

THE EKKLESIA AND BASILEIA CONCEPTS: A SYNERGY FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Ekklesia and Basileia are concepts with divine origin intended for the colonization of the earth for God's will and government. The Ekklesia which is said to be the assembly of people for a kingly assignment has the mandate to propagate the Kingdom values and cultures. This paper using exegetical tools is an attempt to properly position the Ekklesia as realm in which the Kingdom is manifested. This paper holds the church up as the tool of Basileia in sharpening the nation morally, ethically, spiritually and economically so as to position the total man for a relevant development in Nigeria. The church is therefore expected to be conscious of her identity and keep in focus her source and reasons for existence in Nigeria so as to be relevant in the national development.

Introduction

The Synergy of Ekklesia and Basileia can be very productive in the development of any nation. The concepts were not invented by man but by God who wished to introduce His government on earth as it is clearly depicted the first creational mandate for man "Let them have dominion over the earth ...". So, God's plan was to extend His heavenly Kingdom (government) to the earth through the principle of mission. Man who is to team up with God has the assignment to establish the influence and culture of heaven on earth. Consequently God chose to elect men and women in the ecclesiastical setting as agents and vessels of this mission of the earth. It is clear that some of Man's effort to bring about this government independent of God through religious institutions including Christianity, Islam, Hinduism or whatever, have only devastated and impoverished our nation leaving it as desert void of meaningful development. This paper seeks to investigate exegetically into the concepts of the *Ekklesia* and *Basileia* originating from the mind of God as revealed in the Holy writ as tools for bringing the influence on the earth, our States and nations for meaningful development.

Concept Analysis

Ecclesia:

Ecclesia is an Old Testament concept. In the Septuagint the Ekklesia which is ek-kaleo “to call” refers to a congregation or an assembly that can also be referred to “kahal” or “edah”. The Septuagint uses the word synagogue for the Hebrew word “edah”. Both “Kahal” and “edah” are often treated in Hebrew as synonyms. Parsons (2008) contends that Greek translators were not consistent in translating “Kahal” for they often choose Ekklesia and at other times they choose synagogue. But Kahal has the idea of general assembly while “edah” has the idea of assembling at a specific time for a particular purpose at specific places. So it will be right to say that “kahal” is a group while “edah” is an assembly called together for a specific purpose often for a meeting with the Lord God of Israel.

This etymological investigation raises the question “if the New Testament concept of the church is the translation of the Ekklesia”? The New Testament Ekklesia is definitively the group of ‘called out people’ in consonant with God through their trust in Christ. The church is therefore made of people who have confessed and believed in the Lordship of Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh, died, buried and was raised from the dead. Thus, Ekklesia is the assembly of people as the people of God’s own possession. The use of the church in Matthew 16:18, 18:18, by Jesus looked back to the Old Testament’s idea of God’s people. According to Granz (2000) following this Old Testament as well as secular usage, early Christians saw themselves as a people belonging to God: the called out, ones in Christ for the proclamation of the gospel. Munroe (2006) believed that Jesus came to restore the Kingdom of heaven on earth and not to establish a religion. The first step is to establish this Kingdom in the hearts of men. That is, bring men under the colonizing influence of heaven by using the church as vessels of colonization.

Basilica (The Kingdom)

The concept of the Kingdom of God is central to the message of the scriptures. It was Jesus’ primary message as He declared “Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand”. This concept is seen in all cracks of theologies and practical issues like the End times, the nature of the church, daily life of the kingdom citizens, the destiny of Israel, present expectations, the relevance of the church in the world, the contemporary challenges of the church’s influence in the world, transforming culture and Christian political influence. There are varieties of emphasis on the Kingdom. It is seen as both present and yet a future inheritance (Matt 12:28, 1 Cor. 15:5). It is seen as a spiritual experience through new birth, a government that orders the nations of the world. Ladd (1964) argued that “no simple explanation can do justice to such a rich but diverse variety of teaching”.

Scholars emphasize two aspects of the Kingdom of God i.e. the Kingdom of God is depicted as the rule of God and the Kingdom as a realm. Both should be held in a balance even though an emphasis is on one over the other. As a definitive attempt, the Kingdom of God is primarily a realm where Jesus is the King. The New Testament passages however stresses on subjects and government. The Kingdom must tangibly point to governing Kingdom with subjects and a new order. If it is primarily the reign of God which can be seen as abstract, Jesus' usage of this concept would mean that Jesus is communicating a present spiritual realm that will one day materialize into a consummated physical realm.

However, the two main biblical words i.e. "malekut" and "Basileia" brings out clearly these meanings. The Hebrew word 'Malekut' is Kingdom first as abstract (God's reign) and then concrete realm. Ladd (1964), opine that the majority of the uses of 'Malekut' in Jewish literature show the abstract meaning of God's rule while only infrequently it is used to refer to the sphere that God reigns. Vine (2001) demonstrates that Basileia is primarily an abstract noun denoting sovereignty, royal power, dominion, by metonym as a concrete noun denotes the territory or people over whom a King rules. It is used especially of the Kingdom of God and of Christ. The Kingdom of God is the sphere of God's rule (Ps. 22:28, 145:13, Luke 1:52, Rom 13:1, 2). The earth, including our nation is the scene of universal rebellion against God. Yet we know and believe that God has not relinquished His sovereignty in the face of rebellion, (both demonic and human) but has declared His purpose to establish His kingdom where He demands willing obedience. He gave his land to nations and has appointed Kings to administer His Kingdom over the nations. The Kingdom of God is spoken in two tenses in the scriptures- 'The Kingdom of God has come and is among us', Mk. 1:14-15, Luke 11:21-22, and 'the Kingdom of God is coming' Mk. 14:25, Matt. 26:29.

