

Christian Faith and Challenges of the Postmodern Culture in Africa

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Abstract

Persecutions, trials, and oppositions from the Jewish authority and successive Roman Governments across centuries were two of the enemies of the Christian faith in human history, especially during the Greco-Roman period. The trend continued throughout the Dark Ages, leading to the Reformation of the Church in the 16th century. Nonetheless, Christian faith became stronger by the day throughout the Pre-modern and Modern times. On account of this evidence, this paper argues that the Christian faith is potent enough to withstand and overcome the attendant challenges of the postmodern culture in Africa. Essential elements of the Christian faith are, therefore, considered as part of its strength. The writer examined postmodern culture and its attendant threats to the Christian faith. In the end, the paper analysed some of the necessary responses to the identified challenges as expected from all Church stakeholders involving Christian theologians, religious educators, philosophers, and pastors. The writer concluded that the Church in Africa could not afford to oversleep at this challenging time since her God-given task of kingdom expansion is seriously at risk. Therefore, the paper recommended that Church messages should focus on this dangerous culture in its various dimensions from henceforth and different action-plans mapped out be conscientiously followed.

Keywords: Christian Faith, Challenges, Postmodern Culture, Africa

INTRODUCTION

One major threat confronting the Christian faith ecumenically at this time is the culture of postmodernism and its attendant challenges. Despite this reality on the ground, however, this paper argues that the Christian faith is potent enough to survive the challenges of this kind in Africa since the trials and oppositions of the past ages globally could not keep it at bay. Opposition to the Christian faith began almost immediately after Jesus Christ launched it out in Palestine and established it at Calvary with the seal of His blood. These onslaughts ultimately aimed at utterly annihilating the faith and decimating the Christian Way. However, the faith grew beyond limitations and barriers across ages, notwithstanding the number of Christian martyrs whose blood watered its seed. According to S.M. Houghton, many of these witnesses suffered martyrdom by burning at stake, throwing them to wild animals, or casting them into boiling oil while many of them became beheaded.²⁷²

Apart from the persecutions that arose from the Jewish authority and Roman Governments, Christian faith also battled with certain ideological fallacies within the Church. All of these were against the person of Jesus Christ, the Founder and Originator of the Way and Foundation upon which the faith stands. Prominent among these dissenting views is Arianism, which claims that Jesus is not of the same substance with the Father.²⁷³ Another one of note is Gnosticism which asserts a special kind of “mystical knowledge,” known as “the secret key of salvation” exclusively for people with accurate understanding.²⁷⁴ This trend continued all through the Middle Ages,

²⁷² S.M. Houghton, *Sketches from Church History* (Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth trust, 1980), 16.

²⁷³ Dennis E. Groh, “Arius, Arianism,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary Database*, Ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1996), S. 1:385.

²⁷⁴ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, Vol. 1 (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1984), 58-59.

but the faith survived all this with unprecedented growth and development.

To this end, the paper investigates the concept of the Christian faith, the culture of Postmodernism, significant challenges of the postmodern culture to the Christian faith, and the expected responses of the adherents of this faith to the crises.

CONCEPT OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Adequate analysis of the Christian faith is grossly impossible without necessary in-depth search of the Scripture. According to Joseph R. Farinaccio, the faith contains specific elements, some of which are the following: the infallibility of the Bible as God's Word upon which Christ established His Church, the Personality of God's Being (Exo 3:14), the Unity or Oneness of God (John 17:3), and the Absoluteness of God. A few others are His Sovereignty and Supremacy (Exo. 3:14; John 5:26), Omnipotence (Psa. 103:19), and Ownership of the universe and all therein (Psa. 24:1). Some others of these features are, namely: the Omniscience of God (Psa. 136:5; 147:4-5; Heb 4:13), Eternal nature of God (Deut. 33:27; Psa. 93:2), Holiness of God (Isa 6:3-5), Creative power of God (Gen 1:1), and Spirituality of God (John 4:24). Farinaccio regards these attributes as "God's divine will and sovereign purposes."²⁷⁵

In another development, Christian faith can be understood through an adequate analysis of its fundamental steps. Editor of AM Bible Courseware identifies twelve of these steps. The "Assurance of Salvation" is the first, which stands on some biblical premises: direct statements presented in Scripture, the witness of the Holy Spirit in the heart, and newness of life as evidence of a change within. "Forgiveness of Sin" is the second step with the understanding that God forgives any sinners that come to Him by faith through His Word. More so, the purpose of the Christian life is another. This step

²⁷⁵ Joseph R. Farinaccio, *Faith with Reason: Why Christianity is True* (Pennsville, New Jersey: BookSpecs Publishing, 2002), 31-32.

teaches that every Christian is part of the eternal purpose of God. Also, reading the Bible and learning how people should read it takes a vital part of the Christian faith for the Christian life is about walking with Christ. The possibility of this enterprise is only through the infallible Word of God.

