

The Concept of Brotherhood in Traditional Africa as a Panacea of African Ecclesiology, Matching the Teaching of Love in the First Epistle of John

Peter Lee Ochieng Oduor

Dean of Students, Youngsan Bible College

Republic of Kenya, Kiambu County, Karura- Kanyungu.

National Overseer, Harvest Revival Ministries- Kenya

Africa International University, Nairobi, Kenya.

P. O. Box 21647-00505 Nairobi, Kenya

+254722409736

pastorodurlee@gmail.com

Abstract: This study examines the concept of brotherhood integrated in traditional Africa from a therapeutic perspective in the crafting of an African ecclesiology of love in relation to the exegetical concept of brother and sister as presented in 1st John. There was a strong emphasis of the perception of brotherhood cemented by love in traditional African setting that draws high level similarity with the doctrine of love advanced in the Johanne epistles. An emphasis of the brotherhood concept will assist the African church administer healing from the cancer of ethnic hatred, forms of segregations and divisions along the lines of status ailing the African Church. The ideology of brotherhood in traditional Africa facilitated the creation of a society whose signature was hospitality, generosity and genuine concern envisioned in the bond of love inherent among community members that can serve as a mark of Ecclesiality.

Keywords: Brotherhood, Contextual Ecclesiology, Ecclesiality, Ubuntu

1. Introduction

The concept of brotherhood among Africans bore a significance of link and strong relationship that was landmark of the community. It was the sense of relationship that characterized 'associations in the community of both men and/or women brought together by a sense of commonality in both interest and aim' (Gyekye, African Ethics, 2011). So paramount was this relationship to traditional Africa to the extent that it was the true and authentic definition of who an African was. Onuoha (1965, p. 41) affirms that brotherhood was the seal of tribal life in Africa. The fact of the survival of the traditional African society was based on the ability of her members to uphold and implement the basic principle of mutual dependence in the idea of common brotherhood (Asouzu, 2007, p. 357). Gyekye (1996, p. 175) draws a strong correlation that existed between humanity and brotherhood in traditional African cultures as they recognized the dignity and integrity of the human being as a creature of God thus our common brotherhood is intrinsically linked with our common humanity. Martin Luther King Junior's remarks that: "We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together like fools" is a daunting reality.

The theme of brotherhood is also emphatically stressed in the pages of scripture. The Old Testament has a wealth of information to disseminate directly or indirectly the subject of Brotherhood that can only be denied by those unfamiliar to it as is attested by Peake (1923, p.9). (Ratzinger, 2013) Shows how brotherhood was originally based on the fatherhood of God in creation as well as our common descent from Adam and Noah making humanity part of one worldwide *familia Dei*. From the unique genesis of all mankind it follows that all men share equal value and brotherhood (Adler, 2015 p. 34). The main objective of this study is to explore the significance of an emphasis of the brotherhood concept in traditional Africa as a distinguished mark of Ecclesiality for the benefit of an ecclesiological construction in Africa in the pattern of love as captured in 1st John. To realize this objective we shall evaluate the concepts of brotherhood in traditional Africa and contextual ecclesiology, highlight on the biblical perspective of the brotherhood concept, evaluate some of the practical expression of brotherhood from an African perspective in an effort to aid an African ecclesiology of brotherhood and love in the pattern of Johanne epistles. We shall conclude by the submission of our conclusion of the subject.

2. Brotherhood in Traditional Africa and Contextual ecclesiology

The concept of brotherhood in Africa is traditionally referred to as *Ujamaa*, and the term captured the understanding of both family hood and brotherhood drawn from the institutions that the people would easily relate to. The socio-political and economic system they hoped to develop was one that was an extension of the family unit and by effect made all Tanzanians' to become relatives, brothers and sisters with the term *ndugu*, helping to cement relationships as is articulated by Samuel Gyasi Obeng & Beverly Hartford (Editors) (2002, p.37). Ngonyani goes further to state that usage of this term of reference *ndugu*, was strategic with regard to its intention of the expression of solidarity among Tanzanians and those who support Tanzania. The term was gender neutral and was used to address every Tanzanian for example *Ndugu* President, *Ndugu Mwalimu* (teacher), *Ndugu Wanainchi* (people, citizens), *Ndugu Mkurugenzi* (Director) etc. All these were expressions of equality and emphasis on family ties as a nation as captured by Obeng & Hartford (2002).

Brotherhood according to Gyekye (2011) is universal and an outright advocacy of the common membership of one universal human family that constitutes or should constitute a legitimate basis for the idea of universal human unity or brotherhood. This was envisioned in Tanzania in the 70s and 80s when *ndugu* was used extensively for non-Tanzanians and those who supported Tanzania with illustrations ranging from the media referring to *Ndugu* Mao Dze Dong, Leader of China, *Ndugu* Kim Il Sung, President of North Korea, and *Ndugu* Fidel Castro, President of Cuba all who supported the sociopolitical system of Tanzania as stated by Obeng & Hartford (2002). Moving to West Africa, we find this idea depicted for instance, in the Akan maxim: “human being's brother is a (or another) human being.” (Or, ‘Man's brother is man.’), (*Onipanua ne onipa*) stating that humans can only relate to humans and not beasts in line with the thought of Gyekye (2011).