However, the Kingdom of God and the church are inseparably related for Ladd (1964) argued that the Kingdom creates the Church and the church bears witness to the Kingdom. The Kingdom is the reign of God while the Church is the realm where God reigns. The church is the instrument and custodian of the Kingdom. The church is a concrete manifestation of God's sovereign rule among men. Ridderbos (1980) opines that the Kingdom is the whole of God's redeeming activity in Christ in this world and the church is the assembly of those who belong to Jesus Christ. The church is smaller and the Kingdom is larger circle with Jesus Christ as the center.

It is therefore proper to state that the whole idea of this Ekklesia and Basileia is all about God's government, the government of Heaven; a kingdom with God as the King. One must state categorically here that this concept has nothing to do with religion or an organization of any sort but a King and His Kingdom. This is the oldest form of government and the only one that is divine. It is God-invented. Munroe (2006), states that a Kingdom is simply a

domain over which a king has rulership. Heaven was the first domain that God created, from there God decided to extend this domain to another realm which is the earth. He deliberately chose this planet as the tangible location of his Kingdom's colony. He placed humans created in His image to dominate the earth for Him. This colony was lost through rebellion. Man has continued to struggle to get it back through all forms of religious activities. These religious moves have only devastated the earth and impoverished man. This is reflected in the series of religious crisis and all the killings in the name of religions.

At the fall of man and his lost of his Kingdom mandate in this colony, the King of the Kingdom moved fast into action to restore what man lost – the kingdom. Man, did not lose religion but a Kingdom. So religion is an invention of man, born out of his own personal efforts to find God and restore the Kingdom on his own. (Gen. 3:15.) God states "*I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike His heel*" This was the King's confrontation of the devil that indicated that, there would be one specific offspring who would strike a fatal blow against Lucifer and his schemes by crushing his head. This singular offspring: – the man Jesus Christ of Nazareth appeared thousands of years ago as the Son of God embodied in human flesh. At his appearing in the scene, space-time and history, His message was not about the formation of religion but of the Kingdom (Matt. 4:17). In order to restore this kingdom back to man, He first had to deal with the matter of man's rebellion against God. This He did through his death on the cross where he paid the price for man's rebellion. Through this, He restored man to a right standing with God: the King of the kingdom and reinstalled our original and rightful place as rulers of the earthly domain. Munroe (2006) would contend that the cross of Christ is the doorway that gets us back into the Kingdom. The cross of Christ is all about Kingdom restoration, it is about restoration of power and authority, and it is about our regaining rulership – that is the Gospel.

National Development

It is not out of place to briefly talk about national development from the approach of this paper. Levi and Harinden (1982) understood development as a long-term improvement in the standard of living. The economist will see this as economic growth in monetary value of goods and services. There could be economic growth without relevant development especially where majority of the masses, did not benefit from such economic growth. Onwuliri (2008) contend that development goes beyond the narrow lines of economic and material advancement. It is all encompassing. The synergy of both Ecclesia and Basileia should aim at the development of the total man, whether emotional, psychological, spiritual, economic, educational etc. The aim of the development of the total man is to adequately position him to maximally

appropriate the benefits of life in the Kingdom. With such development man will relevantly affect his environment positively.

The Synergy for National Development

As stated earlier the idea of Kingdom is God's idea. This is reflected in the creational mandate for man;

Then God said "let us make man in our image in our likeness and let them rule (or have dominion) over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth and over all the creatures that move along the ground (Gen. 1:26)

We see that this is the mandate to rulership Kingdom, sovereign rule or government. So that creational mandate was to establish a government on the earth that will destroy chaos.

Now the earth was formless (no order) and empty (chaotic emptiness), darkness was over the surface of the deep and the spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said "let there be light and there was light" (Gen. 1:2-3)

The need for the impact of divine government is glaring especially because of the disorder, emptiness, darkness and chaos. Such government is to maintain productive order and management. Therefore, it is proper to say the purpose for man's creation was to subdue this territory with the government of God. The lost of his dominion on this earth (territory) to the devil moved God to initiate for a re-colonization. Munroe (2008), therefore holds that the

Kingdom is the governing authority of a king over his territory impacting it with his own will, purpose and intent producing a citizenry of people who reflect the morals, values and lifestyle.

So the Ecclesia is meant to reverse Adam's failure in tending the garden. God planted citizens of His heavenly country here as immigrants on earth, so they can turn it into conclave of Heaven. The Ekklesia is to include the immigrants whose lives individually and collectively should reflect the culture of the higher kingdom of God. So the church is to be distinct manifesting the culture of the heavenly Kingdom.