Similarly, the prayer life of a Christian is an essential element. The editor presented it as a communion with God and an attitude of the heart. Finally, the witnessing life of a believer is of equal importance (Acts 1:8). The editor regards this as a fundamental responsibility of the believers.²⁷⁶ All of these steps are not only fundamental to the growth and development of the Christian faith but also form part of its intrinsic value and strength which fortifies the believers against any pressure, examples of which are the attendant challenges of the postmodern culture.

Furthermore, central to this paper is the impacts of the Christian faith in human history. According to Howard R Burkle, the effect of the Church on the political and intellectual life of people throughout the Dark Ages was great. During this period, the Church employed the Christian faith as a driving force to inform almost all aspects of the life of that time. The economic life and the political aspect of the time are of paramount importance to this writer. Again, the Church employed the faith to influence entire Europe for God. In addition to all this, the Church preserved learning during this period through her system of monasticism, which began to develop around early A.D. 300's.²⁷⁷

From this analysis, the existence of the Christian faith is not limited to the idea of mere religiosity but has significantly impacted humanity with wide-range of benefits, cutting across almost every aspect of human need. To this writer, the Christian faith is the basis for true

²⁷⁶ AM Bible Courseware, ed., *First Steps in the Christian Faith, Libronix Bible Software* (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute, 2004), AM Lessons 1-6.

²⁷⁷ Howard R. Burkle, "Christianity Today," *The World Book Encyclopedia*, C-Ch Vol. 3 (Chicago: World Book-Childcraft International, Inc., 1978), 407.

freedom from the stronghold of human frailty and ignorance. It preserved knowledge in Europe until the time of the Renaissance. The writer also views it as a fulcrum upon which many of the past cultures rested.

CULTURE OF POSTMODERNISM

The culture of the postmodern time is a complex one. This complexity covers its meaning, doctrines and structure, and timeframe. The intricacy and multiplicity of this way of life inform its complication. The positions of scholars like Gabriel O. Olaniyan whose understanding of postmodernism states that it is “a cultural worldview, a school of thought, a system of observation, a sceptical interpretation of culture, reaction against western philosophical assumptions about truth and objectivity, an intellectual movement and a philosophical school of thought.”²⁷⁸

More so, Olaniyan advances that further investigation should be made into human history for a better understanding of the concept. There is no consensus among scholars in this regard as to the particularity of history. Nancy R. Pearcey and Charles B. Thaxton opine that human history is generally of three stages, starting from the period of Enlightenment to the twentieth century. These are the following, namely, the “Ancient world,” brilliant but limited scientifically, and the “medieval world” described as a time of wretchedness in intellectuality and culture. The time is also called “Dark Ages” due to its inherent bankruptcy. The last stage is the “Modern Age.” It is the time of emergence of reason and enlightenment which dispelled the

²⁷⁸ Gabriel O. Olaniyan, “Implications of Postmodernism for the Church’s Efforts at Achieving Objectives of Christian Education in the World,” *Ogbomosho Journal of Theology (OJOT)* Vol. 20 No 1 (2015): 93.

clouds of the religious claims of the medieval to the absolutes of truth, values, and meaning.²⁷⁹

Scholars have begun to criticise this characterisation, especially the negative designation of the medieval period. The trend began with the efforts of Pierre Duhem (1861-1916), a French Physicist and philosopher.²⁸⁰ Nonetheless, Helen Olomu Ishola-Esan is in support of the view of Pearcey and Thaxton with some deviations. Ishola-Esan describes human history as a three-stringed developmental process: pre-modernism, modernism, and postmodernism. According to the scholar, an adequate understanding of the postmodern culture is grossly impossible without giving appropriate consideration to the first two.²⁸¹

