Breaking the Yoke of Economic Dependency in Africa: Insights from Pauline Corpus on the Ecclesiastical Role

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Abstract

The yoke of dependency refers to the belief that an individual or a nation cannot handle their problems without the intervention of others; the attitude of avoiding or neglecting personal responsibility and relegating it to others. This attitude has made Africa neglect its moral duty and fail to tap into the valuable resources for its development. This paper interrogates Apostle Paul's approach to the gospel ministry, which has significant implications for breaking the yoke of dependency in Africa, a situation arguably witnessed in the church. It critiques the issues that have held Africa back, feeding the warped idea of what is generally known as "the Whiteman's burden." The library-based research interrogates different perspectives on dependency from scholars within the frameworks of Apostle Paul's writings, mainly in his epistles to the Thessalonians. The study concludes that the solution to dependency solely lies in the hands of Africans. The African church needs to recognise its identity in God, be willing to work hard and tap the human and natural resources within its reach.

Keywords: Colonialism, Economic Dependency, Neocolonialism, Dependency, Pauline Epistles, Africa

Introduction

Africa's poverty and underdevelopment have evoked unprecedented responses from international bodies and summits such as the United Nations and G7. For example, in the recent G7 meeting in Hiroshima, Japan, there were protests outside the meeting hall, agitating that the gathering "was ignoring world realities" (Mutambo, 2023). Similarly, Albert M. Muchanga, the African Union's Trade Commissioner, denounced the G7 attitudes toward

Africa. He stated that Africa cannot continue to be a source of raw materials for the rest of the world, yet it wallows in poverty and underdevelopment (North African Post, 2023). Dambisa (2009) observed that Africa has continued to depend on aid and the cancellation of debts by the West for several decades. Unfortunately, despite the trillions of dollars poured into the continent, Africa still wallows in poverty and underdevelopment. Thus, she concludes that foreign aid is dead, for it has created a dependency culture.

The culture of dependency raises several questions; why should the rich world look at Africa "with a twang of conscience and a glint of opportunity. Why should it send money and experts to Africa? Why offer advice and ideas, and Africans' poor, dumb and hopeless hold their hands out in supplication" (Bindra, 2005). Why should a rich continent continue to raise its hands in supplication for aid if it only benefits the donors and not Africa? Ayittey (1999) laments that Africa is imploding and wallowing in poverty, yet it is richly endowed with some of the most valuable natural resources.

The culture of dependency has left Africans badly hurting; therefore, how the church carries on its work in this century will significantly affect hundreds of millions of lives. The magnitude of the dependency syndrome is a call for action to uproot it and reinstate Africa to the place where God would love her to be. A holistic empowerment is needed, for authentic transformation comes through proper interpretation and application of the word of God. Therefore, there is a need for biblical principles that integrate every part of a person's experience and delivers them from all that prevents them from reaching their potential in the sight of God (Batchelor, 1993).

This paper, therefore, examines the history of Africa that supposedly gave birth to the present condition. It should be recalled that the church in Africa can only be understood within the perimeters of the African continent, for it is a total of the continent's past and present experiences. Colonialism and neo-colonialisms are considered the traumatic aeons that have perpetuated the culture of dependency. Just as Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1992) and Walter Rodney (2018) assert, African literature exists in a historical continuum, and so is African dependency syndrome, which is complex and can be attributed to internal and external causes. This paper largely emphasises the internal causes by giving an overview of the challenges the church will likely face in breaking the yoke of dependency. In addition, the paper acknowledges many challenges to encounter in the process, but it focuses on unemployment and drought/famine. Finally, the article reflects on some principles that can help address the African church's dependency spirit.

Historical Survey of Dependency

Colonialism and Neocolonialism

Colonialism left psychological wounds which still hang over Africa like a threatening cloud up to date (Magesa, 1976). Colonialists' believed that Africans were inferior and unable to master the socio-economic and technological environment in order to improve their social and economic conditions (Matunhu, 2011). Such inferiority and underdevelopment were attributed to 'blackness,' Africa's traditional values and social systems. Therefore, they disregarded the African worldview and imposed Western values and social structures on Africans. This led to a shift from collectivism, 'Ubuntu philosophy,' to individualism. A change from "I am because we are" to "I am because I am." Such a shift cost Africa the ability to meet her own needs; it introduced a social order that did not have the strength and vitality needed to sustain independent nationhood. It brought the paradox of a rich yet poor continent (Turaki, 2011; Fowler, 2000; Ayittey, 1999; Kinoti, 1994; Santa Ana, 1981; Menkiti, 1984). Africa became a recipient of foreign aid, which has ultimately become an albatross around her neck (Ngwiri, 2005), limiting local participation and depriving the continent of the most crucial development resource- the creative initiative of Africans.

