchantly anti-Jewish. Diametrically opposed to all this is Motyer (in Köstenberger 2005), who believes that the destruction of the temple forms the basis for the Fourth Gospel. In the aftermath of this destruction, John presents Jesus as the 'locus of the presence of God in Israel and the focus of the means of atonement '(Köstenberger 2005:214).

This shows that among scholars there is by no means any agreement regarding the anti-Jewish polemic of the Fourth Gospel. But given the model of interreligious and intercultural dialogue I am proposing in this article, I think Motyer (Köstenberger 2005:214) has made a significant point that reveals Jesus as a distinctive character on whom everyone, including Jews, should focus their attention. This implies that, after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, Jesus is the living temple through whom the entire universe can worship God. Therefore, if Jesus has become the locus of God's temple worship, it implies that the *Ioudaioi* (Jews) in the Fourth Gospel should be understood in the context of history, where Palestinian Jews rejected Jesus as the messiah. The gospel recounts the escalating conflicts between the historical Jesus and the Jewish authorities of his day. Considering this, it would be wrong to present the text as anti-Jewish, though the gospel claims that there must be a recognition of Jesus as the messiah before the Jews can enter the kingdom of God. It should be noted that Nicodemus is a reference point. Nicodemus, who recognised Jesus as the rabbi who performs signs that show

that God is with him, was told by Jesus himself that no one can enter the kingdom of God except if he is born again (John 3:1-3,5).

This brings us back and affirms what I highlighted earlier: Jesus's encounter with the Samaritan woman is a manifestation of God's presence among his people. Jesus's encounter with the Samaritan woman affirms that everyone belongs to God. Next, I will briefly highlight the history of the strained relationship between the Jews and Samaritans to help readers to appreciate how revolutionary this encounter was, and to understand why this remains a model to follow, especially for Christians.

The History of the Strained Relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans

If someone reads this passage without its background, they might be left wondering why the Jews and Samaritans hated each other. This strained relationship has its equivalents in the modern world. Some examples include the hatred between Serbs and Muslims in contemporary Bosnia, the hostility between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, and the feuding between street gangs in Los Angeles or New York City. From a historical perspective, Gary Knoppers, using 2 Kings 17 as a key source, responds to the above question by saying that the ordinary understanding has been that Samaritans were taken to be foreigners. 'The Jews claimed that Samaritans were of foreign origin or at best had a mixed pedigree '(Knoppers 2013:3).[3] However, Knoppers says the poor relations between Jews and Samaritans have nothing to do with the Samaritans 'observance of their religious rituals or with genealogy, history, and blood (2013:3).

Josephus, the first-century AD historian, suggested that the Samaritans were Cuthites, the descendants of one of the five peoples presumed to have been imported into the land by the Assyrian authorities from Kuta in southern Babylonia (2 Kings 17:24). Knoppers observed that 'in rabbinic times, a minor tractate, *Kutim*, was devoted to the subject of the Samaritans '(2013:3). Using

[3] An idea that held sway for a long time was that the Samaritans were descendants of the polytheistic foreigners whom the Assyrians resettled in Samaria in the late eighth century BC to replace the departed Israelites.

the story of 2 Kings 17:25-28, some scholars have cited another rabbinic expression they say referred to Samaritans. The Samaritans are called 'lion proselytes 'as opposed to 'genuine proselytes'. According to Knoppers (2013:4),

> the usage plays on the story in which YHWH sends marauding lions among the foreign immigrants settling in Samaria because they did not worship [literally, fear] YHWH.[4]

This means that the foreign settlers did not voluntarily convert to Yahwism. Therefore, this circumstance casts some aspersions on the circumstances of their conversion. Considering this, Knoppers insists that one must apply rabbinic material, following the observation of Schiffman that the rabbinic dispute about lion converts, as opposed to true converts, is an Amoraic creation in reference to earlier Tannaitic disputes (Knoppers 2013:4).[5]

Some scholars, however, believe that the final rift between these two nations came about in the second century BC, with the destruction of the temple of Samaria by John Hyrcanus. His action demonstrates hatred and contempt for the whole Samaritan community, hence excluding them from Judaism (Bourgel 2016:506). Thus, it is easier to understand the backdrop of the strained relationship between the Jews and Samaritans in the time of Jesus. Given this background, it is important to discuss the person of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel to help the readers always strive to imitate his character as manifested in the event of his encounter with the Samaritan woman.

The Person of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel

A discussion about the person of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel is necessary to inspire and challenge the readers, and Christians in particular, on how to dialogue with others. As noted earlier, the Fourth Gospel paints a clear picture

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[4] For more insight on this, see Knoppers's (2013:4) analysis of y. Git. 43c; y. Qidd. 65b; b. B. Qam. 38b; b. Nid. 56b; b. Qidd. 75a-76a; b. Sanh. 85b.

[5] *Amoraic* refers to the Amoraim period of about 200-500 AD during which Jewish scholars conveyed the Oral Torah. They were primarily located in Babylon and Palestine. The Amoraim succeeded the Tannaim and their legal discussions and debates are codified in the Gemara.

of the kind of person Jesus was. Jesus's self-revelation is driven by his salvific mission and exhibits his divine power and authority. The prologue of the Fourth Gospel presents Jesus as the *Logos* that was in the beginning, was God, was with God, and through whom all things were made (John 1:1-4). The Fourth Gospel has a heightened Christology, clearly portraying Jesus as divine.

Within the framework of symbolism and signs, Paul Tillich (1962:301-303) stated that the Gospel of John conveys transcendence by using figurative language drawn from the nature of human experience. However, as argued by Dorothy A. Lee (2018:2), religious symbols convey a sense of divine mystery making it a realm that is indescribable. Symbolic significance portrays a reality that is beyond the capacity of everyday language to articulate, revealing and unfolding Jesus's glory and identity (Schnackenburg, 1968:1.82). When the symbols manifest themselves, they make the one who encounters them achieve some faith and understanding. Hence, they can be identified as the manifestation of miracles which John calls signs, thus making signs and symbols closely identical. Lee (2018:7) corroborates this as she claimed that signs (*semeia*) are evident in the miracle stories, which form the 'backbone of Jesus 'public ministry'. She further adds that the 'Semeia point to the central Johannine theology of glory revealed in the flesh, and they lead to faith ' (2018:9).

As these signs point to the revelation of the glory of Jesus in the flesh, they bring us to the 'I am 'sayings of Jesus, by which he draws every reader's attention to his identity. With these, he presented himself with concepts identifiable by human senses but that still manifest him as divine. When contemplating Jesus's divinity, one can understand that his encounter with the Samaritan woman marks the beginning of a new way of doing things, especially for Christians.

> If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water. (John 4:10)

Thus, it could be argued that 'if you knew the gift of God and who it is 'implies something new that breaks away from the old order, thus establishing a new

way of relating and winning the heart of the other in the event of misunderstanding, or argument.

Highlighting the person of Jesus in such a way that reflects his divinity and transcendental character in relation to this investigation points to what Jesus expects his followers to do. Jesus, though divine, had to humble himself, showing his followers the way to go when it concerns the unity of all persons created by God. We are to imitate the character of Jesus that he reveals in his treatment of the Samaritan woman. The next section will discuss the Catholic church's attempt at imitating Jesus when it comes to interreligious dialogue.

The Nature of Interreligious Dialogue

The work of dialogue has become important given the many frictions, controversies, disagreements, and altercations going on in our world today. The world needs dialogue politically, culturally, and religiously, though the religious dialogue seems to have raised greater concerns. Through interreligious dialogue, all religions can come to terms with each other and respect each other and so ensure unity and peace among religions. Christianity, Islam, and Judaism have been prevalent in interreligious dialogue. They are all considered Abrahamic religions since they all trace their lineage back to Abraham. For many centuries they have assumed superiority over each other. Against this backdrop, many thought leaders and religious bodies have engaged in interreligious dialogue at various times and places. Those worthy of mention include Nicholas of Cusa and Saint Francis of Assisi. However, the Catholic church officially opened formal dialogue with other religions on October 28, 1965, with Pope Paul VI's address *Nostra Aetate*.

In *Nostra Aetate*, the Catholic church speaks of Christianity as having a lot in common with Judaism and Islam. To that effect, she proclaims they should be recognised as those belonging to God's family, as part of the Abrahamic lineage. This document states:

> In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the church examines more closely her relationship to non-Christian religions. In her task of promoting unity and love

> among men, indeed among nations, she considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship. (Paul VI 1965:1)

The church, by this position, establishes the reason for dialogue as recognition of others as those created by God and so calls for unity of all (Paul VI 1965:2). Considering this, it invites its members to always be ready to enter dialogue with other religions.

> The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men (Paul VI 1965:2)

This position of the church speaks of her obedience to God through Jesus. The church has shown this committed obedience in diverse ways. Still, the most prominent among them is the establishment of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in 1988. This stemmed from the Secretariat for Non-Christians, which was instituted on Pentecost Sunday in 1964 by Pope Paul VI.

Another outstanding commitment of the church is seen in Pope John Paul II's World Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi on October 27, 1986. It has become a yearly affair that brings leaders of all religions together in Assisi for a day of prayer for peace in the world. The church by all this has shown commitment to recognition and respect for others, as Jesus exemplified during his encounter with the Samaritan woman. Let me turn to discuss Jesus's encounter with the Samaritan woman to help the readers understand why this model should be adopted in interreligious dialogue.

Jesus's Encounter with the Samaritan Woman: A Model for a Christian Interreligious Dialogue

In his encounter with the Samaritan woman, Jesus showed that as the incarnate *Logos*, he had an interest in the entirety of humanity from the start. This is clear from his initiation of the dialogue. 'When a Samaritan woman

came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink? '"(John 4:7). In *Ecclesia in Africa*, Pope John Paul II stated:

> From the beginning, it has been a characteristic of God to want to communicate. This he does by various means. He has bestowed being upon every created thing, animate or inanimate. He enters a relationship with human beings in an exceptional way. In many and various ways, God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days, he has spoken to us by a son (Heb 1:1–2). The Word of God is by nature word, dialogue, and communication. He came to restore, on the one hand, communication and relations between God and humanity and, on the other hand, that of people with one another. (1995:71)

This gives support to the idea that the mission of Jesus Christ, among other things, is to restore the lost friendship between God and humans and to reconcile them to one another. And in doing this, everyone can benefit from this mission. This gives us a clue why the structure and culture of the time did not deter him. With his actions, Jesus sets a new tone of dialogue, a new way of doing dialogue, and a new law that should guide our dialogues. At this point, let me highlight some virtues that emerged from this encounter.

Humility

Anyone with status like Jesus in a world that privileges patriarchy would find it difficult to speak with an insignificant and immoral person such as the Samaritan woman. However, he showed that everyone has a dignity that cannot be taken away, despite their cultural and religious differences. This is part of what the theology of the incarnate *Logos* in John's prologue means. Jesus left us an example to emulate. Recall that in the Gospel of Matthew he asked his disciples to learn from him for he is meek and humble in heart (Matt. 11:29). If they let go of their egos, Christians will assert themselves as the salt of the earth and the light of the world which Jesus demands them to be (Matt. 5:13-14).

Jesus, being God, did not need anyone to give him water, but because of his mission to restore humanity to God, he engaged with the Samaritan woman.

In humility, he emptied himself (Phil. 2:6-11) and came to dwell among us (John 1:14). Joseph Kuaté (2018:36) surmises that

> God humbles (lowers) God-self, not only to the level of creation, but also to the level of an interlocutor who is full of cultural, racial, and even sexual prejudices to make the dialogue fruitful.

Jesus showed that dialogue requires a huge sacrifice, self-emptying, and unreserved recognition and respect for the other's dignity. It is a course that he expects Christians to champion in our world today.

Patience

The Samaritan woman's reaction towards Jesus when he requested water indicates pre-existent tribal, cultural, and religious issues, as earlier pointed out.

> The Samaritan woman said to him, 'You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink? '(For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) (John 4:9)

This reaction was heavy enough to constitute an obstacle to the mission of Jesus. But, because he holds every soul in high esteem, he did not give up. This shows that every person is precious in his sight and thus deserves salvation. Instead of getting offended, he lovingly continued to dialogue with the Samaritan woman. He cut across cultural and historical barriers. Only people who are patient and enduring can overcome the challenges emanating from religious and cultural differences. If we do this what differentiates us can become a guide to establishing a fruitful dialogue. Mahmoud Ayoub (2007:118) understands this when he says that what separates us should serve as a beacon of light that guides us to God. At this point, Jesus's patient and enduring approach should be a guide and inspiration to everyone, especially Christians, to make a meaningful stride in dialoguing with others. This is a challenge for Christians engaging in dialogue.

Value

Jesus shows that he values all humans through his encounter with the Samaritan woman. This attitude is in stark contrast to the sense of superiority

that might arise in the event of Christians dialoguing with other religions. One might also be able to use this to argue against the alleged anti-Jewish element of the Fourth Gospel, though it might not be sufficient. Jesus patiently engaged the woman:

> The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water. 'He told her, 'Go, call your husband, and come back.' 'I have no husband, 'she replied. (John 4:15-17)

Leaning on this, Christians are expected to look beyond appearances and superficialities in the event of interreligious and intercultural dialogue. Christians in this way can inspire their dialogical partners and may end up sharing their faith. Pope John Paul II lends credence to this in *Redemptoris Missio* when he says 'Faith is strengthened when it is given to others '(1990:2). This resonates well in Jesus's encounter with the Samaritan woman.

Women in Dialogue

This is the most remarkable breakthrough in this encounter. It was obvious that Jesus stepped on the toes of many people, especially his disciples, as this encounter took place in a highly patriarchal society. 'Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman '(John 4:27). Jesus went against the religious and cultural expectations of the time. He did allow inequality between males and females but opened the way for the accommodation of both sexes in formal dialogic activity.

Unfortunately, people, especially Christians, have not been faithful to this. Women were consciously and inadvertently excluded from formal dialogue in our world, including for four decades at the Henry Martyn Institute of Hyderabad, India. During her informal get-together with a fellow member of this institute, Diane D'Souza raised this question: 'What if […] we created space for women to share what interfaith means from their perspective? '(Frederiks 2012:1). This advocates for women's inclusion in a formal dialogue. Considering this, Helene Egnell, who conducted her PhD research at the institute, stated:

> We wondered who set the boundaries […] we saw building interfaith relationships as 'crossing boundaries audaciously.' And as we struggled, I couldn't help but reflect that in four decades of dialogue meetings organized by men, no one had spent time questioning, challenging, or expressing their discomfort with the founding categories themselves; most accepted them as the very entry point of interfaith dialogue. It was here that I began to catch a glimpse of the new insight women would bring through their very way of being and knowing and doing. (2006:100)

From the precedence, Christianity is challenged to advance a dialogical meeting that is inclusive in a manner that suggests that everyone has a spark of divinity and humanity. This corroborates Pope Francis's advice to people to avoid the economy of exclusion (1990:53).

The Place and Participants of Interreligious Dialogue

It is necessary to give some thought to the place of dialogue and the people who will engage in dialogue. This is important since the aim of the dialogue is not anything less than peaceful coexistence, mutual understanding, and reconciliation. To this effect, the dialogue might not hold in an agitated environment or in the presence of those who are not open to engaging in dialogue. For instance, the reaction of the disciples of Jesus when they came back from where he sent them gives an idea of why Jesus sent them away before initiating a conversation with the Samaritan woman (John 4:7,27). Thus, the fruitfulness of dialogue relies so much on the place of dialogue and the people involved. In the case of this encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, the conversation takes place at the well. I can recall in traditional African villages how a well is a meeting place for many people, where information is exchanged. So, one can imagine why Jesus headed to the well at the time he encountered the woman. There was no interference or interruption during the conversations.

Given this scenario, a dialogue will be fruitful when it takes place in a peaceful environment and at the same time when those with liberal minds are involved. Therefore, one important lesson this encounter has is to be conscious of the

place where dialogical meetings take place, and the kind of people that engage in the dialogue. Religious fanatics and intolerant fundamentalists are not fit for a dialogue. To allow such people is to risk expressions of superiority. In her book *Christians, Muslims, and Mary: A History*, Rita George-Tvrtković hinted at the possibility of ensuring fruitful and efficient dialogue, using Middle Eastern religious issues to corroborate this claim (2018:143-144). At the time, she recommended Lebanon as a place where an interreligious dialogue should take place since it is the site of great religious diversity.[6] This, for me, is an excellent example of thinking about a place of dialogue and the people expected to engage in the dialogue.

Our Responsibility: My Recommendation.

Adele Reinhartz, in her work *Befriending the Beloved Disciple* (2002), constructed different reading approaches to the Fourth Gospel (compliant, resistant, sympathetic, and engaged), through which she provided us with models of engaging in dialogue. From what she espoused in these approaches, it was clear that compliant and resistant methods would frustrate any thought of dialogue, while sympathetic or engaged readings are sure to be fruitful when dialoguing with other religions, traditions, and cultures. She says,

> In constructing a compliant reading, I have come face to face with the gift of the Beloved disciple and its life-transforming implications for my own life. But I have also faced the possibility that accepting the gift exacts an ethical price. Accepting the Beloved Disciple's gift entails the denigration of and hostility

[6] In this work, George-Tvrtković (2018:143-144) highlights important places where Christians and Muslims shared devotions in different shrines of Mary across the world to establish that Mary can be a bridge that can connect the two religions in the project of dialogue. She points out how Lebanon is an exceptional country among the Middle Eastern nations for its high religious diversity. It has Shi'a Muslims, Sunni Muslims, Maronites, Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Protestants, and Druze who, despite all their differences, made the Feast of Annunciation (March 25) a national feast. On such a feast day, you find all these religions celebrating this feast together in Harissa, near Beirut, at the shrine called Our Lady of Lebanon. Lebanon, by this, becomes a perfect exemplar of a good place for dialogue and the people, a good model of those expected to engage in dialogue.

> toward those who fail to accept the gift. […] A resistant reading creates another Other- Beloved Disciple- by denying the validity of the worldview that he espouses. As a sympathetic reader, I focus on the matters that might unite the Beloved Disciple and myself while ignoring for the time being those that might separate us […] for the time being, a final attempt at friendship by naming and addressing the major issues that stand between the Beloved Disciple and myself. (Reinhartz 2002:99,131)

Reinhartz is not denying the relevant message contained in the Fourth Gospel, but she is just raising important questions that can drive a theological debate or conversation that might douse tension surrounding alleged anti-Jewish narrative in the gospel. Thus, in her work *Cast out of the Covenant: Jews and Anti-Judaism in the Gospel of John* (2018), Reinhartz evolves a principle that aims at highlighting the core message of the gospel. She developed this alongside the implied author, of an implied reader, Alexandra. However, without denying the authorial situatedness of Reinhartz, the implied reader is appealed to to understand that the network of the gospel's ideas and language is not part of an abstract and contingent intellectual system (Lieu 2020:134). In light of this, the text becomes for the readers, an 'intentional act of persuasion', which has as its goal to help the readers recognize their own longing for life and freedom, which is met through the person and work of Jesus and through the appropriation of the offer of life and the transformation of self that follows. (Lieu 2020:134)

Bringing this into conversation with Jesus's encounter with the Samaritan woman, it becomes clear that the encounter aimed at not only dialogical achievement, but establishing a missionary strategy that will help those encountered to discover the extent of their relationship with God and work towards the transformation of self.

Given this context, the third and fourth reading which Reinhartz suggested in *Befriending the Beloved Disciple* (the sympathetic and engaged readings) provides a model that will challenge every Christian to sacrificially engage with other religions and cultures to establish a relationship with them, leading to fruitful dialogue. This approach is taken based on the humility, love, perseverance, patience, and consciousness of the other's background and

culture that Jesus showed when he encountered the Samaritan woman. So, adopting these third and fourth readings, and at the same time seeing them resonating in Jesus's encounter with the Samaritan woman, I would like to recommend that readers always pay close attention to such approaches as these in the work of interreligious dialogue. The preceding backdrop implies that for a dialogue to be fruitful, the participants must have such character traits as patience, perseverance, and humility, and must be ready to see themselves in the other. When there is friendship with others, the dialogue will be easy – this is what Jesus's encounter with the Samaritan woman represents in all its ramifications. Considering this, it becomes a paradigm for Christians dialoguing with other religions.

Conclusion

Having come to this point, I wish to reiterate that the world still needs peace, even though various dialogical meetings have taken place at various times across the globe. Therefore, my position in this article is that in every dialogue, if we want it to be fruitful, we must learn from Jesus's encounter with the Samaritan woman. Therefore, while I present it as a model, it implies that Christians, more than the adherents of other religions, are expected to adopt this approach. As followers of Jesus, they are called to make sacrifices for the sake of peace and the redemption of souls in the event of dialogue. This encounter does not only provide a model for a successful interreligious and intercultural dialogue, but it also provides a way for peaceful coexistence and compatibility to continue in a multireligious society. To this end, this encounter with the Samaritan woman proclaims a message to the world, especially to Christians: 'A new command I give you '(John 13:34). This suggests a new way Christians should follow in the event of dialogue with other religions.

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Biblical Concept of Shepherding and its Significance for Pastoral Ministry in the African Context

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Abstract

One of the metaphors for portraying pastoral leadership in Christianity is the imagery of the shepherd. Africans have a rich cultural heritage and understanding of shepherding, which also informs their perception and expectations of a pastor as a shepherd. The contemporary existential challenges Africans face, especially Christians, also demand a shepherding role. Reports from mass/social media suggest that some pastors could not live up to their shepherding responsibilities. A descriptive method was employed to ascertain this perception using the Biblical data, existing literature, and survey responses from 167 Africans – comprising church members, leaders, student pastors in theological schools, and church pastors. This paper explores the task of shepherding and its significance for pastoral ministry in Africa. It affirms God as the great shepherd and Jesus as the good shepherd. The research shows that shepherding is not limited to pastors but is also expected from parents and Christian leaders, as 76% of the respondents opined. A called pastor is required to have a loving capacity and selfless character. Their responsibilities entail feeding the flock with God's word, caring for sick members, looking for backsliders, and bringing lost sinners to the fold. The research discovered a need for shepherding to be demonstrated more through teaching, discipleship, and visitation, as suggested by 97.6%. It thus underscores leading God's people to absolute submission as the ultimate task of shepherding.

Introduction

Numerous metaphors have been used to portray leadership in a religious milieu. One of such imageries conventionally employed in Christianity and particularly by the Baptist denomination in Africa is the shepherd. The concept of shepherding does not emerge from a vacuum but indisputably has Biblical antecedents and theological explanations. Africans have a rich cultural heritage and understanding of shepherding, which also informs their perception and expectations of the pastor as a shepherd. The contemporary existential challenges Africans face, especially Christians, also demand a shepherding role. Reports from the mass media and social media suggest that some pastors could not live up to their shepherding responsibilities. The significance of shepherding in the context of Africans and its antecedents necessitates this research.

Attempts that have been made to describe the meaning of shepherding and its varied applications include the relationship between a leader and the led, as well as the responsibilities of the leader. Previous studies have also explored Biblical exegesis of selected passages on shepherding, considered a general review and development of the concept, and carried out an overview of the functions of shepherds in the light of pastoral ministry. This paper, however, presents a treatment of the idea of shepherding by combining theological and Biblical inputs with statistics obtained from Africans. Hopefully, this approach would make the discourse more holistic and relevant for the church in Africa. This article, therefore, argues that an integrative approach to the shepherding metaphor is highly significant for a more comprehensive understanding and application towards a highly effective pastoral ministry in the African context.

This paper, therefore, examines the Biblical background and denotations of shepherding, reviews some theological explanations and applications of the shepherd imagery, and consequently discusses the significance of shepherding requirements and responsibilities for pastoral ministry. In succinct terms, the research finds out the perception and expectations of Africans about the shepherding roles of pastors. Answers were elicited and provided for the following research questions: What categories of people do you perceive to be shepherds from a religious context? What are the most expected qualities of a

pastor-shepherd in the African context? How significant are the shepherding roles to the existential challenges of Africans? To what extent is the pastoral ministry effective in the shepherding roles?

A descriptive method was employed to achieve these research objectives. A questionnaire was designed to survey the perception and expectations of African Christians about the shepherd metaphor and the shepherding ministry. The sample population of the respondents, which includes committed church members, student-pastors in theological schools, church workers and leaders, and serving church pastors, is 167.

The Biblical Concept of Shepherding

A shepherd generally refers to a sheep keeper who tends, feeds, or guards the flock. Shepherding in ancient Mediterranean culture has positive and negative backgrounds (Fowler 1991). Both perspectives are worthy of evaluation.

Shepherds and Shepherding in Ancient Times

Shepherds were notable persons in ancient times and Biblical accounts. Shepherding was then a common vocation in the unenclosed country of Palestine (Fowler 1991:1-4). The time-consuming and burdensome duties of a shepherd usually entail leading the flock out from the fold in the morning, marching ahead of them to the green pasture for food, watching them all day, taking care of the sheep to ensure that none of them stray away, searching for any sheep that eludes his watch and wanders away from the rest, and seeking diligently till he finds it and brings it back. The shepherd also has to supply the sheep regularly with water for this purpose; he guides them to some running streams or wells dug in the wilderness and furnished with troughs. He brings the flock home to the fold and counts them as they pass under the rod at the door to ensure that none of the sheep is lost. His labours always transcend the sunset time as he has to guard the fold through the dark hours from the attack of wild beasts, or the cunning attempts of the raiding thief (David 2006).

A glimpse of the onerous tasks of a shepherd is noticeable in the declaration of David's experience in 1 Samuel 17:34-35:

But David said to Saul, 'Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it.'(NIV).

It is expedient to note however that Abel, the son of Adam, was the first shepherd recorded in the Bible (Gen. 4:2). The narrative account indicates that shepherding was a prominent occupation of the Israelites in the early patriarchal age. Some other good examples of shepherds in the Torah include Abraham (Gen. 12:16), Rachel (Gen. 29:9), Jacob (Gen. 30:31-40), the twelve sons of Jacob (Gen. 47), and Moses (Ex. 3:1) (Aranoff 2014). The vocation of shepherding was still a means of livelihood in the time of Jesus. Hence, the shepherds watching their flocks by night were among the first to receive the message of Jesus's birth and visit him (Luke 2:8–20) (Resane 2014). The significance of a shepherd in God's redemptive plan and the value of their work can be deduced from these historical antecedents.

Shepherds were treated with a disdain that made them seem irrelevant and insignificant in the society during ancient times. Resane (2014) also notes that while Biblical history unfolded among the settlers in the ancient Near East and the subsequent patriarchs, cultivation took pre-eminence and shepherding fell from favour and was assigned to those in the low social ranks of society such as the younger sons, hirelings, and slaves. Farmers such as in Egypt even hated shepherds (Gen. 46:34). David, the youngest of the eight children of Jesse, was saddled with task of a shepherd as recorded in 1 Samuel 16:11-13 indicating the despised status of a shepherd, which became widespread as a result of the disposition and influence of the Canaanites on the Israelites.

In spite of the fact that many biblical heroes were shepherds, some critics often identify keeping of sheep as a job for an ignoramus which a young boy and a dog could undertake. On the contrary,

> Biblical commentators write of shepherding as a task leading to solitude and contemplation, thus making it an appropriate lifestyle for a religious individual. (Aranoff 2014:36)

This implies that piety and devotion are necessary elements in the character of a pastor. However, the pastor's devotion to a private life of meditation does not isolate him from the flock of God whom he is called to shepherd.

Denotations of Shepherds in the Old Testament

The Old Testament does not only refer to persons who guide a flock of sheep as shepherds but also use the designation for monarchical leaders (2 Sam. 5:2) and God himself (Isa. 40:11, Ps. 23:1). The prophetic literature refers to national leaders as shepherds (Ezek. 34:1, Jer. 23:1). The title of shepherd was used commonly for deities, leaders, and kings in the Old Testament era in which many of the people were familiar with nomadic life. The greatest leaders of the people, Moses (Isa. 63:11) and David (Ps. 78:70-72), were also shepherds (Resane 2014; Tidball 1997).

God's covenant relationship seems more prominent with people who were shepherds by profession. The apparent opposition these covenant people face has also led to some allegorical interpretations with the theme of the suffering righteous shepherd. Examples of this suffering shepherd motif include Abel the shepherd, whose offering was accepted by God, but who was murdered by Cain. Esau also attempted to kill Jacob, a shepherd who, having received Esau's birthright, also received Isaac's blessing in place of Esau and had to run for his dear life (Hamilton 2014). The theme, which reflects in the life of Moses and continues through David, found ultimate fulfilment in Jesus. Hamilton cites Laniak's observation that 'Moses and David are prototypical leaders' (2014:27). More importantly, YHWH (the Hebrew name for God; its equivalents are 'Yahweh' and 'Jehovah') reveals himself as the true shepherd ruler of Israel. Laniak (2006) elaborates on this statement when he writes, 'Prototypes are exemplars for phenomenological categories, ideal members that possess the primary attributes by which we define a class'(32). He goes on to say that there are two prototypical shepherd rulers in biblical literature, Moses and David. To use theological language, these figures 'typologically' anticipate the role of Christ as the ultimate shepherd. (2006:35)

Like Joseph, David was shepherding his father's flock, and his father sent him to see about his older brothers (1 Sam. 17:12-15) (Hamilton 2014:27-28). Gan (2010) also attests to the fact that Yahweh is the professed shepherd who led the Israelites like a flock through the wilderness (Ps. 77:21) and subsequently

passed shepherding responsibility to his earthly shepherds such as David (2 Sam. 5:2,7:7-8).

Psalm 23 is one of the passages that focus on the shepherd motif with particular reference to God as the shepherd leader of his people (Adamo 2018). David's critical reflection on the lessons learned from leading and guiding the sheep informed his description of the Lord's care, courage, and guidance for him ('The Lord is my shepherd' (Ps. 23:1)) and the Israelites.

> The Hebrew word for shepherding is often translated as 'feeding' as it is impressed by the next statement, 'I shall not want' or 'I shall lack nothing' – alluding to the fact that the Psalmist means he will lack neither in this life nor in the next. (Resane 2014:1)

This implies the divine provision of the necessary food for physical nourishment (Deut. 2:7).

An explanation in the standard *midrash* is that shepherding is a prelude and was meant to train and prepare Moses and David for the ultimate task of leading the Israelites as prophet and king respectively. *Exodus Rabbah* (2:2) also 'presents God observing the leadership capabilities of both Moses and David through their shepherding skills (Aranoff 2014:37). Their excellent skill of caring for the sheep might have contributed to the higher calling they received from God to shepherd his flock - the people of Israel.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel are two prophets in the scripture who extensively referenced the shepherd leadership model. Ezekiel chooses a shepherd metaphor for kingship that was well-known throughout the ancient Near East, from Babylon to Egypt. God did not only decry the false shepherds of Israel in Ezekiel 34 but also unfolds the responsibilities of true shepherds as searching and bringing back the strayed, binding up the injured as well as strengthening the weak (Ezek. 34:4-16a) (Adeyemo 2006). This framework of shepherding roles is still pertinent to contemporary pastoral ministry.

Shepherding Connotations in the Gospels (Teaching of Christ)

Resane (2014) expounds the close connection between references to Old Testament shepherds and New Testament (NT) spiritual leaders. The concept

of tending or shepherding emanates from the NT Greek root *bo* (feed, feeding) and *boter* (a herder), which also gives the meaning of feeding or nourishing. The synoptic gospel writers express this as they relate to the people tending the pigs in Decapolis. The Greek word *poimen,* which means 'shepherd', occurs six times in John's gospel alone and sixteen times in the entire New Testament. It was used extensively in John 10:1-18 where Jesus refers to himself as 'the good shepherd [who] lays down his life for the sheep' (v. 11).

In using the shepherd imagery, Jesus identified himself as the shepherd of Israel who would have the role of David as shepherd-king. The imagery also portrays his deity and messianic role (Blackaby 2008). A good shepherd cares for the sheep even to the point of death (John 10:13) so that he may present them unto God without blemish (Still 1996). Jesus demonstrated this sacrificial nature of the shepherd when he went to the cross in absolute submission to God's will; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, thus fulfilling the prophecy in Isaiah 53:4 (Beke 2012). Jesus Christ is also regarded as the proverbial shepherd who sought for the lost sheep until he found it. The parable of the lost sheep thus corroborates Jesus's assertion in Luke 19:10 that he has come to seek and to save those who are lost (Stott 2016). In essence, the good shepherd entered the Holy of Holies like the Jewish high priest to speak to the father on behalf of the sheep (Michaels 2010).

The relationship between Christ and his disciples was illustrated with the shepherd-sheep connection in which Jesus, the "great shepherd of the sheep" (Heb. 13:20), used the qualities of a good shepherd to teach important lessons and spoke of himself as one "who knew his sheep and would lay down his life for them" (John 10:7-18). Jesus committed the assignment of feeding his sheep to Peter after his resurrection (John 21:1) while Paul addressed the Ephesians' elders as shepherds over the flock, that is, the church (Acts 20:28).

Lessons about Shepherding in the Epistles

Paul the apostle used the shepherd imagery as a link between the works of a pastor and that of a teacher in Ephesians 4:11 (Tidball 1997). Simon Peter, a disciple of Jesus, whom the resurrected Christ charged with the task of feeding his sheep, aptly referred to Christ as the chief shepherd. In his ultimate use of this biblical imagery, Jesus was recognised as the owner and true pastor of his flock (1 Pet. 2:25,5:2,4) from whom all other pastors can learn the task of

shepherding, being the perfect model. The sheep can, therefore, repose their confidence in Christ who will never fail even if the earthly shepherds fail. The shepherd motif was also used by Peter, who is a wise and devoted shepherd, to portray the responsibilities of his fellow elders and the pitfalls to avoid. 'They are not to serve grudgingly, but willingly, not greedily but eagerly; not arrogantly, but as examples' (Tidball 1997:138-139). He also encouraged the elders to be devoted to the welfare of the flock without the motive of personal earthly gain but in obedience to the chief shepherd who will reward them exceedingly. Mark Overstreet (2013) and J. R. Beke (2012) among many other scholars also attest to the fact that Jesus is not just the good shepherd but the chief shepherd.

The Shepherd Metaphor in a Theological Context

The field of pastoral theology has produced a number of articles on the person and work of a shepherd. This paper, however, contributes to the descriptive usage of 'shepherd' in Christian religion and its metaphorical equivalence to the leader or church pastor, and reiterates its significance in pastoral care and counselling.

Representation of God as the Good and Great Shepherd

According to Rodgers,

> the metaphor of shepherd is often used to provide a biblical understanding of the functions and role of the pastor. (2010:2)

The shepherd imagery is valuable in pastoral care as a reflection of the pastor's role as leader, provider, and protector in contrast to the bad, uncaring, and worthless shepherds. The imagery also represents God as the good shepherd who cares for his people and a metaphorical illustration of the character and nature of the compassionate and just God (O'Kennedy 2009). Rodgers (2010) affirmed the crucial record in Psalm 23 and Ezekiel 34 as connected to pastoral care; he also identified the need to exercise caution not to simply correlate the work of God described in these passages to the role and function of the pastor in the twenty-first century or of contemporary leaders. In succinct terms,

> The primary concern of the shepherd metaphor is not a prescription of pastoral functions, but description of God Himself as revealed in the incarnation of Christ as the 'Good Shepherd' (Jn. 10:11); the 'one Shepherd' (Jn. 10:16; Ezek. 34:23; 37:24); the 'great Shepherd' (Heb. 13:20). The metaphor of shepherd in the Old Testament is generally an anthropomorphic representation of Yahweh. (Rodgers 2010:2)

This connotes that the biblical metaphor of a shepherd in the Old Testament is a key pointer to the perfect example of Christ the great and chief shepherd in the New Testament.

Keener remarks that while most Christological imagery texts are associated with God, other texts that employ the shepherd imagery for the church have the 'biblical images of shepherds as human leaders of God's people' (1997:1092). Though shepherds are used as natural analogies for rulers and leaders, the Biblical portrait is used primarily for God by the Israelites to denote his leadership, protection, and commitment to his covenant people. Hence, pastors have a perfect example in the life and ministry of Jesus who reveals the character of God, the great shepherd.

Reiteration of the Leadership Roles of a Pastor

Still (1996) explicitly describes a pastor as a shepherd who leads God's flock to green pastures. He aptly refers to a pastor as an under-shepherd of the flock of God whose task entails caring for the sick members and looking for those who have gone astray for restoration. Pastoring is an act of pasturing in which the Christian shepherd fattens the sheep (the congregation) through their consecration to make them suitable as an acceptable sacrifice before God. This goal, which may be accomplished through teaching, preaching, praying, counselling, visitation among other functions, will be subsequently discussed in this paper.

The pastor is called to feed the sheep even if the sheep, who are essentially members of his churches, do not want to be fed with the word of God (Still 1996:8). Jesus's teaching about the laws of the kingdom of God, popularly known as the Sermon on the Mount, is regarded as food for the sheep. Gan asserts that 'the metaphor of the shepherd is an illustration of love and care

for the flock' (2010:12). This is why God the shepherd-king condemned the unrighteous shepherds who failed to care for the people, refused to strengthen the weak, and neglected the sick and the injured in Ezekiel 34:4 and Zechariah 11:16. He also suggested that a righteous shepherd will search for the straying sheep; this is in consonance with God's tender care for his people (Ezek. 34:4-6,8, Zech. 11:16).

Shepherding has been described as a crucial task of overseeing the flock of God. This informed Young's identification of the assignments of pastoral leaders as nurturing, leading, healing, correcting, and protecting the members of a church (no date:3). Their tasks as shepherds are also dependent on their knowledge about the nature, life, resources, functions, and tasks of God's flock. The flock of God should be seen as the household of God and the habitation of the Spirit whose life is not only rooted in Christ but also receives from Christ and grows in him to nourish other members of the body of Christ. While the functions of God's flock are entrenched in glorifying God, growing to maturity and gospel proclamation, its tasks include worshipping God, nurturing, and evangelism. The resources for discharging the responsibilities are basically the word of God, the spirit of God, prayer, and spiritual gifts (Young no date:4-5).

The Depiction of God's People as Sheep

Petersen (2003) opines that the metaphor of sheep was used throughout the Bible to describe God's people as defenceless animals who lack the sharp teeth of a wolf, the slashing claws of a bear, the outer protection of a turtle, the speed of a cheetah, and the cunning of a fox. The Church, being a flock of sheep, is being cared for and secured by Jesus the good shepherd, the master and model shepherd who calls men and women to be under-shepherds of the flock (Petersen 2003). In addition to this shepherd-sheep relationship, the Johannine text (John 10) also reiterated the Old Testament idea of the almighty Jehovah God as 'shepherd' (Isa. 40:10-11, Ps. 23:1-4).

It is imperative to reiterate that pastors and church leaders are accountable as under-shepherds and stewards to God, the great shepherd, who assigned them the task of feeding and nurturing the sheep among other functions (Jer. 3:15). It has been observed, however, that church members who are to be nurtured as sheep have been abused and exploited by many shepherds who

claim to be God-called pastors. The recovery and restoration of such sheep after being spiritually abused, emotionally shattered, or sometimes physically wounded, is usually a difficult and long process (Visser and Dreyer 2013; Damiani 2002). Hence, a pastor who has strayed away from God, the great shepherd, cannot be a good shepherd to fellow sheep among whom he/she was privileged to be called as priest (Heb. 5:1-5).

While most pastors today hold a professional, institutionalised office as shepherds, the background of the profession in the Bible and the metaphoric usage of it are not usually identified with formal education. The contemporary discourse on orality has it that

> approximately seventy thousand evangelical churches have been planted, and more than forty thousand churches are being led and shepherded by pastors without formal theological/seminary background and training (Abraham 2014:29)

This is not to jettison the significance of training even in an informal setting for effective shepherding. These pastor-shepherds who minister among traditional ethnic groups share the gospel of Jesus Christ simply and relationally, using storytelling to teach and explain Biblical truths.

This type of informal training that promotes oral strategies is now finding relevance in some African theological institutions; it had earlier been evident among founders and leaders of African-instituted churches. Orality has been introduced into theological education through the use of publications such as *Contextualisation of Expository Preaching: Engaging Orality for Effective Proclamation in Africa* (2018) by Ezekiel Ajibade and *Orality and Theological Training in the 21st Century: A Book on Digitoral Learning* (2016) by Jay Moon among others. Research works have also identified that carrying out pastoral ministry activities through oral strategies is an effective means of nurturing, counselling, discipleship, and evangelism in the modern generation. This includes the use of drama, Bible storying, or storytelling for teaching, preaching, discipleship, and evangelisation of both oral learners and congregations of literates. Pastoral care of victims of violence has also been

done effectively through storytelling (Dobbs 2018; Bush 2015; Metzger 2015; Willis and Evans 2004).

