

The Christological Model Of Jesus As Folk: A Challenge To Christian Leadership In Nigeria

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Abstract

This article draws from biblical insights and Igbo socio-cultural structures to introduce a new Christological model for Nigerian Christianity – Jesus as folk. In Nigeria, Christians evidently connect with Jesus as a wonder worker who effects changes in their lives especially for the better even in spite of their moral standing. Pastors help to foster this image of Jesus and a lot of Christological currents had been derived from this inkling. Consequently the average Nigerian Christian is no longer challenged as to living by the ethics of the religion but lives a high level of awareness as to the benefits of believing. Alongside the quest for miracles is the acquired unwillingness to bring human efforts to bear on life situations as if God will do everything. Jesus as folk implies that Jesus is both like and is one of us but this is not just about Jesus but also about real folks who through this exposition should be seen as another Jesus. The work aims at re-focusing on the humanity of Jesus as a means of strengthening the power of mere human nature and challenge Christians to their own part of the salvation bargain.

Introduction

Having continued in the romance of Lord Lugard and Lady Shaw; having prolonged their game; having been swayed by the schemes of the West, over one hundred and sixty million inhabitants of the portion of the earth known as Nigeria stand at the brinks of economic stagnation, social disintegration, political disaster and war. The prevailing socio-economic-political situation in the country has been a source of worry to all other aspects of the country's life. The citizens of this country are in a constant security threat on all fronts – social, economic, political, food, job, environmental and so forth. Nothing is guaranteed because anything can happen at any time. The middle class which is the engine house of any thriving economy at some points totally disappeared from the Nigerian socio-economic environment. The result is that the gap keeps widening between the upper and lower classes of society leaving everyone with one of two options – either you are rich or you are poor.

Throughout the history of Nigeria, the Igbo have been at the forefront of the Nigerian struggle. Majority of the Igbo are Christians and Christianity thrives in the South-Eastern part of the country where the Igbo are found in more numbers than any other place in the world. This part of the country is understood as the homeland of the Igbo. The key element in the consciousness of a people who find

themselves in the kind of situation highlighted above is survival. The question of survival is not a stranger to the Igbo consciousness, so as will be expected; people become ingenious in inventing strategies for this survival.

The Nigerian situation is such that beats the imagination. This is a country that is reputed by the independent, statistics and analysis of the US Energy Information and Administration as the largest producer of oil in Africa (in spite of the fact that Libya has a larger oil reserve) and the eleventh largest oil producer in the world and the world's fourth leading exporter of LNG. Nigeria has produced quite a number of the world's biggest brains and talents in the likes of Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Philip Emeagwali, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and so forth. Therefore it is a country that is hugely blessed with natural and human resources. It is a contradiction for that same country to have over 60% of its citizens live below poverty line. By this is meant that over 60% of Nigerians live with less than \$1 income every day. This is part of the agitation of mind raised by El-Rufai (2011):

Though Nigeria's population is three times that of South Africa, our economy is second to theirs in Africa. We are the 37th largest economy in the world, and 11th in terms of labour force (about 48 million, according to 2010 estimates). So how come we are one of the most impoverished countries in Africa and the 25th poorest in the world? Global average income is about \$25 per person per day, or \$9,000 per annum.

Though as at the time of this paper, Nigeria has become the largest economy in Africa in terms of GDP, at the same time this bogus status does not better the lives of Nigerians where evidently in the slums, ghettos and suburbs in which most of these people live there is either total absence of social amenities or non-functional ones; no medical facilities, no roads and so forth. The scenario is full with such hopelessness that people are frustrated to give human solutions any trial.

On the one hand, remarkably the failure of the political class to offer any solution to the Nigerian problem is everywhere to be seen; this has been described by various key players in the Nigerian political domain, Nuhu Ribadu (quoted in *Premium Times* Newspaper, June 30, 2013), Aborishade (2014) and Soriwei (2014). This is expected since the political class are the successors of the first republic elites who rest comfortable on the *status quo ante* and enrich themselves; isolating themselves from the real Nigerian experiences. That is to say, if you are a successful politician, you do not belong to the everyday Nigerian experience; you are completely aloof the real issues of poverty, insecurity, injustice and oppression.