For example, new production and consumption patterns were introduced without factoring in the African context; cash crop production replaced Africa's traditional food production. Unfortunately, the crops introduced were foreign to the African soil and climate; hence they could not sustain the continent. Due to this, hunger-stricken areas depend on international bodies for food relief (Brereton, 2008; Ayittey, 1999). Locally produced goods were replaced with imported ones, and unequal trade relations in the global market. Since the West can transform raw materials into finished goods, it exploits and expatriates African resources and labour and determines the prices for the export of raw materials and the price for imported goods. As a result, goods are sold at high prices, depleting the capital Africa might otherwise devote to upgrading her own productive capacity (Munro, 2023).

A new system of education was introduced as a way of inculcating Western values. According to Ayittey (1999), this system was the "shibboleth of education" for it ignored vocational skills and sciences. This "consumption variety" model taught Africans how to consume foreign goods but not how to produce local goods. This way, it failed to prepare and groom Africans in the arts of knowledge, science, technology, and labour skills as tools for developing humanity and creation.

In a nutshell, colonialism robbed Africans of their native value systems and failed to replace them with anything useful other than the culture of dependency (Bidstrup, 2002). The colonial legacy is still perpetuated today through neocolonialism. Ela (1986) asserts that Africa's dependence on foreign countries is much graver than it was under colonial regimes, "The real Africa is living in a colonial situation, and its train of misery and injustice wears many faces. The formal independence of the young states mystification is simple masking of Africa's actual dependence." Concurring with Ela, Bidstrup (2002) narrates that, though "no African government would openly suggest that the West seeks to dominate Africa, in a subtle and cynical way: not for political, but for economic reasons. The large multinationals see vast resources in Africa and want those resources."

Therefore, Africa's independence did not produce independent nationhood (Turaki, 2011). Africa today has difficulty escaping its past, for the colonial night continues to cast its long shadow over the continent. The heritage of the colonisers has not been shaken off. "The 'Negros' have driven the whites out only physically. Colonial racism has left scars and mutilations in the African soul too deep for that. Traumas in the native population, resulting from long years of colonial contempt, survive independence" (Ela, 1986).

Today, previous colonising states and other powerful economic states contain a continuing presence in Africa's economies, especially where it concerns raw materials. Moreover, various first world states, notably the United States, are said to be involved too; "Investment by Multinational Corporations, on the other hand, enriches few in underdeveloped countries, and causes humanitarian devastation to the populations which inhabit neocolonies" (Obadina, 2000). Lastly, even though not widely spoken of, neo-colonialism is manifested more in foreign aid, which, according to Sowell (2005), has left many monuments of futility in Africa, "from rusting machinery and the ruins of many projects to cows sent from Europe that keeled over in the African heat." Moreover, the aid industry is helplessly dependent upon seeing an incapable Africa, lacking in agency and permanent need of external direction. This has prevented Africans from moving forward.

The Missionary Factor

The missionary efforts in Africa cannot go unnoticed. Many missionaries sacrificed their lives to bring Christianity to Africa, helped improve African education by introducing formal education, availed medical services and helped abolish the slave trade. However, the paradox is that these efforts became an economic setback due to the collaboration between the missionaries and the colonisers. Like the colonisers, missionaries' perception of the Africans

tainted their potential to be independent. They saw Africans as poor, naked and in dire need (Fowler, 1995). To salvage the situation, "they build churches for the people, shipped in Western clothes and built a spirit of dependency to the extent that Africans felt that they had nothing to give. They appointed African pastors and paid them from their support from overseas" (Chikazaza, 1997). As a result, Africans became spectators and not partners in the ministry. They were drawn in as workers and not owners together with the missionaries.

Such a perception had the following ramifications. Africans accepted the fostered false identity of regarding themselves as poor (Mazuri, 1986). Such perception did not position the missionaries strategically to use the potential of the African church for the entire body of Christ and the continent at large. On the contrary, it robbed them of

> Any psychological acumen, it lost the nerve and many sons and daughters of Africa do not trust in their God-given power to affect their own liberation . . . When the missionaries and the colonialists respectively declared an all-out war against the African church as 'primitive,' 'savage,' and 'barbaric.' . . . It dealt the coup de grace to the African personality, to "is-ness (Magesa, 1976).

The aftermath of being perceived as poor and savage was a "poverty mentality," concluding we are too poor to do anything for ourselves without outside help. Such an attitude has affected the church both physically and spiritually; "Christian ministries unwittingly are perpetuating economic dependency when they plead, just send money. . . this continues to make the national church dependent . . . it often robs the African church of its natural potential. When easy money . . . is available, very few want to explore indigenous ways of fundraising" (Smith, 2000). Thus, the more the church and the continent depend on the donor money, the less they respond to their responsibilities.

Apart from the poor perception of Africans, missionaries engaged in a one-sided gospel of winning souls. They overemphasised the focus of the gospel at the expense of its scope. It seems Christ's liberation of human life in its fullness, including the fullness of human social relations, was left out. Hence the perception that the African church does little to support itself and its members (Fowler, 1995). The missionaries failed to teach Africans how the spiritual and the physical are integrated; instead, they used Scripture to perpetuate poverty within the continent. Two verses, Matthew 5:3 and 19:24, were misread to mean that the church is for the poor and not the rich; hence, the poor felt accommodated, whereas the rich felt closed out because they have material things. Wealth became associated with hell and poverty with the Kingdom of God (Chikazaza, 1997).