Survey and Research Questions

A survey was conducted among 167 African Christians to ascertain the perception and expectations of African Christians about the shepherd metaphor**.** The demography of the respondents is presented in the table below.

Nationality or Region of Respondents	**Frequency**	**Percentage**	**Cumulative**
South South, South East, or South West Nigeria	137	82.0	82.0
North Central, North East or North West Nigeria	24	14.4	96.4
Ghana, Cameroun, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire	6	3.6	100.0
	167	100.0	100.0
Status or Position in Church			
Church Pastors	81	48.5	48.5
Student Pastors, Associate Pastors, Church Leaders	52	31.1	79.6

Church Members and Church Workers	34	20.4	100.0
	167	100.0	100.0

The questionnaire was designed as a Google form and was sent to different WhatsApp groups and to email addresses of prospective respondents. The responses were collated and analysed by Google form and presented in categorised form as shown in the table above. From the table, it is expedient to note that about 96.4% of the respondents cut across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria, where this research was carried out. Citizens of Ghana, Cameroun, Togo, and Côte d'Ivoire are also represented in the survey. This means the African Christians' perspective and expectations can be generalised for the whole continent. While 48.5% of the respondents are church pastors, 31.1% are student pastors, associate pastors, or church leaders such as deacons. The remaining 20.4% are committed church members serving as Sunday school or discipleship teachers, choir members, theological educators, denominational workers, or unit leaders. It is assumed that the relatively wide range of respondents also lends some credibility to the survey result. A quick overview of the research questions, as inferred from the respondents, is presented below.

Categories of people perceived to be shepherds from a religious context

The first research question seeks to find out the categories of people African Christians perceive to be shepherds. From the findings, it can be inferred that though pastors are usually regarded as shepherds, parents and other Christian leaders are expected to possess shepherding qualities and should thus be portrayed as shepherds. The survey findings corroborate this hypothesis, as 76% affirm that parents, Christian leaders, and pastors are all expected to have shepherding qualities and carry out responsibilities, while 22.2% regard only pastors as shepherds. This connotes that a pastor who is not a good parent is not likely to be a good leader or does not portray exemplary leadership.

A shepherd metaphor points to one who cares and supplies the need of others (caregiver), one who guides and guards others about issues of life

(guide/coach), and one who provides direction and counsel to a place of abundance and satisfaction (mentor). The metaphor of a shepherd encompasses the three imageries of a caregiver, guide/coach, and mentor. This was affirmed by 81.4% of the respondents in the research survey. In contrast, only 18.6% identified one or two of the imageries as adequate representations of a shepherd. From Biblical and contemporary examples, the moral qualities or defects of a pastor or Christian leader as a parent often reflect in their pastoral ministry or leadership, giving it credence or discredit. Biblical examples include prophets Eli and Samuel.

Expected Qualities of a Pastor (Shepherd)

The second research question attempts to identify the most expected qualities of a pastor-shepherd in the African context. A shepherd cannot carry out their tasks as caregiver, guide/coach, and mentor without one or more of these three essential qualities: calling experience, loving capacity, and sacrificial, selfless character. Assessing the respondents' perspectives on this research survey shows that 40.7% considered love and selflessness or either of the two to be basic qualities and capacities of a shepherd. By inference, pastors (parents and Christian leaders) can carry out their pastoral or shepherding responsibilities effectively towards transforming society through love. This opinion aligns with the scriptural truth of love and selflessness as a mark of true disciples of Christ (John 13:34-35). The qualities of love and selflessness of a pastor will also equip them to care for grieving or vulnerable church members without exploiting them.

In addition, 59.3% of the respondents opine that a shepherd should have a sense of calling with the other two qualities. The seeming failure of parenting and poor stewardship of influence by Christians at home, at the marketplace, and in contemporary society might not be unconnected to this negligence or ignorance of their calling as shepherds. The genuineness and commitment to the calling experience also seem to fade among some contemporary African pastors, thus leading to scandals and materialistic tendencies instead of societal impact and transformation through their leadership.

The next section addresses the other two research questions: How significant are the shepherding roles to the existential challenges of Africans? To what extent is the pastoral ministry effective in the shepherding roles?

The Significance of Shepherd's Imagery in Pastoral Ministry

Based on the preceding theological appraisal and survey, it can be concluded that the requirements and responsibilities expected of a shepherd are significant in meeting the existential challenges of African Christians, especially their church members. These requirements connote that a shepherd is a leader who has been called by God to lead his people as a prophet, priest, king (or pastor in contemporary time) and has responded to the great shepherd (Laniak 2006). The shepherding responsibilities are undoubtedly significant for societal transformation and nation building. It has been observed, however, that the effectiveness of pastoral ministry in the context of shepherding roles is relatively low and insignificant to an extent. In this section, the words *shepherd* and *pastor* will be used synonymously to further highlight the significance of a shepherd's assignments.

The Significance of Shepherding Qualities for Societal Transformation and Nation Building

Qualities of shepherding are quite significant for effective parenting, impactful Christian leadership, and fruitful pastoral ministry. Since shepherding qualities are not limited to pastors alone, parents and Christian leaders are also required to possess the virtues. Demonstrating the godly virtues expected of a shepherd by these three categories of people is significant for societal transformation and nation building. As a matter of necessity, a shepherd-pastor with a calling experience, a capacity to shepherd people, and the character of a shepherd is instrumental to such a paradigm shift in an African context. More so, the mass media portrays many pastors as people who lack a genuine call of God or of questionable character due to the many scandals involving them as a result of the atrocities they engage in.

God's promise to give his people shepherds after his own hearts who will rule with knowledge and understanding (Jer. 3:15) has implications and significance for contemporary leaders, especially pastors. Effective Christian leadership is feasible at home, in the marketplace, and in the nation at large when the three categories of people affirmed by respondents in the survey possess the essential qualities and meet the shepherding requirements. Such demonstration of shepherding qualities will adequately enable the church to

alleviate the occurrence of social vices and corrupt practices attributed to or emanating from poor parenting and bad leadership.

A pastor should consider his calling to shepherd God's people a privilege. Therefore, God's preference in choosing human agency to make his will known and accomplish his purpose should be taken with a sense of accountability and stewardship by contemporary under-shepherds. With regards to capacity, a shepherd needs God's heart as well as a sound godly mind. This will enable them to see what God the owner of the pastoral ministry sees and carry out only what he does. A pastor needs wisdom and discernment to effectively shepherd God's flock whose mission and life's destiny he must know (Laniak 2006:22). This philosophy of shepherding (having a heart for God and hands to build God's people) will eliminate the tendency of materialism, misappropriation of God's resources, and acts of corruption and exploitation which has hitherto reduced the impact of the church on nation building in Africa.

The twenty-third psalm was presented by Rummage (2005) as that which describes the benefits and caring acts of a good shepherd. The needs of the sheep for which pastoral care must be provided were also stated as

> rest, refreshment, renewal and restoration, guidance in righteousness, courage, companionship, protection and comfort, food, acceptance and healing, blessings, unconditional love, and hope now and in the eternal future. (Rummage 2005:20)

These essential needs of church members inform the responsibilities of a pastor (parents and Christian leaders) as a shepherd to the flock of God, the great shepherd of their souls.

While the calling experience of a shepherd naturally entails caring for sheep, a pastor may find himself in a church with nominal membership, in which case he has to turn a flock of goats into a flock of sheep. This may require a loving capacity and character of self-control, self-denial, and self-discipline. Pastors should not be in ministry for the sake of what they would gain from the church members. They should also not be used 'as a means for their own

aggrandizement, to boost their ego and indulge their desire for power' (Still 1996:2).

The ultimate purpose of a shepherd is to lead God's people to absolute submission and sacrifice. The pastor is essentially a church leader who leads church members in effectively carrying out church ministries such as social ministry (Nihinlola 2013). This is in tandem with the cultural background: 'Israel's sheep were reared, fed, tended, retrieved, healed and restored – for sacrifice on the altar of God' (Still 1996:1). Hence, total devotion to wholesome worship and sacrificial service is the expected outcome of a shepherd's task. True pastors must be committed to the word of God, being thoroughly fed in knowledge, wisdom, grace, humility, courage, fear of God, and fearlessness of men. In order to accomplish this, the pastor must know the truth not only verbally, propositionally, and theologically but also religiously, devotionally, and morally (Still 1996:10). This calls for continuous training, spiritual development, and mentoring of the pastor.

The pastoral ministry is a relationship between Christ, the chief shepherd, the pastor as the under-shepherd, and the parishioners as the sheep. It is essentially the great shepherd of the sheep who facilitates the equipping of every believer for the task of ministry through the pastor. The pastor in turn sets a Christ-like example for the believer while he consciously adapts his leadership style, attitudes, and behaviours to accomplish the 'ultimate goal of preserving the safety of the flock and ensuring its development to maturity' (Tidball 1997:128-129). A pastor who declines to follow and yield to Christ absolutely is vulnerable to the Devil's deception and tends to become a false shepherd who neglects and exploits the innocent sheep.

Moreover, the features of shepherds assessed in this research are teaching, nurturing, caring, compassion, and empathy. These features identified as requirements of shepherding include feeding the flock with God's word, caring for sick members, looking for backsliders, bringing lost sinners, and visitation and identifying with members in grief or joyous moments. The opinion of 12% of the respondents who identified only feeding God's flock with God's word was superseded by the perspective of 88% who considered all the requirements as necessary and indispensable for every shepherd. Their calling experience, caring aptitude, and submissive attitude to the great shepherd and

ministry owner are undoubtedly vital for nation building. This cannot be accomplished, however, without the requirements of teaching, nurturing, caring, and showing compassion and empathy to the firm, strong, and maturing Christians or the feeble, naïve, shallow, and weak believers,

The Responsibilities of a Shepherd and their Significance for Pastoral Ministry

Martin Bucer highlighted the tasks of a pastoral ministry in five dimensions (2009). Tidball summarises these as drawing the alienated ones to Christ, leading back those who have been drawn away, securing amendment of lives that have fallen into sin, strengthening weak Christians, and preserving whole and strong Christians to encourage them to move forward on the path of righteousness (1997:47). Of all the pastoral roles earlier highlighted, the responsibilities of caring, spiritual nourishing, leading, and the related tasks will now be elucidated.

Caring

Caring in this context denotes directing and protecting or even sponsoring the congregation by attending to their needs. It is also associated with the act of presiding over, but with the principles of servant leadership (Luke 22:26). According to Resane (2014), the caring aspect of shepherd-leadership includes the corresponding functions of a traditional shepherd in the restoration, feeding, watering, grooming, shearing, and delivering of lambs. The resilient attitude of a shepherd in searching, finding, and bringing home a lost sheep describes the act of restoration which was demonstrated by Jesus the good shepherd (John 10:11) and is to be emulated by contemporary pastors for bringing erring saints and lost sinners to the fold (Resane 2014:2).

The love of a shepherd motivates him to look for a lost sheep until it is found; he rejoices and delights in bringing home the sheep rather than being angry. This genuine caring love heals the sorrowing soul, restores it, and disciplines when needed. This task of seeking and rescuing lost sheep requires the pastor's willingness to sacrifice (Oglesby 2005). Hence, while a shepherd-leader keeps the sheep of God in the fold, it is also their priority to find and

> help people who have wandered, fallen into the fire, whilst being careful not to get burned themselves or soil their own clean clothes. (Resane 2014:2)

This responsibility must be taken with urgency and caution within the ecclesiastical context. It is urgent and needful because the pastor might have also strayed in some instances and anyone can be in danger of being deceived. It is also expedient for the strayed sheep to return to God before irredeemable destruction.

Practical ways of carrying out the care ministry include regular pastoral visits to parishioners especially in times of rejoicing, accomplishment, sickness, or grief. Effective social and welfare ministry for reaching out to the poor, orphans, widows, unemployed, and the like is another viable platform for demonstrating pastoral care. This caring ministry is also related to the spiritual nourishment of God's people, which is naturally referred to as feeding, watering, and grooming in a shepherding context.

Spiritual Nourishment

One of the inferences of Yahweh's promise that a day will come when there will be shepherds who will feed the flock with 'knowledge and understanding' (Jer. 3:15) is the responsibility of feeding and provision by pastors (Gan 2010:11). God the shepherd-king expects his servants to be caring shepherds who will feed his people with the teachings of divine principles for fruitful Christian living.

According to Resane, feeding indicates restoration of health, growth, and strength. In consonance with the didactic lessons in John 21:1-17, it is the responsibility of a shepherd-leader to feed the lamb of God both with milk for the spiritual growth of babes in Christ and with provision of solid food to enhance maturation in the Lord. This task of spiritual nourishment by pastors is otherwise known as equipping in the context of pastoral theology (Anderson 1985). While

> solid food is training in righteousness so that the sheep can be fully equipped, able to stand in the day of testing (Anderson 1985:3)

the fundamentals of biblical teaching, apostles' creeds, denominational statements of faith and practices, ecclesiastical catechesis, and current discipleship manuals are materials for such nurturing and edification.

Feeding as spiritual nourishment needs to be complemented with watering. A conventional shepherd intentionally leads his flock to water regularly for renewal and refreshment. He will roll away the stone covering the well and draw the water for the flocks. The import of this is from the cultural/Biblical background of shepherding.

> When all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone away from the well's mouth and water the sheep. Then they would return the stone to its place over the mouth of the well. (Gen. 29:3)

Hence, a shepherd-leader prepares parishioners' hearts to be receptive to the nourishment of the Holy Spirit through Biblical exposition, prayer, and by living in selfless obedience to the commands of Jesus Christ (Resane 2014:2-3).

Grooming is another form of spiritual nourishment. It connotes the function of a pastor that resembles the work of a groom – someone employed in a stable to take care of horses and ensure their neat appearance. In succinct terms,

> A shepherd grooms his sheep, keeps them clean and free of contamination from the world, the flesh and the devil. He then prepares them through instruction to be disciples, followers of the Good Shepherd, so they will, in turn, go out and minister to others. It was at the climax of his mission on earth that Christ, after grooming his disciples could entrust them with the (Great Commission) mandate. (Resane 2014:3)

Grooming in the light of this assertion implies an integral part of discipleship which is a continuous process that transcends completion of discipleship courses but equips believers for teaching and evangelism.

Shearing as a function of a shepherd is also a valuable exercise that amounts to spiritual nourishment. It implies that contemporary pastors have an obligation to discipline, encourage, and rebuke the church members so that

they may be fit for service to the Lord (2 Tim 3:17) The delivery of lambs is central to the overseeing work of a shepherd. The new birth experience of sinners who will be enlisted in the church is the responsibility of a pastor. This is in line with Isaiah 40:11:

> He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

This, however, involves a partnership with the Holy Spirit. While the pastor 'proclaims the Gospel; the Holy Spirit then convicts the sinner, who eventually becomes a Christian' (Resane 2014:3). The tasks essentially include discipleship of new converts towards maturity through which they grow and live out their professed faith.

Leading

Leading has been regarded as the most common role of a shepherd. Joshua was described in Numbers 27:17 as one

> who shall go out before them [Israelites] and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep which have no shepherd.

This clearly portrays the leadership role expected of contemporary pastors (Gan 2010:10; Anderson 1985:159). This role is crucial because leadership determines direction. A pastor directs the believers in the world to follow the lead of the good shepherd, guides them in the path of righteousness, instructs them not to be of the world, but leads them to pastures and water for spiritual nourishment.

> This shepherd-leader's task calls for the discipline of the sheep to alert them to the world's pitfalls. This leadership task also means directing the flock out and teaching them to stay together in unity. (Resane 2014:4)

Protection of afflicted sheep is a role of the shepherd which is also connected to the task of leadership. In this regards, a pastor has to prevent the flock from

being vulnerable, to guard the sheep from the peril of deception (Isa. 56:11, Zech. 10:2-3), and to keep the flock from scattering (Jer. 10:21) (Gan 2010:12). Resane also adds that

> the shepherd is expected to be ready to exercise control over the sheep in order to guide and direct them to prevent them from wandering off into danger. (2014:4)

The roles of supervising, guiding, and directing by a pastor were deduced from the shepherd's equipment of rod which is used to protect and defend the sheep and his staff which guides and directs them. These responsibilities are indisputably required and necessary for effective pastoral ministry in contemporary time.

African Christians, parents, church leaders, and pastors' perspectives on shepherding tasks rate teaching and preaching, praying and intercession for individual church members or as corporate entity, and pastoral care and counselling to the grieving souls as the three most important areas that African pastors are focusing on in their shepherding ministry. This was attested to by 73.1%, 54.5%, and 31.1% of the respondents respectively. The three least focused areas of pastoral ministry as observed in the African context are directing and protecting practitioners from imminent dangers of deception and heresy (14.4%), discipleship and leading God's people to absolute submission (18.6%), and visitation and caring (24.6%). Africans as communal people often desire the pastoral care and ministry of presence of their pastors in good or celebrating events and in grieving or mourning moments. Coincidentally, not many pastors are living up to the shepherding responsibility.

The research also shows that pastors in the African context should be more committed to discipleship (mentoring and building up to maturity in Christlikeness), leading God's people to a life of absolute submission, which is the ultimate goal of shepherding. The respondents also expect pastors to improve their preaching and teaching responsibilities with visitation and caring. Two inferences can be drawn from their opinion. First, it is probable that the teaching and preaching of African pastors (as prevalent as it seems) is

not fulfilling the essence of ministry gifts for the church. The purpose of the gifts is for equipping and training God's people for works of service

> so that the body of Christ may be built up […] reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Eph. 4:12-13)

Some African Christians seem naïve and immature, such that they fall into deception by false prophets and succumb to heretical teaching in a bid to seek for solution and deliverance from existential challenges. Second, that some pastors are not feeding the congregants with sound Biblical preaching but are promoting heresies and shallow faith is also a possibility.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The notion of shepherd is a Biblical metaphor which reflects the conventional but onerous tasks of shepherding. God used the vocation of shepherding to prepare people like Moses and David to become notable leaders of his people. The shepherd imagery was used for kings, priests, prophets, and leaders of the people to denote their skills for guiding, directing, caring for, and leading God's flock in the Old Testament. God is ultimately the great shepherd who nurtures the faithful shepherds and condemns the false ones. The self-description of Jesus as the good shepherd also provides a perfect leadership model for contemporary pastoral ministry. Future researchers may attempt an exegetical analysis of scriptural passages on the great shepherd to gain more insights on the shepherd metaphor.

A pastor must have a calling experience, a loving capacity to shepherd people, and selfless character. The responsibilities of a pastor as an under-shepherd entail feeding the flock with God's word, caring for sick members, looking for those who have gone astray for restoration, and bringing sinners to the fold. The genuine love and care of the shepherd is demonstrated through teaching, praying, discipleship, visitation, among other tasks, aside from his time of solitude and contemplation. To this end, this researcher recommends that theological institutions constantly emphasise the need for a lifestyle of

sobriety, contemplation, and solitude as a shepherd in their training of pastors for effective ministry.

Assessing the metaphor of shepherding in pastoral leadership through a research survey among 167 African Christians revealed that shepherding should not be limited to pastors. Nevertheless, shepherding qualities are expected from parents and Christian leaders as opined by 76% of the respondents. A shepherd metaphor points to one who cares and supplies the need of others (caregiver), one who guides and guards others about issues of life (guide/coach), and one who provides direction and counsel to a place of abundance and satisfaction (mentor) as affirmed by 81.4%. This article confirms that a shepherd must have a calling experience, a loving capacity, and a selfless character. Their responsibilities entail feeding the flock with God's word, caring for sick members, looking for backsliders, and bringing lost sinners to the fold. Their genuine love as shepherds should be demonstrated more through teaching, discipleship, and visitation, as suggested by 97.6%. This researcher thus recommends that these qualities be further assessed through empirical study involving only church members.

Based on these perspectives, this article submits that a pastor's shepherding qualities, requirements, and responsibilities (Christian parents and leaders inclusive) are significant for societal transformation, nation building, and impactful pastoral ministry. The ultimate mission of a shepherd is to lead God's people to absolute submission and to protect them from the imminent dangers of deception and heresy. This makes feeding, grooming, and shearing components of spiritual nourishment a must because they connote discipline and practical Christian living, which are of immense significance to pastoral ministry and the church in the African milieu.

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‘*Kĩama Kia Athuri*’ Rituals, and Challenges to Agikuyu Christians

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Abstract

This study examined the Agĩkũyũ *Kĩama kia athuri*’s (council of elders) initiation rituals to establish whether they are religious acts of worship and therefore undermine Christianity, as has been claimed by Agĩkũyũ church leaders. To analyse the *Kĩama* (council) movement, this research applied four steps and used criteria advanced by Arnold van Gennep’s *Rites of Passage* and Victor Turner’s ‘Rituals’ to evaluate the *Kĩama*’s ceremonies. On the question of sacrifices and offerings, the research revealed that the shedding of animal blood was not unique to the *Kĩama* ceremonies but occurred without question in other events in the Agĩkũyũ lives, like in marriage. The study determined that the rituals were rites of passage for the Agĩkũyũ men into varying degrees of eldership. It established a yearning to return to the Agĩkũyũ customs disrupted by colonialism and the coming of Christianity. This study identified political rather than religious motifs in the resurgence of the *Kĩama kia athuri*, purporting to protect Agĩkũyũ’s political and economic interests. But this would undermine Christianity as well.

Introduction

The global resurgence of African cultural practices has attracted a sizeable number of African scholars’ attention. This couples with the dilemma facing African Christians in their choice of affiliation between Christian or modern and traditional values.

The rate at which the Agĩkũyũ Christians are reverting to their traditional cultural practices such as the *Kĩama kia athuri* (council of elders, or Agĩkũyũ council of elders) has prompted several studies to gain an in-depth understanding of the movement and inform the church's response. Among the Agĩkũyũ, *Kĩama* (council) was the highest communal authority vested in the legislative, executive, and judicial functions (Diocese of Mount Kenya South 2018:1). Its members were the custodians of Agĩkũyũ ancestral land, governance, military, customs, and religious matters. The *Kĩama* was in charge of the religious, economic, political, and social order of the Agĩkũyũ people. In modern times this term, *Kĩama kia athuri*, suggests Ndung'u, Onyango, and Githuku (2021:644), was adopted following the 2008 post-election violence. It was after the *Kĩama* eldership brokered peace with elders of other ethnic groups in the Rift Valley. The post-election violence of 2007/08 affected the political and economic lives of the Agĩkũyũs living in the Rift Valley. Hence, Ndung'u, Onyango, and Githuku (2021:645) note that Agĩkũyũ elders sought protection from further eviction.

It is difficult to ignore the impetus among Africans to adopt Africa's worldview in their practical lives as Christians, hence theologians, such as Ndereba (2021:55), have urged African theologians to pay close attention to the African traditional worldview and cultural practices for relevant lessons. But other scholars and Agĩkũyũ Christians dismiss the *Kĩama* as having no place in the modern civilised world. They refuse to accommodate the *Kĩama* in Christianity for the risk of syncretism. S. N. Ndung'u, E. Onyango, and S. Githuku (2021:671) observed that the main contention Christian theologians hold against *Kĩama* was in its initiation rituals, the 'aspects of sacrifices (blood), praying facing Kirinyaga and libations'. These Christians consider *Kĩama* rituals repulsive, hence rejecting the movement. How shall the Agĩkũyũ Christians reconcile their cultural practices and Christian liturgy?

Study Problem

This study examines the validity of categorising *Kĩama*'s initiation rituals as religious and, therefore, incompatible with Christian teachings.

Methodology

The study approaches the study in four steps. In the first step, the study describes how *Kĩama* manifests in the present Agĩkũyũ society. The second step discusses why *Kĩama* endures and its significance in the Agĩkũyũ community, whereas the third uses anthropologists' theories to interpret the implications of *Kĩama*'s sacrificial rituals. The final step weighs, as a response, the appropriateness of *Kĩama* for Christians today.

Kĩama kia Athuri manifests among the Agĩkũyũ today

Over the last twenty years, scholars noted a revival of Agĩkũyũ cultural groups such as *Thai*, *Kĩama kia Athuri*, *Ngwata Ndai*, and *Mungiiki*, among others. These cultural groups sought to restore the Agĩkũyũ cultural practices which they jettisoned in the post-colonial era. During the 1980s, as was the colonial era, President Moi's government outlawed tribal groupings, but targeted the Agĩkũyũ groups. Police often arrested these practitioners, according to Ndung'u, Onyango, and Githuku (2021:661),

> 'in the forest carrying out the initiation […] locked them in a cell together with the meat they were roasting'. However, there has been a new impetus in forming these ethnic groups after 2002.

After the ethnic clashes of 2008, there was an unprecedented cultural awakening in the country, attributed to a mixture of factors. One was the increased reach of the vernacular media, which became a medium for messaging ethnic sentiments (Diocese of Mount Kenya South 2018:7). The second was the ethnic political participation through the formation of ethnic-based political parties. The third is the drive to preserve ethnic and cultural practices, and the fourth is the promulgation of the 2010 Kenyan constitution. The constitution of 2010 buttressed cultural heritages in law,[1] allowing for their overt operations, hence registration in 2014 of the Kikuyu Council of Elders Association Trust (KCEAT) and in 2018 the Agikuyu Council of Elders (GCE).

[1] The Kenyan constitution promulgated in 2010, Chapter 2: Section 11, (1) and (2) encourages cultural practices that are consistent with the natural law.

Of late, proponents of the *Kĩama* have initiated Agĩkũyũ men in droves. Initiates include church leaders, convinced that the association has a vital role in their society. As a governing council of elders, it focuses on public governance issues of the day, as claimed by 60% of respondents in the study by Ndung'u, Onyango, and Githuku (2021:656). It provides a mentorship framework for men in society, while 35% of the participants in Ndung'u, Onyango, and Githuku (2021:662) found a uniting factor of *Kĩama*, which minimises vices among men.

The council draws its members from all walks of life. They established cohorts of the organisation throughout the country (Diocese of Mount Kenya South 2018:8). But most *Kĩama* adherents are Christians (Ndung'u, Onyango, and Githuku 2021:655). They attend church service in the morning, partake of Holy Communion, and in the afternoon, they attend *Kĩama* and participate in its rituals and ceremonies (Ndung'u, Onyango, and Githuku 2021:644). Bishop Peter Njenga of the Anglican Church Diocese of Mt Kenya South was not only a *Kĩama* member but recruited Christian men of his diocese into it. He writes (Njenga 2023:321),

> I introduced a new rule through the synod. I directed that nobody would be elected unless they produced a *mbuzi* (goat) to the Kiama (council).

Some hold offices from the local church to the diocesan synod of Mount Kenya South Diocese. Serving with Bishop Njenga, *Kĩama* members contributed 98% of the materials and money needed to build churches or church developments. They contributed more than those who profess salvation. This, Kambo (in Ndung'u, Onyango, and Githuku 2021:656) observes,

> *Kĩama* membership comprises 80% of Christians of different denominations and faiths who hold leadership positions in their Churches 'including professionals such as doctors, lawyers, politicians, business owners, pastors, and priests. *Kĩama* upholds the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) and Joshua 24:1-15 'Me and my house we will serve the Lord', the *Kĩama*

> demonized by the Anglican Church is not the one I know of as a member. It is good wisdom to criticize what one knows about.[2]

Ndung'u, Onyango, and Githuku (2021:656) state that 60% of the respondents had prior knowledge of the *Kĩama* initiation rites. But the younger respondents (represented by 10%), learned of the rites during the initiation and the subsequent teachings. In matters of family, morality, respect, and responsibilities, they counselled the recruits regardless of their entrance level. They had to live exemplary lives, following the members' code of conduct, since they were heads of their families. They learned to discuss ethnic and political challenges facing the Agĩkũyũ society, guided by the Kikuyu Council of Elders. In the end, a designated person led the men in prayers facing Mount Kenya, lifting their hands, and invoking God saying: *thai thathaiya Ngai thai* (praises be to God praise).

Although the Diocese of Mt. Kenya South under Bishop Njenga embraced *Kĩama*, his successor Bishop Timothy Ranji differed. Njenga (2023:322) laments,

> when my successor came in, he said no to that practice. He moved to the synod and said that giving goats to Kiama was evil and sinful.

Ndung'u, Onyango, and Githuku (2021:670) acknowledge that 'Agikuyu are divided on the relevance and importance of *Kĩama* in the modern society'. Many Christian Agĩkũyũ are living in modernity and church, and as Ndung'u, Onyango, and Githuku (2021:662) noted, they regarded *Kĩama* as irrelevant. They have embraced the transformation and modernity proffered by the new societal structures of governance, making *Kĩama* redundant.

[2] Kambo's statement in '*Kĩama* circular: 26th July 2016, p. 12' is cited in Ndung'u, Onyango, and Githuku 2021 without providing a link in their bibliography.

Kĩama's Significance in the Agĩkũyũ Community

In considering the historical development of the *Kĩama kia athuri* in its cultural contexts, this section of the study interprets the reasons underlying the practice.

The Origins of Kĩama

The Agĩkũyũ, according to oral tradition, was a matriarchal society where the ruling women oppressed their male folk (Presbyterian Church of East Africa 2018:6). The men, *riika rĩa Iregi* (*Iregi* age group),[3] retreated secretly into the forest to plot their freedom from tyranny. These secret meetings bore the *Kĩama*. Since the meetings took long, they had to eat, hence goats (*mbũri*) were slaughtered. So, men made it a habit of bringing a goat, *mbũri ya Kĩama* (goat for the meeting), to be eaten during the *Kĩama* meetings. Soon goat-eating eclipsed the purpose of the *Kĩama*, the freedom of deliberation.

The Agĩkũyũ legend (Presbyterian Church of East Africa 2018:7) credits the *Iregi* for executing a violent overthrow of the women's regime. They impregnated their wives at the same time and engaged them in a physical fight a month before delivery when they were most vulnerable. The subject of contention is when the coup happened. For, while Agĩkũyũ elders credit it to the *Iregi* age set, Maina wa Kinyatti (2011) claims that the coup occurred after this age set. Despite these discrepancies, the role the *Iregi* played is not in dispute (Presbyterian Church of East Africa 2018:8). They were, thereafter, set to implement the constitution they coined to govern a new patriarchal government. The new constitution proposed that,

> a) henceforth men must decline to execute the duties women allocated to them, for example, looking after babies, drawing water, fetching firewood, being governed by women, and being beaten;

[3] *Iregi* means 'to protest' or 'to dissent'. This age group was the bunch of men who were circumcised when the conflict overturning matriarchy was at its height.

b) have their separate huts (*thingira*) and stop sleeping in their wives' houses (*nyũmba*);

c) continue meeting in the form of *Kĩama*;[4] so that they can review their constitution and progress of emancipation;

d) to meet in their '*thingira*' with a view to mentor their sons on manhood, honour, allegiance to the community, and integrity and uphold the new system of governance;

e) declare that animals, children, land, and women themselves are men's properties and that men have exclusive rights over them;

f) men to be paying a dowry to exercise full authority over women;[5]

g) mothers, aunts, and grandmothers are to be giving instructions concerning the new government to all female children in the *nyũmba*, while fathers, uncles, and grandfathers are to be doing the same in the *thingira*;[6]

h) all wives of a certain age group were jointly owned by the age mates;[7]

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[4] Note that the word *kĩama* first meant 'meeting'. Over time this metamorphosed into a secret council. The place of eating goats in these meetings is only a recent emphasis.

[5] Previously women married and paid the dowry for men.

[6] So, after weaning, the boy would join others in the '*thingira*' for instructions and mentoring. Circumcision or initiation was a graduation ceremony after the instructions (education).

[7] The Gĩkũyũ men were organised in age sets. These are people of the same age and were circumcised at the same time. All the women were jointly owned by the age set in order to: i) conceal the infertility of men; ii) avoid rape in case one age mate's wife was sick or pregnant or denied conjugal rights; iii) have children from outside the marriage to propagate the name of the family in case the family were bewitched to

> i) all issues of morality, economy, social welfare, leadership, religion, and justice would be adjudicated by the *Kĩama*. (Presbyterian Church of East Africa 2018:8-9)

The *Iregi* became the custodians of the Agĩkũyũ people. For continuity of its social function, it metamorphosed into the *Kĩama kia athuri a mbũri.* Further, it was subdivided into stages whose members they assigned various societal functions. Its members, henceforth, had to pay a goat to advance in the eldership stages. Humphrey Waweru identified five councils of elders joined in stages.

The first of these councils, Waweru (2011:42) holds, was *Kĩama gia Kamatimu* (the spear's council). It was known as *Kĩama gia Mburi Imwe* (the council of the first goat). This is because, one gave a goat, *mburi ya Kĩama* (the council's goat), to belong to this council. This was an age-grade training. The council, comprising recently married men, considered the warriors and young elders whose children had not been circumcised. They deemed the elders as too inexperienced to adjudicate cases in society; they mentored these men to adjudge by senior elders. Further, they assigned these elders to gather firewood, light the ceremonial fire, and roast the *Kĩama* meat.

The second council was *Kĩama gia Mataathi* or *Kĩama gia Mburi Igiri* (the council of two goats). To rise to this council, they had to give two goats and a lamb, hence the name (Muriuki 1969:162). According to Wa-Kang'ethe (1981:72),

> the first goat, *mburi ya mwana* (child's goat), was given shortly before the circumcision of a member's first child; the second goat, *mburi ya Kĩama,* was given so that they could officially accept the member as a member of this council; and the lamb, *ndurume ya kuinukania* (lamb for blessing), was given to the

death; iv) provide physical security of the age mates in case a certain man was beaten or mistreated by his wife. Selected strong members of the age group would be sent to physically discipline the unruly wife.

council immediately they had circumcised his child in order to reunite the child with the family and to bless the homestead.

This council executed the legislative and judicial functions of the Agĩkũyũ nation, hence its esteem.

The third council was called *Kĩama gia Maturanguru* or *Kĩama gia Ukuru* (the council of the old age). To join this council, Waweru (2011:42) observes, members gave two he-goats. The Agĩkũyũ considered elders of this council the wisest in the land and referred to them as *muthamaki* (chief elder). They wore brass earrings and carried ceremonial leaves of *Maturanguru* as a symbol of authority, according to Wa-Kang'ethe (1981:72). These elders decided 'the dates of circumcision feasts and the holding of *Itwika* ceremony' (Kenyatta 1966:105).

Waweru (2011:42) identified *Kĩama gia guthathaiya* (religious council of elders) as the last stage. Members were required to have their children's children circumcised and their wives sexually inactive and beyond childbearing age. They also officiated at public religious ceremonies at the designated *Mugumo* (fig) tree and were the great custodians of the Agĩkũyũ religion and culture. Few got to this most honoured stage.

Liturgical Rites

Although the literature on the actual process of initiation is scanty, it involves a call and response of oathing that Kabetu (2017:103) explains occurs after they share meat:

> *Atiririi Kĩama, tondu nitwaria ngoima cia ng'ania twamutonyia Kĩama-ini-ri, toigai Kiama kiromwenda, magacokia: Kiromwenda. Toigai angikanatua cira urothira, magacokia, Urothira. Ugai angikanateithurana mbaara irothira, magacokia: Irothira. Ugai angika nahoro haniria kundu gutemanitwo, horohio io ironina uuru, magacokia: Ironina uuru. Ugai angikanaigwithania andu mahitanitie maroiguana, magacokia: Maroiguana.*

> (English translation) Now council members, since we have eaten the meat from this candidate's (name inserted) goats for his admission into the eldership of this council as one of us, say: May he now be admitted as a full member of the council. And they reply: May he be admitted as a full member of the council. (See also Ndereba 2021:49.)

Such initiation rites involving oaths were not unique to Agĩkũyũ. Mbiti (1999:122) observed the same among the Akamba. Senior elders did induction into the council, then defined to the new elders the responsibilities for which they took the oaths. The elders would arbitrate in disputes brought before them, and their judgment would be final (Ndereba 2021:49). Through their wise counsel, elders should deliver lasting peace in the society, by ending bitterness issuing from disputes and quarrels.

The Agĩkũyũ, like other African societies, according to Mbiti (1999:66), developed worship liturgies as they participated in prayers and the giving of offerings and sacrifices. They did not always offer these offerings to God, but also to lesser spiritual beings – such as 'divinities, spirits and the departed' (Mbiti 1999:66). In terms of prayers, the *Kĩama* members prayed facing Mount Kenya, lifting their hands, and invoking God, saying: *thai thathaiya Ngai thai* (worship God worship). During the ceremonies, a designated person led this invocation. The council of the *Kĩama* elders was the first responsibility to God. It is in response to God that these men become dedicated to ensuring justice prevails through the council to which they were inducted through a sacrifice.

Since in Agĩkũyũ traditional religion priests, rulers, the living dead, and ritual elders were mediators between man and God, it is easy to hitch the Agĩkũyũ eldership system to mediatorial office. In traditional African religions, Mbiti (1999:68) observed that to reach God effectively, it may be useful to approach him by first approaching those who are lower than he is but higher than the ordinary person.

Any religious functions in the Agĩkũyũ tradition had to be conducted by a priest, notes Leakey (2007:1082), who was drawn from the head of the family or clan and was assisted by other junior elders. Thus, according to Ndereba (2021:48), *Kĩama* ritual elders played a mediatorial role within Agĩkũyũ culture,

serving as, in the words of Mbiti (1999:66), 'conveyor belts' in approaching God.

Interpreting the *Kĩama*'s Sacrificial Rituals

In establishing the ethical reflection of *Kĩama*, this study uses ethical guidelines, drawing from the Agĩkũyũ values and norms. The impetus of the present of *Kĩama* appears to have three key motifs: cultural, political, and religious.

Cultural Motif

The belief that African cultures and religions were repugnant is now changing (Diocese of Mount Kenya South 2018:9). While the colonialists endeavoured to keep certain aspects of the Agikuyu system, not disorienting them, including the Agĩkũyũ initiation rites, Wa-Kang'ethe (1981:78) claims that the missionaries pushed to displace the Agĩkũyũ religious and belief system. They sought to replace them with a Christian belief system, including the initiation rites. Such missionaries included Cagnolo (Cagnolo and Pick 1933:257), who asked Rt Rev. Perlo[8]:

> How could morals be found among the people who in their age-long abandonment, have become so corrupt as to raise practices openly immoral to be a social institution?

Thus, missionaries associated the Agikuyu religion and culture with the Devil. To turn to God, Wa-Kang'ethe (1981:104) noted, the missionaries demanded their converts break from their traditional religion and culture. The break was to be so complete that they deemed any accommodation of culture as going back to *gucokerera maundu ma Ugikuyu* (going back to things of the Agĩkũyũ) (Kibicho 1975:9). Theologians are challenging conclusions made by missionaries that Agĩkũyũ had no moral conscience.

Kenyatta (1966:190) laments that all *Ituika* (customary) songs and dances were banned at the instigation of missionaries as subjugating and dehumanising.

[8] Rt Rev. Perlo was the initiator and the organiser of the Consolata Fathers among the Agĩkũyũ.

The members of councils were the 'educators' of the people. Wa-Kang'ethe (1981:71) noted, that their membership was based on age, individual wisdom, and communication ability within these councils and families, that the knowledge, history, myths, legends, beliefs, and traditions of the nation were imparted to the young and the old. A modern example was Amos Karani Kiriro. He was a Kikuyu elder and an expert *par excellence* on Agĩkũyũ marriage and initiation. Kiriro hosted a popular radio show on Kameme FM in the late 1990s on Agĩkũyũ culture and authored the book *Gĩkũyũ Marriage Simplified* (2011) because of the knowledge of culture. He also presided over countless *ngurarios* and *irua* (Agĩkũyũ traditional marriage ceremonies) for friends and friends of friends.

Political Motif

Proponents of the present (post-colonial) *Kĩama* gather to preserve culture and offer leadership to the community. The Agĩkũyũ, claims Wa-Kang'ethe (1981:69), had a democratic form of government exhibited in their social structures. Such involved the administrative and judicial councils, both the *Kĩama kia Bururi* (the National Council) and the local and the *Njama ya Ita* (the Warriors' or the War Council). *Muthamaki* (chief elder) or *athamaki* (chief elders) were appointed leaders and ruled by moiety who presided over this council.