Embedded in the African concept of brotherhood was the appreciation that all persons, race or ethnic backgrounds notwithstanding were brothers. Thus, in as much as the word usage of brother in African cultures was for those persons who share various and complex family relations linked by blood ties, it was also used significantly, by people who never shared any blood ties. The comprehensive meaning captures the intention of elevation of people from the purely determined blood relation level towards a place where the worth of humanity is held as transcending the contingencies of human biology, race, ethnicity, or culture. Ngonyani further observed that there was some uniqueness and similarity in the notion of *ndugu* to that of comrade as was used in communism. This is because as opposed to the concept of comrade the notion of *ndugu* brings in the bearing of blood relations (Samuel Gyasi Obeng & Beverly Hartford (Editors), 2002). This is the pursuit of a unique society demonstrating fidelity to the traditional African ideal that led the Tanzanians to embrace the notion that their nation was an African family that was an extremely coherent imagery consistent with Tanzanians’ desire to chart out her own course of development and her own ideology based on indigenous experience (Samuel Gyasi Obeng & Beverly Hartford (Editors), 2002). (J. Nyerere ed., 1966) Aptly put it that

‘Modern African socialism can draw from its traditional heritage the recognition of society as an extension of the basic family unit. But it can no longer confine the idea of the social family within the limits of the tribe, nor, indeed of the nation’.

Brotherhood in Africa was not theoretic on paper that was a reserve of ideological thought but rather a practice expressed in their gestures. Gyekye (2011) ascertains that a practical translation of the idea of brotherhood leads to such social and moral virtues as hospitality, generosity and genuine concern for others. To accurately understand contextual ecclesiology we need to first deliberate on the understanding of ecclesiology. Pickard (2012, p. 6) observes that given the theological and political roots of *ecclesia* and the deployment of the word in the New Testament, it is possible to identify at least three dimensions to the study of ecclesiology (literally means the word/reasoning concerning the called out ones of God): foundations, dynamics and purpose. This is followed by the elaboration that concerns for foundation are normal in the doctrine of the church; attending to dynamics draws attention to emergence and endurance of the church and associated themes of the movement and energy; in as much as both are significant they need to be allied to the purpose with ecclesiology being basically an inquiry which also attends to the purpose of the church (Pickard, 2012, p.6-7).

Brooke underscores the study of the self-understanding of such groups and how they considered themselves to be a church, or people of God locally as the backbone of ecclesiology (Kent Brower, Andy Johnson 2007, p.1). Contextualization is a critical subject in theological scholarship and has been accorded different descriptions. Byang Kato comments on the same in J. D. Douglas ed.(1975, p. 1216-23 [1217])affirming that it is a new term imported into theology to express a deeper concept than indigenization does as it bears the connotation of making concepts or ideas relevant in a given situation and in reference to Christian practices, it is an effort to express the never changing Word of God in ever changing modes for relevance. Since the gospel message is inspired but the mode of its expression is not, contextualization of the modes of expression is not only right but necessary. Knapp (1976, p. 15) describes contextualization as the dynamic process through which the church continually challenges and/or incorporates—transforms elements of the cultural and social milieu of which it is an integral part in its daily struggle to be obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ in its life and mission in the world.

Contextualization can also be expressed as ‘any action that puts the Gospel into a more understandable, culturally relevant form by including elements from a culture’s customs, language and traditions’ (Racy, 1996, p. 304-309). It is “the practice of declaring or depicting and living out the gospel message in cultural forms and terms drawn predominantly from the frame of reference of those you are communicating with” (Scott, 1997, p.6). Bevans (1985, p. 1) acknowledges that contextual theology is a means of doing theology by taking into consideration: the spirit and message of the Gospel; the tradition of the Christian people; the culture, whether brought about by Western technological process or the grass-roots struggle for equality, justice, and liberation. This practice of contextualizing of theology - is really a theological imperative. As we understand theology today, contextualization is part of the very nature of theology itself as Bevans (1985) accurately elaborates.

Contextualization is greatly significant because the oneness in Christ is in Christ and not in any external change and the unity in Christ produces Christians whose Christianity transcends all their local and racial differences as is accurately captured by Kato in Douglas ed. (1975). Like missions, ecclesiology cannot be conducted in a cultural vacuum but must be incarnational in both theology and methodology. Kato (1975) in agreement points out that the New Testament submitting a pattern of cultural adaptations with the incarnation itself as a form of contextualization that should motivate us towards making the gospel relevant in every situation everywhere as long as the gospel is not compromised. When this practice of contextualization is conducted with regard to the doctrine and practice of the church we call it contextual ecclesiology. We now shift focus to the discussion of what the Bible has to state as concerning the concept of brotherhood.