Given again the peculiar nature of the African people who live in an environment aptly described by Mbiti (1975) as religious, it is religion more than anything else which has played the key role of supplying for the failure of the state by offering hope to the hopeless and bringing good news to those who are in the shadow of death. It is often said that religion is the hope of the common man in Africa. It is very common for the African to turn his gaze on God for assistance in situations that overwhelm his mind. Since the religion immediately at the service of the Igbo is Christianity, it is the pastors who are possessors of the 'what' and 'how' of solutions to the problems of the Igbo. On the other hand, therefore, the pastors who trade on the gospel of Christ pose as offering the panacea to this real Nigerian experience. Cultivating on the fertile religious environment of Africa, it is not

difficult to see that they also become the bourgeoisie of society who acquire the same aloofness like the politicians (Obiorah 1998). In other words, to escape the real Nigerian experience, one only needs to be a politician and in the absence of which the next bet is to be a pastor. The multitude of Nigerians who are living below the poverty line are the easy prey of many of these pastors whose ground of operation is fertilized and peopled with the nutrients of ignorance, poverty, credulity and fear. Nevertheless, for the pastor to offer help through the means of Christ's gospel, then that gospel must be interpreted in an effective way.

Obiorah (1998) had insisted that this effectiveness overweighs on the side of the pastors' interest while the people whom the gospel was meant to serve are either deceived or left worse for their problems. In as much as the present writer may, to a large extent, agree with Obiorah, at the same time the work is concerned with a different matter which is to articulate the existing biblical interpretations into a Christology upon which the approach of the pastors are based, evaluate its authenticity, validity and suitability for the Nigerian situation.

Consequently, this work evaluates the Christological models employed by Nigerian pastors in the business of bringing succor to the ailing population of the country. The judgment of this work is based on the concrete experiences gathered by the writer through the years; having participated in the enterprise of Christ's gospel for more than fourteen years. Perhaps it is important to note that African Christology had been observed as always reaping from the field of experiences; unlike western Christology which is dominated by ideological developments (Clarke 2011). The work uses an Igbo paradigm to create a shift from the status quo without deviating from the basic teachings and moral demands of the Christian religion and suggest a model of Christology upon which the pastoral approach to the Nigerian problem could be based.

Christological Currents operative in Nigerian Christianity

Jesus as a Miracle/Wonder worker: In his address to the crowd that gathered on the Pentecost day, Peter gave Jesus the distinctive character of "Miracle Worker". In Acts 2:22 he said: "I am speaking of Jesus of Nazareth, singled out by God and made known to you through miracles, portents, and signs, which God worked among you through him." Peter tactically employed this manner of identifying Jesus because he knew that most of those who came to Jesus expected miracles. Matthew (4:23-25) had earlier shown that Jesus had a reputation for his miracles and the reason why people looked for him was because of his ability to work miracles. Suraci (2005) had observed that Jesus performed about thirty-five miracles in his three and a half years public ministry. Held under the sway of Jewish law especially the version popularized by the Pharisees, it is only miracles and wonders through which Jesus could have met the expectations of the Messiah which the prophet Isaiah spelt-out (Is. 61:1) and which Jesus adopted as the manifesto of his public ministry (Lk. 4:18-19). Yet that was within only a three and half year's period of his public ministry. The other aspect of Jesus' life spanning a period of more than thirty years which prepared him for this ministry must not be left out in this evaluation/rating of Jesus.

Given the religious nature of the Igbo, spiritual solutions become a very welcome alternative in the face of any problem. Kanu (2012) had suggested that the quest of the Igbo after Jesus as Healer is informed by an interior metaphysical composition which makes the Igbo think every situation in terms of cause and effect. Without negating this opinion, the present writer also adds that the Nigerian Christians are in need of a Jesus who will turn their situation around without any efforts of theirs especially when their previous efforts had been of no worth in the struggle against their socio-economic, political and environmental conditions. In traditional Africa, spiritual solutions to problems have little or no moral demands. The effectiveness of spiritual processes rest on the appropriateness of the ritual performances recommended. Pastors exploit this religious background of the Africans giving it a Christian blend. The Nigerian who has reached the breaking point in his struggle to proffer solutions to his problems is a fertile ground to grow the seed of a miraculous Jesus. The average Nigerian is ready to give in everything to get solutions and the least the Nigerian pastor need to do is to give preeminence to the spiritual interpretation of any problem so as to qualify him for a possible spiritual solution of which he is the supposed expert. Miracle is the deepest yearning in the heart of Nigerian Christians outside of which the Nigerian problem is deemed insoluble. The disadvantage of this Christology is that Nigerians no longer believe that human efforts have the potency to transform even ordinary human situations.