Moreover, Olaniyan posits that pre-modernism, the period before the modern age, began from the medieval time to the French Revolution of the 18th century, specifically in 1789. Scholars identified some of the characteristics of this age as belief: in the supernatural of the western world; domination of the tradition and authority; and the existence of God, spirits, angels, and demons. Adherents of this culture generally believe in spiritual reality, having control over the physical world. The domination of tradition and authority comes as traditional rules, cultural norms, and authorities of the Church. Values were also believed to be absolute to guide without questioning for they are taken to be valid and objective.²⁸²

Contrariwise, the culture of modernism is a sharp deviation from that of pre-modernism in doctrines and practices. According to Olusegun

²⁷⁹ Nancy R. Pearcey and Charles B. Thaxton, *The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy*, (Turning Point Christian Worldview Series) (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1994), s. 18.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Helen Olomu Ishola-Esan, "Challenges of Post-Modernism to the Christian Religious Education of Youths in Nigeria," *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology (OJOT)* Vol. 20 No 1 (2015): 52-53.

²⁸² Olaniyan, 93-94.

Olawayin, citing Clark H. Pinnock, modernism is ‘a shift in consciousness from the Medieval Christian worldview²⁸³ ... to autonomous humanity and its self-governed material existence.’²⁸⁴ Nonetheless, Olaniyan posits that modernism failed to meet up to the expectation of its promises.²⁸⁵

Given the understanding of the first two periods, namely, pre-modernism and modernism, scholars etymologically define post-modernism as a reaction to the failure of the culture that preceded it just as modernism is to pre-modernism. This situation informs Craig A. Loscaizo's view about this culture as “A reactive movement against the theories and practices of modern art, literature, philosophy, economics, politics and theology.”²⁸⁶ Similarly, Ishola-Esan²⁸⁷ and Momolu Armstrong Massaquoi²⁸⁸ agree with this idea, saying postmodernism is a change or advancement that comes in the thinking and belief of the present generation in response to the failure of modernism. Scholars like Martens also describe it as the age suspicious of meta-narrative²⁸⁹ and sceptical to rationalism.²⁹⁰

²⁸³ Chris Gousmett, in *Introduction to a Christian Worldview: A course in thinking Christianly about the whole of life* Published in 1996, <http://allofliferedeemed.co.uk/GousmettCGWorldviewManual.pdf> <Accessed on September 2, 2016>, defines worldview as “the comprehensive framework of one’s basic beliefs about things and their relationships” (2, 6).

²⁸⁴ Olusegun Olawayin, “God and the World in the Post Modern Age: The Challenge for Nigerian Christian Theologians,” *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology (OJOT)* Vol. 20 No 1 (2015): 3.

²⁸⁵ Olaniyan, 94.

²⁸⁶ Craig A. Loscaizo, “Proclaiming Mystery in an Age of Information,” *Apologetic Preaching: Proclaiming Christ to a Postmodern World, Database* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2000), par. 8.

²⁸⁷ Ishola-Esan, 53.

²⁸⁸ Momolu Armstrong Massaquoi, “Postmodernism and Its Impact on the African Family Relationships: A Socio-Biblical Analysis,” *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology (OJOT)* Vol. 20 No 1 (2015): 29.

²⁸⁹ Elmer A. Martens, “The Flowering and Floundering of Old Testament Theology,” 26:2 (Fall 1997): 675 <www.directionjournal.org/26/2/flowering-and-floundering-of-old.html/2103/12/09>.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 677.

Furthermore, scholars like A.K.M. Adams are of the view that although this era is known and called postmodernism, it does not distance itself from the tenets or culture of modernism.²⁹¹ Regarding its doctrines, Olaniyan declares that postmodernism characterises itself by the standard of truth and morality. Human society determines these elements upon the assumption that the majority cannot be wrong. Again, the relativity of moral values is another mark as a condition to decide questions of morality. The plurality of religion is another element for all faiths and practices are the same, and people must tolerate them.²⁹² Similarly, Dan Story adds that plurality and relativism are central presuppositions of this worldview.²⁹³

Regarding how people formed these values, Massaquoi posits that it was through globalisation.²⁹⁴ On this, Susanna Snyder, citing M. Castells and A. Appadurai advances that globalisation is, “The complex, dynamic and interweaving ‘network’ and ‘flow’ of financial capital, information, technology, people, organizations, governance, images and ideas burgeoning across the contemporary world.”²⁹⁵ In other words, it is interconnectivity of activities that go on around the world today.