3. Biblical Perspective of the concept of brotherhood

The bible is forthright in her advancement of the brotherhood agenda all from the Old Testament to the New Testament. This segment is dedicated towards unearthing the brotherhood ideology present in the Old Testament then the New Testament followed by an exposition of the first epistles of John with the perspective of his emphasis on the doctrine of love.

3.1 Brotherhood ideology of the Old Testament

The Old Testament cult emphasized that an individual's brother was one who belonged with him in the unity not of just any people but of the unique chosen people of God meaning that brotherhood did not depend merely on common racial descent but on common election by God as it was a brotherhood not instigated by a common mother but a common Father that is the universal God, Yahweh as analyzed by Ratzinger, (2013, p.3). In agreement Nichols (2007, p.45) states that for the Old Testament, a brother was someone who belonged with you in the unity of the common people of God. The Israelite ideology of brotherhood bore the connotation of a brotherhood springing from a common Father who was not merely the God of Israel but the one and only God thus He was not the Father of Israel alone but of all (Ratzinger, 2013). This position has not failed to generate its fair share of criticism especially with regard to the concept of election of the nation of Israel. Anderson (2011, p.3) acknowledges that the concept of election or chosenness in the Hebrew *Bible* is a subject which has been receiving renewed attention in scholarship with the debate revolving around whether the action was simply as the object of His' affection or for a specific purpose, while rejecting others.

We take note of the threat posed to the concept of brotherhood in the Old Testament by the fronting of the perception of an ideology of particularism and partiality advanced in the Old Testament. Kaiser (1991, p. 290-1) correctly articulates that the best apology for the alleged particularism and partiality in the Old Testament lies in the forthright presentation of the relationship of God to Israel and other Nations in the Old Testament presenting us with two facts: that the God of the Old Testament is the Creator, Lord and Redeemer of the heavens and the earth; and secondly, this God made all peoples in His own image. The concept of particularism and partiality makes the first appearance in the call of Abraham with Genesis 1-11 presenting a concept of universalism in scope and outlook. Kaiser (1991) further analyses that the universalism of Genesis 1-11 not only preceded Abraham's call, but is logically connected with it and accompanies the call because his blessing is for the purpose and the result of being the means by which 'all peoples on earth' (the seventy nations just mentioned in Genesis 10) will be likewise blessed by God. All men are united in Adam and in Noah; yet a special covenant binds the God of all to Abraham and his seed thus Israelites are in a heightened sense, brothers but because of the unity that characterizes both humankind and its Creator, others are in wider sense brothers also (Nichols, 2007, p.45).

3.2 Brotherhood ideology of the New Testament

The subject of brotherhood experiences unprecedented acceleration in the New Testament where emphasis is accorded to the usage of the analogy of family relationships in reference to the church. Brown (2013, p. 84) observes that the subject of the family of God in the New Testament does not fall in the category of a metaphor but is the exact expression of who Christians are. This is because of the fact that from the first chapter to the last the book of Acts refers to Christians as brothers while at the same time all letters in the New Testament addresses Christians as brothers or speaks of Christians as brothers. Brown (2013) further affirms that the term brother, brothers or brotherhood appears 190 times in the epistles. Banks (1994, p.50) undertakes a word study of the

term brethren that is frequent in the epistles and affirms that the Greek word used is *ἀδελφοί* (*adelphoi*) which is by all standards the favorite way Paul enjoyed to refer to his church audiences in his writings. This leads to the analysis by Johnston (1943, p. 75) that the journey of Christian pilgrimage because of love being the motive power and chief glory, thus believers are sons, members of a family, they have brethren. The church according to Paul's thoughts takes a threefold expression of: the Family of God, a brotherhood in Christ, and a Fellowship in which the Holy Spirit is incarnated, a visible result of an unseen divine activity (Johnston, 1943).

The emphasis accorded to the concept of brotherhood for the early church as is envisioned in the writers of the epistles was not anchored on their own thought or ideology but from the teachings and life of Jesus Christ. In Mathew 23:8 Jesus stated that "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers". Joe Kapolyo comments in the Africa Bible Commentary (2006, p. 1186) that Jesus is the one true teacher, the rightful successor to Moses with all his followers being brothers and sisters of equal standing before Him. In these sentiments Jesus introduces us to a new found relationship of his followers characterized by a strong sense of brotherhood far superior to blood relations as it is that of the Spirit. This is similar to the comments from Gill's (2012) exposition of the entire Bible of the phrase "and all ye are brethren"; not merely as the descendants of Adam, but as being in a spiritual relation, the children of God, and disciples of Christ, and so have no superiority one over another: this may regard the disciples, both as believers and Christians, partakers of the same grace, and standing in the same relation to God, Christ, and one another, and having an equal right to the same privileges.