Within the boundaries of this Christological currents in Nigeria is contained the idea of Jesus as Healer, Jesus as Superman/Warrior/Conqueror and Jesus as Avenger. These are other Christological titles of Jesus functional in Nigerian Christianity. Jesus as Healer is consequent upon poor medical facilities. Obviously, the sick in Nigeria place more confidence of getting better on the pastor than on any manner of medical worker. The Nigerian Christian is more likely to accept spiritual causes of even the mildest of sicknesses than to admit medical interpretations. So Jesus the Healer attends to them at the prayer grounds where they are even ready to pay astonishing amounts of money to catch a glimpse of the pastor in the name of the *'powerful man of God'* for their healing. Again the Nigerian Christian is almost always overwhelmed by his/her circumstance that no strategies can be trusted to work things out. Prayer is needed to conjure the superman who is capable of breaking every barrier and getting schemes succeed; even science and technology which is founded on certainty and precision need prayers to work in Nigeria because it is only God who can make things work within this irredeemable failure of the system. The relevance of Jesus the Superman/Warrior/Conqueror is not difficult to see. If the Nigerian-Christian will survive the harshness, unpredictability and inundation of his/her situation then Jesus must be seen through the prism of Superman/Warrior/Conqueror. Lastly, and true to this African identity, it is spirits or men who invoke them who are responsible for everything good and bad alike. Sometimes these spiritual phenomena may be given moral interpretations as a number of African writers have done:

It is people who are evil or sinful, whether or not they are aided by invisible forces. For, even when invisible forces intervene in human life to cause harm, it is more often than not because they are "used" by evil people or are manipulated by forces on earth. Otherwise, these spirits

(though without physical bodies of their own) are personalized by the African religious mentality to express their badness in what they do as “bodied” beings (Magesa 1997).

Magesa however is giving moral interpretation to what the average African will dub spiritual and will not allow any further explanations no matter how logical. This “bodied beings” are often referred to as witches. Okpalike (2012) agreed with Evans-Pitchard (1937) and Mbiti (1975) that almost every situation in Africa (good or bad) is understood as witchcraft. Most times, however, it is the negative things that are thought as such. Nigerian Christian spirituality takes on the model of warfare. Nigerian Christians need not just a warrior but a vengeful warrior; for how can he/she rest a peace when he/she is not sure that his/her proven enemy has not been summarily dealt with? Thus Jesus the Avenger is needed for intervention and revenge. This religious sentiment is African but not Christian. Yet the Nigerian pastor would not mind to appeal to the Old Testament which is informed by a parallel religious sentiment to African religious culture so as to Christianize that quest and paint the picture Christ as vengeful. It is important to note that whether it is Jesus as Healer, Jesus as Superman/Warrior/Conqueror or Jesus as Avenger it is the ambient of miracles and wonders that causes these effects to bear on the Christian who appeals to it.

Jesus as Royalty: The post resurrection character of Jesus is invincibility the apex of which was inaugurated by the Ascension. The consequence of the Ascension is that he is now seated at the right hand of God (Mk. 16:19 and Rom. 8:34) where he reigns and his kingdom will have no end. Paul established the thesis that Christians are children of the Father, heirs and co-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:15-17). With such status Christians like Christ have overcome poverty and are subjects of unceasing feasting and unquantifiable wealth; the kind Paul described in 1Cor. 2:9. Sometimes this identity of Christ becomes so overbearing that the whole events that led up to this status is forgotten. Christ then would seem a thunderbolt across the sky of humanity, a sudden explosion that happened entirely without warning. The royal figure of Ps. 110 prefigured Christ but did not paint a balanced picture of his royalty as did Paul (Phil. 2:6-11). It is important to note that before the exposé of Paul he first admonished “Let the same mind be in you that was found in Christ Jesus” (v. 5).