However, the adoption of the Local Native Councils, Wa-Kang'ethe (1981:76) observed, made the administrative role of the *Kĩama* redundant in 1925. By appointing chiefs, the colonialists shifted the authority centre in Agĩkũyũ society, when the chiefs replaced the traditional *athamaki* (chief elders). For example, in southern Kiambu, Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu replaced Waiyaki in 1892. This, according to Kenyatta (1966:190), was the last *Ituika* (circumcision ceremony), where 'Mwangi took over from Maina during Muhingo and before the Kienjeku and the Nuthi [...] in Metumi and Gaki respectively'. Muriuki (1969:22) claims this change of power occurred between 1890-98. Kenyatta's chief complaint against the British was,

> that Irungu or Maina generation whose turn it was to take over the government from the Mwangi generation, between 1925 and 1928 [...] was denied the birthright of perpetuating the national pride. (1966:189)

Thus, by 1925, the colonial political structure virtually replaced the Agĩkũyũ political system and its administrative units. This, Wa-Kang'ethe (1981:78) claims, set in motion a gradual disorganisation of the Agĩkũyũ social structure.

Kĩama groups' postures support the government of the day and the county government of the day. They deny direct participation but indirectly participate in politics. In the just concluded national election, *Kĩama* leaders endorsed various political candidates. In a statement read by national chairman Ndichu wa Njuguna said:

> Elders present and nationally elected *Kĩama* officials, without objection, agreed that honourable Speaker J. B Muturi is endorsed as the Mt Kenya East spokesperson, and this endorsement be conveyed to the Njuri Ncheke and Embu Cultural officials. (Otieno 2021)

The *Kĩama* today has manifested a political motif, seeking to restore the diminished role under British colonial rule and the independent government (Diocese of Mount Kenya South 2018:5).

Religious Motif

This study draws special insights from the action sciences and anthropological theory of the ethnographer Arnold van Gennep and British anthropologist Victor Turner to develop a strategy for action.

Kĩama *Ceremonies as Initiation Rites*

The *Kĩama* ceremonies bear the features of initiation rites like the ones advanced by van Gennep in his celebrated work, *Les Rites de Passage* (*The Rites of Passage*) (1909 and 1960). The *Kĩama* rites involving prayers, libation, isolation, rituals, and sacrifice of goats comport with van Gennep's definition of 'rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position, and age' (Turner 1967:94). He sees performing the sacrifices as enabling an individual to make a meaningful change of status in society. This is in line with the sacrifices an Agĩkũyũ male made, according to anthropologist Agĩkũyũ, in seven landmark stages between birth and death to gain standing in society:

1. *Gakenge* – A newborn baby for the first few months. After that, they referred to him as *Kaana*, a baby. Major ceremony – being born (*gũciarwo kwa mwana*).

2. *Kahĩĩ* – A young boy frolicking about like a young kid goat. Major ceremony – the second birth (*gũcokia mwana ihu-iinĩ*).

3. *Kĩhĩĩ* – A big boy nearing circumcision, which would be anything from twelve to eighteen years. To be called a *Kĩhĩĩ* (*Kĩhĩĩ gĩkĩ*) is an insult as it is a reference to the fact that one is due or overdue for 'straightening' or circumcision (*nĩ ũtigĩtie handũ*).

4. *Mumo – Kiumĩri* (singular), literally means 'coming out', and 'emerging' like a butterfly from a cocoon into the full bloom of God's creation. Circumcision ceremonies – These were the most important of the Agĩkũyũ ceremonies of coming out. *Mambura ma irua*.

5. *Mwanake* – A young man until marriage. God's material creation is in its full glory. God, *Ngai*, did not create a child but a fully grown man. A young man is God's fragment that was fashioned into a man by the creator, *Mũmbi*. *Mwanake nĩ kĩenyũ kĩa Ngai*. *Mwanake wa Njaama ya ita* (community warrior) is a member of the warrior coupe and military. *Mwanake wa Njaama ya kamatimũ* is a member of the policing and guard coupe police.

6. *Mũthuuri – Karabai*. A married man who can still be called upon to serve military duty in a major war.

7. *Mũthuri wa Kĩama* – An elder who serves in one or more of the many councils. Because the Agĩkũyũ system of government had no chiefs or kings, all government was through a consensus in the various tribal councils. (Gĩkũyũ Centre for Cultural Studies 2017; see also Ndereba 2021:45)

A successive three-stage progression of separation, margin, and aggregation marked initiation rites according to Van Gennep (Turner 1967:94). In the *Kĩama* initiation case: first, according to Ndung'u, Onyango, and Githuku (2021:658), initiation was done in the forests, fulfilling van Gennep's

separation or pre-liminal stage, when a person or group becomes detached from an earlier fixed point in the social structure or an earlier set of social conditions. Second, members were required to pay a goat to be promoted from one grade to another. This fills the margin or the liminal stage when the state of the ritual subject is ambiguous. The individuals are not in the old state, but not yet in the new one. Individuals' talents, good morals, age, and proficiency in judicial and religious affairs were some qualifications considered for every grade. Third, the men were grouped according to their grades based on functions which had their duties and rights. This is the aggregation or the post-liminal stage when the ritual subject enters a new stable state with its rights and obligations (Turner 1967:94, 1968b:576-577).

Are* Kĩama *Ceremonies Acts of Worship?

Victor Turner's insights can help this study determine whether the sacrificing of goats at the *Kĩama* ceremony is religious worship or a rite of passage as is purported (Turner 1974, 1976, 1977, 1982). Turner applied the Van Gennep passage model and rituals in both tribal and modern industrial societies. What he found in rituals among the Ndembu compares favourably to those of modern society and among the Agĩkũyũ. These rituals involved symbolic manipulation and a reference to religion.

Deflem (1991) discusses Turner's approach to rituals, first as part of an ongoing process of social drama. Here, rituals play a significant role in a society's conflictual equilibrium. Second, he discusses dealing with symbols that make up the smallest units of ritual activity; symbols are carriers of meaning. Third, the meanings of symbols are multiple, giving unity to the morality of the social order and the emotional needs of the individual (Turner 1980:91-94).

Rituals, according to Turner (1968a:2), are symbols showing crucial social and religious values, by which information is revealed and regarded as authoritative, as dealing with the crucial values of the community. Since they embody beliefs and meaningful symbols, Turner (1967:19) claims, they can be objects, activities, words, relationships, events, gestures, or spatial units. In Turner's definition, therefore, ritual refers to ritual performances involving manipulation of symbols that refer to religious beliefs. In the current practice of *Kĩama*, the goat is offered at the *Kĩama* eldership initiation rites for two main reasons: to atone for the sins of the elders and to introduce new elders to

other men. First, the elders must offer a libation to God, a sacrifice to atone for their inadequacies. Should they have offended the societal requirement, sacrificing goats and sheep should make up for their flaw. Second, the goat is sacrificed to initiate new elders into the council.

Ritual as symbols in perspective

Turner (1967:31-32) distinguished dominant and instrumental symbols. Dominant symbols appear in many ritual contexts, but their meaning possesses high autonomy and consistency throughout the total symbolic system. Kenyatta observes (in Ndung'u, Onyango, and Githuku 2021:45) that sheep and goats were important for the religious and cultural life of the Agĩkũyũ for purification and sacrificial rites among the Agĩkũyũ. Agreeing with him, the anthropologist Louis S. B. Leakey (2007:207) pointed to the incomparable value the Agĩkũyũ placed on goats and sheep in the social organisation. So, offering goats as a sacrifice was not just for *Kĩama*, but permeated most of the Agĩkũyũ life. For example, in the indigenous ritual of *Guciarwo na Mburi* (birth by goat), a ceremony where a stranger is 'born' into the community. Gathogo (2017) observes they slaughter a goat just like in the *mbũri cia Kĩama*, but they do not perceive this as worship, although blood is shed, and they make sacrifices. He cites an example where, in 1910, the Embu medical missionary Dr Crawford performed the ritual of *Guciarwo na mbũri*.[9]

In his rendition, John DeMathew (2009) opined an indispensable act that makes an Agĩkũyũ marriage endure. He states:

> *Atũmia aitũ magũrwo na rũru;* (the dowry be paid by a flock)
> *thakame yacio ĩrũmagie mohiki*; (the bloodshed will sustain the marriage)
>
> *kĩrathimo kĩumage gatũrũme-inĩ;* (blessings flow out of the slaughtered lamb)

[9] 'In 1910, for his entrance fee, he presented the elders with a bull and there was a great feast. This made the Embu elders recognise him as one of their own, and his "religion" as part of theirs. In turn, they promised him "that they would now insist on all the people keeping God's Day and attending [church] service, and that he was to be the leading elder (*Muthamaki*)".' (Gathogo 2008)

karĩa mũhirĩga wao ukarũmia. (For the clan to partake)

Chorus:

Mburi cia Kiama ci negeruũ adhuri… (give council goats to the elders)

Kanitha wa Ngai uuge ũndũire ũcokio; (let the church of God encourage culture)

Na muma wa kĩrore ndikaugũkwo (And the oath of *kirore*, we shall not recant)[10]

DeMathew, in this song, affirms an old Agĩkũyũ belief that marriage lasts because goats are killed, and they shed blood during the dowry payment ceremony. He lists what comprised an enduring marriage union; comprised of shed animal blood, clan prayers, and fellowship in partaking meat, marriage will stand.

Rituals as instrumental symbols are the means of attaining the specific goals of each ritual performance. We can investigate instrumental symbols only in terms of the total system of symbols, which makes up a particular ritual since we can reveal their meaning only about other symbols. Deflem (1991) notes that it was Turner's opinion that using symbols in ritual empowers them to act upon the performer and cause a change in the person. The *Kĩama* rituals resulted in transforming the initiate's attitudes (status) and behaviour (responsibility). For Agĩkũyũ men, Ndung'u, Onyango, and Githuku (2021:646) observed, these eldership stages were important as a rite of passage. Once initiated, men gained social authority, influence, and power. Their status affected their wives, who also attained social status, responsibilities, and duties. Conversely, when husbands failed to ascend the social ladder, other women ridiculed their wives (Leakey 2007:4; Hobley 1967:430; Kenyatta 1966:101).

[10] 'Mburi cia Kiama' track 5 in *Mene Mene Tekeli*.
https://www.musixmatch.com/ko/lyrics/John-De-Mathew-2/Mburi-Cia-Kiama

We must see the goat slaughter at *Kĩama* initiations for what it achieves: the polarising empirical properties of Turner's (1968a:18-19) dominant symbols. In the polarisation of meaning, the dominant symbol has two distinct poles of meaning:

> 1. at the ideological pole, a cluster of significata refers to components of the moral and social order, to principles of social organisation;
>
> 2. at the sensory pole, the significata are natural or physiological phenomena and processes that arouse desires and feelings.

One dominant symbol comprises both a natural necessity and a social desire. It, according to Turner (1967:54),

> represents both the obligatory and the desirable. Here we have an intimate union of the moral and the material.

These included the fees paid to the elders in several goats and other requirements.

Rituals association with supernatural powers.

Most of the respondent African Christians, in the survey by Ndung'u, Onyango, and Githuku (2021:633), viewed the *Kĩama* initiations as religious, involving rituals and sacrifices, and demonic and against Christian norms. It is possible to characterise *Kĩama* activities as religious, as Kibicho (2006) framed the Mau Mau members in Kenya in 1952 as a religious conflict between African culture and Westernisation. They prayed (facing Mount Kenya) and offered sacrifices to *Ngai* (God) before launching their raids against the British government. They prayed '*Hoyai ma amu Ngai no uria wa tene*' (that is, continue praying to God (*Ngai*), comrades, the God of our ancestors). Kibicho's claims, about Mau Mau members, agree with allegations Leakey (1954:41) proffers that the Mau Mau movement withstood the British not because of war strategy but due to being an African religion. The Mau Mau was, asserts Leakey (1954:43),

> a new religion, of which through oath ceremony formed only a small part that was the force which was turning thousands of peace-loving Kikuyu into murderous fanatics.

Today's *Kĩama* ceremony adapted Kikuyu traditional oaths (see § 3.2 above) for binding its members, as was done with Mau Mau freedom fighters. A Mau Mau oath commissioner, Samuel Gakuo Maceru, describes how he conducted the oaths (Gathogo 2014:21): once they slaughtered the goat or sheep, they mixed its stomach contents with herbs, water, and a little of the animal's blood. He would then place a grass hoop over the initiate's head and hands, then place some of the mixture on the initiate's hands and another portion of the mixture on a banana leaf waved over his head seven times. The initiate would then swear allegiance to the movement by repeating the words of oath as instructed. Thus, he/she would uphold the secrecy of the movement on the threat of death, pledge their possessions, and kill if necessary. The *Kĩama* ceremonies are not unique, since according to van Gennep (Turner 1967:94) the passage between any such groups requires a ceremony, or ritual, which is the rite of passage. Initiation rites of groups in modern society practise customs traceable to their sacred past. Van Gennep hypothesises that such 'social groups' are grounded in their magico-religious foundations as well.

Rituals performed in tribal, as in modern industrial, society, argued Turner (1976:504-505) are,

> about matters of ultimate concern and about those entities believed to have enunciated, clarified and mediated a culture's bonding axioms to its present members.

For the Ndembu, rituals of affliction were referred to as religious belief in supernatural powers with shades of ancestors. Even though rituals in modern society occur in the secular domain of recreation, they, argues Turner (1974), are situated outside the confines of religious groups, and have some religious component. This is because, according to Turner (1982:12), they have,

> something of the investigative, judgmental, and even punitive character of law-inaction, and something of the sacred, mythic, numinous, even 'supernatural' character of religious action.

All rituals are religious, Turner and Turner conclude, because they all 'celebrate or commemorate transcendent powers' (1982:201).

Rituals in modern society share characteristics, in Turner's view, with the tribal rituals he studied in Ndembu society, where 'all life is pervaded by invisible influences' (1976:507). In this way, tribal societies are wholly religious, and ritual actions surrounding their religions are 'nationwide'. It oriented them towards 'all members of the widest effective community' (Turner 1977:45).

Rituals can be traced to religious beliefs and symbols. Turner holds them to be related, hence his definition of ritual as,

> a stereotyped sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place, and designed to influence preternatural entities or forces on behalf of the actors' goals and interests (1977:183)

Meanwhile, van Gennep (Turner 1967:94) concurs that rituals must not be viewed in the sacred domain alone, for the presenting act is in the secular, with no sacred connotation.

Since the industrial revolution and because of secularisation, modern religion, claims Turner (1968c:441-443), is decoupled from the rest of culture. Religion in modern societies is, writes Turner (1976:507),

> regarded as something apart from our economic, political, domestic, and recreational life. Religion is part of the division of social labour.

Turner, thus, regards the rituals of modern, industrial religion as liminal (as are tribal rituals where religion and other cultural sectors are interwoven). This is because it is no longer, as its most distinct characteristic, a community affair but is individualised and covers a certain aspect of specific groups. In modern societies, the institutions are disintegrated and independent of each other. These institutions, thus, deal with given needs and respond to certain questions members face, such include law, politics, economy, and/or religion. Rituals occurring in such domains may not carry religious connotations, as they occur where supernatural matters are not dealt with.

But Moore and Myerhoff (1977) question whether this distinction can be made between religious and secular rituals while being cognisant of Turner's distinction between tribal and modern societies. In tribal societies, as Turner argued, religion, economy, law, politics, and other cultural domains are interwoven. Muchunu Gachuki, a member of the African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa (AIPCA) administered the Mau-Mau oath:

> [c]onsists of vows and commandments. People who have no sacred vows cannot be said to be religious […] Our 'creeds' in Mau-Mau were organised in accordance with those of Kikuyu Central Association [political party formed in 1925] which existed before Mau-Mau […] based mainly on the traditional beliefs of the Kikuyu […] that, 'we are praying to the God of Gikuyu and Mumbi' who gave to us this country - a country that was alienated by the Europeans (Gathogo 2014:21).

Tribal rituals, therefore, must have some religious component since tribal religion in both mythology and ritual practices has not (yet) split off from other sectors of tribal culture. Hence, the sacrifices and prayers at *Kĩama* eldership should be understood as a socio-cultural rite of passage and not a worship-religious event. Although these observers are quick to perceive the rite as spiritual worship, there is a need to distinguish *Kĩama*'s initiation rites from Agĩkũyũ acts of worship.

The Appropriateness of *Kĩama* for Christians Today

Christians among the Agĩkũyũ should formulate a plan of action for the *Kĩama* phenomenon, applying strategies based on the understanding adduced above. This will allow them to develop a strategy for leading a congregation through change.

We can understand *Kĩama* rituals in this light, as not fully embracing the entire way, but certain aspects of life. Karanja wa Mwangi, the head of Agĩkũyũ Academy committed to restoring the customs including *Kĩama kia Mbũri*. He describes himself as a progressive advocate of culture and accepts changes such as 'eradicated female genital mutilation' (2022:5). Mwangi (2022:5) states:

> All that we do not subscribe to is colonialists' doctrine in the church, but we can't go back to wearing skins the way our fathers used to do. We have those traditionalists who advocate for such uncivilized practices, and this confuses us.

Kĩama adherents have transformed their operations to avoid conflicting with their Christian faith. They have, according to Ndung'u, Onyango, and Githuku (2021:670),

> stopped advocatory for rites such as of 2nd birth, circumcision, dances and elaborate ceremonies, warrior ship, women circumcision, *guthiga*, *hukuro,* and traditional operation apparatus, but they keep facing Kirinyaga while praying.

Hence, they do not advocate for a second birth rite, female circumcision, or obscene and sexually oriented dances during the circumcision rite of boys. They do not advocate for *guthiga* or joining warriors. *Kĩama* modernised aspects of this tradition by swapping spears and shields for books and pens given to initiates since the battlefield had changed. The oral teachings changed for literary instructions. Here, initiates took notes and, upon graduation, got certificates instead of the elaborate ceremonies and dances marking the new status. Although the initiation rites are done, as in the pre-colonial period. They replaced the drinking of *muratina* with water and soda. But they must roast meat.

Even though 15% of Ndung'u, Onyango, and Githuku's (2021:662) respondents regarded *Kĩama* as irrelevant, they acknowledged it raised genuine issues for the government. And 20% of respondents considered *Kĩama* as the partner of the government and church in the fight against 'drunkenness, immorality, sanctity of life and other abuses in the society such as female circumcision'. But 'these groups are active participants in national and regional politics" (Diocese of Mount Kenya South 2018:8).

Considering the distinction Mbiti (1991:63) made regarding occasional sacrifices, involving the shedding of animal blood, and regular offerings individuals make, including the giving of foodstuffs, milk, or honey and the libation through their ancestors, these do not amount to worship or religious

sacrifice. This concurs with the conclusion reached by T. M. Kirimi Kibaara, Bibiana Ngundo, and Peter Gichure (2020:2562) that,

> the church needs to recognize *mbũri cia Kiama* as one rite of passage within the Gikuyu culture to embrace the concept of Christianizing certain aspects of the traditional ritual.

The turbulent political climate around ethnicities has given the need for ethnic intervention. In their survey, Ndung'u, Onyango, and Githuku (2021:665) saw the need for ethnic elder-driven engagement and reconciliation whenever needed. So, if the Agĩkũyũ is to survive, politically and economically, in lands away from their traditional homelands, such as the Rift Valley, *Kĩama kia Athuri* would be the vehicle for peace, reconciliation, and political patronage.

Today's version of *Kĩama* is much diluted, bent towards politicking, and commercialised. Ndung'u (2022) claimed the *Kĩama* eldership has substituted initiation goats for a fee paid in cash. And this act may remove the major objection of Christians.

While this approach can secure the interests of the Agĩkũyũ society, identity politics is destructive for a country like Kenya. When we make 'tribes' the basis of our relationships, we will lose the 'nation' in the tribal mire. I maintain my previously published conclusion that:

> We must move from the politics of 'our tribe' to the politics of 'Kenya', then we will rediscover the counter-intuitive truth, as Sacks (2020) states, that a nation is strong when it cares for the weak, that it becomes invulnerable when it cares about the vulnerable. (Omondi 2022)

The church stands to be destroyed by the logic of tribal politics and not the blood in the *Kĩama* ceremonies. It conditions us to act on tribal self-interest without a commitment to the nation's common good. When this logic creeps into the church, the body will be dismembered, torn between loyalty to their tribe and Christ.

Conclusion

This study establishes that the *Kĩama* initiation ceremonies are initiatory rites into eldership or stages of adulthood. It decouples the rituals from sacrifices performed as Agĩkũyũ religious rites. So, the goats slaughtered during the *Kĩama* meeting, though they appear to be offerings, are not sacrifices to God as in the Agĩkũyũ religious ceremony. It recognises *Kĩama*'s political motif in addressing the Agĩkũyũ interest in regional and national matters. Even though the *Kĩama* participates in the political welfare of the community in times of disputes. However, the community must consider the risks of being insular in a multi-ethnic country. The church will be disembowelled by the logic of tribal politics rather than the ritual blood of the *Kĩama.*

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Rethinking Catechesis of Forgiveness in the Context of Historical Injustices: African Covenantal Oath-Taking as Panacea to Collective Memory

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Abstract

When a human being is offended by another, they hurt and the urge to revenge is inevitable. Nonetheless, forgiveness is imperative both as a Christian virtue and also for the purpose of healing from the hurting. This can only be achieved when genuine repentance on the part of the oppressor and genuine forgiveness on the part of the victim take place. When these values are missed out in the process, collective memories of the bitterness are likely to be passed from one generation to another. When bitterness of the past is passed on to younger generations through collective memories, we witness intermittent violence like that which we always witness during the electioneering period in Kenya. Persisting sporadic violence ignited by collective memories, despite truces between warring communities, is evidence that no genuine forgiveness ever took place. How can we then achieve genuine repentance on the part of the oppressor and true forgiveness on the part of the victim? This article proposes rethinking the catechesis of forgiveness. It argues that if forgiveness is understood in the light of covenantal oath-taking, the African Christian will take it seriously and will avoid passing on the bitterness to the next generation. Theological hermeneutics are applied to the exegesis of biblical texts on forgiveness and inculturation hermeneutics are applied in linking the cross of Christ and the African oath-taking. The research is library based.

Introduction

The world today groans in pain from historical injustices that range through economic exploitations, social injustices, political oppression, cultural alienation, sexual discrimination, corruption, negative ethnicity, and inter-religious conflicts and atrocities. These vices are likely to recur whenever there has not been genuine confession and repentance on the part of the offender. Whenever these evil acts are perpetuated, the victim hurts and finds it difficult to forgive the offender. Repentance is a Christian virtue that is enhanced through daily prayers. In Christian prayers, the worshippers petition God for forgiveness of their sins and they promise to forgive those who have offended them. When said atrocities are perpetuated by people who claim to be Christians, one definitely doubts the sincerity of the confession of the worshipper.

One may wonder how such atrocities could be perpetuated in the context of nations boasting of Christianity because Christianity calls for forgiveness and reconciliation and peaceful co-existence among neighbours. Unforgiveness by the victims of historical injustices that have not been properly addressed have vented out through negative ethnicity and political conflicts. This was the case with Rwanda's genocide (1994) and Kenya's post-election violence (2007/08) which were ventilations of precipitated anger from the colonial period. This also underlies the worldwide interreligious conflicts of the twenty-first century.

Reflecting on this occurrence in the two nations, Kenya and Rwanda, which boast of high Christian conversions, one would wonder how they would drift into such serious ethnic conflicts. This article observes that, despite the efforts made by governments and non-governmental organisations to mitigate conflicts between communities that find themselves at war with each other because of historical injustices perceived to have been perpetuated by those they perceive to be their oppressors, these conflicts have always reared their ugly head especially during national elections. This is evidence that no genuine confession and repentance and genuine forgiveness ever took place.

The Church has attempted to reconcile warring communities, especially in Kenya's Rift Valley, through prayers and organising come-togethers of young

people for sports and youth camps, hoping that through such activities there would be cohesion, but intermittent violence has occurred during subsequent national elections. This means that any repentance, confession, and forgiveness that took place were superficial.

This article proposes that if repentance, confession, and forgiveness are understood in the light of African covenantal oath-taking, the African Christian will take the process seriously and will avoid passing on bitterness to the next generation. Using theological and inculturation hermeneutics, this article now proposes the rethinking of our catechesis of forgiveness from objective to subjective to covenantal oath-taking as a new hermeneutics of how we should approach forgiveness.

Collective Memories of Historical Injustices

Many armed conflicts we experience in Africa today, although they may appear to have immediate causes, have true causes deeply rooted in what we call collective memories of historical injustices. This bitterness is passed on from one generation to another through collective memories. The bitterness of historical injustices is aggravated when election processes are flawed.

> This has created hatred among communities, especially those that feel oppressed or disenfranchised by the dominant communities. Consequently, this kind of hatred that has been caused by political oppressors has been categorized among the 'unforgivable sins' by the victims of oppression. (Moenga 2020:9)

This is so because an election is supposed to be a platform that offers an opportunity to the citizenry to express their wish. Unfortunately, when electoral processes are flawed, the aggrieved group feels hurt and may react with violence. Such has been witnessed in Kenya's national elections in 2007, 2013, 2017, and 2022. The losing sides incited their followers to take to the streets with chaotic demonstrations to force the government to resign. Victims of the rigged elections and of violence afterwards find it difficult to forgive those who hurt them. This bitterness is passed from one generation to the next through collective memories. Examples of expressions of bitterness

precipitated by historical injustices in Kenya and Rwanda are the post-election violence (PEV) in 2007/08 and genocide in 1994 respectively.

We shall draw lessons of non-forgiveness and collective memories from local and global scenarios like those of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, South African xenophobia and the religious crusades of the Middle Ages. Moenga (2020) notes that, before the establishment of colonialism in Africa, African communities lived in harmony and this harmonious relationship came to an end with the coming of colonial rule, which divided the communities into tribes. The 1994 Rwandan genocide is a case in point. The case of genocide in Rwanda is embedded in its history. Ilibagiza (2014), gives an overview of the events that led to the 1994 Rwandan genocide. According to this account, the German and Belgian colonialists applied a divide-and-conquer strategy between 1884 and 1917 between the Rwandan Hutus (the majority agrarians) and the minority Tutsi (livestock keepers). The two colonial governments recognised the Tutsi's elitism and appointed them to rule over the majority Hutu; thus the latter became the symbol of colonial rule. When the majority Hutus won the first elections in 1961, they perceived the Tutsi as collaborators with their colonisers; they embarked on a scheme to exterminate them and intermittent violence between the two communities became a feature of post-independence Rwanda. This brewed animosity between the two communities leading to the 1994 genocide.

South Africa is another nation that never healed from historical injustices despite forming a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) for the purpose of promoting national unity and reconciliation. The commission was tasked to establish the truth of events during apartheid, and depending on the magnitude of one's crimes they would offer amnesty, reparation, and rehabilitation to the victims. Signs of non-forgiveness and false reconciliation include the infamous xenophobia witnessed repeatedly in South Africa today. According to the Human Rights Watch (Masiko-Mpaka 2023), contrary to the expectation of many people that, after the TRC's efforts to reconcile the victims of apartheid and their oppressors, people would forgive each other, there have been increased incidences of xenophobia in South Africa since 1994.

Besides political factors, many world conflicts have been caused by religious pride. For example, during the Middle Ages Christians, basing their belief in election, regarded Muslims who lived in Jerusalem as a threat to the existence of their own religion Christianity. Such an attitude skewed the Church's hermeneutics, leading to dubious teachings that Arabs and by extension Muslims were an accursed nation. To counter the invasion of the holy city, the eastern emperor Alexius Comnenus appealed to Pope Urban II (1095) for military support to drive the Muslims out of the holy city (Clouse 1977:276).

Governments and religious organisations have made efforts towards the elimination of historical injustices and their effects, through forming commissions to lead the processes of reparation. Despite these efforts, intermittent conflicts based on historical injustices are still evident. This leads us to evaluate the approaches that have been used by governments and religious groups towards achieving peace in Africa.

An Evaluation of the impact of the attempted Solutions

There have been efforts by various governments all over the world to achieve world peace through truces between warring factions. Similar effort has been made in religious circles; Christians and Muslims have initiated mechanisms that would bring them into dialogue for the purpose of finding a lasting solution to what divides them. Let us begin with non-religious circles. For the case of Kenya's post-election violence (2007/08), the government set a Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) whose mandate was to investigate the historical injustices from 1963 to 2008. The TJRC model anticipated sincere confessions by perpetrators, punishments for the offenders, and compensation for victims as advised by Desmond Tutu. According to Tutu (Tutu and Tutu 2014:7), forgiveness requires an ongoing conversation of honesty and sincerity. This model was criticised on the grounds that confession and justice would open wounds and wouldn't bring about national integration and cohesion. The Church on her part proposed forgiveness without confession by perpetrators of the crimes.

Besides the TJRC, the government also created the National Cohesion and Integration Commission. Its mandate was to foster national unity, equity, and the elimination of all forms of ethnic discrimination. Despite the existence of

this commission, pre-election and post-election violence has persisted. This is evidence that genuine confession and forgiveness never took place.

Despite non-governmental organisations, the Church and the international community intervening to reconcile the historical animosity between communities in Kenya's Rift Valley, sporadic violence especially between communities living in the region has continued. Gabrielle Lynch (2011), analysing the political situation in the Rift Valley and western Kenya on the eve of the 2013 national elections, noted that, although things seemed relatively calm, the calm was 'negative peace' because it was based on Ruto and Uhuru's similar fate at the ICC. She noted that there was no substantive change in local relations and things could therefore change quite rapidly if Ruto and Uhuru were to fall out at some point. She goes on to note the dissatisfaction by the locals with the way the resettling process of internally displaced persons (IDPs) was conducted by the Kibaki government. According to the respondents from the non-Kikuyu communities, the Kibaki government favoured his Kikuyu community in the process of resettling the internally displaced victims of the 2007/08 post-election violence. She concludes that dissatisfaction could lead to further anti-Kikuyu narratives similar to those that motivated the 2007/8 post election violence.

Lynch (2011) further observes that, in the events running up to the 2017 general elections, there was a rise of anti-Luo feeling among Kikuyu and Kalenjin. Feeling in areas such as the Nairobi slums could lead to the possibility of anti-Luo violence in Nairobi, Nakuru, and Eldoret towns. She further notes there could also arise election-related violence in areas outside the Rift Valley such as Bungoma County in western Kenya where there is a history of election-related violence between the Sabaot (a sub-group of the larger Kalenjin) and the Bukusu. One of the politicians from the Sabaot community intimated to her of the possibility of violence if the county government seats in Bungoma County were not shared to the Sabaot community.

For inter-religious conflicts between Muslims and Christians, initiatives have been made through dialogue and diapraxis as an effort towards enhancing a Christian-Muslim relationship. Diapraxis is a living process which does not include evangelisation of the other group. As observed by von Sicard,

> Diapraxis demands that Christians and Muslims live and work with one another toward reconciling conflicts and helping local communities act on their own choices in self-development towards a more just and participatory society. It is a living process, a way of coexisting and championing pro-existence. It involves people in communities working out ways to deal with violence, hooliganism, military or other despotism and economic depression. It takes place as people tackle corruption, educational and moral standards, etc., together. (von Sicard 2003:131)

Despite these efforts, each group has always treated goodwill activities from the other group with suspicion as acts of conversion, and sporadic conflicts have continued. It is for this reason that this article is seeking to find alternative, suitable methods to be applied in an attempt to resolve continued conflicts.

Whereas the situation in Kenya after the post-election violence remains volatile, the Rwandan case is rather different. As for the case of Rwanda after the genocide, the Rwandan government established the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) to address the issues that had led the country into the genocide with the aim of healing the country and achieving national cohesion and reconciliation. General surveys indicate that the Hutu and the Tutsi offered a platform for genuine repentance and forgiveness.

Since the time of the Christian-Muslim crusades in the Middle Ages, a mention of crusade to Muslims invokes bitter memories that have been passed from one generation to the other. For Muslims, Christian crusades are a continuation of the Western Middle Ages aggression towards the Islamic religion. Despite efforts to reconcile Muslims and Christians, collective memories have played a significant role in the instigation of Christian-Muslim antagonism. Gada surveys the impact the medieval Christian-Muslim crusades had on Christian-Muslim relations and states:

> The festering sore they left refused to heal, and scars on the face of the lands and on the souls of their inhabitants and [*sic*] still in evidence. As late as the twentieth century the anticrusading

> ghost was invoked in connection with the mandate imposed on Syria and Iraq and the Anglo-French attach on Egypt in 1956. (2017:2)

Since all efforts proposed by religious organisations and governments have not born much fruit, this article proposes a rethinking of the catechesis of forgiveness in which the cross of Jesus Christ becomes the centre of convergence between warring human communities and God in the God/man. With the application of African covenantal oath-taking, genuine repentance, and forgiveness will be achieved.

Rethinking the Catechesis of Forgiveness as a New Paradigm

Justification for Rethinking the Catechesis of Forgiveness

We have observed that efforts by governments, religious organisations, and non-governmental organisations to achieve world peace have not achieved their mandates and objectives as they were possibly anticipated. It is for this reason this paper proposes rethinking the way we have taught forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace-making in our churches. Genuine forgiveness and reconciliation are imperative for peaceful coexistence in our ailing continent. This is only possible when our catechesis of forgiveness is rethought. For genuine forgiveness and reconciliation to be achieved, Pope Benedict XVI argues, 'education in the faith is indispensable' (2011:Article 32). There has to be an authentic conversion based on whatever is taught and learnt; there must be a living connection between memorised catechism and lived catechesis that should lead towards a profound and permanent conversion of life. The lives of the converted Christians should be those permeated with the spirit of the Gospel. Thus, the Christians' understanding of the Gospel should shape their understanding of the world.

Our justification of this methodology is based on the fact that Christianity is spreading very fast in the global south and Africa in particular. According to Kenya's 2019 census, 85% of Kenya's population is largely Christian. This leads to our hypothesis that if Christian values, and more so forgiveness, are taught well, Christians who are the majority in this continent will influence genuine reconciliation and hence achieve lasting peace. Since the population of Kenya is majority Christian, we can conclude that its political class is majority

Christian and therefore, as exhorted by the Pope, according to the 'Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith', the political class has an essential duty to implement and administrate a just order and to 'be a major instrument at the service of reconciliation, justice and peace' (Benedict XVI 2011:Article 81). People in leadership positions should know that their position comes with responsibility and that leadership positions have been entrusted to them by the citizens and, therefore, they should be held responsible for their actions.

> It is important to call for a renewed reflection on how rights presuppose duties, if they are not to become mere licenses. (Benedict XVI 2011:Article 82)

This understanding can only be achieved if proper catechesis of the Christian faith is done. Proper catechesis as an approach is also based on the ground that it is a Christian duty to forgive as taught in the Lord's Prayer. The Christian faith in the Beatitudes also teaches peace-making as a virtue. Thus the gospel is supposed to be informative, transformative, and formative. Therefore, proper catechesis has the potential to transform people's attitudes leading to genuine confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Based on this new understanding of the role of the Church in the process of transformation, we note that the Church is obligated to promote within her ranks and within society a culture that respects the rule of law. This then leads us to ask what is to be taught for us to achieve true forgiveness, peace, and reconciliation.

From Objective to Subjective Forgiveness

We have stated in our hypothesis that genuine forgiveness is imperative in the process of healing and achieving genuine reconciliation. Despite the Church teaching the Christian virtues of forgiveness, peace-making, and reconciliation, nations and communities that subscribe to this particular faith still experience hostilities emanating from historical injustices. This then calls for a new understanding of forgiveness. This is only achievable if the catechesis of forgiveness is given a new approach.

C. B. Peter observes that the reason why, despite Christians petitioning God in the Lord's Prayer to forgive them as they forgive those who sin against them, genuine forgiveness never takes place is because the Christians have understood it from an objective point instead of the subjective one implied

therein. He says, as we ask our Father in heaven to forgive us, we also ought to forgive one another. He further observes that 'the whole concept of forgiveness is one that has been greatly distorted among many Christians' (2011:51). He notes that 'it has been plucked out of its subjective soil and conventionally re-planted in an objective seedbed' (2011:51). What he means by subjective is

> that if I have committed a fault, then I must realize it and beg for forgiveness, and if the other person has committed a fault, then I must forgive him or her without expecting or extracting any apology from that person. (Peter 2011:51-52)

So, according to Peter, this ideal approach to forgiveness has been distorted into an objective approach. And by objective approach he means that,

> when it is my fault, I do not care to apologize but expect the other person, the grieved one, to forgive me as if it is my Christian birthright, and his or her Christian duty. But when the other person has wronged against me then I expect him or her to apologize to me in all Christian humility and in a nice Christian manner. This is the objective distortion of the subjective phenomenon of forgiveness. (2011:52)

Jesus at the cross is the best example of subjective forgiveness and, therefore, an example for us to emulate. Although he was hurt, he did not seek revenge nor did he require of his tormentors repentance. He simply forgave them and prayed to his father to forgive them for they did not know what they were doing. In the same manner, we are to forgive our trespassers even before they come to their senses like the prodigal son and come back to ask for forgiveness.

Moving forgiveness from objective to subjective still cannot achieve the eradication of superficial repentance and superficial forgiveness. Is it not the same people who petition God daily for forgiveness who turn against each other during elections? Does it matter to them whether the forgiveness was objective or subjective? What is imperative here is genuine repentance and genuine forgiveness. This then demands that we further search for a step that makes the repentance and the forgiveness more authentic. It is at this point

we propose rethinking forgiveness in the light of African covenantal oath-taking.

Forgiveness in the Light of African Covenantal Oath-Taking

Since the colonial and missionary invasion of Africa, world ideologies and religious diversities have greatly influenced African worldviews. This is because African culture has always been dynamic. However, despite this influence and Africa's cultural dynamism, Africans have not completely abandoned their traditional beliefs and practices. For example, African covenants and oaths are still administered in ceremonies such as marriage dowry negotiation agreements.

Besides the traditional covenants and oaths, in modern African Christian society many religious covenants are practiced. For example, baptism and the sacraments are forms of covenant between God and Christian believers. During baptism, the initiate vows to shed their old ways and follow Jesus Christ, and remain faithful and obedient to Christian teachings. This covenant is enacted through the ceremony of baptism. The church congregation and the priest serve as witnesses between the two parties, i.e. God and the new believer. In many church traditions, this covenant of baptism is followed by the administration of the sacrament of Holy Communion. If we can take the sacrament of Holy Communion as a sacrifice that seals the covenant entered in baptism, then we can see Christ's work at the cross as the sacrificial lamb that seals Christian covenants and that can also seal African traditional covenants. Other common covenants in the Church include ordination services. Outside the Church, we have various covenants and oaths such as loyalty to state oaths of allegiance, trade agreement treaties, peace treaties, land buying agreements, and employment contracts. This demonstrates the fact that covenants and oaths are not strange phenomena in modern Africa.

As already stated, despite conversion to Christianity and influence by Western ideologies and worldviews, African Christians' faith expression is tinged by their African realities. For example, an African Christian would fear taking a traditional oath if they were not sure of what they were about to say but willingly take a Western oath even when they were sure whatever they were about to testify was false. Therefore, this article is arguing that if forgiveness is taken as an oath taken by the warring parties, the African Christian on their

part will not at will go against that which they have sworn to do in an oath for fear of its consequences. According to Obioha,

> An oath in African Traditional conception is defined as a solemn promise made by an individual or group of persons having a deity as a witness to the terms of the agreement within the African society. It can also be seen and regarded as an affirmation of an intended action or deed, binding on an individual with an obligation to be fulfilled. (Obioha and Etifiok 2023:58)

Many African traditional oaths were accompanied by animal sacrifices to seal the promises made in the oath. Curses for those who would dare go against the covenant and the oath taken were also invoked. In African traditional culture, curses were used as a form of deterrent and punishment. In the event of a conflict, formal curses would be used to punish the offender. Curses would only be uttered by persons of higher status against persons of lower status. They were also only effective if indeed an offence had been committed by the victim the curse is uttered to. However, such curses could be reversed by the one who invoked it if the victim repented and asked for forgiveness. The reverse could be achieved through a ritual or outright revocation by the one who uttered it (Mbiti 1969:211).

African people believed that the effects of the curse were experienced within this present life. John S. Mbiti notes that

> The majority of African peoples believe that God punishes in this life […] For that reason, misfortunes may be interpreted as indicating that the sufferer has broken some moral or ritual conduct against God, the spirits, the elders or other members of his society. (1969:210)

> [The African] belief behind the oath is that God or some power higher than the individual man, will punish the person who breaks the requirements of the oath or covenant. Like curses, oaths are feared and many are administered ritually and at great expense. (Mbiti 1969:212)

Based on the fact that African Christians have this fear underlying and influencing their Christian behaviour, we are proposing that if forgiveness is taught in the light of African covenant- and oath-taking, it will provide a basis for the Christian to enter the oath of forgiveness with sincerity. Understanding forgiveness as an oath is better taught in the light of the work of Christ at the cross. At the cross, the God/man unites humankind with God to enter into a covenant of forgiveness. The warring human parties are essentially at war with God, through their sins. God who is offended invites the offender to enter into a forgiving and reconciliation covenant at the cross in which Christ's death is the sacrificial ritual that seals the covenant agreement.