The long-term consequences of the one-sided Christianity by the missionaries were as follows. The seeds sown then still bear fruit today; they have not yet produced a mature church that can reproduce herself; Africans got the gospel of salvation and not the gospel of the kingdom. The former is a kind of fire insurance ticket that guarantees passage into eternal life at the end but leaves the present more or less intact-it would not touch the economy because money was worldly and corrupt. Africans were not taught to stand up for themselves; consequently, "the African became a child whose toys must not be tampered with. In the economic, political and religious arenas, childishness still prevails" (Mnkandala, 2000). Even now, the church is still raising her hands in supplication for aid from the West to cater for her basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing. The church is still a toddler who cannot stand on her feet, utilise the vast resources within her reach, and create independent nationhood.

Africa's Setbacks Facing the African Church

Unemployment

According to Deen (2006), unemployment is defined as a situation of loss of control or helplessness or being involuntarily out of work., ILO uses the term unemployment to refer to persons of working age who are without work, though they are currently available for work and are seeking work (ILO, 2013). Many African governments see the unemployed as jobless people looking for jobs and being available for work.

Unemployment is one of the greatest challenges that predisposes the African church into a state of dependency. According to ILO (2020) report, nearly 34 million persons were unemployed in Africa in 2019. South Africa registered the highest rate of 26.5%, whereas the rates in North Africa were at 11.8%. The rate was lowest in eastern Africa at 3.8% in the same year. Statista.com, in 2021, reported an unemployment rate of 8.1% and 8% in 2022. Though the rates vary significantly across African countries, in 2021, South Africa registered the highest rate at around 34%. Djibouti and Eswatini followed, with unemployment reaching roughly 28% and 25%, respectively. On the other hand, Niger and Benin had the lowest unemployment rates in Africa.

According to Celik (2006), "Being unemployed is not only a question of being left outside of wage earning; it also means continuing a dependent lifestyle. Being dependent and being an adult simultaneously is difficult it means loss of self-confidence, motivation, basic competence, social integration, and the application and use of individual freedom and responsibility." Economically, unemployment involves the wastage of productive power and

robs people of the opportunity to contribute to society economically; their failure to participate in the labour force translates to a loss of tax revenue and their exclusion from responsible citizenship (Sen, 1997; Marelli et al., 2013) Celik highlights that "with a job, there is a future; without a job, there is a slow death of all that makes a man ambitious, industrious, and glad to be alive" (Celik, 2006). In the long run, this translates to the dependency syndrome, the "*serikali saidia"* (government to help) mentality.

Socially, unemployment leads to social, economic, cultural and spatial exclusion (Kieselbach et al., 2013). This means that as the rate of unemployment increases, the number of social network members affected increases, potentially harming many individuals (Calvo et al., 2015). Social exclusion ultimately translates to social instability, predisposing people to delinquent behaviour, including crime, robbery, prostitution, and abuse of drugs and alcohol (Sen, 1999; Hess et al., 1994). Physically and psychologically, unemployment leads to psychological devastation, which induces physical and emotional pain. It can also lead to severe health impairments and unhealthy behaviours such as substance abuse, diet, exercise, and other health-related behaviour and, in some cases, suicide (Chobli, 2022; Kieselbach et al., 2013; Kapuvari, 2011; Sobrino, 2004). Spiritually, unemployment erodes one's identity, making one feel valueless, unproductive, hopeless, and helpless; it affects their personhood and vocation. The feeling of worthiness is related to the question of identity and purpose; thus, the sense of worthlessness questions God's creation and his redemptive work in Christ Jesus. The spiritual grievance of being allowed no opportunity to contribute to the community's life and welfare places enormous responsibility on the church; it damages the spirit, just as the absence of prayer damages practical activity (Stott, 2006; Francis, 2015).

In the past, unemployment was alleged to be voluntary, so idleness was punishable by law. However, it has been recognised that the situation can arise from factors which are sometimes beyond the control of an individual; for instance, "seasonal layoffs' (e.g., in agricultural jobs), technological changes in the industry (particularly by increased automation), racial discrimination, lack of adequate skills by an individual, or fluctuations in the economy (Mocan, 1999). The seasonality of unemployment is explained by the fact that some jobs are in high demand during certain seasons only. For instance, the agricultural sector would employ workers during harvest time (Dornbusch et al., 2011).

This paper asks, "Is African unemployment voluntary or involuntarily?" However, before then, we must clarify what we mean by the two terms. Voluntary unemployment is a situation whereby individuals voluntarily either quit their existing jobs due to low wages or

they are no jobs in line with their qualifications and experience. Sometimes, people voluntarily decide not to work due to unrealistic expectations, work style preferences or reasons arising from their temperament (Özdemir, 2018; Englama, 2001). Involuntary unemployment exists because of the socio-economic environment in which individuals operate. Thus, involuntary unemployment is a "case of forced leisure", as opposed to "chosen leisure," for the unemployed are deprived of the capacity to participate in the labour market through no fault of their own. This happens in cases where there is excess labour, but the economy cannot provide enough jobs for all willing to work (De Vroey, 2004; Mitchell, 2004). According to Mirko (2005), involuntary unemployment can either stem from an excess labour supply or friction in the labour market. According to these definitions, African unemployment, in some respect, can be regarded as voluntary and involuntary.