Without this Pauline variation, it is easy to lead the Nigerian Christian away from the demands of the Christian faith. Majority of Nigerians wallow in the doldrums of poverty; mired in the slums and ghettos and reputed as low lives. A royal feel is a welcome escape from the consciousness and real crushing of poverty which sets itself constantly before them. It is the kind of the Nigerian pastor that Karl Marx was addressing when he referred to religion as opiate. The overall concern of the Nigerian pastor seem to be to momentarily jolt the Nigerian-Christians from the gloom of defeat in poverty that constantly looms all around into the feel of richness and royalty; causing them to accept the reality of that phantasm at least as herald to its actual fulfillment in their lives. It would not be surprising to see a Nigerian pastor asking his congregation, in a prayer session, to begin to dramatize or demonstrate that which they demand of God. Then people will begin to demonstrate in silence. One would easily read those who desired cars by the aerobic

driving they do, those who want to get out of the country by the flipping of arms indicating flying, those who want to marry by their romancing and kissing the air around them, those who want children by the projection of their bellies supported with their arms from behind their waists and so forth. Alighting from such moments the pastor now tells them that it is done. In other words they have already gotten that which they demonstrated. For the majority of these people, everything that needed to be done is complete and next was to see it happen, the absence of which is caused by an enemy who must be fought to a halt and it is the pastor once again who spearheads that fight.

Poverty, insecurity, marginalization, social restiveness, disease and so forth in Nigeria are such that the individual that is directly ached by them cannot do anything about them or better put is no longer motivated to do something about them. Whatever effort government is making in recent times to change the situation is like a drop in an ocean. The man on the street who feels it seems not to be at tune with such efforts, so he appeals to the religious for solution. The Christological approach based on Jesus as royalty in the Nigerian situation may be escapist. Escapism can only offer a temporary relief from the harshness of the real thing. The panacea to the real thing is much more than soothing the surface. In as much as Jesus is royalty and Christians are coheirs with him, it culminates in soothing the wound when those Christians are not connected to the requiring human struggles that bring it about. Jesus is a typical heir-apparent who knew and undertook the struggle required to inherit that which was destined. If Christians are at home with their status as predestined (Rom. 8:29) without involving themselves with the onerous task of deserving and earning it, they may not merit it. Unfortunately, most Christians develop the consciousness of this extended royalty but are not in the least aware that it goes with huge responsibility.

In this section, we deliberately treated two Christological models within Nigerian Christian experience. On the one hand to underline the innermost desire of the Nigerian to have his/her immediate circumstance changed. On the other hand to underscore the avenue open to him/her to do this. In the first there is the consciousness of royalty and all the pomp and pageantry that go with it. In the second that royalty can only come about by miracle or a stroke of divine/spiritual imposition of will over his/her situation. Ironically this will is dictated by the beneficiary (Nigerian-Christian) who possesses the means of manipulating the benefactor (God) or has the option of appealing to the pastor to do the same.

Introducing Jesus as Folk Christological Model

Most of the Christological titles of Jesus are echoes from the years of his public ministry and post resurrection experiences of his immediate followers. Many African theologians have also invented models from African thought patterns, worldviews and culture.

African theologians have come up with different paradigms for Christ like: victor or Chief, suffering Christ, Christ a healer, liberator, Christ in kinship, our ancestor, and even Christ as our guest. I am not of the opinion that there should be consensus with regard to a suitable paradigm for Christ. Therefore, I do not believe that there is a Christological crisis due

to the existence of so many paradigms, as Schoffeleers seems to suggest. Africa is diverse, so it is not possible to find the paradigm that would be suitable for every African situation (Emeakaroha 2006).

In as much as the present writer agrees with Emeakaroha that there is no crisis, that crisis must be understood in terms of ideological conflicts. At the same time, as has been said earlier, African Christology is product of existential experiences, and this is not the same at all times and places in Africa.

Community/Neighbourhood Involvement for Thirty Years: In line with these thoughts, in consideration of the seemingly neglected years of Jesus' life on earth and the critical evaluation of the Nigerian situation, we introduce the Jesus as Folk Christological model in answer to the peculiar Nigerian situation. Here we encounter Jesus from the purview of his Galilean neighbourhood reflexes fully aware that he lived there for at least thirty years; thirty years scantily accounted for in the gospels and did most of his public ministry there among fellow slum-dwellers. The only elaborate biblical account of the period was given by Luke (Lk. 2: 51-52). What further we may derive from that account is that Jesus through those years was involving himself with the culture and lifestyle of his people, experiencing the life conditions around his neighbourhood, acquainting himself with folks; connecting especially with their suffering, pain, shortcoming, weaknesses and so forth while nurturing a consuming passion to offer a once-for-all solution.