CHALLENGES OF THE POSTMODERN CULTURE TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

The cultures of modernism and postmodernism are both foreign to African continent ideologically. In this direction, Olawoyin posits that despite this fact, postmodernism has significantly caused a whole lot of challenges to African society, most importantly, to the Christian

²⁹¹ A.K.M. Adam, *What is Postmodern Biblical Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 3.

²⁹² Olaniyan, 95-96.

²⁹³ Dan Story, *Christianity on the Offense: Responding to the Beliefs of Spiritual Seekers, Database* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1998), s. 14.

²⁹⁴ Massaquoi, 30.

²⁹⁵ Susanna Snyder, “Globalization: Challenges to Christianity,” *Journal of World Christianity*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2011):44.

faith. Prominent among these challenges is that African people, Christians among them in particular, were not prepared for this culture and its attendant challenges.²⁹⁶

1. Philosophical Relativism

Philosophical relativism is one of the two main tenets of the postmodern culture. According to Simon A. Kolawole, the idea implies that “philosophical truths are not absolute but rather depend on such factors as cultures, individuals and situations. As such, they cannot have general or universal applications.”²⁹⁷ Thus, this ideology poses a great danger to the growth and development of the Church in Africa for reducing the Christian faith to a relic of a “bygone era.”²⁹⁸ The foundation of this danger lies in its opposing view to what the Christian faith teaches in that philosophical relativism argues that there is no absolute truth while Christian faith declares that God’s revelation through Christ is not only true and normative but is also universally and eternally relevant.²⁹⁹ This danger is of three strands, namely: danger to the foundation of the Christian faith, danger to the message of the Church, and danger to Church missions.³⁰⁰ This view is in tandem with that of Farinaccio.³⁰¹ Also, J.D. Greear opines that relativism is a threat to the world evangelisation of the Church.³⁰²

2. Religious Plurality

The postmodernists claim that all belief systems assert what is called “truth-claims” and these claims should be given equal consideration

²⁹⁶ Olawoyin, 1-2.

²⁹⁷ Simon A. Kolawole, *The Interplay of Philosophy, Gospel Ministry and National Transformation* (Ibadan: Sceptre Prints Ltd., 2012), 30.

²⁹⁸ Ibid, 29.

²⁹⁹ Ibid, 31.

³⁰⁰ Ibid, 32-34.

³⁰¹ Farinaccio, 11.

³⁰² J.D. Greear, “Mission to Post Moderns,” *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, the Church, and the Nations*, Ed. Bruce Riley Ashford (Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishing Group, 2011), 280-81.

without minding their contradictions. The concern of this philosophical ideology is not really about the assertions but their authenticity. Farinaccio says, “It is impossible for two genuinely opposite truth-claims to be simultaneously true.”³⁰³ This writer agrees with this position for there has been a standard against which people could ascertain all other claims right from antiquity. Similarly, Story also advances that the plurality of religion implies that there are truths in every religion. Given this, there is also ethical relativism since ethics is a major aspect of religion and that moral truths change with time and situations as determined by cultural values, not by God.³⁰⁴

3. Secularism

Another challenge that the culture of postmodernism brought to Africa is secularism. Scholars apply this ideology to three major areas of Western society, namely: government, academia, and public education. Its basis is the idea of “separation of Church and State,” aiming at promoting moral objectivity by keeping religion out of public life. Many public institutions greatly promote this. Hence, secularism is anti-religion.³⁰⁵

4. The New Homiletics

Ezekiel Ajibade, quoting David L. Allen, argues that there is a paradigm shift in Homiletics from the deductive and propositional approach to an inductive type. One main element that characterises an approach of this kind is the efforts of the preacher geared toward creating an experience in the listeners to aid them to listen to the gospel. One of the reasons given for this shift is that deductive and propositional preaching is no longer appropriate for communication. With “New Homiletic” and its related “New Hermeneutics,” the emphasis is placed on the listeners as against the preacher. More so,

³⁰³ Farinaccio, 11 .

³⁰⁴ Story, s 29.