Christ hanging on the cross is God hanging on the cross with arms spread inviting us all to participate in his forgiving act. The victimisers' acts of oppression and the victims' harboured bitterness and transmission of collective memories of the bitterness of historical injustices are imputed on Christ while his forgiving righteousness is imputed on the two parties. This imputed forgiving righteousness removes the superficial repentance and superficial forgiveness between the conflicting parties. The covenant takes place in the God/man as the arena in which the two parties meet (Mueller 1984:6). Christ the sacrificial lamb takes the sin of collective memory that has embittered the victims of historical injustices to the cross where he battles with it and defeats it. The captives of bitter memories are set free in the action of Jesus Christ at the cross.

The process of forgiveness at the cross is tripartite in nature. At the cross, the oppressor beholds God/man's action of love to both themselves and their victims of oppression. With this realisation that Christ the God/man is inviting them for a tripartite covenant of forgiveness, they are moved with this love to seek for forgiveness from their victims of oppression. On the part of the victim of oppression, when they behold Christ the God/man hanging on the cross for the sins committed against them by their oppressors, they realise the unmerited love and forgiveness the oppressor is receiving and they are moved to forgive their oppressors too without demanding apology from them. Christ hanging on the cross cries out to the Father, 'Forgive them for they do not know what they are doing' (Luke 23:34). This appeal to the Father is for forgiveness of both the oppressor and the oppressed, for the oppressor for

oppressing and for the victim for harbouring bitter memories and unforgiving attitude.

Forgiveness as an Imperative for Eschatological Hope

The urgency of forgiveness is based on the fact that it is a Christian duty to initiate the processes of forgiveness, peace-making, and reconciling relationships. Jesus in the Beatitudes exhorts his followers to be peace-makers for they shall be called children of God. He also teaches them to forgive those who sin against them as many times as they can within a day. Pope Benedict XVI in his reflection on peace-making and reconciliation teaches that,

> If all of us [Muslims and Christians] believe in God's desire to promote reconciliation, justice and peace, we must work together to banish every form of discrimination, intolerance and religious fundamentalism. (2011:Article 94)

The fact that God, in Jesus Christ, was reconciling the world back to himself makes it incumbent upon us to reconcile ourselves to one another. The Pope notes that, in Jesus Christ's ministry, especially in his death and resurrection, God was reconciling the world to himself, discounting the sins of humanity (see 2 Cor. 5:19, Rom. 5:10, Col. 1:21-22). He goes further to state that God the Father reconciled the Jews and Gentiles to himself, creating one new man through the cross (see Eph. 2:15 and 3:6). According to the Pope, therefore,

> the experience of reconciliation establishes communion on two levels: communion between God and humanity; and –since the experience of reconciliation also makes us (as a reconciled humanity) 'ambassadors of reconciliation' – communion among men (Benedict XVI 2011:Article 20)

Therefore, if we are looking for lasting peace in the world, only authentic reconciliation can achieve this for us (Benedict XVI 2011:Article 21). Thus reconciliation has to have a vertical as well as a horizontal dimension: vertically we are reconciled to God and horizontally to fellow humankind. This perspective is illustrated in the parable of the 'Prodigal Son' (Luke 15:11-32).

At his return (conversion) he needed to be reconciled both to his father and to his brother.

Another basis for the imperativeness of forgiveness is the fact that at eschaton all creation shall be reconciled in God. This is best explained by Jürgen Moltmann in his theology of the end. Moltmann (1979 and 1999) locates his eschatology in the eternal trinity in which he argues all creation shall enter. He takes a cue from Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 15:28 in which Paul teaches that at the end God will be all in all. He also takes another cue from John's Gospel where Jesus in his prayer to the Father prays for the unity of humanity that they may be one as they (Father and Son) are one (John 17). Therefore, if the ultimate hope of all human beings is towards a universal reconciliation and hope in eternity, that God may be all in all, this should be a driving force for all humankind regardless of their religious differences and ideologies to forgive and seek peace and reconciliation one to another in this world before entering the ultimate perichoresis with the Trinity, for the kingdom of God begins here with us as it anticipates its eventual consummation at the eschaton. C. B. Peter observes similarly that

> The Kingdom of God is not a heavenly destination to be reached beyond death. It is a blessing and a challenge and a challenge to be received here and now. It is manifested in the liberating miracles of Jesus: the blind see; the deaf hear; the dumb speak; the captives are set free. That which blinds the eyes of the conscience, that which blocks the hearing of God's silent voice amidst the social, political, and economic turmoil, that which binds the tongue to speak against injustices – that is broken in the Kingdom of God, and we are truly liberated. (2011:30)

He goes further to argue that

> the Kingdom of God is not merely a Kingdom of philanthropy or charity. It is rather a kingdom of thorough overhauling of social, political, and cultural systems. It is a Kingdom where all love each other, and all love God. It includes the material world and it includes the here and now, but it does not exhaust itself either in all its spiritual and material, individual and societal

> dimensions. Only in such a comprehensive totality does the great petition make its fullest impact: 'Thy kingdom come'. (2011:30)

Christ's invitation in his spread arms on the cross is both vertical and horizontal. The vertical aspect is the fact that God has condescended to meet the human beings in the God/man. He is now pulling to himself all human beings, reconciling them to the Father and to one another. In Jesus' saving act on the cross, both the estranged enemies of God and enemies of one another and friends meet. The invitation is imperative. In Matthew 28, Christ commissions his disciples to go all over the world to make disciples for him. This commission is urgent.

Pastoral Implication

Lest it be misconstrued that such forgiveness and reconciliation lets the perpetrators of conflict go scot-free, the Pope teaches that

> this reconciliation has to be accompanied by a courageous and honest act; the pursuit of those responsible for these conflicts, those who commissioned crimes and who were involved in trafficking of all kinds, and the determination of their responsibility. (Benedict XVI 2011:Article 21)

This is necessary because 'victims have a right to truth and justice' (Benedict XVI 2011:Article 21).

How should we understand this formula of forgiveness that includes justice? This can be understood in the light of the Pope's hermeneutics of Christ's encounter with Zacchaeus. Whereas human justice demanded that Zacchaeus be punished, 'God himself shows us what true justice is' (Benedict XVI 2011:Article 25). He observes that

> They did not know the justice of love which gives itself to the utmost, to taking upon itself the 'curse' laid upon men, that they may receive in exchange the 'blessings' which is God's gift (cf. Gal. 3:13-14). (Benedict XVI 2011:Article 25)

This is divine justice that unconditionally forgives the perpetrator. Christ's beatitudes are a good example of this divine justice as they provide a new horizon of justice. The Pope notes that 'God's justice, revealed to us in the Beatitudes, raises the lowly and humbles those who exalt themselves' (Benedict XVI 2011:Article 26).

True reconciliation and authentic peace is that which comes from above (John 14:27). Such peace

> is not the fruit of negotiations and diplomatic agreements based on particular interests. It is the peace of a humanity reconciled with itself in God, a peace of which the Church is the sacrament. (Benedict XVI 2011:Article 30)

Through sincere confession and repentance like that of Zacchaeus, followed by justice executed through forgiveness, genuine reconciliation and peace is attained.

Conclusion

In the context of the perpetration of historical injustices, the victims are tempted to pass on collective memories to the next generation. This is a clear sign that genuine forgiveness and reconciliation never took place. This paper has argued that, for genuine forgiveness and reconciliation to take place, the catechesis for forgiveness ought to be rethought, to progress from objective to subjective to covenantal oath-taking as a new hermeneutics of how we should approach forgiveness.

In the subjective approach the victim takes the initiative to forgive the offender whether there were apology and genuine repentance or not. However, we noted that despite this approach in the past, the offender is not given the opportunity to participate in the process of forgiveness. Therefore, in our new hermeneutics we are proposing a further step in which both the victim and the perpetrator participate in the process. In the African covenantal oath-taking, the cross of Jesus Christ is central. Forgiveness is based on the ontological divine (the person of Jesus Christ), who by inbreaking into the human existence, he takes up human sins committed through collective memories,

imputes them on himself and nails them on the cross. The victim of historical injustices, by beholding Christ on the cross, realises his/her own sin of passing on the bitterness to the next generation while the perpetrators of those injustices also recognise their sins of victimisation of the victims. The cross becomes the turning point for both the victimiser and the victim, when they both realise their sins and are thus compelled to move from objective to subjective then to covenantal oath-taking. We have argued that since Africans take oaths seriously, they will make the covenant of forgiveness a serious thing. It is at this stage that true confession and repentance take place in a covenantal oath-taking context with God as both the witness and participant.

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Race And Ethnicity: Biblical or Social Constructs

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Abstract

Race and ethnicity are gifts of identity in global society. On the contrary, racism and ethnocentrism are perennial threats to the identity of human existence, equality, societal development, and national and international relations. The onus of this article focuses on whether race and ethnicity are Biblical or social constructs. The approach used in this paper is dialectic in nature. This approach is used to affirm that racial and ethnic diversities are gifts from God that beautify our communal identity, but it also confirms that racism and ethnocentrism are equally evil dispositions of humanity towards other races and ethnic groups. Thus, the paper provides a theological response to the problem of racism and ethnocentrism in the church and society, using the Christo-creation framework to refute racism and ethnocentrism. Thus, any societal or religious stratification that prioritises one racial, ethnic, or gender supremacy over others is evil. This article argues that racial and ethnic superiority over others is not a Biblical structure but a socio-cultural construct and pseudoscientific stereotype that devalues other racial groups. This article concludes that peoples' worth, value, dignity, and sanctity of life should not be based on racial and ethnic phenotypical categorisation. Instead, it should be based on the universality of God's image in human beings as the common point of convergence so as to end the global spiral of racism and ethnocentrism.

Introduction

The world is now a global village. This suggests an interface that transcends geographical borders, racial lines, friendships, and relationships among

peoples and nations orchestrated by hyper-technological transportation and advanced communication systems. This being good news, the world is equally becoming more fragmented due to the perennial challenge of racism and ethnocentrism today. The struggle for existence, survival, and equality devoid of racism and ethnocentrism has been perpetual among humans.

On 28 August 1963, Martin Luther King Jr led a protest with a population of three-quarters of Afro-Americans to Washington DC, in a struggle for survival and racial equality. This protest has remained significant to the global history of racism. He envisioned that

> one day the sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood […] injustice and oppression will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice (Stott 2006:269)

Perhaps the ascendance of Barack Obama's political hegemony as the first black president in America fulfilled this dream. Despite this development, Manickam (2007:326) states that the issue of racism remains in the minds of racists. The superiority of one race or ethnic group over others is yet reckoned with in society at institutional, communal, and personal levels.

At the time of this research, I watched two video clips that depict the current reality of racist acts by both white and black people. One of the acts was in Ireland at a gymnastics medal ceremony where a white lady denied a black girl a medal and skipped her in the queue.[1] The other act of racism was in a video sent to me by a friend. In that video, the black person intentionally expressed racist acts by hugging only his fellow blacks and only shook hands with the whites, including their children.[2] While the racist act of the black person could be existentially reactionary, I think it is not worth it because two wrongs do not make a right.

Today, even the church is caught up in the web of racism and ethnocentrism. The church is a firsthand suspect of the conspiracy of silence or inaction, even of complicity in all of the above, because of the failure to achieve its primary

[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jSZRDAjZLfU
[2] http://youtu.be/nopWOC4SRm4?si=McUfPz-xsWc188dU

purpose of existence by helping to establish conditions and structures that promote justice and life and not oppression and death (Gwamna 2004:50). The church's lackadaisical attitude concerning race and ethnic superiority over others in the past and still today raises the question of whether racism and ethnocentrism are Biblical or social constructs. Gwamna (2004) and Maigadi (2006) testify to how Hutu pastors participated in the Rwandan genocide against the Tutsi ethnic group due to socio-political and ethnic diversity. Some practising Christians have used the Bible to defend race and ethnic superiority over others. Now, in matters of faith, what one believes is crucial. Our understanding of race and ethnicity can inform our belief in the perfection of God's creation, which, if wrongly perceived, could contradict the Christian doctrine of humans created in the image of God.

This paper engages a dialectic approach. Dialectic is an approach in theology that helps navigate the opposing forces in a situation. Dialectic is a situation where two seemingly opposing things are true simultaneously, like the varied reports of what an elephant is by four blind men. By engaging a dialectic approach in this research, the argument will be that race and ethnicity as Biblical constructs and racism and ethnocentrism as social constructs are both true. By providing a theological response to the problem of racism and ethnocentrism in the church and society, the Christo-creation framework will be utilised (a brief exposition of this framework will come later under the theological rebuttal in this work). The paper maintains that racial and ethnic superiority over others is not a Biblical structure but a social, cultural, and pseudo-scientific construct that stereotypes people by devaluing their sanctity, dignity, and God's image. However, the peculiarity of racial and ethnic diversities without predilection over others is affirmed as blessings God gives to beautify unity and communal living. This paper considers the conceptualisation of race, ethnicity, and social construct, the challenge of race and ethnicity in the contemporary world, the Biblical view of race and ethnicity, race and ethnicity as a social construct, and a theological rebuttal.

Conceptualising Race, Ethnicity, and Social Constructs

Understanding the meaning of concepts is essential for better comprehension of every discourse. In the context of this paper, the concepts of race, ethnicity,

social construct, and Biblical construct need conceptualisation for proper understanding of the paper.

The Concept of Race

The meaning of *race* has been viewed as

> a population of a species that differs in the frequency of some gene or genes from other populations of the same species (Kraft 2003:109)

Early anthropologists sub-classified human species based on geography and physical features of skin colour, hair texture, head shape, nose shape, body type, etcetera. The most sophisticated classification has been based on blood type. The problem with such categorisation gave birth to 'individuals who did not fit the categories of light-skinned Africans or dark-skinned Caucasoids' (Kraft 2003:109). As a result, race has come to be seen as a 'social ideology of human division, sorted according to common phenotypical features' (Manickam 2008:718). The term *race* is used to differentiate the identity of people at the intercontinental level. Invariably, race becomes racism when it becomes the basis for assigning human value in society. Today, racism's unbridled power continues to haunt society and the church, specifically through its many expressions of social and political inequality (Manickam 2008:718). This is bad and condemnable by the Bible.

The Concept of Ethnicity

Ethnicity came from the Greek term *ethnos,* meaning 'a people or nation'. In the Bible, it is translated as Gentiles, nations, heathens, and people. It primarily differentiates other people from the descendants of Abraham. Gentile is used as a derogatory name for unbelievers by the Jews, but Paul's use of Gentile Christians addresses the problem of racism. Today, ethnicity refers to 'the social ideology of human division sorted according to common culture' (Manickam 2008:718).

Ethnicity is a cultural phenomenon that relates people to their roots, beliefs, and values, providing them with a deep sense of self-identity during their interaction with others (Maigadi 2006:19). This creates in a group a sense of uniqueness within a broader social context. Therefore, *ethnos* refers to how

certain people live communally (Manickam 2008:719). This indicates that ethnic categorisation emphasises the diversity of culture, which is the way of life.

Race and ethnic identity are viable means to identify strangers in society and not to oppress them. Moreover, the Bible tells us to show hospitality to strangers (Romans 12:13). Maigadi (2006: xvi) affirmed that 'Ethnicity in itself is good […] it is a gift from God and provides people with self-identity and social security'. Ethnicity depicts the difference between people of different socio-cultural and ethnic groups within a locality or a nation. He, however, noted that

> it is the divisive ethnicity (what I call in this work ethnocentrism) that is evil because it discriminates against people made in the image of God. (Maigadi 2006:xvi).

The Concept of Social Construct

A social construct is a set of ideas, moral conduct, way of behaviour, and life created and accepted by people for living in a society. It is not inherently natural but created by society. Social construct derives the standards of living from the norms of society. A social construct is a concept in social sciences that makes society unique. It is believed that social constructs shape our lives as we also shape them. Social constructs change as society changes. Social constructs are good for a society because they direct and guide life in the society. However, there are social constructs that do more harm than good to a society.

Given the above, this paper maintains that racism and ethnocentrism are social constructs created by human pride and rebelliousness. Extreme social constructivism emphasises relativism and regards gender, heterosexuality, marriage, and other Biblical norms as human constructs (Paolantonio 2016). Thus, since different societies have different norms for living, we must look through the culture of the Bible (God's word) to define the culture of living in every community.

The Concept of Biblical Construct

The Biblical construct fundamentally derives its ideas of life and morals from the Bible. The Bible, as the written word of God, is primarily about the

magnificent act of God to glorify himself, to show how people can be saved from their sins by faith in Christ and how to live all of life in obedience as the follower of God. Thus, the construct for life to live must come from the Bible. Bromiley (1999:95) states that Biblical construct 'draws its materials from the Bible and attempts to be faithful to the biblical norm'. A Biblical construct transcends just quoting and assembling verses of the Bible to interpret through exegetical consideration of the text in its historical context, for a profound 'reconstruction of theology on genuinely biblical foundations both of context and method' (Bromiley 1999:95). Therefore to be biblical in our constructs,

> we must take the Bible as it really is. We must accept it on its own terms. We must see, study and state things on its own basis and from its own standpoint. We must not force it into an alien philosophical scheme (Bromiley 1999:96).

Taking the Bible into this consideration necessitates thoughtful exegesis of the text in its historical and grammatical contexts, adequately exegeted to determine what the Bible is saying. In this light, great theological reformers, such as Martin Luther, insisted that the church should not determine what the scripture says but that scripture should determine the church's message. Hence, Luther believes that 'scripture interprets scripture' (Mueller 2017). To him, the tools for properly interpreting the Bible are contained in it, borrowing from Jesus and his apostles, who always referred to the scripture to interpret it. According to Calvin, the basic methodological principle of Biblical interpretation is that everything must be presumed in God and not in the Church's office. He added that since the Bible is the word of God, the ultimate Truth, namely God himself, then we must allow the scripture to interpret itself with consideration to a text directly and interpret it within the linguistic and historical parameters of its context and apply it to the need of the present day (Prakosa 2010:128-129). Calvin is saying that we must not allow ourselves to be directed by our own prejudice and imagination but must listen to the scripture through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to aid our limitedness. An objective reading of the Bible clearly shows that God does not endorse prejudice against another racial group. Calvin's view of biblical hermeneutics can be considered contextual, notwithstanding the accusation against its challenge of literalism. Karl Barth, among others, also endorses contextual hermeneutics.

In Africa, Byang Kato is among the leading theologians who uphold contextual hermeneutics with exegetical enthusiasm to avoid parochial subjectivism in interpretation capable of breeding prejudice. Similarly, Elizabeth Nburu, an African New Testament scholar, believes interpreters must consider historical conditions, grammar, and content in their hermeneutics. She noted

> one key factor among others that must serve as a foundation for the entire process: All conclusions regarding the text must be rooted in an understanding of the culture and worldview of the Bible (Nburu 2019:7-8)

to avoid super-imposition of the meaning of a text. Therefore, any construct that is Biblical must speak what the Bible says, based on the text, context, and content, and apply to the current context for it to be a Biblical construct.

The Challenge of Race and Ethnicity in the Contemporary World

From time immemorial to contemporary times, racism and ethnocentrism have threatened the human race due to the perceived consciousness of supremacy. The reason for superiority consciousness possibly arises from the clash in worldview, practice, language, and lack of tolerance to accommodate and live with various cultures, to appreciate each other's work and peculiarity (Audi 2004:36). This wrong perception of superiority has triggered the challenge of prejudice among racial groups, resulting in violence, killings, and the destruction of 'inferior' racial or ethnic groups as witnessed today. The reoccurrence of xenophobic attitudes against Nigerians and other Africans in South Africa justifies this claim. The law for abolishing racism in America and other parts of the world does not seem to be realised because of increasing vestiges of the segregation of different nationalities in places of employment and accommodation in America and elsewhere. This is because racism still occupies the minds of racists. Locally, say Africa and Nigeria in particular, ethnocentrism and tribalism have retarded national and continental development. Every governmental sector has become racially and ethnically polarised. For instance, Muhammad Buhari was elected the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in 2015 and 2019 based on religious and tribal bigotry but under the mantra of change in disguise.

The allocations into diplomatic offices under Buhari's administration were highly ethnocentric rather than quality-based. This indicates that issues of ethnocentrism and racism are still very much alive in the minds of racists and tribal bigots. Thus, Freed (2017:54) observed that 'the church as the hope of the world' is becoming more complicated. The leadership appointments in some denominations in Africa, Nigeria in particular, are based on ethnic categorisation and dominance. Maigadi's research, *Divisive Ethnicity in the Church in Africa* (2006), using Evangelical Church Winning All in Nigeria shows an archetypal menace permeating Christian religious and non-religious organisations.

Another challenge is that it has caused a setback in Christian evangelism. Race and ethnic superiority make racists view other races as less human because of phenotypical features and cultural distinctions. This is a challenge to the Christian faith because when a supposedly Christian racial group metes out prejudice to an unbelieving racial group in the name of being better or superior culturally, such affects the reception of the gospel in the area. Hall observes that

> invariably with other issues of race comes the exposure of slavery […] some atrocities meted out by white Christians to black slaves while the church largely remains silent (2001:84)

which was a setback to mission endeavours in some parts of the world.

Race and ethnic superiority pose a challenge by promoting injustice in the society. In such a society, employment is offered not based on performance but on the value of race and ethnic group to which one belongs. This can lead to underdevelopment in the nation, causing a high poverty rate, criminality, corruption, conflict, and crisis. These challenges are all religiously, culturally, and socially inclined in nature. Therefore, there is a need for a theological response against racism to guard our culture, symbiotic relationship, and ultimately the gospel from the dominant culture, socially constructed ideology seeking to destroy peaceful co-existence in the world.

Race and Ethnicity as a Social Construct

Debates as to whether race and ethnicity are Biblical or social constructs abound. In this debate, many scholars have lent their voices to the issue. Immanuel Kant believed in the superior intelligence of the white race over the black. He stated that 'the Negroes of Africa have received from nature no intelligence that rises above the foolish' (Kant, 1965:110). He added that

> the difference between the two races is thus a substantial one; it appears to be just as great in respect of the faculties of the mind as in colour (Kant, 1965:111).

He further affirmed that the 'Negro' race has a 'silly natural aptitude […] no real character' (Kant, 1965:111). This is unfortunate for Kant to believe that the black race was less intelligent and inferior to the white race.

David Hume reasoned in the same manner as his contemporary, Kant. He submits that

> I am apt to suspect the Negroes are in general and all the other species of men to be naturally inferior to the white. There was no civilised nation of any other complexion than white or even any individual eminent in action or speculation. (Hume, 1969:415).

Blacks, Hume concluded, have 'no indigenous manufacturers among them, no arts, and no sciences' (Hume, 1969:415). Hume seemed to have inadequate knowledge about Africa because Egypt, in particular, is now globally attested as the earliest civilised place where the iron wheel, architecture, shipping, and astronomy were discovered long before European civilisation. The Nok culture, the earliest known society in western Africa, modern-day Nigeria, existed from around 500 BC to 200 AD and used iron tools, pottery, and several other artefacts. They would not have had such early civilisation if they were less intelligent as some Europeans had claimed. Perhaps Kant's and Hume's erroneous categorisation of prevalent human differences in many countries as natural endowment is the foundation of modern racism.

The sophisticated theory of evolution developed by Charles Darwin has been used by many people to advance racism. For instance, Herbert Spencer used this evolution theory to develop Social Darwinism (history.com 2018), which favoured the idea of racism. The theory encouraged natural selection, which he used to justify certain political, social, and economic views. The theory believes in the 'survival of the fittest'. Social Darwinists believe certain people become powerful in society because they are innately better. Given this, the theory has been used to justify imperialism, racism, eugenics, and social inequality over the years (history.com 2018). This biological view of race in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was misled by pseudoscience that concluded that there are five major races and smaller subsidiary ethnic groups (Spickard 2007:264). They believe race is about biology, genes, and phenotype, and the body is physically inherited, immutable, and distinct (Spickard 2005:11). Karl Linne, a Swedish botanist, founded a pseudoscience that categorised organisms according to their species, including humans, as if it were scientific. This pseudoscience asserts that 'there are several distinct races of humankind, each with a separate physiognomy, intellect and moral character' (Spickard 2005:11). Other pseudoscientist racialist speculators who built upon this idea included George-Louis Leclerc. As a naturalist, he believed in the monogenism of the human race, but he developed the idea of race to distinguish people of different skin colour and physical features. He affirmed that Nordic Caucasians were the original human beings through whom people of dark skin came into being due to the harsh climate. He believed that a cooler climate could make their skin lighter. Beauty, for him, plays a major role in the hierarchy among the races. He believed in the idea that species change over time (Harpham 2023). Johann Friedrich Blumenbach separated the species of humankind into five races: Caucasian or white race, Mongolian or yellow race, Malayan or brown race, Ethiopian or black race, and American or red race. He argued that physical characteristics like skin colour, cranial profile, etcetera, depended on geography, diet, and mannerisms. He emphasised the 'degenerative hypothesis' of racial origins, where he claimed that Adam and Eve were Caucasian inhabitants of Asia through whom other races developed by degeneration from environmental factors such as the sun and poor diet. He believed this degeneration could reverse the original Caucasian race in proper environmental control. Though he believed that Africans were not inferior to the rest of humankind in the healthy faculties of excellent natural talents and

mental capacities, other people used his position for scientific racialism (Johann-Friedrich-Blumenbach Institute no date).

George Leopold Cuvier, a French naturalist and zoologist, claimed that all men descended from Biblical Adam and Eve, who were originally Caucasian. He used physical differences (colour, beauty, and ugliness) and quality of civilisation for his categorisation of races, which comprise Caucasian (white), Mongolian (yellow), and Ethiopian (black) (Isaac 2004:105). A. H. Keane, the Irish Roman Catholic journalist and linguist, affirmed human unity but still used human typologies to emphasise linguistic data rather than human physiology as the basis for hierarchy (Spickard 2007:263). Although these naturalists believed in human beings' monogenic origin, their views encouraged racism due to their categorisation of race according to hierarchy.

Apart from the use of naturalism for labelling racism, others have backed Hamitic theory as the aetiology for racism, claiming that Hamites were black savages, 'natural slaves', and Negroes. This theory identifies the Hamite with the Negro, a view that served as a rationale for slavery and racism using biblical interpretations in support of their tenets from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century (Sander 1969:524). They believed that the black race was cursed through Ham, who mocked his father's nakedness. This view of the Hamite's image deteriorated such that negroes were excluded by whites from the brotherhood race. European thinkers in the fifteenth century initially explained the existence of dark-skinned people of Africa within the biblical framework to justify the subservient status of Africans (Felder 1990). Norman Cohn (1996) affirmed that black Africans descended from one of Noah's sons, Ham, whom Noah cursed for disparaging the nakedness of his father. Daniel Hayes (1996:396-409) concluded that Cush, who are referred to as people of dark skin, are the black Africans. David Goldenberg (1997:21-55) describes black Africans in a derogatory way, characterising them as: 'Physically and intellectually inferior, cursed by God, oversexed, more animal than human, ugly, smelly, and associated with the devil'. This claim belied the Biblical description of humanity by a prejudiced subjective view of the African race.

The Bible invalidates the Hamitic theory because the curse on Ham is not connected with his intelligence. The curse theory of black Africans through Ham is contradicted by the innate theory of Kant, Hume, and Social Darwinism.

The Bible does not record that Cush and his descendants were cursed by their grandfather Noah but that Canaan was (Gen. 9:25-27). Genesis 9:18 shows Noah had three sons: Shem, Japheth, and Ham. Ham had four sons: Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan (Gen. 10:6). Canaan was cursed because his father had seen Noah's nakedness (Gen. 9:25). Noah said:

> Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brother. He also said praise be to the Lord, the God of Shem. May God extend Japhet's territory; may Japhet live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be the slave of Japhet. (Gen. 9:25-27, NIV).

Interestingly, it was the descendants of Cush that the Bible records had dark skin (Jeremiah 13:23), though they were not cursed. Therefore, to conclude that Africans are inferior to whites because they were cursed through Ham, the father of Cush, their supposed ancestor, is not valid. The reason is that Canaan and his descendants, not Cush, were cursed. Interestingly, by geographical location, African ancestry is traced to Cush, not Canaan, present-day Israel, Gaza, Jordan, southern Syria, and Lebanon. The Cushite dark skin was not a result of the curse because Cush was not cursed but Canaan. Therefore, any conclusion that Africans are black due to the curse laid on Canaan is a contradiction. Supposing this Hamitic theory of race is valid, the good news is that Christ came to set free the entire human race cursed through Adam (Gen. 3:17) and every other curse, including the hypothetical Hamitic theory of race. There is no curse that Christ has not reversed.

To this end, it is expedient to explore the social construct theory as the basis of racism and ethnocentrism. However, racial labelling and ethnic profiling as social constructs are new ways of thinking about race and ethnicity (Emerson and Smith 2000:6). While race and ethnicity are not evil, racism and ethnocentrism originate in the modern social construct of race and ethnicity. Those who hold this view argue that a set of people in the modern period who attempted to explain the varieties of people that Europeans and Euro-Americans encountered worldwide intensified some racial groups' ethnic and racial stereotypes. Manickam (2007:327) insists that, in the sixteenth-century Western Enlightenment era, philosophical, theological, and scientific theorists converged to create the myth of white superiority over members of other races.

Racism and ethnocentrism are not essentially natural but socially constructed classifiers that do not support multiple identities but classify them based on superiority (Woldemikael 2005:338). This implies that the concept of race is the classification of human societies into clearly defined racial and ethnic groups based on purely physical attributes. This means that ethnicity and racial grouping are not primordial essentialist and natural groupings but culturally and socially constructed social formations. It is good to note that systemic institutionalisation, ideologies, and classification of people, colonisation, political domination, and slavery are factors responsible for the social construct of the superiority of ethnic and racial identity.

The various existing racial groups worldwide are socially constructed due to their typical dynamics. Spickard noted that

> wherever there are peoples in one social space, they develop a language of hierarchy that one may call 'racial' or 'ethnic' and such hierarchies are connected to colonialism and impositions of power of some group over others, as well as defensive oppositions pursued by the less oppressed. (2005:23)

The fact that race and ethnicity are construed as social constructs means the culture of supremacy must be rejected and the dominant social structures must be dismantled and replaced with a new paradigm of plurality, equality, and mutuality to address the prevailing practices of a dominant racial hierarchy that presumes the superiority of white over black (Battalora 2002:317). Race and ethnicity have no biological differentiation among people groups but reflect social construction depicting a complex social achievement through its classification. To say that race is a social construct does not mean that physical differences are not readily apparent (Emerson and Smith 2000:6). The use of scientific, biological, and social phenotypical approaches, as seen above, has failed to address the challenge of racism and ethnocentrism, hence the need to search the Bible for a proper theological answer.

The Biblical View of Race and Ethnicity

The Bible affirms that 'God created mankind […] male and female he created them' (Gen. 1:27). This statement suggests physical diversity that God uniquely

endowed humankind with, a gift to be appreciated from the beginning. This form of variety was not a curse but a blessing to humanity. God said, multiply and fill the earth. Such dispersal under God's blessing inevitably resulted in the development of distinct cultures, though quite different from the later confusion of languages and the scattering of people under God's judgment at Babel. Since the fall of man and the dispersion of humanity from the Garden of Eden, race has transcended phenotypical diversity to phenotypical superiority. After that, prejudice reared its ugly head when Cain killed his brother Abel (Gen. 4:1ff). Subsequently, in Genesis 6:1, the physical differentiation became more apparent

> when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.

They were persons of great physical stature, different from other people.

Apparently, the diversity of physical characteristics was given by God, the creator. God also gave humans free will to make choices and create culture, but the cultured form of racism and ethnocentrism arose from the corrupt human minds and subsequent development of languages and traditions through the influence of the environment in which humans lived. In other words, the ability to create cultures was based on the free will God gifted humans, but humans' interaction with their environment further informs the social structure and racial superiority.

Apart from the phenotypical diversity deducible from the creation of humans, Genesis 11:1 records that the world had one language and a common speech. If the world had one language and common speech, why is there such diversity of languages today? Further reading of Genesis 11:2-9 presents the rebellion of humans conspiring revolt against God's mandate to be fruitful and fill the earth necessitating a confusion of the language of the whole world. God scattered humanity across the whole earth so they could fulfil his mandate to fill the earth.

Race and ethnicity are a product of God's judgment against human disobedience. In God's judgment, he was graciously merciful, such that he did not destroy the people; he only confused their language and scattered them

to fulfil his purpose. The judgment was not one of destruction: as with Adam and Eve in the Garden (Gen. 3:22-24), God's judgment at Babel dealt with the immediate sins and helped prevent future problems.

> By confusing their language and scattering them over all the earth, God graciously spared their lives and gave them the opportunity to return to Him. He could have destroyed the builders, their city, and their tower, but He chose to let them live (Warren 2004:62)

Thus, the disobedience of humanity, confusion of their language, and their scattering greatly influenced cultural diversity. Ashimolowo summarises the Biblical narrative concerning the emergence of racial superiority thus:

> The fall of man, the scattering of all generations, and the subsequent confusion of language at the tower of Babel brought about various cultures, traditions and conformations […] most of these forms have taken people away from the purpose of God for their lives. (2007:21-22)

Throughout Biblical history, there has developed an idea of racism and ethnicism because of society's multi-racial nature. For instance, the Jews considered themselves better than other races or ethnic groups before God. However, the Jews seemed not to understand that they were only elected to serve as a light to the world to reconcile other nations and racial groups to God. Not only did the nation of Israel entertain a prejudice against other racial groups, but nations such as Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, Rome, etcetera, who became world powers at one point or another, were chauvinistic too. Never at any time did God approve of this ungodly attitude against any nation; instead, God only uses them to punish those who sinned against his holiness and bring to pass his ultimate purpose. Therefore, God's acknowledgement of Cyrus as his servant shows his love for all nations and disapproval of racial superiority.

The racial prejudice in the New Testament is an extension of the Old Testament problem (1 Kings 12:16ff, 2 Kings 17:24ff). The Jews with Samaritans, as well as with other nations, would not mingle or associate because of their attitude of superiority. Jesus dismantled this prejudice, as evident in his interaction

with the Samaritan woman (John 4:1ff). Jesus's interaction with the Canaanite woman, a Syrophoenician by race, seems to suggest his preference for Jews over other races and ethnic groups (Matt. 15:25-28, Mark 7:24-30). However, a critical look at the passage only demonstrates Jewish hardheartedness towards other races, about which Jesus wanted the disciples to learn a lesson that he came not for the Jews alone but for all regardless of their nationality (Dickson 2011:1103). Evidently, Jesus finally met the need of this Gentile woman and also commended her faith, a faith that Jews lacked. The Great Commission commanded in Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:17 testifies to Jesus's love for all nations. Paul also did the same in his famous sermon to Athenian philosophers (Acts 17:22-31). There, Paul proclaims the unity of the human race and the diversity of ethno-cultural identity (Acts 17:26, cf. Deut. 32:8). He affirmed the finality of Jesus Christ, the God of redemption, as the meeting point of all racial groups. He repudiated the religious pluralism of Athens because of its effect on the particularity of the Christian faith. Cultural diversity/pluralism is not equal to religious pluralism. Paul noted the glory of the Church through the redemption that Christ offered on the cross to create a new and reconciled community, the Church, irrespective of race and ethnic identity (Stott 1984:205-208).

Reading through these passages of the scriptures (Gen. 11:7-9, Matt. 28:19-20, Acts 17:26, Rev. 5:9-10,7:9-10), there is no suggestion in the Bible that God considers any one cultural group superior to all other cultural groups. When God disregards other nations, it is not necessarily on racial or ethnic bases but faith in God. Nations or racial groups who would join themselves to God, he will not reject them (Isa. 56:6). God warned Israelites not to intermarry with other nations in the Old Testament so he could preserve them as a newly created nation through which his redemptive plan would be accomplished for the whole universe. Allowing them to intermarry with unbelievers poses the danger of compromising their faith in God alone. According to Roger E. Dickson,

> The principle that is being taught here is that the believers must be taught to maintain his/her faith by marrying one of the same faith. (2011:115)

(See Ex. 34:16, Deut. 7:3, Josh. 23:12, Ezra 9:12.) He further stated that when one marries one of another belief, they will often adopt the beliefs of their mate. If a believer marries a person who believes in another god, they will often become unfaithful to the true God of heaven (Dickson 2011:115). King Solomon failed to abide by this order; he intermarried with the pagans' women who led him astray according to their abominable practices in disobedience to God (1 Kings 11:1-5). Paul's admonition to the Corinthian church in 2 Corinthians 6:14 not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers was also a warning not to intermarry with unbelievers to avoid being led astray, as well as to avoid false teachers who deny the fundamental teachers of resurrection and apostolic authority. This implies that the racial and ethnic difference was not the basis for the partnership choice but the faith affiliation. The Israelites, as a racial or ethnic group, according to O'Donovan (1992:298), were only privileged to be chosen (Rom. 9:4-5). They were not better than others (Deut. 4:37-38). Hence, racial or ethnic superiority is an idea coming from the pride of humanity because, in Christ, God sees us the same; we are just forgiven sinners (Prov. 16:5, Rom. 3:23-25, Col. 2:13).

Race and ethnicity are significant to the world's diversity, interaction, and unity. We can learn unity in diversity from the doctrine of the Trinity. The trinitarian nature of God indicates that God enjoys diversities. The doctrine of the Trinity is the sole claim of Christians who view God as three in one. The term *Trinity* was coined by Tertullian from the Latin *trinitas*, meaning 'threefold' or 'three in oneness'. It is used to summarise the teaching of the scripture that God is three persons yet one God in essence (Grudem 1994:226). In the Trinity, God has revealed himself in three persons in the economy of salvation and affirmed the essential nature of one God who eternally exists as three distinct persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It does not connote the worship of three gods but that God is one in essence and three in persons. It designates the mutual relationship of the consubstantial hypostases or the persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This immanency of the Trinity is a crucial model for the unity of race in the Christian faith. Looking at the theological significance of the doctrine of the Trinity to the Christian faith, M.J. Erickson claims that

> perfect love and unity within the Godhead model for us the oneness and affection that should characterise our relationship with the body of Christ. (1998:367)

The Trinity depicts God's appreciation of social and cultural peculiarities of immediate contexts, beautifying communal and global relations.

This implies that race and ethnic diversities are God's plan for humanity to seek the right ways to unite in obedience to God's purpose in a way he intended for humanity. Fortunately, Christ shows this way of better unity among racial and ethnic groups, especially for those who believe in him.

A Theological Rebuttal of Ethnicism and Racism

This section provides a theological response to the problem of racism and ethnocentrism in the church and society using the Christo-creation framework to refute racism and ethnocentrism. Since scientific, biological, and social categorisation have failed to resolve the problem of racism and ethnocentrism, the Christo-creation framework can be a viable method to follow. The term *Christo-creation* comprises two words, *Christ* and *creation*. From the creation narrative, we can draw insight from the fact that all God created was good and should not be despised. So, no human race is inferior to others. The second term in the framework (*Christ*) presupposes that no one will despise any people if we follow Christ's teaching based on his love and redemption. We can also draw insight from supposing there to be a curse for any racial group; Christ's redemption for humanity reverses every curse. By this, the Christo-creation framework affirms Christ's teaching in light of God's creation of humans as equal and the redemption of God's image in humans, transcending racial identity for the unity of brotherhood.

Emphasis on Human Source from Creation Perspective

Drawing a good dose of insights from creation can invalidate racism and ethnocentrism in society. God's creation depicts humans sharing their common source, worth, and value in God regardless of their wide-ranging identities of skin colour, culture, and other human dissimilarities. 'God created man in his own image' (Gen. 1:27) depicts that the value God places on humans is equal and expects humans to view others equally regardless of race,

ethnicity, and gender identity. In this common image of identity exists dignity and sanctity of life, identity, and meaning or purpose from God and with God. Only humans possess and bear the *imago Dei*. The order of superiority goes from the Creator (God) to man/woman (*imago Dei*) from every race and ethnic group and to other creatures (no *imago Dei*). This order is deep-rooted in the scripture:

> fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground. (Gen.1:28)

Man was to subdue, dominate, and rule over other creature but not fellow humans, notwithstanding their diversity. Unfortunately, the fall of man in Genesis 3 has distorted the order, hence the reason for prejudice and bigotry over racial and ethnic identity today.