Causes of Unemployment in Africa

Unemployment is a complex, multidimensional construct, and so are its causes. However, this paper mentions four of them that seem to be key players in the spirit of dependency. First is low economic growth, which refers to low economic activity and investment. This reduces job creation and makes labour markets unable to employ (Muiya, 2014). It also discourages private investors from investing and locks out newcomers (especially youth) out of the labour market. Citing Kenya as an example, Riech (2019) states that due to low economic growth, the nation has been unable to create job opportunities to cater for the increasing labour force of about 500,000 annually. Concurring with Riech, Apurva Sanghi, the former World Bank chief economist for Kenya, urged the government to provide a conducive business climate for private companies and create jobs (Daily Business, 11 September 2017).

Second, the changing demographics in Africa make it disproportionately difficult to find jobs. This is evident in the Kenyan context, where the UN 2017 estimated 48,609,428 and an increase of 10 million people from 2009 (Daily Business, 11 September 2017). Such an increase accelerates unemployment, for more job seekers are in the labour market than before. Third, unemployment has also been attributed to the mismatch of skills. According to Vogel (2015), "skills mismatch in the labour market describes the fact that levels or types of skills of individuals are inadequate in view of particular job requirements." Vogel further notes that such mismatch translates to a loss of valuable skills, hindering the greater productivity that could have been achieved if they were utilised accordingly. Having the wrong skills makes it hard to get a job (Kirk, 2011); those looking for employment do not have the skills required by current vacant jobs (Mallia, 2005).

Lastly, unemployment in Africa is accelerated by its post-independence structural setting, characterised by neocolonialism, as discussed earlier, with unequal trade relations in the international market. Thus, unemployment exists not because jobs are insufficient but because structural challenges in the labour market often reduce employment prospects (Freeman, 1979). These include "the development of extremely capital-intensive production processes in a country with scarce capital resources and abundant labour resources-the decline and labour-shedding practices of important primary industries such as agriculture and mining" (Alli, 2001). According to Swanepoel and Van Zyl (1999), modern technological changes and variations in consumer choices, including competition, accelerates unemployment. Such changes affect the demand and supply of labour, price and wage determination and the effectiveness of the process of job matching and searching in the labour market (Lindbeck, 2015). New technology reduces manual labour and requires only a few people to accomplish a given task or process. This results in a reduction of the workforce, leading to a low demand for labourers or employees.

Approaches to the Challenges of Unemployment

The continent has tried to face these challenges from different perspectives. First is the provision of decent employment; as Haider (2005) states, most African governments have thought decent employment will strengthen the link between economic growth and aggressive poverty and dependency reduction. The eighth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) seeks to "promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all." This is done through strengthening the capacities of all people to benefit from the opportunities of a changing world of work, strengthening the institutions of work to ensure adequate protection of all workers, and reaffirming the continued relevance of the employment relationship as a means of providing certainty and legal protection to workers. At the same time, recognise the extent of informality and the need to ensure effective action to transition to formality; and promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (ILO, October-November 2020).

Second, some African governments have started structural programmes to accommodate the unemployed. For example, the Zimbabwean government introduced an Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) to accommodate the country's two million unemployed persons (Tetsunao, 1996). ESAP aims to eliminate price controls, cut subsidies to basic goods and services prices, engage in free trade, and devaluate currencies

(Saliwe & Robert, 2000). It is hoped to address the unequal trade agreements that started in the colonial period and are perpetuated through neocolonialism.

However, these two approaches are limited due to several reasons. First, African demographics, as discussed earlier on, and the need for job creation is a massive task for the governments; to handle unemployment adequately, the African governments must create approximately nine million jobs yearly (Abdychev et al., 2018). However, instead of creating these jobs, they are using a vast amount of the continent's resources in education. Though the governments are trying hard, their educational policies of laudable programmes such as primary schooling, which results in an increase in secondary school enrolments, which has led to a proliferation of universities, is curtailing the progress (Alli, 2001). The paradox is that the beneficiaries of these resources find themselves relegated to the ranks of the unemployed instead of the employed.

Second, the structural adjustment measures are inadequate; according to IMF and World Bank, most African countries applying these structures have retrenched large numbers of public-sector workers (Alli, 2001). For example, the ESAP of Zimbabwe, as discussed above, has only led to increased unemployment as state-owned corporations and private companies shed employees in order to remain competitive in the world market. In addition, even though African governments have tried to come up with these structural adjustment programs, they were pressurised "to reduce the number of civil servants, streamline the bureaucracy, privatise the parastatals and liberalise the economy" (Tokunboh, 1997).

Then, what can be done for such people who are victims of an educational system geared towards urban life and stripping the rural areas of the most valuable asset, the people themselves? (Byrne, 2007). How can the church help its members understand that their skills go beyond white-collar jobs? Employment's economic and social importance dictates that this issue is too important to be handled by governments alone.