However, the manifestation of the Heavenly Kingdom's culture will impact positively in a national development. A review of such Kingdom culture will reveal the following:

Kingdom Values: These are those things that a society sees as valuable and worth protecting, preserving and passing on to the next generation. The church is confronted with other values conflicting with the culture of the Kingdom of

God such contracting values like divorce, gay/same sex marriages, personal pervasion and political ungodliness. As the Kingdom's representatives, the church is not to compromise the Kingdom's standard (See 1 Cor. 5:1-2, 9-13). God's Kingdom's culture manifests in godly values which are never surrendered, compromised or watered down for any reason. The foundation of God's throne is righteousness and justice (Ps.89:14) A nation is developed when it is built on the values of honesty, morality, justice and fairness. The values of this culture are further revealed in human dignity, freedom, truth, knowledge, personal responsibility and stewardship. Harmatic (1983), reports that a nation is built by common civil values, common symbols, common sense of progress, equality before the law, mutual respect for others and tolerance and freedom. These are highly esteemed values in God's Kingdom culture. The church as belonging to this culture is to reflect these values.

Kingdom Attitudes: The culture of the Kingdom of God is further revealed in the Be-attitudes. This lifestyle attitude of the citizens of the kingdom is that of love, forgiveness, peace that passes all understanding. The church should be the mouth piece or prophet of the Kingdom in condemning contrary attitude while propagating the desirable attitudes of the kingdom. Like the prophets of the Old Testament who spoke in the name of God and denounced people's actions and attitudes: such as the acts of murder, adultery, idolatry and oppressions. The ecclesia in Nigeria should similarly stand as prophets to speak out against such vices in our land. Uwalaka (2008) believes that prophetic mission of the church in our generations should here involve confrontation denunciations of the causes of social and political oppression in the land. This prophetic mission should include the pursuit of justice for the poor and the oppressed. This is because injustice does not just constitute a serious violation of the will of God but also destroys the potential of the oppressed in Nation building.

Kingdom Response: Munroe (2008) believes that culture is revealed in the way people respond to each other especially to provocation or mistreatment. The world around the church clamors for revenge for mistreatment, yet the Kingdom culture manifests love, forgiveness and tolerance (Rom. 12:19-21, Matt. 5:38-45). The church is the only epitome of peace having as her King the Prince of Peace. The first pronounced blessing on the church by the resurrected prince of peace is "Peace be upon you". So the church has continued to preach, seek for peace all over the world. The church's response of peace at the face of deliberate terrorism against her is the only reason for our national unity. If the church will respond like the world, the nation Nigeria will have been deleted from the world map through violence. The inculcation of culture of peace from the Kingdom is a strong tool for our national development.

Kingdom Morality: The nature and health of any culture is reflected in the moral climate it encourages. A culture that winks at and ignores prostitution, adultery, pornography, homosexuality, cohabitation, pregnancies out of wedlock, abortion, squandering of public funds, political thuggery, kidnapping, murder and robbery is on the verge of extinction. The Ekklesia is the bearer of the moral conscience of the society. Ezenweke and Kanu (2012) see the Church as the bearer of moral vision and moral force by bringing into the public arena the revealed truth of Christ. The church sets the standard and preaches the essence of sound morality; she is the custodian of the gospel truth and so through it provides the principle for correct order of social life. The church is to mould the character of the society which in turn produces a good society that is very relevant for genuine development. To Jude (2008) the church should achieve this by distancing herself from scandalous and embarrassing characters and behaviours. The church as the conscience of the society should be as the vigilant watchman to sound alarm against the forces of evil. The church should constantly awaken the people from the moral complacency. She is the standard for moderation and restraint.

Recommendations

- The church should both preach the Kingdom's values and practice same for effective development of the total man and the nation in general.
- The church in a democratic nation like Nigeria should rise to defend our national democracy. Hence declare war against bad and evil politicians some of who are members of the church.
- Part of the values of the Kingdom culture is stewardship and accountability. The church should therefore demonstrate accountability and demand for the same from her elected members into public offices.
- The church should take up her teaching ministry for her members especially the teaching on the Kingdom lifestyle. This will help the members imbibe these kingdom values which will enable them lead better lives and so be more productive in the society.
- The church is vested with the authority of bringing into bear the will of God; she is the intermediary between celestial and terrestrial realms. She should not relent in praying for the will of the Kingdom to be manifested.
- The church should bear in mind that she is an emigrant, assembled together for a particular purpose which is colonizing this earth for the King. Consequently, the church should not be carried away by the world and worldliness.

Conclusion

The church as the propagating voice and force of the Kingdom is historically a possession of God: a people assembled for a purpose. The vocation of this Ekklesia is the very redemptive work of God. This is reflected in all the Bible images of the church as the people of God who should priestly, prophetically and kingly propagate the Kingdom values. The God of the Bible and the Gospel of the Kingdom are proven efficient and vibrant agents of transformation in every aspect that ensures the growth and vitality of Nigeria. The church in Nigeria should be the preserving and sweetening salt and the lightening light of this nation in every aspect through God and the gospel of the Kingdom.

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