Racism and ethnocentrism are social ideologies that believe one race or ethnic group is superior to others. They are not Biblical constructs. They did not originate from God, given that the reality of cultural diversity is denied. Everything that is is by him. However, it is not every action of humans recorded in the Bible that God sanctions and approves. Hence, it is right to stress that God's creation of humans with free will allows for diversity of culture and, to an extent, physical peculiarity since humans were created male and female. The ability for humans to produce culture to enable social life in our immediate environment is attached to the human intellectual ability of free will God gave them to 'subdue (control, tend, care and keep) the earth' making it productive for our good (Gen. 1:28).

Racism and ethnocentrism are bad, but race and ethnic identity are Biblically and theologically acceptable human identities we cannot deny. Before the entry of sin and after the inauguration of the new Jerusalem, Manickam (2008:723) asserts that 'the expression of God's intentional desire for diversity among God's created' is an indisputable reality we must accept, and live together in unity.

Christ is the Centre and meeting point for racial unity

The idea of unity affirms the beauty of the diversity of race and ethnic identity. However, to achieve this oneness in diversity, Christ must be the centre and the cornerstone that holds all people together. Thus, a sound theology of race, ethnicity, and gender must focus on Christ and his redemptive work on the cross to restore humanity from wrong perceptions and acrimony against each other. Christ's redemption on the cross was for all humankind because all have sinned, causing a fracture between humans and God and fellow human beings. This has affected our relationships and perceptions about one another's identities. Christ died for universal redemption to restore the fractured identity of humankind on the cross. Neal (2012:26-43), as he cites Jürgen Moltmann, asserted that the cross is now the rallying point of unity for all Christians. There, the cross levelled and placed all races and ethnic groups in need of Christ. On the cross, the Christian community, irrespective of race, ethnicity, and gender identity, sees and understands each other and their needs. Our unity, togetherness, oneness, and acceptance of each other depend on our oneness with Christ. Moltmann (1976:315) succinctly and more precisely surmises that 'the nearer we come to the cross of Christ, the nearer we come together'. Jesus is the meeting point to cure the problem of race and ethnicity. The church must desist from building racial and ethnic walls, which Christ broke to make us one as fellow citizens upon the foundation of the prophets, apostles, and himself, the chief cornerstone of the building of oneness. The cross remains the inroad for unbelievers for salvation and unity with believers (Eph. 2:14-22).

Emphasis on Universal Solidarity of Human Rights

Human rights are moral standards, principles, and norms that guide human behaviour to protect life from social abuses to ensure universal freedom, equality, and fairness. Human rights are integral laws for all humankind, regardless of language, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, or other social sorting. Human rights developed from the understanding of God's justice, God's image in man, human free will, Biblical teaching on love for the outcast and even enemies, and the golden rule in Matthew 7:12: do to others what you would have them do to you, which expresses the right of equality. Galatians 3:26-28 affirms that for those who are in Christ, the barrier of language, race, ethnicity, gender, and class no longer exists. They now possess

equal rights, which all apparent inequalities – 'race and religion, cultural or social status, and gender lose their validity' (Stanssen 2008:411).

God is a God of justice. As the creator of life, God expects that every life must be protected, irrespective of the race and ethnic group to which it belongs. In his support for human rights, Bonhoeffer avowed, as cited by Stanssen (2008:411), that human rights should not be 'my rights' individualistically and possessively, but about standing up for 'those whose rights are being violated'. Therefore, to cure the world of racism and ethnocentrism, universal solidarity is needed to promote human rights and justice. The solidarity must be based on the human race's identity.

> Solidarity of the race is a theological construction to teach the biblical idea that all humans are of the same species, with Adam as a common ancestor (Van Gemeren 2001:1125)

We must affirm that God's image in us is higher in status and integration and greater than the linguistic and cultural diversity that makes us different (Tachin 2014:68). The struggle must be directed against structural forces or evils of the social construct itself. The United Nations, founded in 1945 and organised in 1948, is committed to ensuring that all nations subscribe to the international body of human rights to protect life, peace, and security. They defined these rights as internationally accepted, including civil, cultural, economic, political, social, gender, race, and ethnic rights (United Nations no date). The fact that humanity is poised for such a project shows that racism and ethnocentrism are evil creations of humans. Just as God values race and ethnic identity, humanity must not do differently.

Emphasis on Love for Universal Race as Love for God

The discriminatory treatment of other races as less human undermines the love of God. Love for God is love for man because you cannot truly love God and not love man (1 John 4:20-21). Godly love can overcome racism and ethnocentrism because prejudice and godly love cannot co-exist. We must also know that prejudicing other ethnic and racial groups is a sin. God hates partiality (James 2:9). The church must be countercultural like the early church in order to break down social, class, racial, and ethnic distinctions that still exist in society, including the church today. Just as God has no greater love for one

ethnic or racial group over another but relates to each accordingly (Gal. 3:28), every person who claims that he/she loves God must love people not of their ethnic group equally well without favouritism or partiality.

Emphasis on Social Darwinist Theory as Pseudoscience

The Social Darwinist theory that emphasises racism is now regarded as pseudoscience. In biology, it has been discovered that humans have retained the same blood type over the years. Only blood group types exist but cut across all the world's races. A Nigerian citizen can donate blood to an American citizen; the reverse can be the case elsewhere, provided they share the same blood type. A race may be perceived visually but, according to genetic scientists, race does not exist genetically (Manickam 2007:326-327). The claim that the black race is less intelligent is not justifiable because the black race has proven themselves to possess high acute knowledge in science, social science, philosophy, and theology. From 1920 to 1940, pseudoscientific ideas about one race's superiority over other races were refuted head-on. Frank Hankins' publication in 1926, *The Racial Basis of Civilisation: A Critique of the Nordic Doctrine*, used social sciences to establish culture as the basis of racial differences (Spickard 2007:272).

Given the above, it should be noted that the spirit of racism thrives on misinformation and stereotyping. Instead of portraying people in the image and likeness of God, it seeks to devalue the worth of people that are different from us or as 'not being as good as we are' (Ashimolowo 2007:195). The narrative of Cornelius' and Peter's vision in Acts 10 demonstrates that God does not segregate any nation. Peter confessed,

> You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. (Acts 10:27- 29)

Therefore, every racist or ethnic bigot ought to realise their pitfalls and echo Apostle Peter's confession,

> I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. (Acts 10:34-36)

This Biblical revelation must be upheld and should be the confession of every human who claims to love God.

Conclusion

Race and ethnicity have been affirmed as gifts from God. There is nothing wrong with ethnic and racial identities, provided such are checked and do not promote prejudice. The problem arises when race becomes racism and ethnic identity becomes ethnocentrism. This means valuing one's race and ethnic identity over and above others. The crux of this paper presupposes that God created man in his image and that all races and ethnic groupings descended from that same image through one man, Adam. The wrong understanding of the *imago Dei* in humans is the causal factor of racism and ethnocentrism today. Thus, only theology that is true to the Biblical revelation of the image of God can cure humanity from racial and ethnic pride, bigotry, and prejudice that devastates human peculiarities, relationships, and inter-dependence. The paper acknowledged that physical diversity is a gift from God, the creator, and God created us in his image without superiority of any kind. It was also noted that cultural diversity is a contingent possibility since humans were created with free will to make meaning out of their environment. Thus, it is fitting to conclude that racism and ethnocentrism are social constructs from human pride and view of the race. God is interested in the redemption of every race and ethnic group. Jesus asked his disciples to 'go and make disciples of all nations' (Matt. 28:1-20), irrespective of race and ethnic identity. In the vision, John saw

> a great multitude … from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb (Rev. 7:9-10)

signifying the gathering of racial and ethnic groups unto God as the creator, redeemer, and sustainer of all made in his image. God loves the diversity of race and ethnic identity but hates racism and ethnocentrism because of the propensity therein to divide and set humankind against God and each other.

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Paul's Eschatological Ethics for the Global South: The Application of Romans 13:11-14

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Abstract

The article argues that Paul's exhortation to live a higher ethical life in Romans 13:11-14 is confirmed, given the eschatological view of believers' final salvation. Paul's eschatological perspective in Romans indicates the glorification of believers despite the current suffering that stands against Christian life (Rom. 8:28-36; 12:2). According to Paul, the path to glorification is through suffering, and the motivation for perseverance and obedience to the higher ethical life is the eschatological expectation and the final salvation of believers (Rom. 5:1-11; 8:18-25). Paul's argument for the relation between eschatology and ethics seems clearly stated in 13:11-14, insisting on moral obligation in view of eschatology (Keck 2005:333-334). Therefore, Paul's view of eschatological ethics in this text is vital for the higher ethical life to be applied in the church of Africa and beyond. The study uses a socio-rhetorical analysis as a fruitful methodology to explore how Paul's use of eschatological expectation is motivational for a higher standard of Christian life in the presence of challenges and suffering in the first century. This could teach the way to live a Christian ethical life in the presence of contemporary challenges in Africa and beyond. With the aim of articulating the role of eschatology for Christian ethical life in Paul in the designated text, the article attempts to review some related literature, considering the history of research. Romans 13:11-14 is analysed using socio-rhetorical analysis to establish Paul's main message to attest to how ethics is connected with the eschatological expectation. Paul's view of eschatology and ethics in this text shows the link between eschatology and ethics.

Therefore, the article argues that the relationship between eschatology and ethics in Romans 13:11-14 is essential, showing how eschatological ethics is motivational and can teach an ethical Christian life for the contemporary African church and beyond.

Introduction

Paul's view of eschatology and ethics is an important issue that can be observed throughout his letters. For instance, Paul's use of *salvation* in Romans is largely in terms of future salvation, as indicated in some verses (Rom. 5:9-11; 8:23; 13:11; 1 Thess. 5:8-9; Phil. 2:12; 1 Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim. 4:18) within the framework of salvation in three tenses: past, present, and future (Colijn 1990:29). Paul's eschatological ethics is emphasised in a significant number of verses in the Pauline corpus (Rom. 15:1-4; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; 15:32-34; 2 Cor. 5:9-10; 7:1; Gal. 5:22-23; 6:7-9; Phil. 2:12-13; Col. 1:21-23; 3:1-5; 1 Thess. 5:8-11; 2 Thess. 2:14-15). The connection between future salvation and the present ethical life seems more clear and common in the Epistle to the Romans and the text we designated. The clear portrayal of eschatology and ethics is established in Romans 13:11-14 vividly. It seems that Paul's motivations for different Christian ethical activities are inspired by the eschatological perspective and the main text that could show this reality is the text we have designated in this interpretive analysis. The article aims to show how Paul's eschatological ethics is confirmed in this text and depict its significance for the global south for the Christian ethics to transform church and society at large.

Terms like *eschatology* and *ethics* need to be defined for the proper use of the terms throughout the article. The term *eschatology* in this article focuses on Paul's use of the future hope as it is demonstrated in the Old Testament of the messianic expectation of the Jews (Wood 1911:79). Paul's use of eschatology is in the sense of the kingdom of God in the future aspect (1 Cor. 6:9; 15:24, 50; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5; Col. 4:11; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 1:5; Wood 1911:86). Christian eschatology is Christ-centred and is not simply a set of beliefs about the future. However, it is about how God sums up all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10). The kingdom of God is not also abstract because the Christian eschatology is about the victorious coming of Christ again (1 Cor. 15:45) that

anchors all biblical history and the kingdom of God is about the rule of God (Ladd 1990:22).[1]

The method employed in this research is the socio-rhetorical method because of its significance both for the biblical context of the text and the context in which scripture will be applied (Robbins 1996a:18-40 and 1996b:1-6). This method uses five texture analyses: inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture, and sacred texture. However, in this research inner texture, intertexture, and social and cultural texture analysis will be used for their sufficiency in understanding and applying our specific text. Because of limited time and space, these three texture analyses are enough to better understand the text. The reason I have selected this method is that the method uses different methods from the historical-critical, the literary critical, and other methodologies together in a coherent manner in a single interpretive framework (Robbins 1996b:1-2; Gowler 2010:194). Inner texture focuses on the literary textual flow of the text and intertexture emphasises the texts used within our specific text from other texts. The social and cultural texture analysis emphasises the social and cultural issues employed within this text.

In the first part, I will interact with some related literature to identify the gap and demonstrate the contribution the paper would bring. In the second part, I will show a socio-rhetorical overview of Romans 13:11-14 whereas the third part focuses on Paul's view of eschatology and ethics in context to confirm Paul's view in context. In the fourth part, the focus is on articulating the relationship between eschatology and ethics in context to argue how the issue of eschatology is the motivational factor for Christian ethical life. Finally, I will point out lessons for the global south in terms of ethical obligations for the transformation of the church and society. The bible version is used from the

[1] The kingdom of God is the reign and the rule of God manifested in this age and the age to come which means the realised kingdom and the not-yet aspect of the kingdom of God. The Pauline expectation aspect of the kingdom of God is the not-yet aspect. Therefore, the hope of the coming of the kingdom of God is an eschatological expectation. In the present reality, ethics is the life that reflects our identification with Christ manifested by holiness and right action in every dimension of life based on the teaching of Jesus (Matt. 5-7).

New Revised version unless otherwise specified (Meeks, Bassler, and Society of Biblical Literature 1993).

Review of Related Literature

Paul in the context of Romans 13 demonstrates important ethical issues which are confirmed by obedience to the government (13:1-7), fulfilling the law by loving one another (13:8-10), and living by holiness (13:11-14). These all are ethical issues that the Christian community is called to live in the present reality of the first century. It seems that the motivation for performing the above issues in Paul's argument is the statement that is attested in verse 11 saying, "Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed." (Rom. 13:11, ESV)

Different scholars see the issue of the relation between ethics and eschatology differently. I will sketch some important perspectives in the modern exegetical traditions. For instance, according to Andres Nygren (1983:438-440), Paul's ethics in the context of Romans 13:11-14 are not directly connected with eschatological salvation rather he has established the unique uses of his ethics in this specific context. However, Paul J. Achtemeier (1985:210) has argued pointing out that: "If verses 8-10 reflect the words of Jesus about love as the fulfilment of the law (see Mark 12:28–31), verses 11-14 reflect the words of Jesus about the impact of the future on present activity."

Achtemeier seems to connect the context of Paul with the tradition of Jesus about eschatological explanation in his teaching and how it influences the present living. It seems correct that Paul's theological articulation of eschatology and the ethical obligations as an imperative are derived from the teaching and the life of Jesus Christ as attested in the gospels.

Leander E. Keck (2005:329) has also argued that Romans 12-13 in general shows that moral imperatives in this context are demonstrated, given the impending salvation which is explicitly given strong emphasis in Romans 13:11-14. Keck (2005:331) argues also the coming of the day of salvation towards us is an important motivation to live a life that rejects vices and appropriates the virtues of a Christian ethical life. Peter Stuhlmacher's (1994:212) view also

strengthens the above views and argues for the presence of a clear relationship between Romans 13:11-14 and other Pauline texts such as 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, Colossians 3:1-11, and Ephesians 5:18-20 where texts are linking eschatology with ethical life. On the other hand, Käsemann (1980:362) has seen it differently, attesting that the imminent expectation is the foundation for the Christian reproach and proper conduct in the present reality of Christian living. John Toews (2004:327) has also outlined the textual context of Romans 13:11-14 in two important points: the reason for the proper ethical life and the imperatives for the Christian ethical life. Toews affirms that the eschatological expectation demonstrated in the view of the tension between what is and what will come is shown by different imageries that lead to the imperative of Christian ethical life.

According to Wright (2002:727), Paul's portrayal of Christian ethical life opened in 12:1-2 is closed in 13:11-14 showing that the final salvation and end time are approaching. Dunn (2002:784) has also pointed out that the opening verse, 13:11, embeds the eschatological perspective and it is a foundation for the Christian identity. Dunn's view is much more about the Christian identity rather than a Christian ethical life which is motivated by the eschatological perspective and the end time, claiming that Christian virtue is not separated from Christian identity. Richard N. Longenecker (2016:981) argues that the message of these verses as a whole conveys the nature of the Christian ethical life in the present time where the age to come and the present existing age are overlapping, referencing four important things like the Christian gospel, the teaching and the example of Jesus, the appeal of God's spirit, and the continuous renewal of the mind. The need to realise that Christians are living in the eschaton is an important issue that Longenecker has attested to in his exegetical analysis of the text. These exegetical traditions are more from a Western context and lack the consideration of the African context that needs to be addressed by eschatological views for the proper ethical life. James Nkansah-Obrempong (2013:106) claims that spirit is the foundation for Paul's ethics, referring to Romans. Even if he raises a significant number of issues as the foundation for African theological ethics, the issue of eschatology is not emphasised.

The above scholars have addressed the issue of eschatology and ethical Christian life in one way or another. However, the strong tie between the

eschatological expectation and the end of salvation in the present Christian ethical life and its vitality is not emphasised. The main burden of the text Romans 13:11-14 nourished this issue that we need to address in our exegetical analysis. Eschatological salvation is essential in this context and other parts of Romans because Paul wanted to show the tension between the present reality (this age) and the future reality (the age to come). Scholars who worked on Paul and ethics are not only lacking in connecting eschatology and ethics but also avoid analysing this specific text that might better show how Paul uses eschatology as motivation for the Christian ethical life (Rosner 1994:33). Moo (2002:189) is correct in his explanation of the passage where he argued this text shows how New Testament ethical behaviour is tied to the age of salvation that God has brought into being through Jesus Christ attesting to the framework of old age and new age.

In his presentation of connecting eschatology and ethics, Paul seems to show the nature of the kingdom of God in the present reality considering the realised and the not-yet aspect (Witherington 2004:321). The article also tries to fill the gap in how the eschatological vision might shape the African context because the African cultural orientation despite its diversity is past-oriented and does not give much emphasis to the future (Widlok, Knab, and Van Der Wulp 2021:3). The socio-rhetorical overview of the section will show how the eschatological expectation and the end salvation are motivational in this context and other parts of Romans such as 8:18-25; 15:1-4, and others. Despite different views being entertained, the need for an eschatological perspective on ethical obligations in Africa is critical because the African context is much more past-oriented than future-oriented, which may affect the Christian ethical practice in different aspects (Mbiti 1970:21-24 and 1975:33-34).[2] The current article might fill the academic gap addressing two critical issues. The first is studying the text using socio-rhetorical analysis, pointing to the

[2] John S. Mbiti (1970:21-23; 1970:33) has argued that the African idea of time concerns mainly the present and the past, and has little to say about the future, which in any case is expected to go on without end. Others also claim that the African timeframe is much more past-oriented than future-oriented. However, all do not agree that Africa is past-oriented because of disagreements among scholars((Widlok, Knab, and Van Der Wulp 2021, 400-402). In Ethiopia's socio-cultural context, it is also observed that the gold time is considered in the past. It might be clear that Africa has no uniform cultural makeup and the understanding of time might not be the same.

relationship between eschatology and ethics in this context. The second is the significance of Paul's eschatological ethics for the global south for transforming the church and society to make an application for what we have interpreted.

Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Romans 13:11-14

Socio-Rhetorical Overview

The socio-rhetorical interpretation uses five texture analyses: inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture, and theological texture, as we have pointed out in above (Robbins 1996a:18-20 and 1996b:1-4). However, in this analysis, we use only the first three interpretive, analytical methods to understand Romans 13:11-14 and show how eschatological expectation and the end salvation are tied with the present Christian ethical life in this context. This interpretive framework acknowledges different aspects of the text, such as the historical, the literal, and the contextual in which the text will be applied. Essential keywords and phrases in the context are explained, considering inner texture, intertexture, and social and cultural texture analysis as the interpretive tool. The detailed analysis of the method and direct employing of the methodological activities are not apparent because of limited space.[3] However, the explanations and the analysis of the keywords and phrases are in consideration of this methodology.

A socio-rhetorical interpretation of Romans 13:11-14 can be analysed employing inner texture analysis in various ways, such as through the identification of repetition, progressive texture, open-middle-closing texture, as well as narrational and argumentative texture. The use of these analytical techniques allows for a comprehensive understanding of the inner texture of the passage. While there are not many significantly attested repeated words within the context, the words 'salvation' and 'flesh' are repeated throughout Romans. The phrase 'the hour to come' also appears in different parts of Romans, often in an eschatological sense. These three usages can be considered as keywords in interpreting the textual context. The noun form of

[3] Socio-rhetorical criticism in the broad framework and research is employed, indicating step-by-step analysis. However, the current article has page limitations; I do not employ the process. However, at the back of interpreting and analysing texts, I use the method as an interpretive framework with a special emphasis on inner texture, intertexture, and social and cultural texture analysis.

the word 'salvation' appears five times in Romans, while the word 'flesh' appears thirteen times. Additionally, the progression of the argument can be observed by examining the opening of Romans 12:1-2 which is closed in 13:11-14, indicating the ultimate goal of a transformed life that is lived with a view to the eschatological end time. Although the broader sense of the opening is found in 12:1-2 and closes with Romans 13:11-14, this small text also contains its own opening-middle-closing structure, further emphasising the eschatological end as the overarching theme of the passage. Furthermore, it is worth noting that Romans 13:11-14 can also be analysed using sociological and anthropological theories, which can provide valuable insights into the meaning and significance of the text (Robbins 1996b:71).

The keywords and phrases that should be attested in this context are *kairo*s (the time) of salvation (verse 11), the expression 'Put off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light' (verse 12), 'walk properly as in the light' (verse 13), and 'Put on Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh' (verse 14). These four phrases are the focus of the analysis to argue that Paul's eschatological view is connected to the ethical exhortations in his letters, with a particular emphasis on the designated text. The flow of the text is organised under one reason (verse 11) and three imperatives (verses 12-14). The reason is that the time of salvation has approached, which is the block's overarching idea as Ben Witherington (2004:317) has called it 'eschatological sanction'. However, all three imperatives are nourished by the use of metaphors for plain communication to the first readers. These elements are shown in the Christian ethical life, which is demonstrated by the imperatives of put off, walk, and put on. By the use of a socio-rhetorical analysis, I will attempt to establish the overarching idea and elements in summary, focusing on the main elements, following Paul's sentence flow logically. The aim of analysing the text is to make an application within the African context even though the African context is not homogeneous; I only emphasise the main issues that Africa might have in common.

Καιρός (Kairos) as Eschatological Time

The term *kairos* is a keyword not only for this specific text but in Paul's usage in Romans; it is essential. The term *kairos* is studied together with the term *chronos* because both can be translated into English as 'time' (Thiselton 2016:232). However, the two terms are different because the term *chronos*

indicates time as duration while *kairos* is a critical time or the appointed time (Thiselton 2016:233). The term *kairos* has a theological significance in the New Testament, especially in Pauline letters. The term is used thirty-one times in Pauline letters referring to the time to come despite sometimes overlapping with the temporal aspect of *aion* (age) (Hawthorne, Martin, and Reid 1993:978). The term *kairos*/*time* is described with a striking mixture of metaphors in the flow where the term serves as an opening in the flow of the text of Romans 13:11-14 (Toews 2004:327). Andria (2011:154, 245)has argued that the term *kairos* refers to the time of the return of Christ rather than the chronological time and how hope for Africans can give meaning and a goal to life.

The context of our designated text shows the age to come, though the sense is the appointed time. Fitzmyer (1993:682) demonstrates that the term *kairos* is 'the period of Christian existence when Christians are called upon to manifest by their action that they are such and to conduct themselves suitably'. On the other hand, Wright (2002:786) has verified the term *kairos*/*time* shows 'a special moment rather than mere Chronological time'. However, Dunn (2002:785) strengthens the significance of the term by attesting that the term recapitulates what is said before gathering and summarising all together in harmony in this actual textual context. Käsemann (1980:362) also seems to validate in the same way but with a different expression, arguing that the term shows 'the moment of destiny' while Fitzmyer (1993:682) attests to the 'eschatological deliverance of Christians as the fulfilment of the pledge'.

Paul's use of the term *kairos* shows the eschatological expectation as the turning point that prepares for the imperatives demonstrated in the proceeding verses (12-14). The eschatological perspective is common for the people of God in the era of the New Testament. The teaching and the principle of the kingdom of God (the rule of God manifested in the present and future) in the tradition of Jesus are nourished with eschatological expectations (John 14:3). The aspect of the kingdom of God is manifested, having the future elements beyond the presently realised aspect. This eschatological expectation as motivation is vital in Paul's use of the term *salvation* in Romans, especially in the verses Romans 5:9-11 and Romans 8:18-25 which are the most vital expressions. For instance, Jewett (2007:363) has attested to the first

text pointing out that '[t]he future tense is all the more heightened by the emphatic position of *nu`n* ("now")'. In addition to this, Jewett (2007:508) also points out regarding Romans 3:26 that '[t]he reference to the sufferings "of the present critical time" employs the expression found in 3:26, *nu'n kairov*, representing the eschatological period inaugurated by Christ'. The place of the future in Paul's theology is strong. However, Paul also never ignores the past and the present in salvation history. Paul does not over-emphasise the future but sees the future expectation as a motivational hope that encourages living a worthy life in the present reality.

The text that Paul is presenting in the literary context of 13:11-14 has the aim of motivating an ethical Christian life whereas in Romans 3:26 it is generally the era of the new eschatological beginning started by Jesus Christ. Important terms in 13:11-12a like the present time (τὸν καιρόν), the future hour (ὥρα), and the future salvation (ἡ σωτηρία) indicate how Paul's expression of salvation is an eschatologically oriented presentation (Longenecker 2016:982). However, according to Jewett (2007:820), Paul's use of 'roused from a sleep' should be also interpreted in the eschatological context that strengthens the above elements. These eschatological expressions in this text coincide with the use of Jewish eschatological uses demonstrated by the terms 'this age' and 'the age to come' (Longenecker 2016:982; Thiselton 2016:233). It is possible to argue that Paul's future expectation is similar to the Jewish expectation of the golden time in the future (Ladd 1974:51). However, Paul's eschatological expectation is final consummation and the glory of believers who continuedly followed and obeyed Jesus.

Paul's use of eschatological salvation as a framework seems very important in this context because it is the reason for the higher standard of the Christian life. Paul's use of *kairos* is an eschatological time that has been begun by the coming of Christ but will be expected in the future, fulfilled by the second coming of the Messiah (Jewett 2007:819). This expectation of eschatological salvation in the future served as the foundation for the ethical exhortation as a motivational in Paul's presentation. In a context where the golden time is considered as the past like in the African context, eschatological expectation in the future tense is a very important theological premise for the global south (Mbiti 1970:34 and 1975:27-28). The Pauline exhortation for higher ethical life in this context focuses on the future eschatological expectation which seems

to focus on the second coming of Christ. The second coming of Christ is cosmic and that addresses the whole of God's created world. Elias K. Bongmba (2020:507) is correct in his analysis of how Paul's eschatological perspective can shape the African timeframe in God's salvation history because Paul preaches a futuristic eschatology that is cosmic and embraces the entire creation for God's redemptive purpose. Even though there is no uniformity in African culture and timeframes, an emphasis on the past is observed in some cultures of Africa. Therefore, the importance of eschatological expectation is immense because it calls for an ecclesial community to live an ethical life with proper social relations with others (Bongmba 2020:511). Even if the active works of God in the past were completed by Christ, and though the ongoing provision of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christ's believing community is important, the future expectation is crucial for the higher Christian ethical life. Without ignoring other important issues like the work of the Holy Spirit, as Nkansah-Obrempong (2013:106-107) has pointed out the role of eschatological expectation and the future salvation is important for the Christian ethical life.

Paul's Ethical Exhortations that Arise from an Eschatological View

a. Put on the Armour of Light

The first figurative expression that depicts Paul's first exhortation of higher ethical life is 'putting off the works of darkness' and 'putting on the armor of light' (verse 12). The use of the metaphor of day and night communicates the contrast of two lifestyles; insisting to live a higher Christian life is the first concept. Paul used this concept with metaphors in different parts of his letters (2 Cor. 6:14; 1 Thess. 5:4-5). Paul's use of the above concept coincides with other usages both in the Old Testament and New Testament (Ps. 43:3; Isa. 2:5; 9:2; 42:6; Luke 16:18; John 1:4-9; 3:19-21; 8:12; Acts 26:18; Thiselton 2016:233). The expression the 'night has gone' shows not only the change of domain but points to the approaching of the eschatological end time. However, Paul's use of 'armor of light' is military terminology that might show going beyond living in good deeds and that might indicate participating in spiritual warfare for the Lord (Moo 2002:189). Paul intends to show the need to struggle in the midst of the corrupt system to shine a Christian virtue. Moo has correctly demonstrated the nature of the armour of light, pointing out that Paul's use of the weapon of light is appropriate for those who have been rescued from the domain of darkness and transferred to the domain of the

kingdom of God to share them in the inheritance of the saints in light (Moo 1996:824). Paul has demonstrated salvation as the transfer from the domain of darkness to the domain of the kingdom of his son (Col. 1:13-14). Conversion for Paul is the transfer from the domain of darkness to the domain of light.

The works of darkness and the armour of light are not the same but contrastive, which shows life in the domain of Satan in the fallen world and the domain of the kingdom of God. Light and darkness are imageries of two lifestyles showing life in old age and the new eschatological age started by the coming of Jesus Christ. The term *put off* is the complete rejection of worldly practice because it stands against that with the Christian life in Christ. The Ethiopian scriptural tradition shows these two eras, which are the time before Christ and the time after Christ, or the era of the law and the era of the gospel (Adamite 2022:156). The Ethiopian interpretive tradition uses contextual interpretive mechanisms by being sensitive to the Ethiopian context, identifying three eras that are the era of unwritten law, the Torah, and the era of the law of gospel (Belay 2020:73). However, most of the modern and Western exegetical traditions, like Toews, show that the expression attests to 'abandoning vices and replacing them with virtues and for discontinuing immoral conduct and pursuing moral conduct' (Toews 2004:327). Dunn (2002:787) also believes that these contrastive imageries indicate putting off vices and putting on virtues. Therefore, it seems clear that, in context, the term is attested because of the motivation of eschatological salvation, the future expectation to live a Christian ethical life in Christ, and the norm of the kingdom of God following the model of the life and practice of Jesus Christ.

b. Walk in Daytime

The second issue Christians are advised to do is to walk in the light (daytime) which might symbolise a higher Christian life following the pattern of Jesus Christ (verse 13). This hortatory is also presented in imagery and by the contrastive phrases, indicating how life in the light looks against life in darkness. This phrase is also imagery that conveys the importance of being the agent of transformation. Jürgen Moltmann (1993:328) has pointed out the mark of the Christian community being an arrow of hope that points in the right direction guiding the community towards moral life. Paul's advice of walking in daylight is an example of higher Christian ethical life that can be demonstrated in different ways in a hostile world that might include the

exportations attested in 13:1-7 and 8-10. Paul's use of the term *walk* is widespread in his letters elsewhere to show the appropriate Christian daily conduct following the footsteps of Jesus Christ (Moo 1996:824; Jewett 2007:825). Thiselton (2016:234) is correct in affirming that Paul's use of *walk* is confirmed within the Christological context, which is very Jewish for practical Christian conduct. This exhortation is an essential element in the midst of many challenges and problems in Africa and beyond; as Andria (2011:154) has pointed out, suffering and hope exist in the midst of African Christianity. Therefore, walking in the daytime is the calling of the Christian community, to live a higher standard of Christian life in which the exemplary life can manifest.

In the second place, the contrast is between night and day, which aims to exhort to walk in the right Christian life rejecting the practices attested by the imagery of night. The contrast might be to show what Christians should do and what they should reject. The expression of darkness shows this through the practice of what people do in the dominion of darkness. The Christian moral life is proven to be living in the light and avoiding the experience of darkness, which is named as orgies, drunkenness, sexual immorality, sensuality, quarrelling, and jealousy. These six things are the experiences of life in the domain of darkness apart from Christ. Wright (2002:729) tries to connect these practices, referring to Romans 1:18-32, arguing that these vices indicate the abuse of one's own body and others. However, Thiselton (2016:234) seems to connect these vices with Paul's use of the work of the flesh in Galatians 5:19. However, these paired vices that Paul has listed are used against a Jewish background and in a Graeco-Roman context, appropriating them in this literary context that Christians might reject the works of the fallen world and follow the examples of Jesus Christ by practising virtues (Moo 1996:824-825; Jewett 2007:826-827). These practices are not only challenges for the first-century Christians but also the wider and the contemporary Christian community; and the African context might have more challenges since there is a growing amount of Christianity. Therefore, the urgent needs of African Christianity must be addressed, articulating how the eschatological vision might shape the attitude that enables us to reject vices manifested in different ways. If the African Christian community develops a futuristic perspective, this might enable the eradication of these vices, which is the sign of life in darkness. Since there is a quantitative growth of Christianity, the qualitative growth of the

church can be addressed by actively engaging in biblical teaching of the future expectation.

c. Putting on the Lord Jesus

The third imperative given for the Christian community based on the eschatological perspective is putting on the Lord Jesus Christ (verse 14). This expression is the climax of the argument because the standard for the Christian life is Jesus Christ, who has shown the right way, walking as the model and dying at the cross to enable his followers to live a higher standard of life. Dunn (2002:791) has argued that usage here is similar to Paul's Adam-Christology/soteriology articulation in 1 Cor. 15:53-54. Toews has demonstrated Paul's use of the term and its meaning, 'Putting on Jesus Christ', excitingly. According to Toews (2004:329), the meaning of the term is that '[t]o put on Christ is to live under his lordship and within his community'.

On the other hand, Thiselton (2016:235) connects the term with the baptismal terminology of Galatians 3:27, signifying the term shows being clothed in Christ, which might also show embracing Christ again and again in faith, loyalty, and obedience. Moo (1996:325) also confirmed that our relationship with Jesus Christ is manifested in two ways: first, a conversion that enabled us to be incorporated into Christ, sharing his death, burial, and resurrection, and second, living out the new life that we gained by being in Christ. Keck (2005:333) has also pointed out the absence of the spirit in this context, "because for Paul, the Spirit is the means by which the risen Christ exercises his power over those who are 'in' him".

However, the traditional Ethiopian interpretation indicates that putting on Christ is following the footsteps of Christ, glorifying him, and having fellowship with him (Adamite 2022:156). However, Romans' commentary in the African context interprets the term 'following his [Christ's] example and behaving like him' (Andria 2011:246). It seems correct because the idea conveys that putting on Christ is imitating Christ and his character with a proper fellowship. Following and imitating Christ requires denying the fleshly desire that goes with the domain of Satan and the fallen world.

Paul's presentation indicates here that putting on Christ enables Christians to reject the provision of human nature in its fallenness. Jewett (2007:828)

contends that the term is found in a legal, administrative, and business context, although Paul is using it in this context to communicate that Christians would reject the twisted system of honour and shame which produces the works of darkness. However, Moo (1996:826) points out that Paul's imperative here indicates that Christians would not lead a 'licentious lifestyle' but rather hold Jesus Christ to get victory over flesh through his provision of the Spirit.

In general, the eschatological salvation perspective motivates new thinking that enables us to live with standard Christian behaviour set by the life and the work of Christ (Toews 2004:330). In this context, we have argued that this eschatological motivation enables Christians to obey three imperatives, which is the mark of the virtues of the Christian life. The first is putting off the works of darkness and putting on the armour of light. This shows living in a community set by a higher standard of Christian life. The second is walking in light/daylight which indicates being a model in the midst of the community. The community would like to have a model that guides it towards a standard life. The calling of a Christian community is pointing a proper direction for society – where to go and what to do – and rejecting the practice of darkness manifested in different vices. This walk is the practical Christian life manifested by doing a Christian virtue and ignoring the life of darkness and the fallen world practice of living a life that Christ models. Paul's eschatological-oriented exhortation in this context underlines the need to undergird all Christian thinking and action to be an agent of transformation (Longenecker 2016:984). Finally, the third imperative is the climax, which conveys following Christ closely and having fellowship with him, leaving the corrupt system and the fleshly desire. The mark of Christianity is being in Christ, and the power to overcome vices is having a continuous relationship with Christ that manifests by faith in Jesus and testifies through the Christian baptism.

Paul's View of Eschatology and Ethics in the Broader Context

In the context of Romans and other parts of his letters, Paul sees the eschatological perspective as a motivational power that shapes the present reality. Since Paul shares the Jewish eschatological hope of the coming of God, futuristic salvation is manifested in different parts of Pauline letters. Paul's exhortation to stand firm in the midst of persistent suffering manifested by

higher ethical life is because of the eschatological expectation. The strong expression of future salvation motivates one to boast in suffering (Rom. 5:3-11). Thiselton (2016:126) has pointed out how Paul has attested to the new way of seeing suffering and even boasting because of suffering and the reason that suffering has no way to alienate us from God, who gives hope. However, Moo (2002:102) points out that the reason for a godly response to suffering is that the Christian faith is anchored by the hope that is manifested in Christian virtue. Jewett (2007:355) has also correctly argued that the connecting hope in Romans 5:5 correlates with Paul's use of boasting in suffering in 5:2-3 and that this boasting emanates from the hope. Therefore the strong expression of the eschatological salvation in Romans 5:9-11, which is attested salvation in past and future tenses in parallel, indicates how the future enables the present Christian living (Käsemann 1980:138-139). Keck (2005:141) has affirmed his interpretation of Romans 5:9, indicating Paul has pointed out the future salvation from the wrath of God.

The context of Romans 8:18-25 is another essential element that shows the future eschatological salvation and motivates standing firm in the midst of the present suffering. Keck (2005:209) has shown how the present suffering is linked with the future glorification of believers. The expectation of future glory frames the need to stand firm in the midst of suffering in this context (Rom. 8:18, 30). Moo (1996:508) has correctly argued that Paul used the term *glory* in the above two verses as an inclusion to show the future Christian inheritance and the present status of Christianity. The future glory in these texts indicates eschatological salvation, which is strong motivation to live a life of virtue despite the present suffering. These verses indicate the future glory and attest to the future salvation in context.

Paul's use of eschatology is not limited to the above texts of Romans. However, many texts in the Pauline corpus serve as a general framework to motivate the Christian ethical life. We can observe some essential texts in the Pauline corpus, for example 1 Corinthians 15:1-58, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, Colossians 3:1-11, and Ephesians 5:8-20. Close reading of these texts shows that Paul's ethical life is grounded in the eschatological expectation, despite a significant number of exegetical works not identifying how Paul's eschatological view has affected his articulation of the Christian ethical life. Gordon Fee (2010:16) has pointed out how the eschatological framework is strong in Paul's theology of

1 Corinthians, raising the issue at the beginning and at the end. The reference to the final Christological revelation in 1:7 is an opening and at the end the issue of eschatology is attested in 15:54-7. Joseph A. Fitzmyer (2008:91) has pointed out how 1 Corinthians uses the eschatological terms distributed throughout different chapters (1:7-9; 6:14; 7:29-31; 15:1-58) where Paul encourages and challenges to live a higher Christian life. Other Pauline texts like 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, Colossians 3:1-11, and Ephesians 5:8-20 are also clear in showing the role of an eschatological perspective on the proper Christian life.

Paul's theology and ministry seem to be grounded in eschatological hope centred on his conception of the future as we have seen in the above texts. In addition, Christianity, according to Paul, has a beginning but does not have an end to this reality. However, the perspective of life in Africa is more on the past and might affect our view of the future, even though it is difficult to ascertain the whole of Africa because of the diverse cultures and people groups. The African past-oriented culture can be challenged and shaped by Paul's eschatological perspective to have a balanced life without ignoring the past because God's revelation and his salvific work are a past that has a present effect on our life. However, the past work of God and the continued work through the Spirit might encourage us to see the future. This futuristic perspective also encourages us to live a worthy life in the present reality with the eschatological expectation.

Paul's ethics are part of his theology of salvation because salvation is attested in three tenses, past, present, and future. The present reality of salvation is demonstrated by obedience as attested to work out your salvation (Phil. 3:12). There is a transfer from the domain of darkness to the light of God's son (Col. 1:13-14). Paul's use of salvation in 1 Corinthians 1:18 is an ongoing reality as it is the past reality, because the term *salvation* is in the sense of the present continuous tense. The role of preaching the message of the cross in this context enables us to grow in our salvation as obedient children demonstrating our Christian life in virtue as we follow Jesus Christ. We can generally observe Paul's view of eschatology and ethics as part of the Christian experience. The first is a perspective that enables us to do different things; the second is the Christian experience modelled by Jesus Christ. As we have argued in the exegetical observation part, both his eschatological perspective and the ethical

life modelled by Jesus Christ are shown. These two critical issues demonstrated in Romans 13:11-14 are firmly embedded in Pauline theology in different parts, which is significant for the global south to transform the church and community.