Jesus grew up in Nazareth which was a Jewish enclave in the Galilean territory. Nazareth may not be called destitute but it was relatively poor and overpopulated; there was scarcity of natural resources and absence of fertile soil. There is no doubt such a situation is good ground for sicknesses, diseases and hoodlumism. Yet growing up in the family of craftsmen and carpenters, Jesus may have enjoyed a reasonable socio-economic class within that neighbourhood. This explains why he was able to attend the Jewish school to get acquainted with the Jewish scriptures and Aramaic. Nevertheless, this little edge he had over fellow slum-dwellers is not the point which this work pays attention to more than his Galilean consciousness that made him choose ten of his closest followers from there and the folk consciousness in those whom he chose that made them concentrate more on emulating Jesus than on appealing to his power (Matt. 14:28, Jn. 13:15). It should be noted that outside Nazareth, other parts of the Galilean territory were peopled by gentiles; true to the words of Isaiah (Is. 9:1). Nevertheless, it was indubitable that Galilee was underrated by the Jews living in Jerusalem where Jesus visited very sparingly; at most four times in his lifetime.

Meanwhile Jesus, in these thirty years may have been acquainted with the Jewish history of invasions and defeat – Assyria (721 BCE), Babylon (586 BCE), Greece (326 BCE) and Rome (63 BCE); the Egyptian bondage and the consequent liberation struggle led by Moses. He lived the experience of Herodian dictatorship and lawlessness; the optional gangsterism of fellow Galilean dwellers to counter the social injustice that ruled the day. He witnessed fellow slum-dwellers die in their numbers with hunger, sicknesses and diseases which would easily be cured and taken care of; widows, orphans and abused women living at the mercy of environmental hostilities.

Remarkably Jesus grew up in a kind of Nigeria and in a part like Nigeria's typical sub-urban areas. He had the option of being aloof since he could manage his way to the best of the life afforded in the slum or even relocate to Jerusalem in search of greener pastures as many Nigerians do. Rather he was involved but did not involve himself in the slum life. He evolved from the rotten environs with deep-seated compassion and zeal to change the situation. His movement to Jerusalem marked the beginning of his confrontation with the real issues of Jewish life and his determination to break years of laxity and institutionalized defiance to God's plans for the Jews. He was determined to change things with the price of his life which he was ready to pay and the demand of which he clearly saw coming; but he believed in that cause and in God whom he understood as Father. Within this frame of thought, it was not his miracles but his teachings and practical life which marked Jesus off from other prophets. For instance:

The derivation of Jesus as Folk Christology using the Igbo paradigm of Nwanna/Nwannee

The Nature of Folk in Igbo Culture: In Igbo culture like in every other African setting, kinship bond determines the nature of relationships; areas of strength and weakness (Olisa 2002). The individual is basically a member of *Ezinaulo* (family). *Ezinaulo* is made up of "a number of closely related individuals that included husbands, wives, uncles, nephews, cousins, household servants and other individuals who, as a result of several years of fruitful settlement in a particular Igbo community, became naturalized citizens" (Nwosu 2002). A couple of *Ezinaulo* make up *Umunna Imeulo*. *Umunna Imeulo* is made up of at least two generations of bloodily related people. A number of *Umunna Imeulo* builds up to *Imenne* (*Imenne* is based on the presumption that the progenitor of the *Umunna* is a polygamist). Meanwhile a few *Imenne* make up the *Umunna*. *Umunna* is the whole community of progenies of an identifiable progenitor. It is the basic Igbo community defined as closely related by blood (most times in a patrilineal culture). Olisa (2002) also averred:

... each UMUNNA contains several kindreds and acts independently as a separate unit in a large range of matters. Common ancestral origin is more easily traceable at this level than at the village level; thus in many towns, the sub-village names have the prefix UMU – (children of so and so – Green, 1947).