3.3 Christology from a Brotherhood Perspective

The strength of the church is proportionately related to her level of Christological understanding. It is in this regard that African ecclesiology should emphasize the Christological emphasis of Christ fulfilling the ideal model of a perfect brother in traditional Africa to advance the notion of brotherhood as a mark of her Ecclesiality. Stinton (2004, p. 170) while quoting Nasimiyu Wasike asserts that to define African Christology, one has to look at the various names that we give to Christ, to make Him one of us, we look at him mainly as one of our brothers, the first of our brothers. Sawyerr (1968, p. 73-74) advocated strongly for the presentation of Jesus as elder brother in line with Rom. 8:29 that Jesus is referred to as the firstborn among many brethren stating that similar to the tradition of the eldest of the elders being the head of the lineage, so is Christ the head of every family.

Stinton (2004, p. 174-5) analyses three importance of the image of Jesus for African Christians: akin to the image of Jesus as ancestor, this Christological portrait serves as a hermeneutical bridge joining biblical and African concepts allowing for the clear affirmation of key biblical teachings about Christ in a way that truly resonates with many Africans' understanding and experience of brotherhood from their African heritage; the image of Jesus as a brother clearly enhances one's understanding of incarnation facilitating the grasping of the reality and significance of Jesus more deeply and personally; lastly, the expression of Jesus as brother, among other family images, contribute to the comprehensive character of many African Christologies.

3.4 Exposition of John's perspective of love among brethren in 1st John

The greatest identifier of brotherhood that is spiritual resolves around the presence of genuine love among the community of believers. This is because through the Savior came a release from the past and hope for the future; and to faith and hope was added the supreme gift of love and Jesus was the divine love in action, its humility, its pity, its succoring kindness, and its lavish generosity as stipulated by Johnston (1943, p. 73). We now exegetically consider the Johanne message of love as an ingredient to strengthen the concept of brotherhood as a mark of Ecclesiality. In 1st John 2:3-11 John commits himself to the exhortation of believers towards a life of obedience. John Calvin (2012) comments concerning 1st John 2:3, that John reminds us that the knowledge of God derived from the gospel is not ineffectual, but that obedience proceeds from it. Ngewa in the Africa Bible Commentary (2006, p. 1556) concerning verses 5-6 acknowledges that complete love for God is shown by obedience to His word with the command to believers to live as Jesus did reminding John of the sentiments of Jesus dubbed the new commandment in John 15:12 "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you".

It is not a coincident that Apostle John uses the same language of Jesus in emphasizing the essence of brotherly love because not only is it of paramount importance but also of novelty. Morgan (1866, p. 83) observes that all this is necessitated by the relation of man to God and to fellow men where God is the Creator and they were brethren bound to love all the members of God's family. This idea is seconded by Wiersbe (2010, p.121) in his emphatic expression that Christians love one another because they have all been born of God, making them brothers and sisters in Christ. As partakers of the same nature and the same hope, they are under obligation to love one another as is the case with children of the same family on earth. Ngewa (2006, p. 1557) concerning verses 9-11 comments that love becomes the lens through which one looks at all relationships and thus one can enjoy a secure footing as one walks the Christian path because these loving relationships transcends any distinctions based on race , tribe , clan or class.

In Chapter three there is the expression that obedience and love are evidences of son ship and brotherhood because we have been reminded that a true child of God practices righteousness (1st John 3:1-10) with (vv11-24) emphasizing on the matter of love amongst brethren (Wiersbe 2010). In the African context, a repetition of a matter is not mere coincidence but is a matter of emphasis. John reiterates a point he has made (1:9) and will return again (3:11-24) by stressing that anyone who does not love his brother is not a child of God (3:10) as is analyzed by Ngewa (2006, p. 1559). Yarbrough (2008, p. 203) from (1st John 3:16) acknowledges that many cultures have various definitions for love vying for acceptance but for the audience of John, they had one central defining image that is Christ's death for others because Jesus taught that self-sacrifice was the ultimate expression of love. Love has profound theological underpinnings and a sublime exemplar in Christ in that the first test of gospel profession is the practical expression of love towards fellow believers in proximity because with the absence of love, any claim to know and to have God's love is a sham according to Yarbrough (2008).

Ngewa (2006) in summary highlights on three significant points that John unearths concerning love for each other taught in 1st John 3:11-24 that are of significance in the construction of a brotherhood ecclesiology of love, stating that: it derives from Jesus Christ because everyone can show some kind of love, but no one can exercise the love called for here without learning it from Christ because of the fact that it cannot exist outside Christ; Secondly, it is practical in the sense that Jesus' love led him towards His incarnation and in like manner our willingness to share reflects the measure of our love for God either God's kind of love or love for God; lastly, it is genuine because it goes beyond the realm of word and mustn't be formalities or attempts to appear in good light, but must reflect sincere concern for the loved ones. 1st John 4: 7-21 advances the essence of Love among brethren as Knight (2009, p.137) acknowledges that 'God is love' as definitive of the essence of His character and love is the imitative action prescribing the essence of the character of His followers who have no choice but to 'practice being God' everyday of their lives, which is all about being a Christian.