³⁰⁵ Farinaccio, 23.

scholars view narratives as the best tool to employ in communicating the gospel.³⁰⁶ This ideology is a threat to the Christian faith because the truth of the gospel is now socially constructed as determined by the listener rather than scripture, which is the sole authority for faith and practices.³⁰⁷

5. Religious Infiltration

Religious infiltration is one of the major threats to the Christian faith because a number of the elements of the postmodern worldview are penetrating the Church. As members of the Church interact with this culture, and as the Church responds to its challenges, certain cultural practices of this type are permeating into the Church. The following are a few examples of these infiltrations: a shift from soul enriching programmes to entertaining types like ‘suya’ night and the use of worldly slangs, naked dressing, and diplomacy in decision making at the expense of seeking the voice of the Holy Spirit. Messages about heaven and hell are not fashionable anymore, and those that reprimand sinners are no longer in vogue.³⁰⁸

6. Attacks against African Family Structure

The effects of postmodernism on social structure in Africa are in no small measure. According to Massaquoi, since the mid-19th century, Africa has started witnessing a significant change in all spheres of life. The first of these areas is African family life. This change occurs as the family responds to the changing culture and relationships. In the course of all this interaction, a new set of beliefs or values are absorbed, which ultimately affect the traditional African family life and structure. Increase in peer influence over children, the idea of marriage by contract, and that of same-sex marriage are some of the

³⁰⁶ Ezekiel Ajibade, “The African Preacher and the Demands of Postmodernism,” *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology (OJOT)* Vol. 20 No 1 (2015): 14-15.

³⁰⁷ Ibid, 15.

³⁰⁸ Olaniyan, 100.

imports of this culture from the West.³⁰⁹ Similarly, cohabitation, the astronomical increase in the rate of divorce, single parenting, teenage pregnancy, and undue desire to raise children alone are some others.³¹⁰ These negative effects greatly impair the influence of the Christian faith on Africa family.

7. Open Theism

Open Theism is a challenge to the Church in Africa generally. It specifically throws some contests to the following: Christian preachers, theological educators and institutions, and Church ministry. According to Akinwale Oloyede, open theism is the balance between the transcendence of God of classical theism and that of the radical immanence of God of process theology. It is a theology that believes in the openness of God to the changing historical realities of humankind such that God, in the exercise of His care, accommodates human actions and inactions to change His very person.³¹¹

Theists also object to the idea that God's sovereignty is unlimited. They also argue that God is vulnerable to mistakes and that He changes His plan. Thus, God sometimes is dependent on the changing world. About the exercise of human free will, the proponents of this ideology argue that God is powerless sometimes over the exercise of man's free will. In this way, humankind has unlimited freedom to corner God as the latter becomes helpless over man's action with the presence of evil in the world. Oloyede, therefore, posits that these ideas are contradictions to the traditional understanding of the biblical doctrines as conceived by the evangelicals.³¹²

³⁰⁹ Massaquoi, 33-34.

³¹⁰ Ibid, 38-39.

³¹¹ Akinwale Oloyede, "An Appraisal of Open Theism and the Problem of Evil in Contemporary African Context," *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology (OJOT)* Vol. 20 No 1 (2015): 75-76.

³¹² Ibid, 76.

8. Challenge of Violence in Africa

Violence is essentially and traditionally strange to African culture. In the light of the contemporary spate of this threat across continents, scholars are globally reflecting upon the menace. Discussing the communal living of the Yoruba people in Nigeria and the Black people of Africa in general, Peter Ropo Awoniyi emphasises that the culture of conflict and war is strange to the indigenous religions of the people. Instead, justice, peace and harmony distinguish them.³¹³

Also, Armin Zimmermann advances that the upsurge of violence is an adverse effect of globalisation.³¹⁴ This effect is a menace that cripples the socio-economic and political life of the community, State or nation. It also takes its toll on the family, of which children and women suffer the most. Olusola Ayo-Obiremi supports this view and argues that children suffer the most from this challenge either in person or by proxy.³¹⁵ This writer believes that all these dangerous imports of violence in African society are threats to the spread of the Gospel and the growth and development of the Christian faith in the land.

CHRISTIAN RESPONSES TO THE CHALLENGES OF POSTMODERNISM

Given the spate of the challenges of the postmodern culture to the Christian faith, there is the need to find appropriate responses to some of them since the culture has become one to contend with on the continent. The responses shall be in the form of specific strategies that the various stakeholders in the Church will have to carry out.