Marriage cannot be contracted between two people from the same *Umunna*. Every individual becomes a bonafide part of the village or the town to the extent to which he is endorsed and validated by *Umunna*. The Igbo cannot compromise his membership of *Umunna* under the pain that he becomes a vagabond. *Nwannaa* is the nametag given to every (male) member of *Umunna*. *Nwannaa* is a concept that contains in it closeness, familiarity, informality and susceptibility. When the Igbo call another '*Nwannaa*', he seems to be saying to him 'Buddy or Homie'; even though not exactly because *Nwannaa* beyond being a nametag, evokes a strong feeling that breaks all strangeness, rancor or suspicion. *Nwannaa* is free to come into another's house anytime without invitation, has unlimited access to food and shelter without charge, is accountable to another for his life; they look up to each

other for support. On the other hand there is *Nwannee*. *Nwannee* is both effeminate and familiar in a sense that it seeks a maternal connection which often times is even of closer knit than *Nwannaa*. At the same time outside that effeminacy or familiarity, *Nwannaa* and *Nwannee* evokes the same folk sensibilities. Membership of *Umunna* is the basic social security of the Igbo. Ideally, every successful *Nwannaa* or *Nwannee* regards it a bounden duty to tutelage others in the same path of success he/she has been through. If one *Nwannaa* or *Nwannee* is a businessman, it is a common practice that he/she takes as many members of his *Umunna* as possible to train and start them off in the same business he does; so also it is for the civil servant and so forth. A successful *Nwannaa* or *Nwannee* is therefore an iconic figure who sets the pace for a good moral life, lifestyle and even faith affiliations; he is emulated by a good number of people growing up in the *Umunna*. Such *Nwannaa* gives his resources, time, good will and services to others free of charge like they were the reason for all his struggles. *Nwannaa* is at home with the history, culture and tradition of his *Umunna*; participating in their life and taking pride in identifying with the *Umunna*. *Nwannaa* or *Nwannee* is properly speaking a folk; on of or among kiths and kin.

Emmanuel as Folk in the like of *Nwannaa/Nwannee*: *Jesus is a Galilean folk (Nwannaa/Nwannee)*. It was the Prophet Isaiah who projected the idea of the Messiah as 'Emmanuel' (Is. 7:14) and Matthew categorically stated that the birth of Jesus was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah (Matt. 1:23). Matthew started his gospel with the genealogy of Jesus to root him among his earthly folks; the rest of his story highlights the immanence of Jesus and his humanity. Clearly Matthew was addressing a Jewish audience who would better understand Jesus as folk. The letter to the Hebrews in describing the priestly office of Jesus again underscored his humanity (Heb. 2:17) and stated the implications of that humanity (Heb. 4:15). Matthew will even make his fellow Jews question: "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?" (Matt. 13:55). Yet Matthew and very many Galileans did not fail to see the Messiah dimension of Jesus' personality especially as fulfillment of ancient prophecies in spite of their abundant acquaintance with his humanity.

Jesus spent all his life in the Galilean Neighbourhood. Although *Nwannaa/Nwannee* does not include the demand to spend ones whole life among his kiths and kin but that Jesus did underscores him as a folk man with local blend. First of all for thirty years he was interacting with the culture, religion, philosophy, language, history and morality of his folks. He was cultivating love for them and connecting with them at a very deep level. He made thirty years of effort to make them not only look up to him but believe in him and his mission. They so knew him that they can address him as "*Di anyi*" ("*Di anyi*" is the Igbo colloquial rendition of "*Homie*"). The word is often used among people of the same age group to depict an unrestrained and unrestrictive closeness like 'fella' and 'buddy'. It is *Nwannaa/Nwannee* with an air of emphasis) without diminishing his messianic significance.

Jesus was a successful Folk. As such, it is not by accident that he took ten of his twelve apostles from among his folks. He needed to carry them along and make them inheritors of his enterprise. These were men who will not look at Jesus

as beneficiaries will benefactor, but see in this partnership reasons to live like Jesus lived especially giving their lives like Jesus did for the sake of their other folks whose salvation they believed workable and possible through such sacrifices. Jesus allowed them unrestricted access to his heavenly treasures to the extent that he made them co-heirs (Rom. 8:17) and unreservedly bequeathed them with his earthly assets. However, it will also be so for all those who through them may become members of Jesus' company (Jn. 17:20).

Jesus was positively disposed to Jewish culture and language. Jesus did not give an elitist approach to his appreciation and evaluation of the Jewish language and culture. He always presents as folk. He will go with his mother to the wedding at Cana (Jn. 2:1-12). He even did the *Bar Mitzvoth* ceremony of initiation (Lk. 2:41ff) and continued to attend the Sabbath (Mk. 3:1-6, Jn 5:1-18) and the Passover (Jn. 1:13ff). He knew and observed the customs and tradition of his people; connecting with his followers at that level while directing them to their real spirit and essence.