Drought and Famine

The second challenge that Africa and the church must face in the process of breaking dependency is drought and famine. The hunger that stalks the continent spares no nation, and that is why the sprawling shantytowns of the poor and hungry surround even the most Westernised cities, such as Nairobi, Lagos, and Accra. The situation is constantly worsening, and the overall food output in Africa falls every year. Statistics show that one out of every three Africans does not get enough food to eat, which points to retarded physical and mental development, diseases and disability or death (Tokunboh, 1997).

This state has been attributed to several reasons. The first reason is that the state is beyond our control. Second, we have inadequate natural resources or the devastation of these resources by acts of nature. Africans believe in food relief aid, especially those in drought and famine-stricken areas. Famine relief programmes are applauded for a timely response. Unfortunately, though relief aid has helped save lives, it is not sustainable; much more is needed (Von Braun, Tekul, & Webb, 1999). Just as financial aid leads to dependency, so does food aid; it makes its recipients dependent and kills their desire and motivation towards food security.

Implications of Paul's Approach to Ministry in Breaking the Yoke of Dependency

The Principle of Identity

Paul's identity in Christ became the source of his confidence, which made him measure up to his potential and his native independent spirit, which made it embarrassing for him even to acknowledge a voluntary gift (Phil 4:10–20) and in considerable measure, his desire to set his converts a good example (Bruce, 1989). His relationship with Christ permeated all his lifestyle, so even as he writes to the Thessalonians, he first reminds them of their new relationship with the Lord and then moves forth to the practical bit of that relationship.

Paul never compromised this identity for anything, even when circumstances would allow him to do so. For example, in Thessalonica, as was the case in all the Roman provinces, there were religious traffickers and ubiquitous public orators who spoke to please their audiences, to reap fatter profits or to please their wealthy patrons to ensure continued patronage, but deliberately for the sake of his credibility, Paul chose to maintain financial independence (Bruce, 1989; Winter, 1993). If Paul had chosen to follow the ways of these traffickers, he would have betrayed his identity in Christ, for his faith dictated that he lived to the standards set forth. Instead, by guarding and living up to that identity, Paul commanded the Thessalonians to take action against those not working to earn their living, for he had already set an example for them.

Many Africans have compromised this identity to some extent due to the prevailing challenges discussed earlier. Today, the faulty theology of colonial times is still alive– that we are cursed due to our social, economic, political, and spiritual problems (Adeyemo, 2009). Looking at the meaning of a curse as "an invocation of harm or injury upon a person, either immediately or contingent upon particular circumstances" (Bruce, 1989) and our present state,

the definition might be fitting. However, this is invalid if we, African Christians, know our identity as Paul did. Such a notion and a faulty theology of the colonial era brainwashed Africans, and its effects are seen in how Africans carry themselves as they relate to the West. The yoke of dependency cannot be broken in the climate of such mental slavery and inferiority complex. As Myers (2011) explicates, our identity directly impacts what it means to be empowered; hence, life in the Kingdom of God should define it. Thus, the starting point in breaking the yoke of dependency is the restoration of identity and dignity that has been eroded by unemployment and sin. Recognising this will deal with the web of lies from colonialism and neocolonialism, that Africans are inferior and unable to address their realities.

We, as African Christians, must acknowledge that our real identity and dignity as human beings are not anchored on our race as Africans or our realities as a continent but on God (Gen 1:27; Ps 8:5–6; 139:13–14) and his redemptive work in Jesus Christ (Jn 3:16; Rom 5:8; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:24). Biblically, since sin distorted our identity, dignity and vocation, these are recovered through Jesus. Rediscovering our identity, dignity, and vocation is foundational in breaking the yoke of dependency; for dignified persons, not money or programs will break this yoke (Myers, 2011). As bearers of God's image, Africans are partakers in the cultural mandate (Gen 1:28; 2:15) and should therefore rediscover their calling and vocation as rulers and cultivators of the resources entrusted unto them by God (Fowler, 1991).

If Paul had based his identity on his life before he knew Christ, definitely this would have paralysed him, he chose not to focus on how he persecuted the church, but instead, he dwelled on his new identity in Christ. His new relationship with Christ balanced the focus and the scope of the gospel message; day and night, he laboured with his own hands so that the work of God under his custody would not suffer shame (2 Thess 3:7–8). He maintained financial independence and worked with his own hands to relieve the church of the burden of supporting him (Still, 2006). Just like Paul, we should not let the pangs of colonialism and neocolonialism make us wallow in dependency; we need to shade off the false identity of the colonialists and missionaries. Instead, we should anchor our identity in Christ and live to realise our full potential as human beings. We should allow Christ to transform us holistically, for this is the basis of breaking the psychological mentality of dependency which others have imposed on us. Rediscovering our identity in Christ should liberate us both physically and spiritually. For this very reason, Paul commands the church in Thessalonica to withdraw from the brother whose life was focused on the spiritual (the second coming of Christ) and had

neglected the physical (work). Our real identity must foster a conducive environment enabling us to live life in its entirety, just as God would love us to do. This identity is the springboard for the church to bounce on, work hard, and tap the resources within her reach.