³¹³ Peter Ropo Awoniyi, "Yoruba Cultural Approach to Justice and Peace and Its Implications on the Church in South-West Nigeria," *OJOT*, Ed. Simon A Ishola Vol. XIX No 2 (2014): 3.

³¹⁴ Armin Zimmermann, "The Church and 21st Century Missiological Challenges," *OJOT* Ed. Simon A Ishola Vol. XIX No 2 (2014): 56-57.

³¹⁵ Olusola Ayo-Obiremi, "The Roles of the Church in Helping Children Develop a Balanced Christ-Centered View of Justice and Peace," *OJOT*, Ed. Simon A Ishola Vol. XIX No 3 (2014): 4.

1. General Responses of the Church

The Church will do well to help postmodern children not only to understand her as a community of faith but also to appreciate the reality of having this unique body of Christ in a postmodern world. This step becomes imperative for the Church to have her rightful place in God's mission in African society.³¹⁶ To achieve this noble goal, this writer opines that it becomes necessary for the Church to speak the truth in the love of Christ to the postmodern family.

Furthermore, the Church also needs to respond to the culture of violence. In this process, she can appeal to reason in finding appropriate methods of resolving violence peacefully. She can also appeal to the culture of the sanctity of human life. Again, she needs to call to causality, which places a premium on the value of what the people lose to hostility. This cost is always higher than that of the benefits gained from the menace. History also needs to be appealed to because people always reveal that aggression is never the best way of solving problems. Lastly, addressing the causes of violence is imperative since it is still a reaction to some injustices.³¹⁷

Moreover, the Church also has the mandate to disciple the nations. The order Christ Jesus gave to His Church is summed up in the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20). This mission places upon the Church three significant demands that Robert L. Reymond tagged "intellectual demands." The first of these is "evangelical demand" that requires the Church to contextualise the Gospel without compromising its proclamation to meeting the needs of every culture in all generations. Next to this is "didactic demand" that necessitates all Christians to store the scriptures in the heart to order their thinking and conduct. The last of them is "apologetic demand" which requests from all believers the task of justifying the existence of Christianity

³¹⁶ Massaquoi, 47.

³¹⁷ Kolawole, 64-73.

and protecting the message of the Gospel from being infiltrated.³¹⁸ The writer, therefore, advises the Church that taking to the Great Commission will restore sanity to the social system of the world.³¹⁹

2. Responses of the Christian Theologians

Reactions of the Christian theologians to this subject are critical for the Church to maximise her potential against the challenges of the postmodern culture. If African Christian theologians have to respond to the problems of postmodernism appropriately, they have to consider some factors. According to Olawoyin, Christian theologians will have to maintain a personal experience with God, they should learn from the ordeal or mistakes of the West by retaining faith in God, and there is a need for them to formulate a new theology that is African both in contents and context. Christian theologians should replace the present theology, which encourages immorality within the body of Christ with a more practical one. Again, this new theology should be holistic by considering scientific, ethical, aesthetic and religious perceptions. When biblical theologians might have taken this step, it will give the society a sense of order and focus and will consolidate the faith.³²⁰

There are some responses that African Christian theologians cannot carry out alone without pragmatic and collaborated efforts of some other stakeholders. Ajibade presents five suggestions on how Africa can meet the needs of the West: the continent should champion a return to well-balanced anthropology, reality and sensibility, and the sacred and dignity of human life. Again, Africa should lead the campaign of returning to giving in love and to what is called “brotherhood, fatherhood and motherhood.” African Christians should do this because Africans live in the community as brothers or sisters

³¹⁸ Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, Second Edition-Revised and Updated, Electronic Version (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), s. 586.

³¹⁹ Ibid, xxviii.

³²⁰ Olawoyin, 8.

and neighbours. The bedrock of this advocacy is the value of holding the family as the basic unit of society.³²¹

3. Responses of Christian Philosophers

It is equally fundamental for the Christian philosophers in Africa to rise to the challenge of philosophical relativism if they would pragmatically combat the adverse effects of the postmodern culture against the Christian faith. Relativism claims that there is no absolute truth anywhere, while the Christian faith teaches absolute truth in God through Christ Jesus. The Church, therefore, needs to rise to dispel the deviant claim of philosophical relativism. According to Kolawole, the Church should do this by responding to the faulty foundation of the ideology because the foundation of knowledge and truth does not reside in the mind of man. Humankind is limited and, therefore, cannot have final authority on truth and knowledge.