The Relation Between Eschatology and Ethics

The relationship between eschatology and ethics in the Christian experience is crucial because it is one of the motivating factors to live in view of the future. It is clear that it is not the only motivating factor in Pauline theology because there are different factors that motivate for the Christian ethical life such as the role of the work of the spirit and others. The relation between eschatology and ethics is explicitly attested in the textual context of Romans 13:11-14 which clearly shows how these two theological issues are connected. The importance of the eschatological perspective is attested as motivational for Christian ethical life, demonstrating three essential things. First, the relation between eschatology and ethics in the context is established strongly. The context of Romans 13:11-14 is one of important examples that connect eschatological expectation with the present ethical life. Toews (2004:327) has correctly pointed out that eschatology is the reason for a Christian ethical life in the present reality that motivates a practical life. Longenecker (2016:982) also affirms that Paul uses many common eschatological expressions of his day to introduce the imperative that Christians would obey. The notion of the relation between eschatology and ethics is not only limited to the above text but also a significant number of Pauline texts affirm this reality as we have seen in the above section. The issue of reason indicates that Christian eschatological expectation is the underpinning factor for proper obedience and high moral standards.

In addition, eschatological expectation is giving the means of new thinking. Toews (2004:330-331) has pointed out that an eschatological perspective is also motivational for new thinking and behaviour, claiming that Paul's letters' purpose of eschatological teaching is about the end of history intending to show ethical exhortation. The Christian mind and practice are inseparable because the Christian virtue action starts from the transformed mind and is demonstrated in a godly way. Therefore, the relation between ethics and eschatology in the life of Christian mentality and behaviour is vital. Nygren

(1983:438-439) also affirms this position claiming that Paul's ethics are the ethics of a mind that cannot express generally accepted categories, social ethics but not equalitarian ethics. On the other hand, according to Jewett (2007:819), Paul has built his ethical exhortation on eschatological premises to live a worthy life in the context of the conflicting communities of Rome. Jewett (2007:819) further points out that 'its present context includes the expectation of the Messiah's return in the eschatological love feast'. The strong theological premise of the coming of Christ and the consummation of salvation drives a Christian to practise positive obedience demonstrating a Christian virtue.

Dunn (2002:785) also pointed out the relationship between Paul's eschatological view and the Christian ethical life, claiming that "Paul is keen not to move on from his more general parenesis without specifically underscoring the eschatological context of all Christian ethics."

The claim anchors that the eschatological perspective is a fertile ground for Christian ethical imperatives to be applied in every dimension of the Christian life. As different scholars demonstrate, the connection between eschatology and Christian ethical life is vital. It is correct that the eschatological perspective of Paul is a motivation for ethics and a foundation for doing different Christian practices, making Christ a model to follow in his footsteps. Paul has organised his argument to convey his imperatives under the framework of an eschatological perspective that can teach today to guide our lives based on our future expectations as attested in the Bible.

Generally, the relation between eschatology and ethics is shown in two ways. The first is the motivational reason for Christian ethical life manifested differently. The second relation between eschatological expectation and Christian ethical life is that the eschatological perspective gives a new thinking that affects the day-to-day practice of Christian living. The issue of motivation and the creation of new thinking is a foundation for a proper Christian ethical life.

Lessons for Ethics for the Global South

Paul's use of eschatology as a motivation for a higher Christian ethical life is essential to drive lessons for the ethical life of the Christian community in the

global south, to transform the church and community at large. Richard Hays (1989:168) has pointed out how Paul's use of the eschatological perspective in 1 Corinthians 10:11 informs the scriptural interpretation. If Pauline eschatology is informing scriptural interpretation, it is possible to argue that it also informs the scriptural application to ethical life because the purpose of interpretation is application. Christiaan Mostert (2000:11) has argued there are significant implications of eschatological perspectives for the holistic growth of the church because the church is an eschatological community. E. F. Scott (1914:225) has also pointed out how eschatological teaching is important for modern believers.

The above expiations indicate how the eschatological expectation is important in a precise manner. In the African context, the philosophy of time has affected to have a minimal perspective towards the eschatological vision. This might guide us to focus much more on the past and the present reality than future expectations. The importance of an eschatological perspective in the future tense seems clearly attested in the Bible in general and specifically in the text we have seen so far. The eschatological perspective for the New Testament believers was motivation to live the higher standard of the Christian life demonstrated in Christian virtue. A balanced view of the future is crucial for the Christian higher standard of life as demonstrated in the Bible in our specific text and other Pauline texts. The futuristic view seems important for our work ethic, in engaging towards the future that arises from the eschatological expectations, because at the end God will transform the whole universe. The community needs to engage in development and transformation with the energy of future expectations.

First, the eschatological-perspective-oriented ethical life attested in Romans 13:11-14 is essential for the global south and beyond because we can drive important lessons in transforming Christian life, exiting from the old corrupt system and heading to the new ethical life modelled by the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. In Africa, the system of corruption is observed in different ways addressing the religious, political, and social of the continent despite variations from one country to another country. The eschatological perspective might be one element that enables one to reject the corrupt system aroused by the eschatological perspective and future expectations.

Second, the eschatological perspective not only helps to exit from the old and corrupt system of the fallen world but also enables us to live a life as the light to our surroundings. Living in the light is the right way of walking and contributes to being a model to the community to transform in different ethical issues. The African continent has different challenges: corruption, immorality, abuse of authority, and others in the church and the community. However, in Paul's eschatological motivation and imperative, we can learn by being a future-oriented community to live the imperatives to transform the church and community. It is clear that Africa as a continent is not uniform, but an eschatological expectation and future-oriented view are important for transformation.

Third, Paul's view of eschatology as outlined in Romans 13:11-14 could have implications for Christians in the global south because it can provide hope and guidance in the face of difficult circumstances. There seems to be a strong relationship between eschatology and social justice, Paul's view of the end times relates to issues of poverty, oppression, and inequality, and how Christians in the global south can apply this view to their work for social justice. Further, the contemporary relevance of Paul's eschatological view in Romans 13:11-14, especially in light of current global challenges such as climate change and political instability.

Finally, the eschatological premise enables us to follow Christ closely and have fellowship with him, rejecting the systems that stand against Christ. Africa needs to follow Christ closely and build a strong fellowship with him to be transformed and be the agent of transformation in and out of the church. The life that Jesus Christ pioneered transcends the past-oriented community's decay and corruption. Even though cultural sensitivity is essential to address the needs of the people, the new model by Jesus Christ that entered into the world should guide the Christian community to bring change and transformation in every dimension of life.

Conclusion

The article has argued that the eschatological perspective in Romans 13:11-14 is vital for understanding eschatological ethics in Romans and considering the New Testament at large. We have argued that Paul's use of eschatological

salvation is motivational for Christian ethical life manifested in different ways. First, as we have interacted with different scholars, our socio-rhetorical overview has proven that Paul outlined his idea of an eschatological perspective to enable a Christian community in Rome to live an ethical Christian life. Therefore, we articulated the review of related literature focusing on some scholars concentrating on our specific text. We have identified a gap in which the strong tie between eschatology and ethics is not underlined. In addition, the significance of eschatological ethics for a past-oriented community like Africa (though there is no uniformity of culture in Africa) is capitalised on because scholars did not address it based on the exegetical analysis of Romans 13:11-14.

We have outlined three essential things based on the framework of eschatological salvation that enabled the first readers. These three essential issues are the imperatives of the ethical Christian life motivated by eschatological salvation. The socio-rhetorical analysis of the text has affirmed three critical imperatives: to put on the armour of light, walk in daylight, and put on Jesus Christ as an expression of a Christian virtue rejecting vices. To strengthen our position, we have argued the presence of eschatology and ethics in the broader context of Romans and other Pauline epistles. Our text has pointed out the strong ties and the relationship between eschatology and ethics. We have highlighted lessons for the global south and for the term formation of the church and society. Since Paul's eschatological perspective has motivated the first readers to obey and live a higher Christian ethical life, the lesson could teach the importance of the eschatological perspective to shape African culture and be useful both for spiritual enrichment and all-inclusive development.

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John Chilembwe's Praxis: A Harbinger for Malawi's Public Theology

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Abstract

This study discusses the phenomenon of John Chilembwe's praxis as a harbinger for the construction of public theology in Malawi. It articulates an apocalyptic, soteriological, ecclesiological, and missional vision in which the church is understood as a socio-political entity in its own right, inaugurated by Christ to publicly exemplify and perform the eschatological new reality of God's reign here on earth. Qualitative research methods: literature review and historical research were employed. The study established ten findings regarding Chilembwe's praxis approach: (1) establishing schools, (2) promoting human dignity for all, (3) promoting African land rights, (4) fighting the evils of labour tenancy (*thangata* system) and taxation, (5) protesting against the involvement of Africans in the First World War, (6) organising the 1915 uprising against the colonial rule which inspired African nationalism that eventually led to the independence of African nations, (7) promoting women's empowerment, (8) creating an egalitarian society, (9) experimenting with various agricultural initiatives, and (10) using violence to counteract colonialism. In recognition of his visionary, transformational, and servant leadership, the Malawi government declared 15 January as the Chilembwe Day. Also, his portrait was on all Malawi Kwacha notes from 1997 to 2012. Also, the K2000 note has his portrait. Therefore, the study argues that a retrieval of John Chilembwe's religio-political engagement provides lessons for the task of constructing African public theology. This task entails an articulation of a model of ecclesial political engagement in which the church in Africa demonstrates its own identity and mission as the proclamation

and performance of a new order of God's reign inaugurated in Christ's death and resurrection. The study has three implications: (1) the explication of the fundamental public contents of the Christian faith drawn from scripture and tradition, (2) the demonstration of Christianity's public relevance and reasonableness, and (3) an examination and exposition of Christianity's public meaning, significance, and impact on society.

Introduction

This article aims to engage with John Chilembwe's praxis as a harbinger for the construction of public theology in Malawi in view of the emerging interest in theology and public life in Malawi (Ross 2018) and Africa as a whole (Agang, Forster, and Jenkins 2020). John Chilembwe was a visionary leader, a man ahead of his times, whose religio-political engagement with the public sphere informs the discourse on public theology in Malawi. His praxis method of theological reflection and engagement inexorably produced a public presence, influence, and consequences. In this way, he made connections between his Christian faith and the practical issues facing the society (Crane 2011:1). John Chilembwe was concerned with the public relevance of Christian theology. Thus, he constructed a public theology in order to engage with the spiritual, socio-economic, political, and cultural issues of the day, thereby bringing a coherent Christian perspective to bear upon public policy and all spheres of life (De Villiers 2011:9).

Mbiti highlights the significance of religion in the African public sphere of human existence and social life which provides an opportunity for the construction of an African public theology:

> Africans are notoriously religious. Wherever the African is, there is religion. He carries it to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop; he takes it with him to the beer party, or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated, he takes religion with him to the examination room at school or in the university; if he is a politician, he takes it to the house of parliament. (1990:1)

In this chapter, African public theology is defined as

> a Christian theology that is concerned with how all aspects of human knowledge, understanding and faith in God can translate into a deep moral commitment to building a better society, one which is strong in faith, love, justice and wisdom (Agang, Forster, and Jenkins 2020:8)

Kusmierz and Cochrane (2013:49) identifies John Chilembwe's praxis with a critical engagement of the prevailing religio-cultural and socio-political issues in the public domain from a theological point of view. And, as a minister of the gospel, he had to be a voice of the voiceless, the main target of public theology (Kaunda 2015:29-31). John Chilembwe's praxis further exemplifies an African public theology that is prophetic in nature (Pieterse 2013:1-6). Kim (2013:7) mentions several features of public theology which are apparent in Chilembwe's praxis such as critiquing, opposing, resisting the social injustice and promoting justice in society.

In pursuit of the aim of the study, the article engages with John Chilembwe's praxis as a harbinger of African public theology in four ways. These are: (1) John Chilembwe's education and formation, (2) John Chilembwe's praxis, (3) the 1915 Chilembwe uprising, and (4) John Chilembwe as a harbinger for African public theology.

John Chilembwe's Education and Formation as an African Public Theologian

In this section of the paper, I will present a discussion on John Chilembwe's education and formation as an African public theologian.

Shepperson and Price (2000:40) relate that John Chilembwe's upbringing in his home district of Chiradzulo contributed to his formation as an African public theologian in several ways. First, the socio-political context of his childhood days was characterised by warmongering, slavery, and a prevailing atmosphere of insecurity. Second, the Ngoni warriors had fought and prevailed among the Lomwe and Mang'anja tribes who were the inhabitants of Chiradzulo. The Ngoni people ruthlessly fought and killed the other tribes and

most of them sought refuge in the slopes of the Mulanje mountain. Third, the Yao slave raiders often targeted the Magomelo area in Chiradzulo to catch slaves who were sold to the Arab slave traders. Fourth, the Portuguese who had partitioned Mozambique were also interested in the area because of its strategic positioning as well as the abundance of ivory which was in high demand at that time. Fifth, the prevailing insecurity of the region led some chiefs to sign protection treaties with the British, eventually coming under the British Protectorate. Nevertheless, little did they know that the treaties they had signed meant that they would be paying taxes to the British Protectorate administration, a restriction of the local autonomy of the chiefs, and that the Europeans would be given access to own land which was once under customary administration (Kirk, Waller, and Lloyd 1895:215). Ross (2020:18) intimates that the 1915 Chilembwe uprising was motivated by the desire to resolve some of the issues that Chilembwe encountered during his childhood days and had continued without any hope of the situation changing for the better on behalf of the Africans. Thus, Chilembwe endeavoured to interpret his Christian faith and translate it into practice by addressing the prevailing socio-political issues in the public sphere. In so doing, he can be considered as a harbinger of African public theology (De Villiers 2011:9).

Ross (2020:189) notes that Chilembwe studied in one of the Church of Scotland mission schools in Chilomoni, Blantyre, from around 1890. Hauya (1993:22) writes that John Chilembwe's education was a product of early Christian missionary initiatives in Nyasaland which had a twofold purpose: first, civilising the primitive and pagan natives by teaching them Christian values; second, replacing the slave trade with legitimate commerce. The curriculum of the mission schools comprised of reading, writing, and arithmetic, with some missions placing emphasis on technical skills. Amanze (2009:121) argues that missionary education was an instrument of Christian evangelism for converting the indigenous people groups. Nevertheless, the missionary education prepared John Chilembwe to become an African public theologian in three ways. First, he was able to read the Bible and construct an early indigenous liberation theology (Ross 2020:189). Second, missionary education prepared Chilembwe to be an interpreter of missionaries and thus allowed him to engage with the Western missiological and ideological discourses (Shepperson and Price 2000:55). Third, the missionary education gave Chilembwe literacy skills which enabled him to write both in the vernacular languages and English.

He later used his literacy skills to write a protest letter against the colonial authorities concerning the First World War in 1914 (Ross 2020:247-249).

Joseph Booth's Influence on John Chilembwe

Shepperson and Price (2000:37) observe that Chilembwe was employed as a house servant by Joseph Booth in 1892. Joseph Booth arrived in Africa in 1892 and established the Zambezi Industrial Mission near Blantyre. He criticised the reluctance of Scottish Presbyterian missions to admit Africans as full church members. Later, he founded seven different independent missions in Nyasaland which championed the equality of all worshippers. Fiedler (2016:5-6) argues that from Chilembwe's association with Booth, he learnt a radical religious ideology and an egalitarian vision. For instance, Booth's 'Africa for the African' philosophy was crucial in Chilembwe's formation as an African public theologian due to its liberational predisposition for the African continent (Kavaloh 1991:12).

Fiedler (2016:5) argues that Joseph Booth mentored Chilembwe to become an African public theologian by inculcating an 'Africa for the African' vision into his life. According to Ross and Fiedler (2020), Joseph Booth's 'Africa for the African' vision was embedded with independency, sovereignty, and self-determination for Africa. This can be demonstrated in several ways. First, he wondered why Africa which was bigger than Europe and North America didn't belong anymore to the African race. Second, he questioned why the Africans' rights for self-administration, sovereignty, and development were trivialised and truncated. Third, he protested against all people and nations who ruthlessly asserted their purpose, power, or right to dispose Africans of their God-given land and natural resources. Fourth, he expressed confidence in the intellectual capabilities and physical strength of Africans which established the basis for human equality. In other words, Africans were not lesser human beings as compared to the Europeans and Americans. Fifth, he expressed confidence in the significance of Africa's population in relation to the continent's vastness and wealth. Sixth, he wondered why Africans were being dehumanised through slave trade and were not treated with human dignity. Seventh, he criticised the Europeans for being responsible for retarding Africa's progress and development due to the criminal treatment they administered to Africa. This was influenced by the European background of barbarism, commercial and territorial enterprise, invasion, and appropriation

of other territories, subduing and destroying the indigenous inhabitants, plundering Africa's human resources through slavery which was one of the most gigantic and long sustained crimes in history. Eighth, he criticised the partition, plunder or scramble for Africa which was characterised by the invasion, annexation, division, and colonisation of Africa by western European powers during a historical era commonly called 'New Imperialism' (1833-1914) (Pakenham 2015:8). Ninth, he considered the partition of Africa as a daylight robbery which drained Africa's wealth for Europe's benefit and development. Tenth, he defended the character of the African which was misrepresented by European prejudice. He argued that the African is not a lazy man, is not a dishonest man, is not a stupid man, is not a quarrelsome man, but acts honestly (Booth 1996:12). Thus, Joseph Booth transferred this liberational, revolutionary, and transformational vision to John Chilembwe and this undoubtedly played a crucial role in his formation as an African public theologian (Thompson 2017:55).

Ross (2020:241) opines that Joseph Booth's threefold strategy for the upliftment of the African race serves as a precursor for the construction and praxis of an early African public theology in three ways: first, by spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the African continent; second, by the restoration of land of Africa to the African people; third, by the restoration of the Negroes to their motherland from where they were stolen, i.e. if they are willing to return back (Booth 1996:13). Crane (2011:1) argues that Booth's strategy connects the gospel of Jesus Christ to resolving the social ills prevalent at that time and constitutes an early construction and praxis of African public theology. Thus, Chilembwe who was under Booth's tutelage was mentored to become an African public theologian through his engagement with such radical liberational theological ideologies and practices (Soko-de Jong 2022:3).

Booth's 'Africa for the African' philosophy is crucial in Chilembwe's formation as an African public theologian because it was seeded with an African vision of independence, sovereignty, self-reliance, self-determination, and development which can be summarised in the following way:

> Let the African, sympathetically led by his more experienced Afro-American brother, develop his own country, establish his own manufactures, work his own plantations, run his own ships,

> work his own mines, educate his own people, possess his own mission stations, conserve the wealth accruing from all sources, if possible, for the commonwealth and enlightenment of the people and the glory of God. (Booth 1996:12)

John Chilembwe in the USA

Shepperson and Price (2000:85) aver that Joseph Booth took Chilembwe to the United States of America (USA) in 1897. This trip had African public theological ramifications:

> For if Chilembwe had not gone to the USA, he could not have become a minister of an American Negro Church; and if he had not been such a minister, he would not have been able to build up, in his own country, with the assistance of American Negroes, the Providence Industrial Mission (PIM), from which in 1915, the uprising against colonial domination in Africa was launched. (Shepperson and Price 2000:88)

Booth's taking of Chilembwe to the USA also played a significant role in Chilembwe's formation as an African public theologian because it introduced him to a different socio-political context which was characterised by racial inequality and discrimination, particularly affecting the American Negroes in several ways. First, the Negroes were disenfranchised since the hopes of the Civil War and the emancipation from slavery had not yet been realised. Second, the political promises associated with the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the constitution which would grant the Negroes full citizenship rights had not yet been fulfilled. Third, the white supremacy which was championed by the Ku Klux Klan manifested itself in intimidation and violence against the Negroes. It was also characterised by bribery and the manipulation of the states' political structures in order to frustrate the federal government's protection of the rights of Negroes. Fourth, the Negro was denied the right to vote in most southern states, including Virginia, where Chilembwe spent most of his time in the USA. Fifth, the Negroes' political participation in Virginia was virtually curtailed. Sixth, racial segregation was observed in public spaces such as trams, depots, hotels, restaurants, barber shops, schools, etc. Seventh, lynching, which involved a public killing of an individual who had not received the due process of the law or justice, was

widely practised against the Negroes. Eighth, Chilembwe himself was on several occasions stoned at Richmond, Virginia, by mobs of white youth for being in the company of a white man, Joseph Booth (Shepperson and Price 2000:93-97).

Chilembwe's stay in the USA made him appreciate the American Negroes' situation as a framework for engaging with the liberational praxis (Fiedler 2016:5). According to Cone (2011:6), the concrete black experience of suffering and inhumanity provides a framework for a liberational praxis for achieving humanity, dignity, and well-being for the Negroes and Africans (Vellem 2012:2). Thus, the American Negro situation played a twofold role in Chilembwe's formation as an African public theologian. First, Chilembwe absorbed some political liberational ideologies, particularly on how the Negroes thought about their situation of oppression. Second, Chilembwe observed that the Negroes did not exemplify a socio-political apathy but were actively involved in their own liberation in order to achieve freedom, human dignity, and self-determination. For instance, the Negroes engaged in self-mobilisation and agency through the development of their own spirituality and independent forms of worship. This led to the formation of Negro Baptists, Methodists, and independent messianic groups which were all discontented with the prevailing racial discrimination and subjugation. Hence, a foundation was laid for the development of a liberational spirituality, independence, an entrepreneurial and industrious spirit yearning for freedom, and advancement of the Negroes' socio-economic status.

Chilembwe's stay in America helped him to make connections between the American Negroes' agenda and the liberation of indigenous Africans. For instance, Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and Rev. Charles Morris, of the Negro Baptists of America, believed that both American Negroes and Africans were tied in a single destiny that needed emancipation. Thus, Chilembwe learnt some indispensable lessons from the Negro churches of the USA that were formative in his journey as an African public theologian. For instance, he learnt ministerial and operational strategies for running an independent church such as the Providence Industrial Mission (PIM) which would later become the centre for socio-political mobilisation and agency in Nyasaland (Makondesa 2006:74).

John Chilembwe at Lynchburg Theological Seminary

Shepperson and Price (2000:113) write that Chilembwe later separated from Booth due to circumstantial reasons such as Booth's lack of financial resources to support Chilembwe. Nevertheless, Booth handed Chilembwe over to the care of Rev. Lewis Garnett Jordan, Foreign Missions Secretary of the National Baptist Convention (NBC). Dr Jordan arranged for Chilembwe to attend the Virginia Theological Seminary and College, a small Baptist institution at Lynchburg, Virginia. The seminary's mission was to prepare Christian preachers, teachers, and workers to serve among the Negroes. Furthermore, the seminary's staff and students were zealous advocates for the American Negro emancipation and African upliftment and freedom. Therefore, Chilembwe's enrolment at the Virginia Theological Seminary and College intensified his radical religious ideas, emphasis on the industrial aspect of education, and spirit of self-confidence and self-determination for the Negro and black African's destiny; a liberational theology and praxis played a crucial role in Chilembwe's formation as an African public theologian.

Shepperson and Price (2000:113) insinuate that Jordan took Chilembwe to Rev. William Wells Brown, who was the pastor of the High Street Baptist Church. Brown was an influential preacher of the 'social gospel' and he felt that he had a responsibility for the world's redemption, especially Africa. Hence, he regarded his meeting with Chilembwe as divine providence which motivated him to pay for his education.

Shepperson and Price (2000:113) argue that Chilembwe's encounter with Rev. William Brown played a crucial role in his formation as an African public theologian in several ways. First, Brown's background of slavery and his eventual escape from slavery on 1st January 1834 motivated him to embark on an anti-slavery mission and to bring liberation to all oppressed human beings in the Americas and in Africa. He later became a liberational lecturing agent for the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society in 1843. He also used his publications to expose the dehumanising situation of slavery in his struggle for liberation. Some of his anti-slavery and liberational publications were: (a) the *Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave. Written by Himself* (1847), (b) *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States* (1853), and (c) the first African American play, entitled *The Escape; or, a Leap for Freedom* (1858). Hence, Chilembwe's encounter with Rev. William

Wells Brown cultivated in him a liberational theology and praxis which was formative in his construction of an African public theology.

Rotberg (1965:345-373) hints that Chilembwe's period at Lynchburg played a crucial formative role in at least three ways. First, his social experience regarding the prevailing prejudice against Negroes later motivated him to fight for the freedom, equality, and dignity of Africans. Second, his interactions with Gregory Hayes, the principal of Virginia Theological Seminary and College, and his exposure to radical Negro ideas through the works of John Brown, Booker T. Washington, Fredrick Douglass, etc. were formative for his quest for the empowerment of Africans and the pursuit of egalitarianism. Third was his initiative to start the African Development Society which was headed by Gregory Hayes; the headline of its prospectus was: 'Che John Chilembwe, of East Central Africa, Gen. Solicitor'. Its manifesto was modelled after Booth's 'Africa for the African' and espoused the industrial mission philosophy and the re-settlement of American Negroes in Africa (Shepperson and Price 2000:117).

Phiri (1999:116) writes that Chilembwe was ordained as a Baptist minister at Lynchburg in 1899. He successfully completed his studies at Virginia Theological Seminary and College in 1900 and was awarded the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Divinity degrees. Thus, Chilembwe's attainment of higher education equipped him with critical thinking skills that later enabled him to engage with the evils of colonialism in an informed manner.

John Chilembwe's Praxis

Makondesa (2006:19) writes that John Chilembwe returned to Nyasaland in 1900 as an ordained minister, a missionary in his own land. His missional praxis was aimed at empowering and developing the lives of people who were disenfranchised and disadvantaged by the prevailing colonial regime in Africa. His praxis further provides evidence of his engagement as a harbinger for African public theology and this can be gleaned from his theological thought, actions, and writings.

It is therefore imperative for this article to explain Chilembwe's praxis, which serves as a harbinger for African public theology. Chilembwe's praxis will be looked at in at least seven areas: (1) establishing the Providence Industrial

Mission (PIM), (2) establishing schools, (3) promoting women's empowerment, (4) a vision for Nyasaland's nation-building, (5) protesting against the conscription of African soldiers, (6) the voice of African natives in the present war, and (7) organising the 1915 uprising against colonialism.

The Providence Industrial Mission (PIM)

Makondesa (2006:21) states that John Chilembwe launched the Providence Industrial Mission (P.I.M.) on 1st February 1900, on the eastern side of Mbombwe River, in Chiradzulo district. He had adopted the name 'Providence' from an institution in New York which funded his stay in the USA. He also adopted the word 'Industrial' from Joseph Booth's industrial mission philosophy.

Tangri (1971:306-307) demonstrates Chilembwe's liberational praxis from his preaching which imparted the values of hard work, self-respect, self-help, and human dignity to his congregation. He preached against social injustice in Nyasaland which was characterised by a multi-faceted oppression concerning African land rights, labour tenancy, *thangata*, hut tax, and the conscription of African soldiers (askaris) to fight in the First World War (McCracken 2012:130-132).

Chilembwe's praxis was implemented through the PIM ministry modelled after American Negro churches who used their respective churches as hubs for liberational mobilisation and agency (Harris 1994:43). As such, the PIM became a centre for spiritual and political formation and action. This can partly be explained based on the fact that most of PIM members were also workers in the European plantations in Nyasaland. As such, the gross human rights violations against them subsequently became a burden for the church which had zealously worked for the improvement and liberation of their lives. Hence, Chilembwe's praxis can be considered as an early development of African public theology based on the various interventions he made in alleviating the plight of indigenous Africans in view of the prevailing colonial domination and ill-treatment of Africans in the European plantations (Ross 2020:188).

Soko-de Jong (2022:4) argues that the PIM's ministry shows some similarities with the early forms of African public theology that Chilembwe had learnt at the Virginia Theological Seminary and College and in his interaction with

American Negro churches, for instance, the application of a holistic ethos which combined orthodoxy, i.e. the Baptist faith according to the NBC which had ordained him, and orthopraxy, i.e. the right conduct, action, practice both ethical and liturgical, and engagement in daily life arising out of one's religious beliefs. This can further be exemplified by the pursuit of progress inspired by a spirit of self-determination because the PIM as a community of believers determined their own projects and built their own church building at a time when most imposing churches in Nyasaland were built under European supervision. Thus, they were independent in their practice of faith and worship.

Chilembwe's praxis through the PIM ministry demonstrates that he was a harbinger of African public theology for two reasons:

> First, he gave interpretations of and guidance to society's various sectors, institutions, and interactions, and possibly to evaluate between religious beliefs and practices as they bear on matters of public concern. Second, he provided such interpretations and guidance in ways that would be intelligible and potentially persuasive to those inside and outside the institutional churches. (Breitenberg 2003:67)

In this way, Chilembwe exemplifies the role of public theology as Resane explains:

> Public theology is located in the societal context and makes proposals or initiatives of practical steps to be taken to remedy the maladies identified in the nation. Initiatives are determined by the shape and size of the social ills dealt with. As a non-institutional religion, public theology endeavours to provide resources for people to connect between their faith and the disturbing issues facing their society. (2019:4)

Establishment of Schools

Makondesa (2006:74) relates that John Chilembwe championed education as an integral part of the work of the PIM. He had believed that education was a

tool for societal transformation. His holistic vision for education of Africans can be summarised in the following words:

> By giving the children of Africa good training they will be able to possess an indomitable spirit and firm dependence upon God's helping and sustaining hand. And make observations which will be of greatest use to different tribes of African Sons, who only need the quickening and enlightening influence of the Gospel of Christ to lift them from this state of degradation, and to make them suitable members of the Great human family. (Shepperson and Price 2000:127)

Chilembwe's aim in developing seven independent native schools was to give the indigenous Africans knowledge and skills which could enable them to be reliable and productive citizens of society. Thus, he engaged in a citizenship education which equipped his students to critically engage with the public sphere in order to achieve the common good. He understood that for the Africans to successfully engage in conversations and actions that curb societal oppression they needed an education that cultivates liberational thought, character, and action as essential prerequisites in engaging with the public sphere. (Chiroma 2019:235).

Chilembwe also used the schools to inculcate socio-political activism in his students. Mr Maynard Gibson Mbela, an alumnus of PIM schools (1904-1907) comments on Chilembwe's political activism:

> Chilembwe taught us a good deal about planters and white settlers. He complained about the planters who were cruel to their African tenants, stopped them from collecting firewood and cutting trees from their estates etc. Indeed, the Europeans did not seem to like him because they used to send detectives to his mission to find out what he was doing. (Makondesa 2006:74)

Shepperson and Price (2000:146-147) write that Chilembwe's purpose for establishing schools seems to be multi-faceted, i.e. evangelism, social-economic upliftment, and socio-political activism. This can be seen in the

various initiatives he introduced like teaching African women to make dresses and encouraging the Africans to dress decently, stay in a hygienic environment, and venture into various enterprises like hunting and agriculture for commercial purposes. Thus, Chilembwe was a harbinger for African public theology because he sought to understand and exemplify the relationship between the Christian faith and the broader economic, socio-cultural, and political context in which ordinary Christians lived (Thiemann 1991:21). Moreover, Chilembwe should be considered as a public theologian because of his pursuit of making the Christian faith relevant to public challenges and initiatives for mobilising Christians for socio-economic and political engagement in order to achieve the common good (Resane 2016:55).

Promoting Women's Empowerment

Makondesa (2006:40-42) alludes that Chilembwe seeded a feminist vision of women's empowerment in his Christian ministry as early as 1900, something that was rare and inconceivable for Africans at that time. He was keen to create an egalitarian community in which both men and women are equal and have opportunities to progress in life. Therefore, Chilembwe is a precursor to feminist public theological discourses.

Makondesa (2006:41-42) gives a sevenfold analysis of Chilembwe's feminist vision:

1. He considered the training and development of women as a special work that must be done with urgency. He argued that the mothers of the race must not be forgotten in doing God's work.
2. He compared the work among women to the laying of a foundation for the future of the African race.
3. He lamented the gap in development that existed between African men and women. The men were developing faster than women and, in his view, this created an unbalanced and unhealthy progress for society.
4. He lamented the unfortunate state of the heathen African woman which he described as ignorant, uninteresting, unlovable, and lacks ambition. However, what she needs is to be brought out of darkness into the light through the Gospel of Christ.

5. Chilembwe and his wife, Ida, discouraged early marriages and encouraged the young girls to attend school and be involved in vocational skills development i.e. sewing.
6. Mrs. Ida Chilembwe[1] served as a model of an empowered woman who is not only a good house wife but a professional since she worked as a teacher at P.I.M. school and a trainer in the women's sewing classes.
7. Chilembwe and his wife exemplified egalitarian principles of gender equality and equity in their life and ministry.

Chilembwe's feminist praxis resonates with Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's reclamation of ecclesiology as the foundation for constructing a feminist public theology. She asserts that:

> Ekklesia in its classical Greco-Roman and early Christian contexts referred to 'the political decision-making congress or assembly of full citizens' and suggested, at least in principle, a radical (i.e., grassroots, or popular) democracy, in which all citizens enjoy equal rights to full participation. The ekklesia of women functions as a critical concept for analysing patriarchal aspects of politics and religion and for pinpointing incongruities between egalitarian ideals and exclusionary practices in both political and religious life. With regard to politics, ekklesia when combined with women helps to crystallize and challenge the tensions and outright contradictions between egalitarian political discourses and actual ideological political practices that largely entitled only certain elite men and women to full citizenship. With regard to religion, ekklesia when combined with women highlights the inconsistencies between egalitarian ideals and exclusionary practices in early and contemporary Christian communities. (Fiorenza 1984:154-157)

Sherlock (1994:46-63) says that the National Baptist Convention sent Miss Emma DeLaney, an African American missionary, in 1902 to work with John

[1] Mrs Ida Chilembwe was very instrumental in giving a practical touch to the women's side of the schools, with her classes in sewing and deportment. Hence, the mission possessed a number of sewing machines demonstrating a high capital base in Nyasaland at that time (Shepperson and Price 2000:171).

Chilembwe at the PIM. Her main focus was in uplifting the lives of women and girls in several ways: (1) sewing, (2) decent dressing, (3) singing, (3) hygiene, (4) house-keeping, (5) fighting against early marriages, (6) fighting against sexist norms, (7) fighting against female circumcision, which she described as a combination of heathenism and barbarism, and (8) serving as a midwife in helping African women in the birthing process. Thus, Chilembwe's feminist praxis provided Emma DeLaney with a platform for implementing a women empowerment ministry which created an alternative space to a predominantly patriarchal, religio-cultural order that was exclusionary to women's being, perspectives, voices, experiences, and lived realities (Manyonganise 2023:90).

Therefore, Chilembwe's feminist praxis articulates succinctly resources for deconstructing patriarchal religio-cultural practices, as well as offering empowerment to confront structures that cause women's vulnerability and perpetuate their subjugation and oppression in society. In this case, Chilembwe prefigured an early form of an African women's public theology that not only identified areas of women's injustice but proceeded to engage the church and the society by empowering women to be active participants in shaping their own destiny, bringing society transformation, and advocating for gender justice and women's equality in order to enhance their well-being and realise their full potential in life (Mwaura 2015:10).

Chilembwe's Vision for Nyasaland's Nation-building

Shepperson and Price (2000:411) submit that at the heart of Chilembwe's religio-political engagement was a futuristic construction of an egalitarian society which provided equal opportunities to all people, transcending tribal and racial boundaries. Hence, Chilembwe as a harbinger for African public theology exemplifies an early indigenous political philosophy aimed at constructing a model African state (Ross 2020:189).

Shepperson and Price (2000:415) argue that Chilembwe articulated a vision for the emergence of the concept of nationhood for Nyasaland. This is exemplified in six ways. First, in his writings he used wider territorial expressions such as 'Nyasaland' to refer to the African people of the Protectorate. Second, he signed his 1914 anti-war letter which preceded the uprising 'on behalf of his countrymen' and clearly this had national implications. Third, he included the migrants (*Anguru*) from the Portuguese territory, Mozambique, who had

settled in Chiradzulu and Zomba. Fourth, his conception of the Nyasaland nationality was multi-racial, including some Europeans as mentors and specialists. Fifth, he encouraged Indian traders to be patriotic and rebuked them for sending the money they made out of the country, thereby depriving Nyasaland of capital. Sixth, Chilembwe envisioned statehood and citizenship in Nyasaland to be better as compared to the colonial period. He dreamed of the Nyasaland state based on principles of good governance, equality, and citizenship with responsible rights and duties (Kobo2010:68).

Shepperson and Price (2000:435) argue that Chilembwe's praxis has implications on the history of African nationalism (Sithole 1963:37-39). Chilembwe had a vision of creating a progressive African state, with selective European assistance,[2] in which native Africans, would run their own industries and enterprises (Nieman 2010:37-44). However, Chilembwe was also conscious that such a state needed spiritual, ideological, political, and economic foundations (Maluleke 1994:245-258). For him, his conception of the African state entailed the unity of all African independent churches implementing the industrial mission philosophy in order to achieve spiritual, ideological, political, and economic progress (Martey 2009:47). In so doing, the African state would be unshackled from financial dependency, oppressive monetary policies of global institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and economic enslavement as a result of globalisation (Ismi 2004:3).

Protesting Against the Conscription of African Soldiers in Wars

Shepperson and Price (2000:143) write that Chilembwe was very vocal at the loss of over one hundred and fifty Nyasaland askaris in the Somaliland military campaigns against the 'Mad Mullah'. Similarly, Chilembwe was disturbed by the awful experiences of the families of the askaris who had died in the war. For instance, a heart-breaking incident for an old woman who had went to Zomba in 1904 to welcome back her sons who were conscripted as soldiers to fight in Somaliland:

> An old woman had come eighty miles to welcome back her six sons. Standing amid the cheering crowds she saw the troops

[2] This should be understood as bilateral agreements in a win-win situation rather than the exploitative ones that represented the colonial and neo-colonial agenda in Africa.

> march past and enquired after her boys. She then learnt for the first time that all of them had been killed […] War has its price of sorrow even for the untutored African who takes his share unwittingly in the burden of the Empire. And there still remains the question to be answered: 'Is it right?' (Shepperson and Price 2000:143)

Makondesa (2006:125-126) accounts that Chilembwe criticised the colonial authorities for recruiting African soldiers (askaris) to fight in the First World War. Page (2019:20) laments the tragedy of Nyasaland's askaris (soldiers), *tenga-tenga* (non-combatant porters), their families, and wider communities during the First World War. Unavoidably, the war created a general discomfort in Nyasaland which provided the context for the 1915 Chilembwe uprising.

Ross (2020:246) observes that the Nyasaland askaris' involvement in the battle at Karonga, which was fought on 8-9 September 1914, resulted in many casualties for the British forces who lost sixty soldiers, forty-nine being Africans, with many more being wounded in the conflict. The situation for Nyasaland askaris was exacerbated due to the fact that tens of thousands lost their lives, and the survivors were battered, broken, and mutilated for life, and were dumped in their villages without pensions, medals, and any form of care from the British Protectorate. Thus, Chilembwe was very much concerned about the plight of the Nyasaland askaris, their families, and broader African communities that were affected by the First World War. He felt duty-bound to challenge the involvement of his countrymen in the First World War. He critically engaged with the prevailing socio-political issues in the public domain from a theological point of view (Kusmierz and Cochrane 2013:50). And as a minister of the gospel, he had to be a voice of the voiceless, the main target of public theology (Resane 2019:5). Hence, Chilembwe's religio-political praxis exemplifies an African public theology which is prophetic in nature (Pieterse 2013:1-6). Smit mentions several features of public theology which are apparent in Chilembwe's praxis:

> Public theology should be critical, in opposition, resisting, warning, critiquing, opposing what is already happening in public life […] and this constitutes the role of the church and the task of theology. (2013:84)

The Voice of African Natives in the Present War

John Chilembwe's protest against the conscription of African soldiers in the First World War led him to write a letter which was published in the *Nyasaland Times* on 26th November 1914 entitled: 'The Voice of African Natives in the Present War'. This letter is significant for the discussion on John Chilembwe as a harbinger for African public theology because it is his last surviving first-hand public document. Hence, it gives us some clues to his thoughts, perspectives, lived experiences, and lived realities which later culminated in the 1915 uprising. In other words, apart from theology acted, this letter serves as a source of his written theological and socio-political thought, which helps us determine his public theological contributions. The letter is here published in full:

> We understand we have been invited to shed our innocent blood in this World War which is now in progress throughout the wide world.
>
> On the commencement of the war we understood that it was said indirectly that an African had nothing to do with the civilised war. But we now find that the poor African has already been plunged into the great war.
>
> A number of our people have already shed their blood, while some are crippled for life. And an open declaration has been issued. A number of Police are marching in various villages persuading well-built natives to join in the war. The masses of our people are ready to put on uniforms ignorant of what they have to face or why they have to face it.
>
> We ask the Honourable government of our country which is known as Nyasaland, will there be any good prospects for the natives after the end of the war? Shall we be recognised as anybody in the best interest of civilisation and Christianity after the great struggle is ended?
>
> Because we are imposed upon more than any other nationality under the sun. Any true gentleman who will read this without the eye of prejudice will agree and recognise the fact that the natives have been loyal since the commencement of this government, and that in all departments of Nyasaland their welfare has been incomplete without us.