The Principle of Hard Work

Paul calls upon the Thessalonian church to work hard just as he did in their midst (1 Thess 2:9). Paul did not only instruct them verbally, but he applied what he taught in his life. He toiled day and night to provide for his daily living; therefore, his teaching was practical for the Thessalonians to hear and see for themselves. Paul worked hard in order that he might not be a burden to anyone. His hard work made him independent, for he made sure that he paid for what he ate, and none of the Thessalonians would accuse him of coveting or stealing (Beale, 2010).

Now the African church needs to apply this principle in order to break the yoke of dependency. The church should not expect people to work hard if the proper teaching of work is not taught and lived out within the body of Christ. Probably there is some ignorance in the church on the biblical theology of work, or supplication for support from the West has been too loud so that the biblical principles are not heard. The church must know it is not God's will for one to drudge hard and yet have no bread for himself and his family (Kuyper, 1991). Therefore, the church should look for innovative solutions so that economic growth and well-being are not disconnected from employment. It should be ready to provide innovative approaches founded on a biblical theology of work that can help us rediscover our identity, dignity and vocation and guide our participation in the community. God wills that Africans enjoy spiritual, moral, and material well-being, and therefore, the church must be actively involved in the search for lasting solutions to unemployment (Turkson, 2016; Myers, 2011)

Therefore, men and women must be taught how to meet their needs even when the government or any other organisation does not employ them. The old saying, "Give a man a fish, and you will feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish, and you will feed him for a lifetime," must be applied in the church to break the dependency. In discipling others, the church must aim at discipleship, which works a transformation as radical as that in which the thief who used his hands to deprive others (Eph 4:28) should use his hands to provide for others (Chapell, 2009).

Though the church can be committed to teaching these principles, doctrinal errors may render them ineffective. This was true of the Thessalonian church; they had relaxed from working, for they thought Christ's return was at hand. Paul wrote to correct this error and to

ensure that the church carries on with her daily responsibilities. Following the principle 'if one does not work, he must not eat,' Paul toiled day and night to provide for his livelihood and that of his companions, and the church at Thessalonica was obligated to emulate his example.

In like manner, to break dependency within the African church, some errors must be rectified. There is a need to balance the focus and the scope of the gospel, lest we fall into the same pitfalls as the missionaries. The focus of the gospel (gospel-as-word) is indeed vital (Myers, 2011), and the church in Thessalonica knew it well, for they were confident that Christ was coming back, but they missed the mark when they neglected the scope of the gospel (gospel-as-deed). The church should understand that the focus of the gospel leads us to eternal life, but there is a life to be lived now– the scope of the gospel. To live spiritual lives is not to cut ourselves off from the everyday affairs of the world we are living in. These affairs can only be met through hard work, and the church can develop technologies and commercial needs suited to Africa's needs. However, these abilities can only be realised and used when Africans are fully involved.

The church should look for ways to engage the increasing numbers of school leavers who are idling in the name that there are no jobs, and in most cases, the jobs referred to here are white-collar jobs. White-collar jobs must not be seen as a leeway of being idle. In 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15, Paul does not refer to a particular kind of employment but calls upon the brothers to work to provide for their needs. The seriousness of the command is seen in the fact that the church must withdraw from those who do not work.

People within the church waiting to work only when they get a white-collar job must know that even in their state of not having that job, they are obligated to provide for their livelihood (Davis, 2000). They should not be allowed to idle in the streets; the church must look for alternatives to help them participate in the continent's economy. Their hard work will place the continent in a position whereby we will not be busybodies but will do something constructive, and the West will not look at us with a twang of conscience and a glint of opportunity. The church needs to deal with the mentality of sloth, which Beisner says is a cheap security which refuses to go out on a limb in the hopes of finding fruit. This mentality does not take the risks that are essential to economic growth: risks involved in testing new technologies or investing capital in untried ventures: risks which have contributed to the discoveries that have multiplied the effectiveness of labour (Beisner, 1988).

We need to understand our educational systems, which are mostly geared towards white-collar jobs. However, we should not despise the knowledge we have gained from the systems, but should bear in mind that this knowledge is useless if it is not applied in a way appropriate to our context. Therefore, the church should make diligent and wise use of natural resources to engage people to work. For without diligence, which is "the precious possession of man" (Prov 12:27), "individuals, families, ethnic groups, nations, and the church will perpetuate dependency" (Beisner, 1988).

The African church should take the command to work seriously. Just as a refusal to work was considered a moral matter so severe as to warrant official discipline by the congregation, and even breaking of fellowship with those who did not readily respond to the church's admonition (1 Thess 4:10–12; 2 Thess 3:6–15), this should also be true to the church in African for the same biblical principles of work do apply to us today. However, this does not mean the church should not practice charity for needy people. The point here is that in practising charity, the church must be careful not to repeat past mistakes. It must teach people how to use their hands to earn their own living, remembering that there is a difference between aid and biblical charity; biblical charity creates responsibility, whereas aid creates dependency.