The Operations of Jesus as Folk

Jn. 2:3 – “*They have no wine*”. In John’s account of the wedding at Cana, Mary presents a typical Galilean scenario. It is important to note in a stride that Mary has also cultivated an deep-seated compassion for the situation of her neighbourhood and is ready to turn things around with every opportunity she had. In a situation where there is hunger, occasions like wedding offer opportunity for free food and in such neighbourhood, most often, attendance may not be strictly on invitation. In such environment it will also be normal experience for people to form the habit of taking Alcohol, [Depressants](#), [Hallucinogens](#), [Opiates](#) and [Stimulants](#) because of their obvious temporary consciousness-switching effect to allay the multidimensional painful harsh life-situations. This was the first miracle that Jesus performed – Turning water into wine – to gladden the heart of those who are soaked in this pain. This is the beginning of Jesus’ show of compassion for the condition of life he has experienced. For the rest of his life on earth, he did not go away to Jerusalem even when he was well equipped to migrate there to gain a place among the leading men of society. His life was an encouragement for his fellow slum-dwellers and a challenge to the highly-placed who tried severally to silence him. Jesus’ show of compassion is a reflex which most times is directed to fellows while the high class of society is understood as the cause of their suffering. This folk mentality is also observable in Jesus’ approach to the social ills of his time. This work proposes to emphasize that aspect of Jesus’ self-denial which made his compassion tangible.

Matt. 8:20 and **Lk. 9:58** – “*Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests; but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head.*” This was Jesus’ reply to a scribe who had witnessed the miracle of curing Peter’s mother-in-law of fever and decided to become a disciple of Jesus. Remember the scribes and the Pharisees were front-liners in upholding the status quo which was rife with programs of impoverishment and marginalization of everyday people. Perhaps he wanted to acquire more powers. With this reply of Jesus, following him would be uninteresting and worthless in the consideration of that scribe; but that was true

about Jesus. It is only a homie in the slum neighbourhood who can live such conditions and survive it. Even that evident asceticism did not distract his focus on doing the right things taunted often as he was. From the on-set Jesus understood his mission as a self-sacrifice in which there is nothing material to gain; a mission to die for a cause. In every situation he would not allow himself to be found wanting in perfection. Obviously the people saw him as one of them. He even left the little comfort his family background could afford him to stay among those who were worse off. He knew that the style of life they lived even when they were compelled by their obvious situation could be changed and he could lay down the example of this change for them to follow. Those who followed him, like every average destitute, understood him as a benefactor at the initial stage; a miracle worker who had answer to their immediate needs; they may not have known that he would do as much as lay down his life to prove a point – that that which he professes and preaches he is ready to defend with his life. He showed that earthly possession was not part of his quest; he was driven by the passion to change things at the cost of his own life.

Lk 7:36-50: This is the story of Jesus' meal at the house of a Pharisee. The woman who was a sinner shed tears on his leg, wiped it with her hair, anointed his leg and kissed it. The Pharisees' reaction was informed by his knowledge of Jewish ritual laws and his socio-economic disposition being highly placed as he was. Here Jesus goes beyond that to teach something else. He lifted the Pharisee from rituals to morals and affirmed his own prerogative to forgive sins. If Jesus grew up among Jewish nobles, he would have learnt simple norms of their ethical values, the kind expected by the Pharisee from Jesus. Even beyond that ethics, he could not place Jesus' claim to prophecy within the categories of judgment very well known to him. As far as he is concerned, Jesus lacked the basic prophetic instinct for which he should have detected the kind of person this woman is and then behave accordingly. Jesus rather showed a high degree of *apatheia* and *ataraxia* in his various encounters with Jewish authorities. These two Greek concepts are associated with people who live a higher consciousness. By them they appear unaffected by ordinary situation that agitate, prick or unsettle the minds and bodies of ordinary folks. Most times, it takes very high moral ideals to sustain the disposition of *apatheia* and *ataraxia*. Jesus exhibited the heights of these dispositions during his arrest, trial and crucifixion. He knew that it is only his death that will open up the can of worms of social injustice, poverty, sicknesses, disease and most of all the insensitivity of the leaders and people in authority to these realities in their environment. He had everything it takes to free himself from it, he was even offered the opportunity to shy away from it but his resilience was overwhelming. It is his reflexes trained by involvement with the harsh situation of his buddies that made him understand that life and death are the same when one operates the mystical terrains of truth, love, justice and compassion. Engaged with the material wealth and bodily wellbeing, the scribes, Pharisees, chief priests, authorities and leaders of the people have lost the taste for these. They can only understand it in terms of the promotion of their own material advantages.