And in no time have we been known to betray any trust, national or otherwise, confided to us. Everybody know that the natives have been loyal to all Nyasaland interests and Nyasaland institutions.

For our part we have never allowed the Nyasaland flag to touch the ground, while honour and credit have often gone to others. We have unreservedly stepped to the firing line in every conflict and played a patriot's part with the spirit of true gallantry. But in time of peace the government has failed to help the underdog.

In time of peace everything for Europeans only. And instead of honour we have suffered humiliation with names contemptible. But in time of war it has been found that we are needed to share hardships and shed our blood in equality.

It is true that we have no voice in this government. It is even true there is a spot of our blood in the cross of the Nyasaland Government.

But regarding this World Wide War, we understand this is not a royal war, nor a government war, nor a war of gain for any description; it is a war of free nations against a devilish system of imperial domination and national spoliation.

If this were a war as abovementioned such as war for honour, government gain of riches, etc, we would have been boldly told: Let the rich men, bankers, titled men, store keepers, farmers and landlords go to war and get shot.

Instead the poor Africans who have nothing to own in this present world, who in death, leave only a long line of widows and orphans in utter want and dire distress are invited to die for a cause which is not theirs.

It is too late now to talk of what might or might not have happened, whatsoever be the reasons why we are being invited to join the war, the fact remains, we are really being invited to die for Nyasaland.

We leave all for the consideration of the Government, we hope in the mercy of Almighty God, that someday things will turn out well and that the Government will recognise our indispensability, and that justice will prevail.

Signed
John Chilembwe
On behalf of his countrymen. (quoted in Ross 2020:246-249)

John Chilembwe's letter has several African public theological implications which are discussed below. Firstly, he lamented that a number of his countrymen, 'have already shed their blood', others were being 'crippled for life', 'invited to die for a cause which is not theirs', and

> the poor Africans who have nothing to own in this present world, who in death, leave only a long line of widows and orphans in utter want and dire distress (Ross 2020:246-249).

Thus, John Chilembwe as a harbinger for African public theology, raised a public outcry against the plight of African soldiers' participation in the war. Resane explains the character of African public theology:

> Public theology is always public, speaking in public places and addressing the public issues for the sake or benefit of the public interest. (2019:1)

Secondly, Chilembwe reminded the colonial government of the natives' loyalty to all Nyasaland interests and institutions to the extent of being patriotic in fighting in the war. However, he bemoaned the fact that the government failed to reciprocate the people's goodwill by improving their general well-being and livelihoods. In this regard, Chilembwe was a precursor of African public theology because he tried to hold the government of his day to be accountable to its citizens and implored it to improve their welfare rather than just exploit them (Ross 1996:22).

Thirdly, Chilembwe as a harbinger for African public theology rebuked the colonial government for degrading the natives' human dignity and violating their rights. He wrote that 'instead of honour we have suffered humiliation with names contemptible'. Makondesa (2006:127) argues that this statement conjectures that the prevailing social injustice inflicted by the European planters on the natives was under the government's watch. For instance, Chilembwe was conscious of labour rights and criticised the prevailing *thangata* system in the Shire Highlands (Shepperson and Price 2000:143).

Mkandawire (1977:185-191) explains that European settlers introduced *thangata* work as an obligation imposed on the tenants living on their estates in lieu of cash rent. Chirwa (1994:530) argues that overcrowding on the Crown Lands and the plight of the migrant workers (*Anguru*) who had no claim to communal land exacerbated the labour situation. Therefore, the only option for the *Angurus* was to remain on the estates and perform *thangata* work. In this case, '*thangata*' meant forced unpaid labour.

Fourthly, the conclusion of John Chilembwe's letter demonstrates the theological basis for his socio-political engagement. For instance, he wrote that:

> we hope in the mercy of the Almighty God, that someday things will turn out well and that the Government will recognise our indispensability, and that justice will prevail.

Thus, Chilembwe's protest against the involvement of African soldiers in the First World War demonstrates that he was a harbinger for African public theology because he made connections between his faith in God and the broader social and cultural context within which the Christian community lives (Ross 2020:188).

Fifthly, the letter demonstrates Chilembwe's compulsion to respond to the crisis which had come on African communities in Nyasaland due to the First World War (Ross 2020:247). Makondesa (2006:127) argues that Chilembwe's letter was a precursor to the 1992 pastoral letter which the Roman Catholic bishops wrote protesting the gross human rights violation in Malawi. Mitchell (2002:7) avers that the 1992 pastoral letter exemplifies the church's critical engagement with the government highlighting the abuse of power, the rule of law, respect of human rights, corruption, nepotism, development, transparency, accountability, etc. Thus, Chilembwe as a harbinger of African public theology serves as an outstanding example of the connection between ecclesiastical engagement with socio-political issues. McCracken (2012:140) argues that Chilembwe's praxis exemplifies an inextricable interplay of religion and politics in Malawi.

The 1915 Chilembwe Uprising

Thompson (2017:1) explains that the Chilembwe uprising was a rebellion against British colonial rule in Nyasaland which took place from 15th January to 3rd February 1915. It was led by Rev. John Chilembwe, the pastor of the PIM. Ross and Fiedler explain that:

> What is beyond dispute is that John Chilembwe, the pastor of the P.I.M. emerged as the harbinger of political independence for Malawi. Indeed, this was recognised in 1995 when Chilembwe Day (15th of January) was gazetted as a public holiday […] The uprising gives some clues as to how Chilembwe drew political conclusions from his Christian faith and developed a remarkably early indigenous liberation theology. (2020:188-189)

McCracken (2012:128-136) argues that Chilembwe's motivation for the uprising against the colonial rule in Nyasaland was multi-faceted. First, there was the plight of labour tenants, particularly Mozambican immigrants (*Anguru*) on the Bruce Estates in Magomero, Zomba. Most of them were members of his PIM church. However, they suffered from labour abuse, were often physically ill-treated, and suffered under the *thangata* system. They also suffered from an increase in hut tax in 1912 and from the effects of a famine in 1913 (White 1989:131-133). Second, there were his own personal problems such as debts, lack of financial support from the National Baptist Convention which had drastically reduced since 1914, and health problems, i.e. asthma and failing eyesight (Rotberg 1965:365-366). Third, there were frustrations in African middle-class men who were educated in mission schools and were denied career opportunities and a political voice by the government and the settlers (Shepperson and Price 2000:240-250). Fourth, the African casualties in the First World War, both soldiers and porters, greatly affected him, and the government demands for more porters directly impacted the members of the PIM (Page 1978:89-90). Fifth, Chilembwe's attitude changed from passive acceptance of European dominance to rebellion only between October 1914 and January 1915, and he was pushed into an uprising by the millennial expectations of his more militant followers (Bone 2015:5-6). Sixth, the timing of the uprising in early 1915, shortly after the start of the First World War and

also at a time of apocalyptical expectations, was no coincidence (Bone 2015:5-6). Seventh, Joseph Booth's influence on Chilembwe regarding egalitarianism and independence, particularly through the ideas published in his book entitled *Africa for Africans* (Langworthy 1996). Eighth, towards the end of his life, Chilembwe was so charged with nationalistic and black power sentiments, to the extent that he interpreted salvation to mean freedom from colonial domination rather than freedom from Satanic dominion (Phiri 1999:28). Ninth, the government planned to deport Chilembwe to the Seychelles because of his criticism against the use of African soldiers in the First World War. Thus, Chilembwe made a pre-emptive attack before the authorities could arrest and deport him (Makondesa 2006:131).

Two important questions to grapple with concerning the 1915 Chilembwe uprising are: (1) Was the uprising a result of a theological decision? (2) Was it an outworking of a public theology? Ross considers the basis of the uprising to be

> a combination of the evangelical faith with a radical social and political standpoint. The Baptist faith that cultivated a deep spirituality among the PIM members also played a socio-political conscientisation role regarding the injustice and violence of the colonial rule. (2020:247)

Ross (2020:189-199) writes about two testimonies given by Rev. Harry Kambwiri Matecheta and Rev. Stephen Kundecha before the Commission of Inquiry concerning the Chilembwe uprising. The two ministers of the Blantyre Mission attested that Chilembwe was much obsessed with the passion for freedom and this was reflected in his theological orientation as a pastor and in his praxis as a protester (Randall 2023:173). Therefore, Chilembwe's uprising can be interpreted as a form of 'theology acted' (praxis). In other words, his violent engagement with the colonial rule reflects an outworking of a public theology because he made the theological connections between salvation and political emancipation.

Shepperson (1953:13) argues that the theological character of the uprising should be placed within the context of Ethiopianism and African nationalism. Nmah and Okonu (2022:16) state that 'Ethiopianism' expresses a threefold

African liberational movement focusing on political, cultural, and religious emancipation, appropriating the Bible as the basis for African liberation.

Rukuni and Oliver (2019:1) explain that "Ethiopianism by definition is an ideology derived from selected events within the history of Ethiopia and its vintage status in biblical times. Ethiopianism transforms the narratives of Ethiopia into metaphors of African nobility; subsequently influencing discourses of mission, pan-Africanism, autonomy and assertive sovereignty" (p.1).

The origin of Ethiopianism both as an African movement and an ideology is based on Psalm 68:31-33, which mentions two African countries, namely Egypt and Ethiopia, thus: 'Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands onto God'(KJV). Duncan (2015:205) states that John Chilembwe's praxis was inspired by 'Ethiopianism' which served as a basis for his engagement in the uprising as a means of achieving liberation from colonial domination. According to Ross,

> Although the Chilembwe uprising of 1915 may have appeared to be futile; nevertheless, the memory of the uprising was a potent factor in the evolution of the nationalistic consciousness which finally resulted in the independence for Malawi. Therefore, Chilembwe is an outstanding example of a public theologian who demonstrates the intersectionality between ecclesiastical independency and political nationalism. (2020:189)

Mjura Mkandawire captures the sentiments of John Chilembwe as a public theologian by Malawians in their commemoration of the Chilembwe Day on 15th January every year through a popular liberational song:

> *Kunali John Chilembwe* (There was John Chilembwe)
> *Mu boma la Chiradzulo* (From Chiradzulo district)
> *Mbusa wa mphamvu* (He was a powerful preacher or pastor)
> *Atsamunda achizungu anakangana naye, boma linakangana nayenso* (The white settlers and the colonial government fought against him)

Koma iye sanalole kuti anthu ache apitirirebe kuona zinthu zovuta (But he didn't allow for his people to continue facing injustice)
Zochokera kwa atsamunda achizungu (from white colonialists)
(Mjura Mkandawire and the MBC Band no date)

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion demonstrates that the Chilembwe religio-political praxis serves as a harbinger for the construction of African public theology. The threefold task of public theology is apparent in Chilembwe's praxis. This means that he, first, clarified the fundamental public contents of the Christian faith drawn from scripture and tradition. Second, he demonstrated Christianity's public relevance and reasonableness. Third, he examined and unveiled Christianity's public meaning, significance, and impact on society.

John Chilembwe as a harbinger of African public theology demonstrates a triangulation of theology believed, theology written, and theology acted within the framework of colonial domination and injustice. Chilembwe's credentials as a public theologian are apparent mainly in the manner he translated his faith into actions by becoming a voice for the voiceless and engaging with the oppressive structures of society. Hence, the paper argues that a retrieval of John Chilembwe's praxis provides lessons that inform contemporary theologians in constructing and working out an African public theology.

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The Lynching of Witches in Northern Ghana: A Public Theological Critique of Mob Justice

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Abstract

Witchcraft accusations and maltreatment have become a menace in the northern part of Ghana. Most of the people who were accused of being witches are women, children, and the poor in the society. In these parts of the country, some camps have been set up as a haven for these accused persons, so as not to incur the wrath of their family and society. Despite the existence of these camps, in 2020, a ninety-year-old woman by the name of Akua Denteh was lynched to death for being accused of witchcraft. This was against the backdrop of a traditional priestess accusing her of being a witch. In a video that circulated online on various social media platforms, one could identify a young woman and an elderly woman molesting and beating the ninety-year-old woman in the glare of the public. This act is usually referred to as mob justice in Ghana. This is an act whereby a mob, most often numbering several dozens or hundreds, takes the law into their own hands to cause harm and kill a person who has done or is accused of doing a wrong act. In this act, the issue of the victims' status is most often secondary, since the mob acts as a prosecutor, judge, jury, and executioner. Thus, employing a feminist public theological perspective, this study interrogates the traditional institution of witch camps and the accusation of women being witches in northern Ghana. This study would use the lynching of a ninety-year-old woman as a case study. This study notes that the church is comfortable with the notion of witches' camps, which they argue is a haven for these accused women, rather than fighting against the evils of these cultural practices. This paper argues that the church must engage the public as

a prophetic voice of action to bring to an end this gender-based injustice, which does not promote life.

Introduction

This paper seeks to investigate the indigenous institution of witchcraft and its accusation in the northern part of Ghana. This paper argues that the church in the northern part of Ghana has a prophetic responsibility to speak against any form of oppression and injustice against women who are accused of being witches in the northern part of Ghana. The northern part of Ghana consists of four regions, namely, North East, Savannah, Upper West, and Upper East. The accusation, beating and killing of witches in these parts of Ghana and the entire country has become a menace to the government; thus, in 2023, the parliament of the Republic of Ghana passed the Criminal Offences (Amendment) (No.2) Bill, 2023, to prohibit people who identify themselves as witch doctors or finders from 'declaring, accusing, naming or labelling another person as a witch; and for related matters' (Criminal Offences (Amendment) (No.2) Bill, 2023:2). This act is awaiting the assent of the president for it to become a law. The Member of Parliament who spearheaded the bill, Hon. Francis Xavier Sosu, has claimed that the delay in assenting to the bill by the presidency is deliberate due to the politicisation of the issues (Dzodzegbe 2023). The presidency on the other hand has refuted these claims, arguing that they recently received the bill and had to take into consideration some constitutional issues before assenting to the bill (Okine 2023).

The Criminal Offences (Amendment) (No.2) Bill, 2023, presents one with the task of attempting to understand the keyword under contention, which is the concept of witchcraft. The term *witchcraft* comes with some challenges because the term is an English word that is used to depict an African belief and practice (Igwe 2016). The word or term in various African languages will have a different meaning which can be negative or positive. For instance, among the Akans of Ghana, of which I am a part, the Akan word for witchcraft is *bayie*. The literal translation of the word means 'come well' or 'you have come well'. One may ask, if this is the literal meaning ascribed to the word, why are people who practise it seen as evil? In attempting to find an answer to this question, one will then have to resort to various linguistic meanings of the term, especially from the English language, which is one of the most popular

languages on the continent. It has been argued that the term among Europeans stood for the belief and practice of

> harmful, black, or maleficent magic, the performance of harmful deeds utilizing some sort of extraordinary, mysterious, occult, preternatural or supernatural means. (Levack 1987:4)

The meaning ascribed to the word by Europeans was further spread on the African continent by missionaries, scholars, and colonial officers, who came to the African continent and used this notion to frame religious and occult phenomena. Thus, the term was used to describe beliefs and practices related to African spiritual power, charm, occult, magic, and voodoo. This expression conflates the concept of witchcraft with 'indigenous' religious practices that are not related to witchcraft, such as manhood initiation ceremonies and marriage. Thus, the accusations of witchcraft, in such a context, present synonymous allegations with those of voodoo or traditional religious practice. This is because there is no distinction made between witchcraft as a key religious belief and witchcraft as a definer of the African indigenous religion (Igwe 2016).

In understanding the reason behind the accusations and punishments meted out to people who claimed to be witches, one should first understand the different types of witchcraft. There are three main categories of witchcraft, namely remediable, irremediable, and anticipatory. Remediable witchcraft is a type of witchcraft where the healing, cure, or repair of the victim who was harmed is possible. Thus, by the use of the tool of accusation, the accused is compelled to remedy the misfortune. Irremediable witchcraft is a form of witchcraft whereby there is no option for cure or repair; thus accusation is utilised as a tool to identify and sanction the causal agent. Finally, anticipatory witchcraft is a type of witchcraft that is expected to happen in the future. Thus, this form of witchcraft could be a potentially remediable or irremediable misfortune. In this process, the accusation is made to thwart the evil plan, scheme, or intent of the witch (Igwe 2016).

In the context of Ghana, Brempong (1996:42) postulates that, in most Ghanaian societies, belief in witchcraft is one of the elements that is prevalent. The belief he noted is not limited to only the rural areas, as also the urban

areas hold on to this belief despite their level of education. Those who are usually accused of witchcraft are the disadvantaged in society, that is the women, children, the poor, and deprived people (Kohnert 1996). According to Brempong, witchcraft goes beyond a cultural thread; 'it is the warp reinforcing the spiritual fabric of Ghanaian societies' (1996:42). Despite Westernisation in Ghana, to Christians and Muslims, this belief is not an alien religious experience. This is because, as argued by van Wyk (2004), the belief in witchcraft is deeply rooted in the religious phenomenon, such that the development of a culture of human rights and the improvement of the judicial process cannot solve this problem alone. Van Wyk further noted that Christian theology has a role to play in solving this problem. He suggested that a theology that liberates people from fear and murder should be constructed. This, he argues, can help people deal differently with this phenomenon of witchcraft.

The way persons who are accused of witchcraft are treated has been an issue of both local and global interest. This has prompted scholars to point out the dreadful way that accused persons are dealt with by their accusers (Igwe 2016). In a report for the United Nations, Cimpric stated that children who were accused of witchcraft were subjected to psychological and physical violence by their relatives, friends, church pastors, and traditional healers (2010:5). The report also noted that their parents could kill them. Similarly, Schauber (2007:116) argued that accusations of witchcraft 'lead to the banishment, torturing, lynching and even killing of the accused persons'. Magesa (1997:188-189) in like manner argued that 'Lamba of Zambia spear the witch to death' while the 'Akamba of Kenya executes proven witches by arrows' and in other places they 'kill witches by beating or strangling them to death, or by burning them alive'.

Similarly, in Ghana, though this has also been the case, most witches rather than being killed are sent to places known as witches' camps where they find shelter from their angry relatives who would have preferred killing them (Riedel 2020). Despite the existence of these camps, in 2020 an old woman by the name of Akua Denteh, aged ninety, was lynched to death for being accused of witchcraft. A traditional priestess accused this old woman of being a witch. A young woman and an elderly woman were seen in a video directly molesting and beating her, with a crowd standing by and watching. In Ghana, this act is

sometimes referred to as mob justice. This is an act whereby a mob, most often numbering several dozens or hundreds, take the law into their own hands to cause harm and kill a person for real or alleged wrongdoing. In this act, the issue of the victim's status is often secondary, since the mob acts as prosecutor, judge, jury, and executioner. This act is being practised all over the world (Ng'walali and Kitinya 2006). Thus, the ninety-year-old woman who was accused of witchcraft fell victim to this mob justice and in the process lost her life. This rekindled the earlier agitation against people perceived as witches and how they were treated. In such a context in which human life is not respected in cases of witches, what should the response of the church be in that community or jurisdiction? Thus, this paper argues that the church should be the voice of the voiceless and less privileged in society who are silenced by the evils of society. This paper will utilise feminist public theology as its main framing in stating its arguments.

Though this paper seeks to address the issue of witchcraft from the perspective of gender, one should not forget that the church has played an important role in the conceptualisation of this problem. The early church, through Exodus 22:17 and Deuteronomy 18:10, proclaimed the death penalty for such transgressions and saw it as their duty to uproot witchcraft (van Wyk 2004). Maimela (1985:63) states that witchcraft is categorised among Harry Sawyer's four types of sin that call for salvation. Asamoah-Gyadu (2015:23) on the other hand, commenting on the Lord's Prayer, noted that, when the African Christian recites the Lord's Prayer, the portion that reads 'Deliver us from evil' includes the activities of witchcraft. He further noted that the reason why the African Independent Churches made an impact in Africa was because of its pastoral response to the issue of witchcraft, which is embedded in the African cosmic worldview but that Western mission churches ignored. Thus, in most Pentecostal and Neo-Prophetic churches, most of their time is dedicated to fighting against witches and demons, which they most often call spiritual warfare. As one who also comes from the Pentecostal tradition, in Ghana, most misfortunes are associated with witches whom the churches perceive as the conduit for such activities. In most Neo-Prophetic churches, we find most of these prophets accusing the parents of their congregants as witches or wizards. However, it is rare for one to see the accusation of men; most of these people accused of witchcraft are women or girls, which points to the issue of

gender discrimination in this act (Asamoah-Gyadu 2015). Drucker-Brown (1993:531), commenting on such forms of accusations in Mamprusi noted that,

> Mamprusi women are accused of witchcraft not only because their aggressive feelings are denied legitimacy but also because they have no public role in the politico-jural domain.

She further asserted that these witchcraft accusations were reactions by men to their loss of control in the local economy and the change in gender power. She postulated that such attributions of evil magic constituted a response to the increasing autonomy of women in the sexual division of labour, in an attempt by men to assert control over them. Drucker-Brown (1993:531) further opined:

> Mamprusi has always regarded women as potentially subversive [...] the fear of witchcraft has grown as men's dependence on women has increased and the increasing autonomy of women threatens both men's control of women and the control by senior women of their juniors. Fear of witchcraft can thus be seen as a measure of the importance of that normally hidden female hierarchy, on which the relations between men and women are precariously based.

This assertion thus points out gender and power issues when it comes to the accusation of witchcraft. This further affirms highly dense patriarchal communities in northern Ghana. This paper will rely on primary and secondary data in this research. The data for this study was gathered from interviews, books, journal articles, and the internet.

Feminist Public Theology

In responding to the problem, a feminist public theology would be an appropriate tool in dealing with this issue. According to Edgar, Babie, and Wilson (2012:vii), 'Christian theology, properly understood, is always *public* theology'. Moltmann (1999:5) presents a detailed explanation of public theology by stating that,

> As the theology of God's kingdom, theology has to be public theology. Its public character is constitutive of theology, for the kingdom of God's sake. Public theology needs institutional liberty over against the church and a place in the open house of scholars and the sciences. Today this liberty has to be defended against both atheists and fundamentalists.

Tracy (1981:3) on the other hand posits that 'all theology is public discourse'. Breitenberg (2010:5) defines public theology to be

> theologically informed descriptive and normative public discourse about public issues, institutions, and interactions, addressed to the church or other religious body as well as the larger public or publics, and argued in ways that can be evaluated and judged by publicly available warrants and criteria.

Stackhouse (2004:275) suggests that public theology presents a dialogue between theology and other fields of thought and carries an indispensable resource for forming, ethically ordering, and morally guiding the institutions of religion and civil society as well as the vocations of the persons in these various spheres of life. Tai (2012:3) noted that public theology is a discourse that has three main divisions: firstly, it is theologically informed, secondly, it is about the public, and thirdly it uses public reason. He further noted that justice as understood in the scriptures as an overarching concept and principle provides justification and guidance for public theology.

Stackhouse (1997:165) further noted that public theology presents insight into

> the way things are and ought to be, one decisive for public discourse and necessary to the guidance of individual souls, societies, and, indeed, the community of nations.

For Chung (2016:1), public theology

> is a theological-philosophical endeavour to provide a broader frame of reference to facilitate the responsibility of the church and theological ethics for social, political, economic, and cultural issues. It investigates public issues, developing conceptual

> clarity and providing social-ethical guidance of religious conviction and response to them.

Peters (2018:155) contends that

> public theology is conceived in the church, reflected on critically in the academy, and meshed within the wider culture for the benefit of the wider culture.

One may inquire about the meaning and scope of the public at this point. Thomas (1992:458) cites the definition of Jürgen Habermas concerning the public as

> A realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed [...] A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body.

Habermas has presented us with what the public thus consists of and what it does not consist of. Brazilian theologian Júlio Zabatiero now presents us with a detailed definition of public theology that brings to bear the prophetic role of the church in the execution of its role in the public sphere. He puts it this way:

> My provocative thesis is that theology cannot, in contemporary society, have the luxury of the privatized isolation of individual religiosity, or the ineffective security of denominational confessionality. Theology has to be public to be theology. Theology, when in fact it is theology and not merely doctrine, has a public dimension that cannot be denied or hidden; it cannot be restricted to sanctuaries, nor the new 'holy of holies' of the temples and their priesthoods. The privileged place of theology today is the public square; the place of the struggle for justice; the place of struggle for the humanity of human beings; the place of struggle for the ecological citizenship of all beings living on planet earth; the place of struggle for the freedom to be, as a counterpoint to the pseudo-freedom to have and to consume more and more. (Zabatiero 2002:56)

Kim (2011:3) presents three main tasks of the church in contemporary times. He suggests that, since the church finds itself in the context of postmodern and pluralist societies, for reasons of justice, the church should be in opposition against any monopoly on power, be it political, economic, social, or religious, and apply its weight to the creation of a public sphere with open access and public debate. Next, he posits that the church should be actively engaged in the public sphere; thus the church must develop a public theology to enable it to play this role in the wider society. Finally, the task of public theology should be the result of engaging in a hermeneutical circle of theory and practice that involves the Christian community as a whole (theologians, church leaders, and ordinary congregations) interacting with other religious communities and wider society. The task proposed by Kim, along with Day (Kim and Day 2017:10), identifies seven marks for public theology. They are as follows: public theology should be incarnational (address concrete rather than abstract matters), fluid (escape the limitation imposed on it by churches and academic institutions and mesh with specific publics), interdisciplinary, dialogical, non-authoritarian (conceive authority as a social construction, mediated through social processes), global, and engaged in praxis rather than mere reflection. While public theology has the above arguments, Isherwood and McEwan (1993:15) argue that feminist theology argues for placing religion and religious doctrines in a discourse 'about change and transformation', the 're-think' or 'metanoia of which the Gospels speak'. They further noted that the word *feminism* in feminist theology denotes a broad context of social analysis reflecting on societal inequalities and flawed structures, rather than asking for equal access for women in an unequal society or replacing male power with female. The core beliefs of feminism are mutuality, relationality, and wholeness; this feminism tries to counter patriarchy, which is seen as a dualistic system inevitably resulting in hierarchy and the oppression that all too often accompanies stratified systems. Similarly, Grey (2007:105) observed that feminist theology is 'a family of contextual theologies', which focuses on the struggle for women and the transformation of society. She further noted that this form of theology is liberative in nature and aims at reconstructing theology and religion in the service of a transforming process, within the specificity of the many contexts in which women live. Ruether (1983:18-19) sums up the definition of feminist theology in this manner:

> The critical principle of feminist theology is the promotion of the full humanity of women. Whatever denies, diminishes, or distorts the full humanity of women is, therefore appraised as not redemptive. [And it] must be presumed not to reflect the divine or an authentic relation to the divine, or to reflect the authentic nature of things, or a community of redemption. This negative principle also implies the positive principle: what promotes the full humanity of women is holy, it does reflect true relation to the divine, it is the true nature of things, the authentic message of redemption and the message of redemptive community.

From the above definitions of both public theology and feminist theology, a feminist public theology can be described as a form of theology that aims at an equal society for both men and women, devoid of any form of oppression or inhumane treatment based on one's gender, through inclusion of diverse religious and cultural communities in the public space. Thus, feminist public theology in responding to witchcraft accusations, which are gendered, would frown upon these acts, which perpetuate injustice against women. In perpetuating gender injustice, witches' camps have been set up as a haven for accused witches. There have been mixed reactions from both the public and religious divides on these establishments. The next section will attempt to briefly look at the notion of a witches' camp.

The Idea of the Witches Camp

Mutaru (2018:256) posits that, though

> witchcraft belief and practices are omnipresent and mundane in African society, the phenomenon of witches camps is rare in the continent.

He further noted that people who were accused of being witches were executed in the past. Drucker-Brown (1993:548), in her study of the Mamprugu kingdom in Ghana, similarly noted that, due to civilisation, public executions of witches have been replaced with punishment that is more humane. Thus, Mutaru (2018:257) noted that the banishment of witches from

their villages by their community leaders has become the order of the day apart from them being beaten, tortured, and insulted. He further noted that, in the northern part of Ghana, for those accused of witchcraft to save their lives, they should relocate to any of the six witch camps located there.

He further argued that, though these places are seen as providing sanctuary and safety for those accused of witchcraft, others perceive these places as 'prisons' where the accused's rights are curtailed and they are being exploited. Irrespective of this assumption, others also perceive these places as playing both roles (Mutaru 2018:259). Crampton (2013:99) concurs with this argument by stating

> to which the accused may flee for protection where they are also effectively imprisoned if their family or community refuses to let them return.

The number of witches camps currently in Ghana are all located in the northern part. There are six in number, with three camps located in the Gushegu district, in Gushegu, Nabuli, and Kpatinga. The famous Gambaga witch camp on the other hand is in the East Mamprusi district, whereas Gnani and Kukuo camps are found in the Yendi and Nanumba South districts respectively. Some of these camps are over a hundred years old. The total population of the inhabitants of all these six camps is around a little below one thousand. Admission to these camps is done daily, weekly, or monthly while the reintegration of these accused witches into their families and societies follows similar patterns. Reintegration is only done when the conditions are safe for them (Mutaru 2018:259).

Human rights reports, media, and non-governmental institution (NGO) reports seek to portray the conditions in these camps as denigrating the dignity of their occupants. These institutions, seeking to attract public attention, often portray a gloomy picture of life in the camp and liken it to 'prisons' where accused persons are 'incarcerated' and made to live in conditions that are not in congruence with human dignity (Mutaru 2018:259). An NGO called ActionAid (2012) mentioned that,

> The witch camps are effectively women's prisons where inmates have been given no trial, have no right of appeal but have received a life sentence.

On the contrary, the indigenes as well as the accused women have a contrary view. Both the community and the accused do not see these camps as prisons or places of exploitation and human rights abuse. To the people, these camps are there to provide shelter and protection to any accused witch who flees her village for fear of being killed or harmed.

Mutaru further noted that the accused witches who inhabit the camps are not restricted in terms of their movement. He argued that these persons could visit the homes of ordinary community members to work and converse with them. This, he argued, is done daily by the host community, which could buy from and even sell to them. Inhabitants also have access to hospitals, funerals, festivals, and activities organised within and beyond the host communities. Likewise, community members have access to the camp. There is no supervision whatsoever on their movement and the custodians of the camp have a friendly relationship with them (Mutaru 2018:264). The custodians are forbidden by the earth shrine to show any form of antagonistic attitude towards the accused persons and a violation of such law would see sanctions from the ancestral world (Mutaru 2018:264-265). Mutaru (2018:265), from a different point of view, states that it would be dishonest on his side to deny the fact that there is suffering in the camp, specifically in livelihood. Though some of the accused saw these camps as safe havens, others also pointed out the challenges they face when basic subsistence becomes a challenge, thus leading them to suffer. One of the inhabitants of the camp puts it this way:

> I see the camp as both a place of protection and suffering. It is a place of protection because stranded, banished women like me have sought asylum in this place and we are protected from any harm from our village kinsmen. It is also a place of suffering because we endure economic hardships. We arrived here with nothing. So, it has not been easy to cope with livelihood. Life is hard here. (Mutaru 2018:265)

It must be noted that when one is cast out of his or her community, psychologically, it comes with some form of rejection and restriction since these persons are banished from their communities. Even though they are received well by the host communities amidst challenges, their rights are also curtailed since their freedom of movement is trampled upon. This is because they cannot move freely to the particular communities from which they were banished. But the perspective from which Mutaru is arguing uses the terminology of rights to place how one feels in one's place of origin on the same level as how one feels in a foreign land. What he fails to note is that some of the women who are accused are people who have toiled their entire lives and have made properties which help them have a decent living condition in their communities. Banishing them means they have to start life all over again; though they have all the freedom they might need in these communities, the strength to make it in life again might not be there because of age issues. Though Mutaru is refuting the argument that sees these places as 'prisons' according to human rights and NGOs, he must also recognise the psychological problem that this banishment comes with. One can have all the freedom one requires in a foreign land, but the warmth and psychological implication that are felt by one being on one's land and among one's people cannot be compared to that which one enjoys in a foreign land. Having presented briefly the idea of witches' camps in northern Ghana, I will attempt in the next section to delve into the issues of witchcraft.

Witchcraft in the Northern Part of Ghana

This section will utilise the method of purposive sampling to sample the concept of witchcraft from the northern part of Ghana, since the northern part of Ghana consists of different tribes and ethnic groups who have different concepts of witchcraft; thus, this paper cannot capture every aspect of it. Igwe (2016:17) asserted that the Dagbani term for witchcraft is *Sotali*, which denotes destruction using *tim*, which is 'medicine'. He further noted that usage of the terms *Sonya* (a female 'witch') and *Bukpaha* (a wizard/male witch) are negative and destructive terms. He argued that the terms *witchcraft* and *sorcery* have been used in explaining this magical phenomenon that exists among the Dagombas (Dagomba is the tribe whereas Dagbani is the language). Evans-Pritchard (1976:18-19) discusses witchcraft and sorcery among the Dagombas, whereby he argues that there is no distinction between them. Igwe

noted that among the Dagombas, it is the witch who decides what he or she uses the witchcraft for, be it for material or immaterial ends. Thus, in this context, Igwe noted that accusation is the tool that is used to compel the witch to reveal the means used to perpetrate the occult harm. David Tait (1963:136) observed a sorcery hunt among the Dagombas. He noted that this hunt was executed in Savelugu. Igwe (2016:54) cites Tait as follows,

> the chief invited the sorcery finders, mostly women to the village and they organized a ritual to identify witches. In the process, the sorcery finders separated the accused persons from the non-accused persons and danced and started pointing out the witches by falling in front of them after falling into a trance. The accused persons were made to drink the medicine that kills the sorcerer's medicine and then were allowed to continue their normal lives in the community.

From the above quote, one can observe how gender injustice is systematically entrenched by using women to enforce these systems. Critically analysing the quote, we see a chief who is a man but refuses to accuse women of being witches. Society thus brings a woman to accuse a fellow woman as a witch, which in a clever way vindicates the chief who is a man of any wrongdoing. The women who accuse the other women of being witches do so because society has constructed these notions and ideas in them; thus the accusations have their foundation in socio-cultural issues. It could be observed that the case under study also demonstrates such a trajectory. It is a female priestess who accuses the ninety-year-old of being a witch and it is a woman who stones her to death. In these two cases, one could observe that, apart from women being victims of gender injustice, they also are used as tools for its perpetuation.

It would be unfair on my side to argue that witchcraft does not exist in the African context, but then whether witchcraft is for good or evil has gender issues attached to it. The purpose of these gendered accusations of witchcraft is to perpetuate patriarchy in the northern part of Ghana, which is a male-dominated society. Goody (1970:207) observed how among the Gonjas there is a distinction between male and female witches. Among the Gonjas, male witches are perceived as protectors, while female witches are perceived as those who cause evil with their witchcraft. This form of distinction or

categorisation of witches seeks to cement the argument that these accusations are directed at perpetuating patriarchy and enforcing male dominance in these societies. However, what would inform these accusations? As argued earlier in the introductory part of this paper, Drucker-Brown (1993) posits that this is because men in these societies have lost control over the local economy. Not only that but there have also been some changes made in gender power. She also noted as argued above that there has been a sexual division of labour in an attempt by men to control women. Thus, when these women are accused of being witches, their hand-toiled properties are transferred to the men, thus granting men a monopoly over the local economy and granting them power in these societies. These women, as stated above, are sent to witches' camps where they have to start life all over again.

Similarly, Badoe (2005:42) noted based on her study of accused persons at the witches' camp in Gambaga that women who resisted coming under the control of men were mostly the target of witchcraft accusations and banishment. She further noted that women who were financially sound or barren and lacked the support of their families were often branded as witches. Badoe (2005:43) supports this assertion with a case study of a woman named Asara Azindow, who was a successful businessperson and accused of witchcraft alongside two other flourishing women entrepreneurs during the outbreak of meningitis in northern Ghana which occurred in 1977. She noted that all these women headed their households in the market town of Gushiegu. These women were forced to leave their communities and seek refuge in the witches' camps for fear of their lives. These accusations thus bring to bear the relations between gender and power. It seems there is a contrast between the reasons for accusation of witchcraft in southern and northern Ghana, though victims are women in both. In southern Ghana, old women who live in poverty are mostly accused of witchcraft, whereas in northern Ghana successful women are those who are usually accused of being witches. Badoe again posits that women who opposed and transgressed the gender regimes in the patrilineal, polygynous, patrilocal societies were those often accused of witchcraft. This is because women in these communities are seen as objects who are to submit to male authority. Also, the potency of women's sexuality is often controlled and contained by men, be it their fathers, husbands, uncles, etc. Any breakdown in this gender regime between men and women or disruption of the hierarchy between co-wives can also lead to witchcraft accusations and the expulsion of

the transgressive women from their societies, thus upholding the patriarchal order (Badoe 2005:49-50). With this relationality between gender, power, dominance, and patriarchy, what then could be the response of the church to these issues?

The Response of the Religious Community

Before I delve into the response of the religious communities concerning the issues of witchcraft in the northern part of Ghana, let us first look at the religious demography of the northern part of Ghana. According to the US Department of State report (Bureau of Democracy 2009), the majority of the people who reside in the northern part of Ghana are Muslims, while Christians reside in the southern part of Ghana. Thus, most of the people living in the northern part of Ghana are Muslims. As much as this paper would like to investigate how both Muslim and Christian leaderships have responded to this issue, it seems there is little or no work available on the issue of witchcraft in northern Ghana. This is because in northern Ghana there is little dichotomy between the indigenous culture and Islamic culture. Thus, the Islamic response to the issue of witchcraft accusations would be what has been discussed in this paper thus far. Similarly, the Christian response to witchcraft accusations is not so much different from that of the indigenous response. Christians, as in the indigenous paper, seek not to abolish these witch camps. They also perceive these spaces as a haven for those accused of witchcraft. A male Presbyterian minister in Gambaga who had been working in these camps for the past ten years when interviewed by Mutaru (2018:267) stated:

> The camp is a haven for accused women being persecuted. It is the journalists and the media people who portray the camp as a place of suffering. The Gambarana does not force people to come there and he does not force accused people to stay. They come on their own for protection. After which you can go home if you like. Those whose communities are not ready to accept them back are living there. Nobody regulates the economic activities of the women in the camp. They can do what is naturally possible for them to make a living. They can do any work provided it is legally and socially acceptable in society. They are free to go anywhere. They trade in the Gambaga and

> Nalerigu markets. There is no restriction on their freedom except that they must inform the custodian or the church if they are travelling outside Gambaga. This is important because if anyone or any family member comes to ask about her, we should be able to tell her whereabouts. Apart from this, the women are as free as any other person in the village.

This particular quote thus presents an overview of how the church perceives this space. The church, like Mutaru, holds the same view about the camps not being prisons but a place of refuge. The Presbyterian Church in particular has been working with Gambaga witches' camps. Through an interview, Rev. Jacob K. Wandusim, the head pastor of Prince of Peace Congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG), Gambaga, and Mr Charles Adongo, the caretaker of the church, also noted the challenges which these inmates face and assisted them. They both asserted that more than ninety percent of the inhabitants of the camp are members of the church (Bekoe 2016:91). Bekoe (2016:91) noted that they play three main roles in seeing to the wellbeing of the inmates of the camp. These are physical well-being, social well-being, and spiritual well-being. Under physical well-being, the church he argued focuses on the physical growth and development of these old women with the provision of food, shelter, and cloth. The church also helps with health issues and sometimes pays the fees of the grandchildren of these inmates.

Furthermore, the social well-being of the church involves helping the inhabitants of the camp to relate with others outside the camp, since it has been difficult for them to do that. Thus, the church serves as an agent of reconciliation. While spiritual well-being involves teaching them the word of God for their spiritual nourishment, the sermons are deliberately contextualised in order to deal with their specific problems and issues and to bring about both emotional and psychological healing. The church also has the 'GO-HOME' project, which seeks to reintegrate these persons accused of witchcraft into their various communities. The church noted that this has also come with its challenges (Bekoe 2016:92-93).