The question now is how we will work hard and provide for our needs as we seek to live out our faith in a continent that is seriously wounded by unemployment, famine and drought. Paul did not leave this question unanswered; the same applies to us.

The Principle of Tapping Resources

Africa is endowed with all the resources necessary for a good productive life. Even though it is one of the poorest, it can sustain an independent and prosperous existence (Ayittey, 1999). For example, a report from the World Bank states that famine-ridden Ethiopia has enough land to support a population of 310 million–ten times the present population. Though we might blame the dependency syndrome of the continent on nature, looking at the resources available, this cannot be true. Therefore, we will only progress if the agrarian problem is solved and Africa can feed itself again (Hadjor, 2010).

As the redeemed of the Lord, the church is called upon to be a responsible steward accountable to God for her use of material possessions, wealth and all given resources. These resources can benefit the continent if we invest in them instead of exploiting them. As the Catholic Social Teachings (CST) highlights, Africans should relate to their physical and socio-economic realities, exercise dominion over the continent through the extraction of

various natural resources, and at the same time, care for and safeguard the environment for Christians are called to accept the world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God and our neighbours (Dembinski, 2018). This ties in with the dominion mandate in Genesis 1:26–28, and as Pratte (2013) explicates, we are to utilise our physical and intellectual power in agricultural and industrial fields. We should utilise science and technology to investigate how the earth functions and harness it for our good. God has empowered us to do the God-like cultivating and enculturing creation, including everything from animal husbandry to nuclear physics, from homemaking to accounting, and how we make God's world flourish (Stevens, 1999). This empowerment extends to knowledge, science, technology and labour skills that can bring out the good from the land, the sea and the sky, open up their potential from the animal kingdom to the plant kingdom, to human 'kingdoms' of theory, of technology, of relationships, of economy, of art, of politics and so on (Turaki, 2011). Thus, the church is responsible for managing the available resources in such a way as to respond to the needs that have led the continent to be so dependent on the donor community. She must redistribute all her time, talents and resources to make the greatest possible impact on seeking to represent Christ in Africa by living a more responsible lifestyle.

However, we need to note that the spirit of dependency cannot be broken overnight, but the church must start where it can, and by so doing, she will be able to create jobs for a certain percentage of the unemployed in productive work. Furthermore, she must use the resources available to serve the people's needs, for the continent's future depends on the reclamation of the continent's wealth. To be able to carry out this, the church must strategise. However, the strategy will vary from one place to another; therefore, the church, as the body of Christ, must learn to cooperate for the continent's benefit.

Human Resources

Africans have boundless creative power, which can be tapped for self-reliance, for "A nation's greatest asset is the people, quality people; disciplined people; skilled people and responsible people" (Tokunboh, 1997). It is their duty, therefore, to be custodians of the God-given resources, skills, abilities and capabilities; they should use their intellect, knowledge, wisdom, imagination, and creativity, power whether in its political, economic, cultural, or religious form, to maintain, sustain, and improve creation for our well-being (Myers, 2011). The African church is richly blessed with these kinds of people; therefore, the cry of unemployment amongst those with the skills must end. These skills must be tapped to empower the continent and help her escape the "dependency syndrome."

The African church should emulate Paul's way of life. Paul had trained in leatherwork, of which he applied the skills in tent-making (Acts 18:3). He used the skills to support himself and others (Acts 20:32; 1 Thess 3:6–15). Though tent-making was one of the despised occupations in Greco-Roman society, Paul made tents to avoid burdening anyone (Reardon, 2020). As an apostle, he would have relaxed and waited for a worker's wages, but his belief in the biblical principles of work made him use the knowledge and skills he had acquired long before his conversion. Thus, the church should maximise the knowledge and skills within its reach, especially the unemployed graduates.

The church should emphasise applying knowledge acquired from our educational system. In addition, the church should change its perspective on employment as white-collar jobs and adopt the biblical view, which sees work as physical and intellectual labour. God's command to subdue and rule over the earth (Gen 1:28) is a call to make it productive and rule by exercising skilled mastery. Cultivating in Genesis 2:15 is a call to apply physical power and labour in agricultural and industrial terms, using knowledge, science, technology, and labour skills to bring out the good from the land, the sea, and the sky (Pratte, 2013). We are to enculture creation from animal husbandry to nuclear physics, from homemaking to accounting, and in all the ways that make the world flourish (Stevens, 1999). Thus, the command to work is not limited to intellectual work (formal or white-collar jobs); it extends to physical (informal, manual or blue-collar jobs). Therefore, whatever work we do to develop, cherish, subdue, replenish, and care for the world should bring glory and honour to God and ensure our best interests are attained.

This practical experimentation of knowledge and skills should help break the dependency on the knowledge that throws light on every aspect of life, from white-collar jobs to the Jua Kali industry (informal sector) and farming, allowing individuals to acquire greater control over their destinies (Hadjor, 2010). Therefore, our minds and hearts will play a bigger role in breaking dependency than our circumstances or natural resources. For example, the church must not import an expert from the West to come and do architectural work while there are architects within the church. These must be given the job and be paid for it, and by so doing, the church will provide work for its members and in turn, they will give their tithes and offerings, which help to carry out developmental tasks within the church and in society.