Ngewa (2006, p.1561) concerning 1st John 4:10 -12 makes the observation of God being the definition of love and exemplifying it to us by the call to love one another helping us to contribute to God's love, as it is made complete in us. This is better understood by observing love through the picture of a triangle with God's love for my fellow believers and for me forming two of the arms with our love for each other completing the triangle. Marshall (1978, p. 218) captures the theme of an assurance and Christian love as the basis of 1st John 4: 13-5:4 emphasizing that when we show love it's a sign that we know God and have communion with Him. This love gives us confidence for the future (because as we pattern our lives after God's nature we will have confidence on the day of judgment); and confidence in the present (because when our relationship with God is based on love, we no longer need to fear Him) thus God's love for us, our love for Him and our love for each other all call for living together harmoniously as stated by Ngewa (2006).

4. Practical Expressions of Brotherhood in Traditional Africa

The expression of love from a perspective of brotherhood in an African setting was made manifest in multiple ways. This study focuses on three virtues, evaluating their relation to the concept of brotherhood, integration in African ecclesiology, the biblical foundation of the three virtues and their aid towards African ecclesiology of brotherhood and love.

4.1 Hospitality, Generosity and Genuine Concern in the Concept of Brotherhood

That Africans are by nature hospitable is a matter beyond any dispute judging from our tradition that saw the measure in which people welcomed and received un-announced guests. Westerners have ridiculed the hospitality gesture incumbent on the Africans as 'intellectual weakness, group inferiority, and absence of sound business elites' (ed. Adeoye O. Akinola, 2018, p. 10). Oloruntoba observes that: whereas the rest of the world relates to Africa on the basis of a cold and self-calculating pursuit of national interest with power as the main denominator, Africans on their part are very un-scrutinizing and unsuspecting in welcoming, applauding and patronizing people of other continents as is attested by Akinola (2018). This gesture has been abused by many who have taken this character as a sense of weakness.

Campbell (1922, p. 45) has captured the dimension of hospitality as being one of the most sacred and ancient of customs in the ancient Bantu land and it is found in great measure and almost everywhere. So great was it that a host would have forfeited his best room in the house and even the evening meal for the benefit of a guest and all this would be without the slightest assumption that he was doing anything outside the ordinary. From an African perspective Nyerere (1968, p.5) was able to submit an accurate assessment that the greatest blessing that was realized by the traditional African society was the sense of universal hospitality that was reliable amongst the members.

Gyekye (2011) observes how the testimony of this ethos of hospitality and generosity incumbent on the African people was adverse throughout the world especially from visitors that visited Africa stating the ethos was a true reflection of the perception of our common humanity and universal brotherhood. In his other writings, *Gyekye* (1996, p.58) identifies love as a critical and central value in the African moral fabric that is attested to in dimensions of concern for others and actions that propagate peace, justice, dignity, respect and happiness. *Nkansah-Obrempong* (2013, p. 27-28) in agreement affirms that so important is the value of love that children from a tender age are taught to love others and utilize any opportunity that comes their way to share what they have thus placing love as a value of centrality in the African cultural, social and moral paradigm.

The journey of the first black bishop explains the same in no unequal terms as he takes us back history lane as far as 1841 in the experience of penetration into Niger. This saw the British government and the Church Missionary Society undeterred by the 1841 disaster and saw a brighter prospect of entrance into the region in areas trade, commerce and the extension of the British imperial system for a long time as is captured by *Adeuyan* (2011, p.110) . *Adeuyan* (2011) goes further to elaborate that as the missionaries engaged in trying to change aspects of the people's culture and the government engaging on the modalities to employ in taking over of the administration from the hands of the monarchs and chiefs in all the kingdoms of the West Coast of Africa. They were able to learn that the indigenous as was the case in all Africa had a human behavior that was kind and hospitable particularly to people of other nationalities of the world.

President *Kaunda* (1966, p.32) of Zambia expressed the measures this behavioral pattern had in the lives of the people making them highly prone to enjoy the company of others. The good illustration of this value for him was placed in the enjoyment of people as was integrated in our conversations of how it is the norm for Africans to enter into a deep conversation with strangers who cross our paths at the end of which we know almost everything about the stranger. The gesture of hospitality was deeply rooted in African societies and *Choge* in the African Bible Commentary (2006, p. 390) observes that in African homes meals were never prepared for the exact number of people present in the household because of the possibility of someone who may drop in to share the meal. It went without saying in all our societies that whenever strangers came into the house they were to be offered something, even if it was only a cup of water according to *Choge* (2006).

A feat that within the context is not regarded as impertinence or an invasion of our privacy for one to engage us by asking 'personal' questions, nor are we also in a state of compunction about questioning others in like manner as observed by *Kaunda* (1966). *Kaunda* (1966) further analyzes that ours is a behavior of openness and interest to other people and our curiosity to their affairs is

not anchored on a desire to poke our noses on the affairs of others but an affirmation of our belief that humans are wrapped in the bundle of life thus there is already a bond that exist between the individual and stranger even before they enter any dialogue.