In addition, the Bishop of Yendi (Catholic Church, which is the largest Christian denomination in the northern part of Ghana), being aware of the closure of the Banysi camp, spoke against it and asked that there should be actions

against the closure of such camps in the future (Riedel 2020). His main argument was similar to that of the PCG ministers and that of Mutaru, who argues that these places are safe havens for these women and that some prefer not to go back home because of the dangers involved. These statements from the churches in the northern part of Ghana shows that their main response, apart from tackling the issues of the 'wellbeing' of the people, is feeling comfortable with the witches' camps. It is quite interesting to note that the main churches that have been actively involved in these cases have been the Presbyterian and Catholic churches. What then should be the role of the church in Ghana in response to this inhumane treatment of women? The lynching of the ninety-year-old Akua Denteh raised various arguments about how the church ought to respond to issues of this nature. With wide condemnation coming from the government and NGOs, some members of the church still reiterated the importance of the witches' camps, which to them could serve as an abode of protection for these women. As observed from the interviews conducted and how the church is responding to the issue of witchcraft accusations, there are some key elements worth noting. First, most of the people who were interviewed were male. Secondly, most of them come from northern Ghana. Thirdly, the initial solution to this problem by the traditional authorities was the establishment of the witch camp. As argued in this paper, the idea of witchcraft accusation perpetuates gender injustice and these accusations entrench patriarchy. This is because these accusations have their backing from the sociocultural environment in which these women find themselves. The men who were thus interviewed seem to be reluctant to address these issues since they are not victims themselves, consciously or unconsciously seeking to guard the system more diplomatically. In light of this, how can the church respond to witchcraft accusations and violence in northern Ghana?

Towards a Ghanaian Feminist Public Theology

In the introductory section of this paper, the paper presented a definition for feminist public theology, which aims at an equal society for both men and women, devoid of any form of oppression or inhumane treatment based on one's gender through inclusive of diverse religious and cultural communities in the public space. Kehler (2001) postulates that most cultural and social norms perceive women as less valuable members of society. These perceptions are

prevalent and are reflected in the attitudes and behaviours that women experience daily. Thus, Amoah (2010) and Oduyoye (2001) call for the abolition of some socio-religio-cultural practices that oppress women in these societies. One of these practices, which ought to be abolished, is the accusation of women as witches. In an attempt to address some of these issues of oppression and suppression within the Ghanaian context, Ghanaian women, like their counterparts among other African women, have begun the articulation of the need for liberation from sexist oppression, which occurs in not only the church but also the social, political, and economic spheres. Thus, most of these scholars take their point of departure as the acceptance of the equal human worth of all in a just society. Thus, according to Phiri (2004:16), African women's theologies involve

> a critical, academic study of the causes of women's oppression: particularly a struggle against societal, cultural and religious patriarchy. They are committed to the eradication of all forms of oppression against women through a critique of the social and religious dimensions in both African culture and Christianity. African women's theologies take women's experiences as their starting point, focusing on the oppressive areas of life caused by injustices such as patriarchy, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, capitalism, globalisation and sexism.

The above definition by Phiri seeks to suggest that the purpose of African women's theology is the eradication of all forms of oppression against women. This quote further presents a sharp contrast to the church leaders, who do not seek to eradicate all forms of oppression when it comes to women accused of witchcraft and the institution of camps. Phiri's focus is both social and religious; thus, this form of theology cuts across every sphere of life whereby women are oppressed by their gender. As argued earlier, some men prefer to resort to the accommodative approach when it comes to the oppression of women, because often they are the beneficiaries of such systems. Thus, African women theologians take it upon themselves to discuss these issues. Kanyoro (2001:37-38) presents them in this manner:

> Women in Africa are the custodians of cultural practices. For generations, African women have guarded cultural prescriptions

> strictly governed by the fear of breaking taboos. Many aspects which diminish women continue to be practised to various degrees, often making women objects of cultural preservation. Harmful traditional practices are passed on as 'cultural values' and therefore are not to be discussed, challenged or changed. In the guise of culture, harmful practices and traditions are perpetuated. Practices such as female genital mutilation, early betrothals and marriages, and stigmatization of single women and widows, [and also polygamy and domestic violence,] are not liberating to women.

Kanyoro rightly captures the condition in northern Ghana concerning witchcraft accusations. As argued above, the chief in the community invites a woman to confirm that another woman is a witch, thereby making women the custodians of these cultural practices. Most women also prefer not to challenge the patriarchal system, for fear of being accused of witchcraft. Those who have done so have also been accused and lost everything, with some even losing their lives. Oduyoye thus observed that, for many years now, women knew that they were being oppressed by men but thought it wise not to raise their voices in opposition. She notes,

> Over time, African women had to learn to know their oppressors but had held their peace, because 'when your hand is in someone's mouth, you do not hit that person on the head'. (Oduyoye 1995:5)

The trajectory has changed in recent times with a lot of education and consciousness; thus, women across the continent continually raise their voices against such oppression. The lynching of the ninety-year-old further brought this issue to the public domain. This was thus a clarion call to the church and Ghana to be creative in their approach to dealing with these issues. The PCG moderator of the General Assembly, Rt Rev. Prof. J.O.Y. Mante, condemned the act, called for the involvement of the government, non-governmental organisations, and the church to re-evaluate how they are all dealing with witchcraft accusation in northern Ghana, and called for justice for the ninety-year-old woman who was lynched to death.

Conclusion

This paper, employing the feminist public theological approach, has argued that underneath witchcraft accusations in Ghana is the issue of gender injustice and the upholding of patriarchal systems in these societies. This paper noted that it is the perpetuating of these systemic and structural sins that has led to the oppression and humiliation of women in these communities. The paper further noted that though the church and traditional authorities have set up camps to prevent the killing of these accused women, the camps serve as a tool to maintain the system rather than deal with the problem. This thus calls for the church to raise and engage in creative actions and solutions to bring this issue to a closure.

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Christian Leaders (Theologians), Governance, and the Moral Dilemma of the 'Rainbow Nation': A Practical Theological Approach

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Abstract

The African National Congress (ANC) has been the governing party of the 'Rainbow Nation' from the first democratic election held on 27 April 1994 to date. During the same period, different Christian leaders (theologians) played diverse roles and expressed their perspectives related to governance and the moral dilemma of the 'Rainbow Nation'. Thus, the article explores distinct roles and perspectives of Christian leaders (theologians) related to governance and the moral dilemma in the 'Rainbow Nation' during the era of the past three presidents of the African National Congress, namely, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, Thabo Mbeki, Jacob Gedleihlekisa Zuma, and the current presIdent of the ANC, Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa. It excludes Kgalema Motlantle as he was not an ANC president but only an interim president of the 'Rainbow Nation'. The article uses a case study method to answer the question: How have theologians and Christian leaders played their roles and expressed their perspectives about of governance and the moral dilemma of the 'Rainbow Nation' in the period under review?

Introduction and Research Approach

The African National Congress (ANC) first secured its position and mandate to govern post-1994 after winning the first and historic democratic elections, held on 27 April 1994. Except in a few instances, Africa's old liberation movement, now turned into a political party, has been ruling at nation, province, and

municipality levels since 1994 to date. Through its collective leadership and culture of providing space for diverse opinions in the organisation (GGGG), the ANC subsequently managed to introduce some political stability, introduced national and municipal democratic elections, and began to address historical imbalances inherited from the long period of colonialism and, lately, apartheid. Each of the four presidents of the ANC championed a different form of governance that was accompanied by some moral dilemma. Such moral dilemmas indicate the clash between perceived ethical and unethical actions and decisions associated with each president's term of office. Nelson Mandela anchored his governance on national reconciliation, Thabo Mbeki on national transformation, Jacob Zuma on the national development plan, and Cyril Ramaphosa's governance is currently anchored on the new dawn captured through the '*Thuma mina*' drive. The article aligns with De Gruchy and De Gruchy (2004:207) that, although some Christian leaders retreated to be involved in church matters, a few have continued to address structural issues in the new dispensation as the ANC slowly assigned the political space to itself and the moral space to the religious sector (West 2018:74). The article is situated in the discipline of practical theology and intends to explore the actions and decisions of the past four ANC and country's presidents regarding matters of governance. It thus uses a case study research approach which Benbasat, Goldstein, and Mead (1987:370) define as examining

> a phenomenon in its natural setting, employing multiple methods of data collection to gather information from one or a few entities (people, groups, or organizations).

The article explores the different post-1994 roles and perspectives of some Christian leaders (theologians) associated and not associated with the four presidents of the ANC (Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, Thabo Mbeki, Jacob Gedleihlekisa Zuma, and Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa). These roles and perspectives relate to matters of the governance of the ruling party on one hand and the identified moral dilemma on the other. Hence the question, how have theologians and Christian leaders played their roles and expressed their perspectives about governance and the moral dilemma of the 'Rainbow Nation' in the period under review?

Moral Dilemma and Governance In South African Governance

Matters of political governance attract different ethical perspectives and discussions. The past four presidents governed in the context of the ANC's collective leadership that seeks to promote unity within contrasting views in the organisation. The implementation of different national policies during the tenure of each of the four presidents attracted criticism from different theologians and Christian leaders who argued that some of the policies did not benefit the poor and oppressed masses, thus creating a moral dilemma for each president's administration as is noticed below. These theologians and Christian leaders spoke from an individual and ecumenical position (Smit 2003; Coertze 2005; Tshawane 2009; Duncan 2019; Magezi 2019).

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela (1994–1999), Governance, and National Reconciliation

Soon after his inauguration as the president of the country on 10 May 1994, Nelson Mandela embarked on a programme of promoting a new nation by establishing a Government of National Unity (GNU), consisting of the African National Congress (ANC), National Party (NP), the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), and other individuals (Gumede 2007:96). Pursuant to nation-building, Mandela appointed F.W. De Klerk of the NP and Thabo Mbeki of the ANC as his deputy presidents and appointed some members from the NP and IFP to serve as ministers and deputy ministers. Demonstrating his commitment to promote national reconciliation, Mandela also reached out and engaged traditional leaders from the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa) established prior to 1994 (Collard 2013:262). His efforts stirred Archbishop Desmond Tutu to christen this new nation the 'Rainbow people of God' (Tutu 1995). Henceforth, the new post-1994 nation is called the 'Rainbow Nation' (see Forster 2016).

Providing a critical response to the governance of Mandela, ecumenical Christian leaders resolved at the 1995 SACC conference that, while the church accepted the legitimacy of the new government, the church should also adopt a position of critical solidarity and speak for the poor in matters of governance

and service delivery, as it supported the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) and other initiatives to address past imbalances (De Gruchy 1995:19; Boesak 2005:166–167). Three years before the 1995 SACC conference, Villa-Vicencio (1992) argued for a shift from liberation theology to a theology of reconstruction to engage the post-liberation context and to speak for the poor and the marginalised in democratic contexts. As such, ecumenical Christian leaders (theologians) viewed critical solidarity as working with the new government to address past wrongs to create a new social order (Pityana and Villa-Vicencio 1995:166). Ten years later, Boesak (2005:161-165) argued for a shift from critical solidarity to constructive engagement as the church must be in solidarity with the poor not the state.

The Moral Dilemma of the 'Rainbow Nation'

Mandela was conscious of his moral standing and authority; hence, he advocated that socio-economic and political reconstruction need to be accompanied by revisiting the moral dilemma of the 'Rainbow Nation'. This advocacy stems from the ANC's Commission on Religious Affairs in 1995, and the 1998 moral summit to address the moral fibre of the 'Rainbow Nation'. Flowing from this summit, Nelson Mandela applied the RDP concept in parliament to advocate that the nation needs to focus on the 'RDP of the Soul' (Mandela 1999). The 'RDP of the Soul' promoted that the religious sector was to concentrate on the moral transformation of the nation while the government will concentrate on the socio-economic and political transformation. In addition, Mandela established an interfaith forum called the National Religious Leaders Forum (NRLF) to hold bi-annual interactions with diverse religious leaders and advance service delivery initiatives in partnership with the government. To this end, he included liberation theology clerics as members of parliament, while others held political leadership roles at the provincial level and in local municipalities (Kumalo 2009:250, 253; see also Maluleke 1997:7). These developments prompted Nolan (1995:152) to argue that the new democratic dispensation needed to take place in a form of self-criticism that focuses on its own people, nation, kings, and institutions. Villa-Vicencio, De Gruchy, and Pityana expressed concern that now Christians and their leaders faced the new dilemma of witnessing in a 'secular state'. Such witnessing was expected from those Christian leaders assigned to important state organs. Fr Mkhatshwa, the then deputy minister of education, who later

served as the executive mayor of Tshwane Metro Municipality, was assigned the responsibility to lead and guide the spiritual transformation that began prior to and continued at the 1998 moral summit. Dr Alan Boesak contested for the ANC's Western Cape premiership (Jeppie 1999:8). Archbishop Desmond Tutu was assigned to lead and guide the work of the Truth Reconciliation Commission (TRC). A few years later, Maluleke (1998:14) insinuated that its use of Christian symbols and language was bewitching.

The above developments demonstrate that Mandela, the first post-1994 president of the ANC and the first democratically elected president of the 'Rainbow Nation' surrounded himself with influential Christian leaders (theologians) who were an intrinsic part of the struggle against apartheid. Maluleke (1997:7) later strongly cautioned that the involvement of some influential Christian leaders in the TRC and other state organs in the post-1994 era were mere political appointees instead of a planned church delegation. To this, Forster (2016) emphasised that Mandela was the messiah of the new era, Tutu the high priest, the TRC its penitentiary ritual acts, and the Constitution and the Bill of Rights sacred texts. In this period, Archbishop Tutu led and guided the TRC by employing a theology based on the *Ubuntu* worldview to emphasise that there is no reconciliation without forgiveness (see Tutu 2009). Nine years later, Maluleke (2020:219) argued that the final step of the TRC is not reconciliation but fixing broken relationships.

The presence of influential ecumenical Christian leaders (theologians) in some key state organs and the 'Madiba magic' did not prevent the emergence of scandals in Mandela's cabinet. First was the scandal of his first health minister Dr Skosazana-Dlamini-Zuma, involving the tender awarded to the renowned producer, musician, and actor Mbongeni Ngema to produce a national HIV and AIDS education show (Gevisser 2009:278). Second and worst were the Pan African Congress's (PAC) member of parliament Patricia De Lille's exposure of the arms deal in parliament (Holden 2008:38–39) and Tony Yengeni's scandal (Holden 2008:71–86). Third were the fraud charges and the jail sentence of Dr Allan Boesak (Boesak 2009:382). During this period key influential ecumenical Christian leaders (theologians) had retreated from public politics while Pentecostal-Charismatic church leaders took over and began critiquing the ruling party's governance and its 'secular state' moral basis (Kumalo 2009:250).

Thabo Mbeki (1999–2008), Governance, and National Transformation

Confronted with the nation-building governance and moral standing of the global icon and his predecessor, Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki, the economist, skilfully followed his pre-determined pathway by steering away from the agenda of national reconciliation Mandela emphasised, to set a new direction for the 'Rainbow Nation'. He based his administration on national socio-economic transformation to focus on addressing the legacy of apartheid. To achieve good governance and management, he went on to implement a cost-management approach through the new policy GEAR (Gumede 2007:72-73,76); Vellem (2013:2) later argued GEAR was anti-working class and pro-capitalist.

Mbeki latter introduced the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA) – intended to boost infrastructure – as policy (Callard 2013:70,168) and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), geared to promote an economically active middle class (Butler 2013:351-352). Cyril Ramaphosa and Molefe Tsele were appointed to serve in the BEE Commission. To achieve the goals he set out in the GEAR and ASGISA frameworks, Mbeki surrounded himself with influential middle-class African individuals (Gumede 2007:308) and influential former anti-apartheid Christian leaders. He intentionally brought the three former general secretaries of the SACC closer to him. Frank Chikane was appointed as director general by the presidency; Brigalia Bam was assigned to lead and guide the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC); and Molefe Tsele was appointed as ambassador to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Mbeki also appointed the anti-apartheid former academic and theologian Makhekhesi Stofile premier of Eastern Cape Province. He opted for continuity by allowing the NRLF, established during his period as the deputy president of the ANC and of the country, to function and ensured that the 1998 moral summit (with Mandela's 'RDP of the Soul' in mind) produced tangible outcomes by establishing the Moral Regeneration Movement (MRM). He then tasked his deputy president, Jacob Zuma, to lead the movement. The mission of the MRM is "to initiate, facilitate, and coordinate societal networks and programmes to regenerate and preserve the moral fibre of our nation" (Moral Regeneration Movement).

Mbeki relied on his international foreign relations experience, gained while in exile, to concentrate on addressing continental issues and ended conceptualising the notion of 'Africa Renaissance' which was later incorporated into the New African Program for Africa Development (NEPAD) (Butler 2013:369). While focusing on continental land global issues, three notable developments occurred during his administration. First, sporadic service delivery protests in several townships emerged as community members resolved to voice their dissatisfaction about the performance of several local municipalities. Such incidents led to the formation of 'concerned residents' associations or forums'.

Second, as ecumenical Christian leaders (theologians) associated with the SACC withdrew to focus on church ministry and a few others practised critical solidarity, a new form of evangelical ecumenism emerged. Two influential evangelical leaders, Michael Cassidy of Africa Enterprise (AE) and Moss Ntlha of The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA), initiated the establishment of the two national leadership forums intended to address matters of governance and national transformation. Moss Ntlha is an anti-apartheid activist linked to the former group called Concerned Evangelicals (CE). The *Kairos* document prompted this group to produce a document called the Evangelical Witness of South Africa (EWISA). The two leaders collaborated to organise the South African Christian Leadership Assembly II (SACLA II) held on 7-11 July 2003 at the Pretoria showgrounds. This assembly was followed by the establishment of the National Initiative for Reformation in South Africa (NIRSA).

Third was the establishment of *Kairos* Southern Africa and the South African Christian Leaders Initiative (SACLI), a forum endorsed by TEASA, SACC, AE, and *Kairos* Southern Africa. Through SACLI, several Christian leaders agreed to raise the urgency of addressing national social cohesion and accountable leadership in all spheres of government, the private sector, the church, civil society, and the family. Eventually, the emergence of *Kairos* Southern Africa and SACLI enabled the two national church bodies, SACC and TEASA, to collaborate in some joint Christian national transformation initiatives despite some contention that evangelicals (including PCCs) in the African continent primarily focus on individual morality instead of addressing structural socio-political challenges (Gifford 2009:215). Henceforth, the leaders from SACC and TEASA

collaborated in shaping and influencing the post-Mandela Christian landscape of the 'Rainbow Nation' and contributed to maintaining the pre-1994 anti-apartheid struggle heritage. Ultimately, these leaders from different church traditions were addressing matters affecting the poor on one hand and promoting the interest of the governing party on the other hand.

The Moral Dilemma and the African Renaissance

Mbeki continued with Mandela's legacy of placing influential ecumenical Christian leaders (theologians) in his leadership and instilled the spiritual transformation agenda (the 'RDP of the Soul') Mandela began. He further continued the existence and function of the NRLF and did not interfere with the ongoing task of TRC, promoted the worldview of *Ubuntu* Archbishop Tutu popularised through the TRC, by implementing the 'Batho-Pele-People First' principle across all spheres of government. Embracing *Ubuntu* resulted in Mbeki championing the 'African Renaissance' vision popularised through his 'I am an African' speech to address African socio-economic and political issues in the continent. He later positioned the 'Rainbow Nation' and his government as the strategic partner to achieve his continental dream of revitalising Africa and presenting it as a different continent in the global community. During this period, Mbeki urged the church to be a 'watchdog'. Boesak (2005:161-162) dispelled the notion that the church should be a 'watchdog' and a partner of the ANC as the struggle was over. Later, Vellem (2010:1-6) added his voice by urging Christian theologians to begin to 'read the time' in the post-1994 South Africa.

BEE, Service Delivery Protest, and Unemployment

As shown above, Mbeki promoted Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) to introduce economic transformation. However, Boesak (2005:163) critiqued that the elevation of the elite has added to increasing the gap between the rich and the poor while Manala (2010:521-523) opposed the privatisation initiatives by arguing that they are the bedrock of service delivery protests emerging in the country. The implementation of neoliberal GEAR and later ASGISA brought strict financial controls and budget surplus within the government coupled with the privatisation and downsizing of parastatals, causing many employees from these state entities to lose their jobs, resulting in increasing the rate of unemployment in the country. Vellem (2013:14,17-

18) warns that, despite the creation of a new black middle class by GEAR and ASGISA, the gap between rich and poor has widened in South Africa, making it one of the most unequal societies in the world. As a result, levels of poverty, hunger and unemployment have increased for millions of poor people (Vellem 2020:4).

HIV and AIDS and the Zimbabwe debacle

Obsessed by driving his 'African Renaissance' vision, Mbeki supported dissenting scholars who rejected the HIV and AIDS connection (Gumede 2007:187-215). He advocated that poverty, instead of HIV, causes AIDS, and finally refused to allow for the use of antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) for people living with HIV and AIDS, much to the dismay of Christian leaders. Meanwhile, Maluleke (2001) argued that HIV and AIDS need a new theological approach to minimise their impact on the country and the SADC region. And Boesak (2005:166-167) added that the church should engage issues like HIV and AIDS.

The nationalisation of resources, particularly the land expropriation process in Zimbabwe and Mbeki's subsequent quiet diplomacy, created tensions between him and Christian leaders (theologians) who called for tough action against Robert Mugabe. The tension between Robert Mugabe and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) escalated the already existing tenson between Mbeki and Christian leaders (theologians). This fact was noticed when the Anglican Bishop of KwaZulu-Natal, Rubin Phillip, lodged a high court interdict to stop the arms shipment of the Zimbabwean government being offloaded at the Durban harbour and transported through South Africa to Zimbabwe (Nakhoda 2011).

Jacob Gedleihlekisa Zuma (2009–2018), Governance, and the New Growth Path-National Development Plan (NDP)

Jacob Zuma's mission was to undo his predecessor's efforts grounded on neo-liberal policies by implementing the ANC 2007 Polokwane conference resolutions to address the results of GEAR and ASGISA and to introduce a developmental state. He resolved to (a) decentralise his government by shifting power from the presidency and (b) focus on eliminating poverty and creating equality by 2030 through the New Growth Path (NGP) (Callard 2013:39-41,58). In addition, and contrary to the position of the ANC regarding

PCCs (African National Congress 2007:4), his administration ended the relationship with previous ecumenical Christian leaders (theologians) associated with the SACC and established a new relationship with Pentecostal-Charismatic church leaders some of whom had already ordained him honorary pastor prior to his presidency in 2012 (Makhaye 2007). This shift of association led to the establishment of the National Interfaith Leadership Council (NILC) chaired by Pastor McCauley. Conradie (2013:16) vehemently attacked the formation of NILC and accused it of being a method to marginalise the SACC. Furthermore, criticism from the SACC resulted in the formation of a new forum, the National Interfaith Council of South Africa (NICSA), by merging the NRLF and the NILC. Pastor McCauley was elected the chairperson of NICSA.

The concern that Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches (PCCs) and leaders would erode the gains of ecumenical Christian leaders (theologians) associated with the SACC (De Gruchy and De Gruchy 2004:229) was now real during the administration of Jacob Zuma, who chose to surround himself with the Pentecostal-Charismatic church leaders instead of the ecumenical Christian leaders (theologians) who contributed to the end of apartheid. Jacob Zuma further appointed Mogoeng Mogoeng, an ordained lay Pentecostal-Charismatic pastor, as the chief justice of the Constitutional Court. At that time, Maluleke (2015:36,38) lamented that the executive and the judiciary were now in the hands of the leadership of two Pentecostal-Charismatic leaders (Jacob Zuma and Mogoeng Mogoeng) while Boesak (2014:1060) earlier emphasised that Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity supported capitalism and consumerism.

Zuma also allowed both the MRM with its agenda of moral transformation (the 'RDP of the Soul') to function, and tasked the minister of health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, to escalate the introduction of the National Health Insurance (NHI) (Collard 2013:73). His international relations agenda focused on shifting from relations with developed economies, G20 (Group of Twenty), to joining Brazil, Russia, India, China to form a new economic block, BRICKS (Brazil, Russia, China, India, South Africa) (Collard 2013:102).

Two phases characterised Zuma's governance, the first being his first five-year term and the second being his second five-year term. In the former phase, he was the people's president who was in touch with the grassroots of the ANC

and the poor, helped to conceptualise and finalise the New Growth Path-National Development Plan, and emphatically denounced his predecessor's position on HIV and AIDS and brought different stakeholders to establish the national AIDS Consortium and implemented the administration of the ARVs to people living with HIV and AIDS. In the latter phase, Jacob Zuma was engulfed with severe criticism from all sections of the 'Rainbow Nation' accusing him of maladministration and corruption.

Reflecting on Zuma's administration, Vellem (2013:14,17-18) argued that there was no material difference between Mbeki's GEAR and Zuma's NGP-NDP as both had embraced neo-liberalism and ditched the aspirations of the poor and the working class. West (2018:79) emphasised that, from the time of Nelson Mandela to the presidency of Jacob Zuma, the ANC had already demonstrated that it was not expecting the religious sector to question it on socio-economic issues, but to concentrate on moral issues conceptualised through the 'RDP of the Soul'. Hence, it was not surprising that Zuma did not expect his PCCs and AICs alliance to engage him on structural issues but to provide him with the necessary unwavering support seen throughout his presidency.

The Moral Dilemma and the New Growth Path-National Development Plan

Zuma assumed the presidency of the ANC and the 'Rainbow Nation' with a cloud of hanging ethical dilemmas, namely, the Shabir Shaik trail to accusation, the arms deal collusion, and the rape trial. Urbaniak and Khorommbi (2020:62) described him as an emblem of Christianity's entanglement with both political leadership and governance under the ANC's twenty-five-year rule. This entanglement is noticed in the Nkandla scandal that created a huge hole in Zuma's NGP-NDP agenda. The former public protector (PP) widened the hole as she recommended that he pay back the extra money used for unrelated renovation at his Nkandla home (Madonsela 2016). Later, the chief justice of the Constitutional Court penned a majority judgement that instructed him to pay back the money and lambasted Parliament for not practising proper oversight in the matter. This was after Zuma had approached the Constitutional Court to overrule the PP's recommendation that he pay back the money. Christian leaders from the SACC and TEASA supported the

recommendations of the PP and decision of the Constitutional Court and joined members of the civil society to demand that Zuma pay back the money and also called that the parliament practise proper oversight.

Meanwhile, leaders of some sections of PCCs and AICs, led by bishop Zondi of Natal, openly supported Jacob Zuma during his court proceedings. They also condemned the recommendations of the former PP that Zuma repay the money used in renovating his Nkandla home and argued that the review case and PP recommendations were like persecuting Zuma whom they believed was also battling with dark forces (Van Onselen 2014:14). These leaders then accorded Zuma Christ's experience by using Christian symbols and songs to communicate his battle with dark forces (Cloete and Bürger 2009; Van Wyk 2019:120).

During Jacob Zuma's second term as the president of the ANC and the 'Rainbow Nation', a clear line of distinction existed between the views and actions of the two Christian groups, namely, his allies in the PCCs and AICs and the SACC, Kairos Southern Africa, and TEASA leaders. The latter opposed his governance while the former approved it, on a path of eroding the gains of Christian leaders (theologians) who contributed to the political liberation of the country. The latter Christian leaders wrote two letters asking about the rise of corruption (Ntlha and Arrison 2011; Makgoba, Ntlha, and Arrison 2012). Their letters seem to suggest that they were doing theology in the current context (Tshaka 2014:6). However, Kumalo (2012) argued that the first letter was moderate and lacked the critical tone of the 'Challenge to the Church' and 'The Road to Damascus'. A few years later and speaking from his experiences of being near the governing party during the period of Nelson Mandela, Boesak (2014:1073) correctly observed that

> As things stand, president Zuma is far less likely to seek wisdom from John De Gruchy and Desmond Tutu than he is to ask advice from Ray McCauley and the court prophets of Victory Chapel International.

Still from the point of view of doing theology in the current context, the sacking of Nhlanhla Nene as finance minister in 2015 caused resistance from influential ANC leaders, Christian leaders (theologians), and the public. Following the

incident, allegations were made that the Gupta brothers influenced governance and benefited from their close relationship with Jacob Zuma. Behind these allegations are Mr Sipho Maseko (former director general of the Government Communications and Information Service - GCIS) and Mr Mcebisi Jonas (former Deputy Minister of Finance). Following these allegations, church leaders of the Dominican Order of Southern Africa lodged a formal complaint in 2016 about state capture allegations with the public protector (Public Protector 2016). The latter presented the findings that showed *prima facie* evidence of corruption linked to Jacob Zuma, the Gupta brothers, Duduzane Zuma, and others (Madonsela 2016) and recommended that a judicial inquiry be established to investigate the state capture allegations.

In addition, SACC leadership initiated a process for whistle-blowers to provide information to a panel it established. The panel's findings, which reflect direct collusion and interference in governance, were published in Soweto's Regina Mundi (City Press 2017). In related developments, Frank Chikane and other senior ANC members initiated a group of elders that acted as a pressure group to have Zuma removed as president of the ANC and the 'Rainbow Nation'. Archbishop Thabo Makgoba added to these efforts and used his 2017 Christmas message to call that Zuma be recalled as ANC president and of the 'Rainbow Nation' as he was not fit to govern (Putini 2017).

Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa (2018-), Governance, and *Thuma Mina* (Send Me)

Soon after his election as the ANC president, Ramaphosa began talking about a 'New Dawn'. Maluleke (2018b) described the period before his presidency of the ANC and the 'Rainbow Nation' as ten years of nightmare. During his inaugural address on 16 February 2018, President Cyril Ramaphosa challenged the citizens of the 'Rainbow Nation' to be a part of the 'New Dawn' by concluding his speech with the '*Thuma mina*' (Send Me) song. This 2002-reworked Hugh Masekela version of a church chorus communicates a message to revive and to rebuild the country's institutions and to fight endemic corruption seen during the administration of Jacob Zuma. Contrary to Zuma, who popularly used a combatant revolutionary song, '*uMshini wam*' (My Machine Gun), Ramaphosa opted to use a mindset-changing and a self-reflecting song used in church denominations and associated it with Hugh

Masekela, the anti-apartheid activist artist raised in a Christian family (see Maluleke 2018a).

Maluleke (2018a) succinctly highlighted the religious context of the song, sung in many denominations, and mentioned that Ramaphosa deliberately used Hugh Masekela's version to evoke themes of self-sacrifice, individual responsibility and the importance of personal change in mindsets. Beckmann (2019:2-3) associated the song with Ramaphosa's leadership of a Christian youth movement on one hand while, as Butler (2013:23,26,34,50-54) adds, recapping his involvement in two Christian student activities and leaderships (SCM and BEYO/BECO) on the other.

Ramaphosa's governance attracted three different reflections. First, West (2018:79-82) had earlier argued that Ramaphosa, then deputy president of the ANC and the 'Rainbow Nation', would, as his predecessors, continue with the 'RDP of the Soul' perception that expected the religious sector not to engage in socio-economic issues by pointing to his speeches to PCC and Jewish gatherings as evidence of this continuing trajectory. Ramaphosa, then the ANC and the country's president, later used *Thuma mina*'s religious appeal and ended his first Covid-19 national speech with the following phrase*:* '*Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika*! God Bless Africa!' using several spoken South African languages. Second, Louw (2020:2-3) argues that his governance is cooperative and intended to change the moral bases of the country. Third, Mashau and Kgatle (2020:4-7) argued that the governance of Ramaphosa will succeed if he implements the mindset displayed in *Thuma mina* and its biblical grounding of Isaiah 6:8, 'whom shall I send? And who will go for us? Here I am. Send me!'.

Unlike his predecessor Jacob Zuma, Ramaphosa resolved not to lean towards one section of the religious sector. He opted to use a two-pronged approach to consult all the religious leaders. On one hand he consulted with religious leaders of other faiths; on the other he consulted with religious leaders who were part of the liberation struggle, and those from AICs and PCCs.

The Moral Dilemma and *Thuma Mina* (Send Me)

Ramaphosa's *Thuma mina* is perforated with controversies that arose prior to his presidency, namely, the 16 August 2012 Marikana massacre that occurred

while he was a non-executive director of Lonmin, the Ramaphosa 2017 campaign (CR17) debacle during his campaign to be the president of the ANC, and the Bosasa scandal pointing to his son Andile Ramaphosa awarding contracts because of being the son of the president. As for the Marikana massacre, Archbishop Seoka intervened in the debacle and later testified in a formal judicial inquiry (Nicolson 2012). Five years later, Ramaphosa apologised to the family's dead mine workers and to the 'Rainbow Nation'. His apology for the Marikana massacre did not deter Boesak (2019:111) from arguing that his apology should be accompanied by a healing process. Regarding the CR17 campaign, the current public protector, Busisiwe Mkwebane, established that Ramaphosa received a R500,000.00 donation from Bosasa, was involved in money laundering, and violated his oath of office by misleading Parliament by providing incorrect information about the Bosasa donation. In addition, Nasrec's 2017 ANC meeting 'step aside' resolution sparked internal ANC conflict and subsequent court proceedings as its national leadership was enforcing the resolution against ANC secretary-general Alias Magashule (Thinane 2021:4-5). Recently, the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA) has dismissed Magashule's plea to appeal a judgement of the Johannesburg High Court (Polity 2022). The Constitutional Court also dismissed his appeal against his suspension from the ANC (Mahlati 2022).

Four recent developments created deep anxiety about Ramaphosa's *Thuma mina* drive. First, the first State Capture report released on 4 January 2022 (Zondo Commission 2021) and the second part released on 1 February 2022 (Matlala 2022) recommends possible criminal charges against implicated individuals. Second, a recent leaked ANC meeting audio recording has created a new moral dilemma for Ramaphosa as the Standing Committee of Public Accounts (Scopa) sent him a list of questions to be answered and the Public Protector (PP) is investigating the matter (Kumalo 2022). Third, a panel of experts that led the South Africa Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) public hearings into the Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal July 2021 civil unrest, resolved that the president and the cabinet should be held accountable for failing to contain the civil unrest that damaged property and infrastructure (Mokobo 2020). The most recent development that has raised anxiety and public outcry is the Phala Phala scandal where the former State Security Agency director-general, Arthur Fraser, laid a criminal charge of money laundering defeating the ends of justice and kidnapping against the president at Rosebank police

station, related to a February 2020 burglary, involving $4 million at his Phala Phala game farm (Sadike 2022). The public protector is investigating the matter with the NPA. An independent panel was established to determine whether a Section 89 inquiry should be held against president Ramaphosa (Chetty 2022); the panel found that he might have violated the constitution and his oath (Ensor 2022).

Summary

The article reflected on ANC's governance from its first post-1994 president, Nelson Mandela, who emphasised national reconciliation, to the current president Cyril Ramaphosa, who is emphasising rebuilding through the *Thuma mina* 'Send me' call. Thabo Mbeki focused on national transformation and Jacob Zuma focused on national development. Additionally, several Christian leaders (theologians) who were part of the liberation struggle formed a part of the four leaders' governance while others did not. Different governance and moral issues emerged during the administration of the four presidents. Consequently, those who were not a part critiqued the governance of the four presidents. During the presidency of Thabo Mbeki, some evangelical Christian leaders joined in critiquing his governance, similarly Jacob Zuma's governance. Alongside these developments, some Pentecostal-Charismatic and AIC leaders supported Zuma while others raised criticism. Thus, the article established those various Christian leaders/theologians performed different roles in matters of governance and the moral dilemma of the 'Rainbow Nation' during the presidency of the four ANC leaders and of the country.

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Review

Ngaruiya, David, and Reed, Rodney L. (eds), *The Holy Spirit in African Christianity.* Langham Global Library, Carlisle, 2022. ISBN 9781839736469, xii, 153pp.

Review by Dr Ryan Faber[1]

The Holy Spirit in African Christianity, the seventh publication in Langham's ASET Series, features eight select papers from the Africa Society for Evangelical Theology (ASET)'s annual conference in 2021. Though the volume is pan-African—it includes contributions from West Africa (Ghana and Nigeria), Southern Africa (Botswana), and East Africa (Ethiopia and Kenya)—a disproportionate number of contributions come from Kenya. This may reflect ASET's Kenyan roots and locale. The majority (70%) of the volume's contributors are African. Of the non-African contributors, two co-authored their contributions with African scholars.

The volume seeks to give an account of the Holy Spirit in African Christianity. But, as editor David Ngaruiya notes, neither African Christianity nor its understanding of the Holy Spirit is monolithic. Ngaruiya distinguishes between three main church traditions in Africa: charismatic (and pentecostal) churches, mainstream (historic mission) churches, and indigenous churches (xi). Though contributors represent mainstream churches, the volume says little about understandings of the person and work of the Holy Spirit in those churches. Instead, it focuses on how the Holy Spirit is understood in charismatic and indigenous African churches.

As Kenosi Molato's comparative study of pentecostal and indigenous churches in Botswana reveals, those traditions understand the Holy Spirit differently.

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Yet, in comparison with mainstream churches, both are Holy Spirit churches. Mainstream churches will do well to attend more carefully to the work of the Holy Spirit, because 'a church that does not reflect on the work of the Holy Spirit […] is considered to be dry, dead, and consequently, incompetent in dealing with African problems' (105).

Several contributors echo this call for mainstream churches to attend to pneumatology. In their chapter, Kwaku Boamah and Jacob Kwame Opata compare the pentecostal movement with Montanism. They acknowledge that the ancient church judged Montanism a heresy (18), but fail to interact with that judgment and its implications for the pentecostal movement. Their conclusion that the two movements 'are more similar than different' (25) demands such interaction.

Their essay focuses more on the origin of the movements than on their beliefs and practices. Both were indigenous movements—in his chapter Molato also observes that African pentecostalism developed independent of the Azusa Street revival (113)—and both developed in response to the attitude and practices of the established churches. Boamah and Opata conclude: 'If the church wishes to avoid the rise of such pneumatological movements, the church must always try and keep the activities and roles of the Spirit central' (30).

In their evaluation of deliverance in Ghanaian charismatic movements, Stephanie Lowery and Danson Ottawa Wafula also reach a similar conclusion. Though critical of deliverance practices, they focus on what mainstream churches can learn from the charismatic movement. Lowery and Wafula acknowledge that the charismatic emphasis on 'practical salvation' 'challenges our own theological tendency to emphasis inner spiritual transformation, too often at the expense of neglecting transformation of one's lifestyle' (139). Too often, mainline churches 'focus upon the Spirit as the giver of new life, so much so that his ongoing role in sanctification is minimised or ignored' (139).

Moses Iliya Ogidis argues that mainline churches also minimise or ignore the work of the Spirit in the empowerment of believers—especially youth, women, and persons with disabilities—for ministry. Ogidis offers an inclusive reading of Acts 2 that challenges the practice of mainstream Nigerian churches that do

not ordain women. His attentiveness to the text is commendable. Acts 2, especially the prophecy of Joel that is fulfilled at Pentecost, emphasizes the empowerment of women and youth. The inclusion of people with disabilities, though an appropriate implication of the Spirit's outpouring on *all* flesh, seems like an imposition on the text. The rationale for that emphasis in Ogidis' chapter is unclear.

Esther Mombo and Helen Joziasse argue that 'the exclusion of women from official leadership in the churches and little elaborate pneumatology [go] hand in hand' (93). Their contribution about the experience of women in the African Israel Nineveh Church, an indigenous church, demonstrates how attention to the work of the Holy Spirit empowers women for ministry in indigenous churches in Africa.

Other contributors address deviations from historic Christian orthodoxy in charismatic churches and among Jehovah's Witnesses. John Michael Kiboi addresses the Neo-Pentecostal presentation of the Holy Spirit is as 'an impersonal force and not God' (49). Jeffery S. Krohn answers the Jehovah's Witness claim that because the Holy Spirit, unlike the Father (*Yahweh*) and the Son (Jesus), is not given a personal name in Scripture, the Holy Spirit is not a person. David K. Ngaruiya provides readers with an account of Augustine's articulation of the Holy Spirit as a 'divine, active person' (36). The emphasis in these three chapters is in the personhood of the Holy Spirit. Little is said about the work of the Holy Spirit.

That is the main disappointment with *The Holy Spirit in African Christianity*. While the contributors provide critical accounts of practices related to the Holy Spirit in charismatic and indigenous churches, they say little about how the work of Holy Spirit is understood in mainstream African Christianity. Two recurring themes demand more attention. First, mainstream churches must give great attention to the work of the Holy Spirit. Second, in addressing the work of the Holy Spirit, mainstream churches must consider the empowerment of women for ministry. That seventy percent of the volume's contributors are male may reflect the neglect of women's gifts in mainstream African Christianity. Perhaps a future ASET conference will attend to the development of a mainstream pneumatology that considers these issues.

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