Apart from using these skills within the church setting, the church can collaborate with local businesses to make low-skilled workers employable in possible ways. First, for someone whose skills were not within a minimum wage, a church could agree to pay a business for a

limited time to hire the worker. During the set time, the worker could gain skills to render his employer an adequate return for his wage and other costs. Second, the church could conduct training programs where people could be apprenticed to church members to learn a trade and then help them find their own jobs (Hadjor, 2010).

Natural Resources

God has richly blessed the continent of Africa with vast natural resources, ranging from fertile land for farming to water bodies that are the potential for energy production and mineral resources. Therefore, Africa is the most blessed of all inhabited continents of the world because all that is needed to be a great nation in terms of material and mineral wealth and energy is in excess (Tokunboh, 1997). There is plenty of land for cultivation, and since God has entrusted it to us, "the concept of divine ownership and divine gifting of the earth's resources, including land, call for careful use of the resources" (Batchelor, 1993). Thus the command to subdue means making the world productive not only for the benefit of human beings but for the world's own sake.

God owns the earth and all its resources but has entrusted their keeping with accountability to human beings. Gary highlights that human beings entered the world in debt to God; God provided them with raw materials and a mind that could understand the regularities of nature, and in turn, he demanded performance (2012). The African church, therefore, should take the initiative and mobilise its labour and locally available resources to implement integrated income-generating programs. Thus the church is accountable to God in how she uses these resources; we are responsible to God for how we use and manage them. God intends that we use and share them for the good of all; access to and use of those resources are meant to be available to all (Batchelor, 1993).

We need to go back in history and learn from the precolonial times. For in those days, there was self-reliance in small communities. People relied on their own resources, and even though colonialism and neo-colonialism affected this kind of self-reliance, not all was lost (Mantuhu, 2011). Therefore, the church should wake up, show a commitment to taking full initiative, and get the continent at large from the spirit of dependency by appreciating the structures which sustained the continent at that time.

Though ranked amongst the poor, Africa must realise that no continent is too poor to contribute to its own sustainability. The church should recognise that self-reliance within her has been killed because we do not use local materials but are somewhat dependent on outside factors and instruments. Looking at the climatic conditions in Africa, we should be able to

think in terms of draught resistance crops. For example, looking at the Kamba community of Kenya, which is usually affected by famine, before the colonial era, the community produced food crops like sweet potato, pumpkin, millet, sorghum, cassava, etc. These kinds of crops were drought resistant; hence, they sustained the community that, when maise failed, cassava or millet became substitutes.

Alternatively, communities surrounded by big rivers in Africa, such as River Congo, Nile, Zambezi and Niger, can be empowered to enable them to engage in irrigation schemes and supply the continent with other kinds of crops apart from the traditional ones. In addition, communities in the driest parts of the continent can be empowered to drill wells for clean drinking water and water for irrigation. However, the church must be careful not to let these communities depend on the church's support. The point here is that they need to empower these people to tap what they have and invest it in a manner that will render them independent. The church's participation in the business world will result in increased income, allowing it to carry out expanded ministry. This increased income will also enable local churches to develop their plans for church growth rather than depend on donors' funds and plans. However, when the unemployed fill the church pews, the church will not have the required resources to carry out its ministry. Hence, the church should look for an alternative which will enable members to work and so to fulfil the instructions of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:9–12; 2 Thessalonians 3:6–15.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that, though Africa is richly endowed with resources, it is trapped in a culture of dependency. This culture believes that without interventions from the West, it cannot adequately handle her social, economic, political, physical and spiritual realities. This culture can be traced back to colonialism, neocolonialism, and the missionary factor. Colonialism robbed Africa of her native value system through new patterns of production and consumption, education, foreign aid and trade agreements. These are perpetuated today through neocolonialism. In addition, the missionaries fostered a false identity and preached a one-sided gospel; they did not prepare the church to stand on its feet. The paper identified the major setbacks in breaking the yoke of dependency as unemployment, famine and drought. It discussed several causes and interventions of unemployment and highlighted how famine programs and food aid have continued perpetuating the dependency culture.

The paper reflected on Paul's approach to ministry as a means of breaking the yoke of dependency. Out of this reflection, the solution to dependency lies in the hands of Africans and no one else. This will come to pass if the African church recognises its identity in God, be willing to work hard and tap both the human and natural resources within its reach. The church is better placed for the task because it knows God intimately, and its relationship with God should be the impetus for action. Hard work is key to breaking dependency. We must be ready to toil in fulfilment of the law that a man shall eat from his sweat. Idling must not have its way in the church, for it kills the people's creativity, making it impossible for them to take risks to venture into the world of economics. Africans who are victims of the educational system, which creates artificial elites who depend on foreign economies, must be helped to know how to harness the knowledge and skills they have for the benefit of the continent.

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