Advocacy for Folk Pastors in contrast with Nigerian Pastors

This paper is of the opinion that Nigerian Pastoral Theology should take cue from this Jesus as Folk Christological model and train pastors who will evolve from the real Nigerian experience and have the resilience to live within the provisions of its harshness. Rev. Martin Luther King, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Pope Francis, Archbishop Oscar Romero and many others are examples of pastors who emerged with fellas from the neighbourhood of ordinary folks and were involved in the everyday experience of the common buddies. These pastors chart a simple lifestyle and live moderate lives in the midst of members of their congregation; engaging themselves in practical activities that lead to change and better human conditions. They knew the pleasure of wealth and good social amenities but counted the liberation and emancipation of the buddies as prior. These people can be sharply distinguished from Nigerian pastors who in the course of ministry transform into industry. Nigerian pastors like the Nigerian politicians are ‘uptown’ men who are identified by their affluence and comfortable blend into the Nigerian *société la crème*. Some of them possess as many as four private jets and control businesses worth millions of dollars. They ape the image of the Christ they preach and one does not need to look very far to see the possibilities of manipulations, dubiety and falsehood they may portend to uphold the image they paint of themselves. The typical Nigerian pastor is the man on the stage that nobody cares to ask about or inquire into his life beyond his stage performance. He is the movie star whose character is superscripted over above the real person who bears and acts it out. This has reduced Nigerian religiosity to theatricals and Nigerian Christians to *dramatis personae*. The whole issue about religion has become an abysmal emptiness that the Christ being sought is missed out entirely in the exercise. While the external shows and drama is on, the real business of transformation and change is the product of master-minded manipulations and clandestine engineering. Many a pastors have been victims of fraudulent swindling because they involve themselves in many shady deals to maintain their public image.

Conclusions and Suggestions

The Nigerian failed state (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012) is a kind of Galilee. Insecurity, social injustice, political turmoil, ethnic discrimination, sectional marginalization, corruption, leadership by manipulation and so forth are the order of the day. The pastor is the sole hope of the average Nigerian who dwells the religious world of Africa. Meanwhile the Pew survey of 2011 shows that 50.8% of the Nigerian population is made up of Christians. This is a warning signal that if that population is not guided by an effective theology that aims at profound nation building, the demise of the populace is imminent. An effective theology in the Nigerian situation must convince the Nigerian of the obligation to focus on the possible change of their social-economic conditions and that it is achievable by employing themselves to the work of bringing this change about. The analysis of the Christological currents existent in Nigeria has shown some deficiencies. They have produced Christians who are not sincere with themselves and the system, who judge themselves impotent in the face of the Nigerian problems, who point away to other sources in their search for soluble Nigerian problems. Such Christians are totally

incapacitated to face the Nigerian problem. It is in the face of this that this paper suggests the Jesus as Folk Christology which presented Christ as a Galilean homie. This way it was able to bring Galilee and Nigeria side by side; Jesus side by side Nigerian pastors. Jesus was able to save Galilee for all those who keyed into his folk-motivated and oriented ministry expressed in his manifesto initially uttered by Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour (Lk. 4:18-19).

It is possible for Nigerian pastors and Christians to save Nigeria from this catastrophic failure. The key is to adopt the right idea, interpretation and practice of our Christian faith.

Most of our seminaries produce priests who dream of comfortable houses, cars and seeming bourgeois life. It is time they aimed at producing pastors who are at home with the Nigerian situation and who are ready to give their lives to make it better. Nigeria needs pastors not priests; priests are at home with the traditional rituals of Christianity but pastors translate the gospel they preach into the life they live and cause others to do the same. Priests are descendants and successors of the Pharisees and priests of Jesus' time whom he vehemently fought and who in spite of themselves did not recognize in him the Messiah they were expecting. They rather spearheaded his assassination in favour of the rituals they are so used to. If Jesus comes again, the same things were going to happen again because the priests have erred. Pastors should be the soldiers of the flawed neighbourhood of Nigeria and humanity; inspired by the adverse conditions of human living to lead a turn-around in the live-conditions of their fellow buddies.

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