Solomon Andariain the African Bible Commentary (2006, p. 231) in the same breath observes how generosity was a concept that was integrated in the cultural setting of African people. Generosity was not a virtue that demanded for one to be rich to exercise it because the call was to share even the little they had. To this effect there was even a proverb, “in friendship, even a crust of bread is shared.” Gyekye (1996, p.27) correctly defines it as a social and ethical arrangement aimed at finding ways of adequately and realistically responding to the needs and wellbeing of the individual members of the society and defining what sorts of relationships should hold between them as they function in society. Nkansah-Obrempong (2013, p. 184) accurately captures an analysis of the same in his sentiments:

...the Africans’ value of sharing a common social life and their commitment to the social life or common good of the community along with their sense of mutual obligation to care for others, their sense of interdependence on and solidarity with the community provide mechanisms for people to deal with and take care of the poor within their communities. This is made possible through the extended family and clan systems as well as through the generosity of the affluent members in the society who are under moral obligation to help those who are poor within their community.

4.2 Hospitality, Generosity and Genuine Concern in African Ecclesiology

By the understanding of the high level human behavior of hospitality, generocity and genuine concern integrated in African tradition, it is important to underscore the bearing of these virtues to the establishment of ecclesiology in the continent of Africa. Nkansah-Obrempong (2013, p. 28) could not agree further in his elaboration that the social nature of African ethics that prioritizes the architecture of strong social relationships should be accorded high level seriousness with regard to crafting Christian ethical structures.

4.3 Biblical Foundation of Hospitality, Generosity and Genuine Concern

The tradition of the Old Testament celebrated these gestures and there were rewards that were reserved to those who the society perceived to exercise hospitality to strangers and a punishment to those who treated strangers with maltreatment. Choge (2006) has highlighted on positive examples of the practice of hospitality that includes Abraham welcoming the strangers by the Oak of Mamre (Gen. 18:1-5), Lot welcoming the strangers before the destruction of Sodom (Gen. 19), Rebecca (Gen. 24), the daughters of Jethro (Exodus 2:16-20) and Abigail (1st Sam 25). These are among the communicable attributes of God because God, who is rich, watches over the poor and is passionate about her wellbeing and in consequence whoever takes care of the poor is doing it for the Lord as is correctly articulated by Nkansah-Obrempong (2013, p. 184). David Alexander & Pat Alexander-Editors (1992, p. 139) comments that in entertaining the three visitors in Genesis 18, Abraham welcomed a stranger and all unknowingly took the Lord himself into his home. This kind of lavish welcome despite the inconvenience of the visitors’ arrival during the midday siesta is typical of the hospitality among nomadic desert people even today. No wonder the writer of Hebrews while exhorting readers to exercise hospitality in Hebrews 13:2, chooses to cite this incident.

Choge (2006, p. 390) highlights on how the Old Testament is vocal with regard to those who withheld hospitality including the men of Sodom who wanted to assault Lot's guests in Genesis 19, the men of Gibeah in Judges 19, the Ammonites and Moabites who failed to show hospitality to Israel on their way from Egypt in Deuteronomy 23 and Nabal in 1st Samuel 25. Nkansah-Obrempong (2013, p. 186) acknowledges that God would not condone the behavior of the rich mistreating the poor because He blessed them so they would in turn become a blessing to the poor because there was a stern warning to the rich not to exploit the poor by charging interest on their loans (Ex. 22:25, Lev. 25:35-37, Deut. 23:19). Alexander & Alexander Ed. (1992, p. 201) affirms that the mark of the Lord's community was purity and holiness (Deut. 23: 10-14, 17-18) and a sense of practical humanity (Deut. 23: 15-16; 19-20).

Choge's (2006) remarks on Deuteronomy 24:17-18 comes in handy as there is the reflection of many ancient law codes that insisted that the king was to provide justice for defenseless people such as resident aliens, orphans and widows observing that in the Old Testament it was a responsibility incumbent on every member of the society. It was in this effect that the Israelites were brought into remembrance to their history of how they suffered when they were defenseless in Egypt. Because God had shown them mercy, they were to show mercy to others. They were not to reflect the attitude replicated in the Angolan Umbundu proverb *Po lofa via cimbotopmanuvasiya* ('people spit when a frog dies'). The implication thereof that the poor people are so unimportant that even their deaths go unnoticed was never to be the case in Israel. Nkansah-Obrempong (2013) asserts that the Prophets demonstrated a strong sense of harshness to the rich in the nation who oppressed the poor, subjected them to humiliation and a loss of dignity as human beings because God's judgement would fall upon them as a nation and He sent them into captivity besides their religious corruption (Amos 2:7, 5; 10-15, 6:1-7) with Amos warning that they wouldn't enjoy the wealth and houses built on the back and sweat of the poor (Amos 5:1).