Again, since there are certain truths found and approved by humankind, an example of which is human laws; relativism's claim which states that truth is not absolute is misleading. Since there are human laws, there are also divine laws, denial of which is bound to bring serious relationship troubles and societal disorder. Also, since philosophy seeks for knowledge holistically, the Church in Africa should, therefore, advocate for the spiritual source of knowledge from religion.³²²

4. Responses of Pastor-Philosophers

If the Church would appropriately combat philosophical challenges of the postmodern age in Africa, the church pastors on the continent should champion the course. They must see the need for philosophy in the Gospel Ministry and recognise themselves as Christian Philosophers. This step should be the basis of a meaningful, clear, and more profound response in defence of the Christian faith. In this

³²¹ Ajibade, 17-18.

³²² Kolawole, 34-41.

regard, Kolawole argues that everybody is a philosopher in a sense for every human being seeks answers to some fundamental questions of life purpose, which are either philosophical or theological.³²³

Similarly, Ajibade opines that a profound solution to the enormous challenges bedevilling the world at this time is the preaching of the Word of God. Scholars can do this in some ways: exegeting the audience, faithfulness to the exposition of the Word, and embarking on the task of apologetics. Some other steps are getting into the media world and filling the vacuum of the postmodern culture only by the Word of God. The latter should be carried out through communal living, regard for the dignity of life, relationship with the sacred, morality, and credible and compelling narratives. Ajibade argues that the methods will resolve the crisis of New Homiletics.³²⁴

Another response by pastors, in collaboration with Christian theologians, philosophers, among other stakeholders, is forming a theology of family relationship. In doing this, scholars should take some steps; namely, developing a biblical foundation for family relationships that underscores the Christian virtues of submission and humility (Eph. 2:15; 4:15, 21; 5:25; Phil. 2:3-4; Col. 3:17-18). More so, the need to have “other-centered focus” as against “self-seeking mindset” is another.³²⁵

5. Roles of the Christian Religious Educators

The roles of the Christian religious educators in combating the crisis facing the Christian faith in Africa as a result of the effects of the postmodern culture are enormous. First, Christian educators will have to identify the contextual nature that makes meaning to students in the teaching-learning process.³²⁶ Also, a multiplicity of religions and a

³²³ Ibid, 13-14.

³²⁴ Ajibade, 19-23.

³²⁵ Massaquoi, 40.

³²⁶ Ishola-Esan, 60.

variety of perceptions and views about God mark the postmodern age. Therefore, the scope of human perception, especially that of the learner, is now wide. This situation should have its bearing on teaching in the areas of goal setting. The goal should no longer be obtaining a uniform understanding of concepts, views, or methodology. It should rather be on what Ishola-Esan called “post-pedagogical classroom,” citing Primer S.A. Grenz. This method should take the credibility and plausibility of the Christian faith into consideration.³²⁷

CONCLUSION

This paper argues that the Christian faith is potent enough to survive the challenges of this time arising from the culture of postmodernism in Africa. The basis of this claim is on the proof presented that the faith had survived all trials, persecutions, and oppositions of the past ages. Nonetheless, the paper also argues that for the Church to survive these threats, she cannot afford to ignore any of them without taking necessary measures as identified. To this end, the writer investigated the concept of the Christian faith with some of its fundamentals. In addition to this, the writer also analysed the culture of the postmodern time, whose basis is at variance with that of the Christian faith. The paper also considered some of the attendant threats of this culture in Africa, which stand in opposition to the tenets of the Christian faith. The writer finally mapped out some steps that the various stakeholders of the Church should take and strategies to put in place in combating these threats.

Given this, the Christian theologians, religious educators, philosophers and pastors and the entire Church cannot afford to sleep since the God-given task of kingdom expansion is at the risk of annihilation at the face of the threats of the postmodern culture. It is, therefore, recommended by the writer that the messages of the Church should address this culture with its threats from henceforth by

³²⁷ Ibid, 63.

following the various action-plans mapped out in this paper conscientiously.

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