The New Testament continues the brotherhood concept that began in the Old Testament. Choge (2006) is vehement on the value that the New Testament places on hospitality to be particular. This is judging by the fact that Jesus played both a host who received strangers and a guest who received hospitality. He welcomed all at his table: feeding the hungry, healing the sick and receiving social outcasts such as tax collectors and prostitutes. He instructed his disciples to give a blessing wherever they were received to show that he built hospitality into his mission. Nkansah-Obrempong (2013) observes that in the Epistles, there was a clarion call for both church leaders and church members to show hospitality. The poor were always on the mind of Jesus as seen in the manner in which He asked the rich people who wanted to follow him to sell all the property, give to the poor, come and follow him (Matt. 19:16-24, Mk. 10:17-22, Lk. 18:18-30). The instruction in Romans 12:13 is an exhortation for God's people to exercise real Christianity in a practical way according to McCain (1996, p. 197). Nkansah-Obrempong (2013) observes that Jesus taught his disciples to imitate God's mercy and compassion when they lend money to the poor as they were encouraged to lend money to the poor, those who couldn't pay them back. As the writer of Hebrews addresses the practical evidence of faith in Hebrew 13:2, shows God's concern with the whole of life from how we use our homes to how we respond to the needs of others as is commented by David Alexander & Pat Alexander Ed. (1992, p. 631-32).

Generosity is also well addressed in the New Testament as is identified in manifold illustrations of generosity and solidarity among local churches. During the time that Jerusalem was experiencing a famine, there is record in scripture of a spirited mobilization among other churches to generously send gifts and donations. The collection for the Christians in Jerusalem captures the writing of Paul to the church in Corinth in 2nd Corinthians 8-9. The Commentary is that the agenda of collection for Jerusalem Christians was not a new project but was anchored on a principle approved and accepted in the Jerusalem council and an initiative that had long began. The advocacy to the Corinth church community was one that emphasized both the generosity and concern administered among the community of God's people sharing even the little they had. The model of effective generosity in this case was the churches in Macedonia judged from the manner in which they themselves and all their possessions became the Lord's property according to David Alexander & Pat Alexander Ed.(1992,p. 599).

4.4 Hospitality, Generosity and Genuine Concern as an aid in African ecclesiology

Adeyemo (2009, p. 18) asserts that in an Africa that has been described as having a too strong a tribal or ethnic tie that promotes nepotism and fuels ethnic hatred and total disregard for other human rights that is a bane to the entire society in the long run. Christerson, B., Edwards, K. & Emerson, M. (eds.), (2005, p.11) acknowledges that in such a context the African Church should not bury her head under the sand but understand and appreciate that cultural, ethnic and racial diversity is a breeding ground in seclusion, separation and division of people. These divisions have a religious tone by virtue of the religious orientation that informs how people interpret their life experiences through religious lenses and thus the cultural diversity is given absolute and transcendence in meaning according to Christerson, Edwards & Emerson (2005). In addition, Christerson, Edwards & Emerson (2005) states that integrated in all religious expressions there is the entrenchment of particular cultural form and the individuals' awareness of God is through culturally specific media in what has been dubbed as ethnocentrism.

The church in Africa by a thorough embracing of the concept of brotherhood in her ecclesiology, should capitalize on the understanding of universal brotherhood as a pillar to combat tendencies of divisions and marginalization on account of tribal and cultural differences. The ecclesiology that grants great advocacy to the understanding that we need to embrace each other in our cultural diversity and draw value from all if we are to achieve our maximum potential is the ecclesiology that Africa needs.

There can be no ecclesiology in Africa that neglects the constituents of the poor that are of a high number in our society. All conversations of African ecclesiology must seek to address the problem of poverty in their setting on the basis of their capacity. Christians in Africa should lead the list in hospitality, generosity and being genuine because they move not only from their cultural obligation but towards their religious obligation. An ecclesiology of brotherhood helps combat the problem in Africa of people being hungry for titles and power by bringing an equalization factor of all humans before God. An ecclesiology of brotherhood will necessitate our missional initiative by virtue of love to look at all people as beneficiaries or potential beneficiaries of the God's plan for salvation. In the same breath an ecclesiology of brotherhood will help deal with the hatred and animosity brought about by denominationalism and thus propels us much closer toward an ecumenical prospect.

5. Conclusion

Ecclesiology in Africa must have an awareness of and a spirited commitment to deal with the problems of poverty, hunger, segregation and human displacement predominant in Africa. There is the possibility to address them by exhorting genuine concern, hospitality and generosity and in that activate the evangelistic unction of the church. It is these virtues that are incorporated in brotherhood that brings us to an understanding of President Theodore Roosevelt, that People don't care how much we know, until they know how much we care. The persuasion of these gestures to the African Christian is anchored in the faith and in the scriptural obligation of love as instructed by God towards our neighbor as we love ourselves. The church should develop a mechanism of helping her challenged members by the encouragement to be creative enough to think of solutions and help them to access training organized and facilitated by the church that will equip and empower them both from a technical and spiritual platform. This is attainable if we heed to the call of the writer of Hebrews that "let brotherly love continue" (Hebrews 13:1)

References

- Adeuyan, J. O. (2011). *The Journey of the First Black Bishop: Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther 1806-1891*. Bloomington, IN: Author House.
- Adeymoh, T. (2009). *Africa's Enigma and Leadership Solutions*. Word Alive Publishers.
- Adler, L. (2015). *The Biblical View of Man*. Urim Publications.
- Anderson, B. A. (2011). *Brotherhood and Inheritance: A Canonical Reading of the Esau and Edom Traditions*. A&C Black.
- Asouzu, I. (2007). *Ikwa Ogwe: Essential Readings in Complementary Reflection : a Systematic Methodological Approach*. Seasprint Publishers.
- Banks, R. J. (1994). *Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in Their Cultural Setting (Revised Second Edition)*. Hendrickson Publishers.
- Bevans, S. B. (1985). Models of Contextual Theology. *Missiology*, 13(2), 185-202.
- Brown, J. (2013). *Corporate Decision-Making in the Church of the New Testament*. Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Calvin, J. (2012). *Commentary of 1st John Kindle Edition*. Kindle.
- Campbell, D. (1922). *In the Heart of Bantuland: A Record of Twenty-Nine Years in Central Africa among Bantu Peoples*. London: Seely Service and Co.
- Christerson, B., Edwards, K. & Emerson, M. (eds.). (2005). *Against all odds: The struggle for racial integration in religious organizations*. New York: New York University Press.
- David Alexander & Pat Alexander - Editors. (1992). *Eerdmans Handbook to the Bible*. Grand Rapids Michigab: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

- ed. Adeoye O. Akinola. (2018). *The Political Economy of Xenophobia in Africa*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing AG.
- ed. J.D.Douglas. (1975). *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization Lausanne, Switzerland*. Minneapolis: World Wide Publications.
- Gill, J. (2012). *John Gill's Exposition of The Entire Bible*. Kindle Edition.
- Gyekye, K. (1996). *African Cultural Value: An Introduction*. Accra, Ghana: Sankofa Publishing Company.
- Gyekye, K. (2011, Fall). *African Ethics*. Retrieved from The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Gyekye, Kwame, "African Ethics", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy(Fall 2011 Edition) <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/african-ethics/>>.
- J. Nyerere ed. (1966). *'Ujamaa the basis of African Nationalism', Freedom and Unity/Uhuru na Umoja: A Selection from Writings and Speeches 1952-65*. Dae es Salam.
- Johnston, G. (1943). *The doctrine of the church in the new testament*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kaiser, W. C. (1991). *Towards Old Testament Ethics*. Zondervan.
- Kaunda, K. D. (1966). *A Humanist in Africa*. London: Longmans.
- Kent Brower, Andy Johnson (Editors) . (2007). *Holiness and Ecclesiology in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.
- Knapp, S. (1976). *Contextualizing and Its Implications for U.S. Evangelical Churches and Missions*. Abington, PA.: Partnership in Mission.
- Knight, G. R. (2009). *Exploring the Letters of John & Jude: A Devotional Commentary*. Review and Herald Publishing Association.
- Marshall, I. H. (1978). *The Epistles of John: New International Commentary on the New Testament (Revised Edition)*. Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- McCain, D. (1996). *Notes on New Testament Introduction*. Bukury, Plateu State, Nigeria: Africa Christian Textbooks.
- Morgan, J. (1866). *An Exposition of the First Epistle of John(2nd Edition)*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.
- Nichols, A. (2007). *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI New Edition: An Introduction to the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*. A&C Black.
- Nkansah-Obrempong, J. (2013). *Foundations for African Theological Ethics*. Carlisle, UK: Langham Monographs.

- Nyerere, J. K. (1968). *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism*. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Oxford University Press.
- Onuoha, B. (1965). *The Elements of African Socialism*. A. Deutsch.
- Peake, A. S. (1923). *Brotherhood in the Old Testament, John Clifford lecture*. Oxford: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Pickard, S. (2012). *Seeking the Church: An Introduction to Ecclesiology*. London: SCM Press.
- Racy, D. (1996, 32). How Far is too far? *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, (pp. 304-309).
- Ratzinger, J. C. (2013). *Meaning of Christian Brotherhood*. Ignatius Press.
- Samuel Gyasi Obeng & Beverly Hartford (Editors). (2002). *Surviving Through Obliqueness: Language of Politics in Emerging Democracies*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.
- Sawyer, H. (1968). *Creative Evangelism: Towards a New Christian Encounter with Africa*. London: Lutterworth Press.
- Scott, S. (1997). *Like a House on Fire*. Chicago: Cornerstone Press.
- Stinton, D. B. (2004). *Jesus of Africa: Voices of Contemporary African Christology*. Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa/Daughters of St Paul.
- Tokunboh Adeyemo- General Editor. (2006). *African Bible Commentary*. Nairobi: Word Alive Publishers.
- Wiersbe, W. W. (2010). *Be Real (1 John): Turning from Hypocrisy to Truth*. Colorado Springs CO: David C Cook.
- Yarbough, R. W. (2008). *1-3 John-Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic.