

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY IN THE ERA OF COVID. 19

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Abstract

The emergence of Covid- 19 pandemic in the early periods of 2019 amongst global Christianity has created a lacuna on the belief in the existence of God. Against this backdrop therefore, the aim of this paper is critically to investigate Christian theology in the era of Covid- 19 pandemic. The study adopts a phenomenological research design and narrative method of data analysis. In this study, library materials include: newspapers, internet materials and so on were the major source of data collection. The study reveals that despite the debilitating nature of the pandemic, global Christianity is still surviving even with the rapid spread of the virus. Christian theologians have also developed new hermeneutics that reveals Gods omnipotence and the conviction has spurred belief in the activities of God in the affairs of man during the era of the covid-19 pandemic. The study therefore recommends amongst other things that Christian theologians in this era of the pandemic will continue to evolve theological nuances that encourage Christian faith and life as that is the only solution to destitution which trails the globe in the era of this ugly phenomenon.

Keywords: Christian, Theology, Pandemic, Covid 19, European

Introduction

Christian theology dovetails with perceiving God in peoples thinking, understanding and practice. Theology is derived from two Greek words Theos and Logos. Theos means God / god as understood by peoples of the world through different religions. God is brought to light as people look at the work of creation, formation of global order, government and politics of life. The efficient revolving of the moon around the sun, the eco and solar systems, families of the world and social changes that follows it. Logos has to do with forensic interpretation of creation and the wisdom inherent in that creation.

The knowledge of whom God is found nowhere except in the holy books of religions. For instance, the Christians found the prophecy about God in the Bible. The Bible unfolds with the first statement “in the beginning God...” The authority in God’s Word is effectively reflected in His Words that brings creation to bear. Each section of the creation takes the Christian theological dictum of one day. So the gamut of creation took seven days. Each day encloses different terrestrial image of divine command from land and sea to the tiniest micro-organism in the sea. The Bible believes that man was the last to be created from the dust of the earth and that God created the whole earth ex-nihilo. In creating man in His own image and likeness, God gave man authority over all created things including fish of the sea and trees of the woods. Health wise, God made the flora and the fauna as raw materials for medicare.

The African Traditional Religion, the Hindus, the Muslims and other religions defined their confirmed peculiarities in Gods control of the earth. Just as the Christians, the worship to God is paramount, each worshipping God collectively in particular days and others not worshipping Him on set days. For instance Christians worship Him on Sundays, the Muslims on Fridays (Jumat worship) while primal religions like the A.T.R do not have particular day of worship. Theological interpretation of observing worship days takes peculiarity from religions settings. Doing theology therefore interprets Gods omniscience in human life for sustenance of the world and sustainability of creation. Over the years, theology has continued to reinterpret God based on contemporary socio-political and changing environments.

Over the dawn of the 21st century, a new socio-health challenge has evolved that put the knowledge and the understanding of God to question. With the rising wave of the new Covid-19 pandemic raging with its attendant high death rates across the globe, people have cast questions on the efficacy of God safeguarding creation from a pandemic whether natural or zoonotic in nature. That

safeguarding also bothers on security from wars spearheaded by the incessant arms deal of long and short range arsenals that has almost exposed the world to third world war. With these issues in place, the question theology is set to tackle is the relevance of God in these changing circumstance in the world created by God but inhabited by man. The relevance of theology is called highly to question.

The task of this paper is therefore is to observe these peculiar theological exigencies discovered in theological treatises of religions and balance them with Christian theological viewpoints. The work will conclude by affirming that theological education and doing theology avails man of the opportunity of knowing that God still reigns in the affairs of man and knowing Him is still paramount in the world.

B. Meaning of Christian Theology

By Christian theology, we mean that understanding of the personality of Jesus Christ evident in the psyche of interpretation. Creating and re-creating the life, giving word of God as reflected in Gods redeeming work of creation and ordering that world to obey the eternal commands of the creator forms the basis of understanding Christian Theology. Christian Theology in essence reshapes the former understanding of whom God is previously based on other religious rendering of God's presence and activities in their lives. For instance, that God plays out His omniscience part alone in touching the lives of the universe. He made and then as African theology will render it "abandon of the government of the world to lesser divinities in *deus absconditus*" - the withdrawn God theology!

The process of reconstructing beliefs in God based on Christians view actually explains the basis of Christian theology and when an African Christian will define his theology, he sees God not just meddling in African mans affairs but overturning a natural process to create a new vista of hope for the African world though rich in natural treasures but frantically and holistically rendered useless by her few rich and usurping colonial mentors who are helped by Africans themselves to loot the already existing resources to their gain and to the eternal shame of Africans themselves. So, we can see God in African mans perspective as a miraculous God who can wade into an already stale religio-social environment and turn the Babylonian captives back to Jerusalem. Stinton (2010) replies emphatically that: "Certainly the process of constructing theology along these lines is not new to Africa. Indeed, early Christianity in Africa had an enormous

impact in shaping the exegetical methods doctoral content and conciliar processes that have shaped Christian theology worldwide” (p.vii).

It is difficult to refer to African Christian theology without first of all dissecting the buffalo-face of African realities of poverty, underdevelopment, the trans-Atlantic slave :- trade across the Mediterranean sea, the many interethnic and multi-tribal confrontations replete in Africa before the church came with her teachings on faith in Christ. To African Christians, the meaning of theology may be irrelevant, if that theology fails to address the realities of Gods intervention and offering of solutions to those present African disturbances. Stinton again concurs that:

When we talk of African theology, we understand this to mean the ongoing attempt to make sense of the African reality in the light of Christian faith and revelation. As thousands of Africans daily embrace the Christians faith, they come with their joys and sorrows, their hopes and despair, seeking to make sense of them in the light of faith. Theology neither ignores nor undermines this “faith expectation”. It addresses it, aiming to point out the relevance of Christians message to the experience of African Christians. Such a theology will necessarily be contextual. It does not float above human reality; rather it is rooted firmly in it. This is the only way that theology can make sense as faith seeking understanding (p.7).

3. Essence of Christian Theology:

Christian theology is of essence because it draws us to the knowledge of God through the agency of the Bible. This means that the Bible is the only hand book when we as Christians explore the knowledge and deeper understanding of God; who He is, His ultimate value, His eternal attributes and His undying grace to mankind. This is not akin to philosophy which models the knowledge of God based on secular Peculiarities and convergences following worldly standards and law. Knowing God philosophically according to Murray and Ray (2012) refers to natural perceptions. According to them, Philosophy takes as its data the deliverances of our natural and mental faculties; what we see, hear, taste, touch and smell. These data can be accepted on the basis of the reliability of our natural faculties with respect to the natural world. Theology on the other hand, takes as its starting point the divine revelations contained in the Bible. These data can be accepted on the basis of divine authority, in a way analogous to the way in which

we accept for example, the claims made by a physics professor about the basis facts of physics” (P.I).

The Bible is important to the Christian theologian because apart from being the Book of faith which situates the Christian depth of belief, it is a handbook of knowledge which the Christian man relates with the world and God. The Bible focuses the Christians attention to the enormity of Gods creative formulas and the reality of His irenic time- table. His attention is drawn to first the oral history of Gods redemptive work in creating the first man of the earth and His presentation of the man in the garden of Eden, the first world of mankind, to work the field (the earth) which God Himself has fashioned for his consumption and consummation. That story of creation is set forth by the Jewish writer inscribed in Hebrew to detail Gods power over the earth and which the Christian thinker must first of all understand. So to the Christian thinker, the Bible stands out as the Book of divine history. Wives (1979) suggests that:

One immediate consequence of applying this suggestion to the oral stage of Christian gospel is to increase historical confidence in the reliability of the eventual text, the message had previously circulated in definite forms, not as random gossip. But to identify that message, the process known as form criticism must try to go further, to isolate the particular oral pattern behind the text and determine the life situation which produced and preserved it..... (p.20).

The Bible draws the Christian thinkers creative mind to the perilous and derilous consequences of sin which is the mother of the fall. Sin negates the plan of creation and put the string on the knot of God favours on the earth in the fall, the person of God in man was thwarted to bring in the eternal wickedness of Satan. Mans act in the Garden ushers in the reversal of divine strategy of making the earth its world and made Satan the governor of the earth. In the fall, man seek autonomy over Gods original intention of being his guard and guide. Wright (1983) proposes that the essence of the fall was man’s arrogant desire for autonomy, a rebellion against authority and benevolence of the creation. The havoc caused by His attempted reversal of status and the curse it brought affected not only man’s spiritual relationship, but also his whole economic and material environment. Each of the four principles.... was corrupted to man’s own cost. The Christian thinkers view is thus made to invigorate the readers mind to the grave danger of sin that robs man of his relationship with God and creates eternal barrier between man and his creator.

The relationship if not severed would have continued divine visitation on earth and the earth could have been a garden of bliss of all centuries; was thus soured and putrefied all times low. The barrier creates a strong stronghold between man and God. Man was not created sinful; God would have been a sinful God.

The earth became sinful because man chose his way to obey the devil and the consequences of that disobedience was death. God posed death upon mankind as punishment and also condemned without equivocation Satan and reduced him to eat the ash and dust of the earth. Upon all these, the idea of redemption through the second Adam was muted.

The Christian thinker was drawn to the academic survey of redemption through critical hermeneutics of the Bible. In the process of redemption, God reversed the dark imposition of death and promise life to whoever looks upon Jesus Christ the exactitude of this reversal was evident in the Jewish experiences of the Exodus which was an oral (and written) record of Israel's exit from the Egyptian captivity back to the promised land. The crossing of the Red sea and the River Jordan portray the symbolic act of baptism which is a ritual of acceptance and incorporation into the ecclesia Deo. In Christ, the Christian thinker draws the inspiration that the death of Christ and his resurrection becomes the focus of the Christian as he journeys in faith. The Christian thinker recreates in the line of Pauline assumption on resurrection and redemption in academic manner. According to Chilton (1986):

Paul says quite precisely that he handed on at the first what he himself had received – 1 Cor. 15,3, both of these verbs reflects the languages of Jewish traditional learning in which accurate recollection and faithful transmission were held to be essential, Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose again in fulfillment of scriptural promise (1 Cor. 15:3-4).(P.58).

Thus in the exodus, the reality of divine mercy was redrawn to capture Gods eternal grace and love for His people. Without the exodus, the children of God will remain inside the strong grip of Egyptian slavery and thus not just negating Gods eternal plan of redemption but also renders God as that powerless and weak spirit who cannot redeem man from the grips of the enemy. Wright (1986) opines again that one outstanding feature of redemption achieved at the exodus was its comprehensiveness. In that one sequence of events, God gave Israel a fourfold freedom; politically from the

tyranny of a foreign autocratic power, socially from the intolerable interference in their family life, economically from the burden of enforced slave labour; spiritually from the realm of foraging gods into the unhindered worship of the Lord and covenant relationship with him.

The Christian thinker (theologian) draws the listening attention of his readers and listeners to these basic facts of a Christian's life. He tries as much as possible not just to "reclaim the centre" of basic theological arguments but also to smite the "devil of unbelief" from the hearts of the world that has lost the tinge and tendon of relationship with God. Added to this responsibility, Tynam (2012) discussed lucidly the three fold functions of a Christian theologian thus:

- To protect the narratives from distortion
- To decode dogmas into once again dangerous memories
- To use methods of inquiry that highlight the political

In extending these three-fold mission of the Christian theologian Tynam says that the first duty of protecting narrative involves more than just authentically communicating the Jesus story while this aspect is at the heart of the theologian's role, it involves many different factors. These differing facets express themselves in.

- The honest retailing of Jesus story
- Understanding the context in which the Bible texts were written.
- Coming to understand the Historical Jesus and the Jesus of faith
- Understanding the primitive churches' issues.

2. keeping alive the memories of those who came before us:

- Reading these stories as dangerous memories that charge and reorients us
- Interpreting these memories as dangerous (challenging, critical, hopeful) for today's worlds.

The second duty of the theologian is to decode dogma. Dogma is the truth held in common by members of faith community. By decoding dogma, the Christian theologian will.

- Help dogma touch our human experience and situation
- Tell the stories of how it has been lived in the past.
- Shape our hope for the future.

Tyney maintains that the third duty of the theologian is to the methodology in which theological reflection takes place. It is to be recalled that theology is political in the sense that it assumes and promotes a vision of our political,

economic, and social world, a notion of the fully human life, and concrete social and economical tool to sustain this. The issue of theological event interpretation is essential as according to him “metz... find that too many theologians tends to take a “shortcut” in coming to their conclusions. It is the idea of taking a short cut approach that robs the postmodern theologians the ability to do systematic theory based survey of theological question before jumping to hasty and incomplete conclusions. One of the most controversial hasty conclusions about Africans and their theology is the 19th century western assumptions that Africans are the unlearned and so lack the idea of knowing God. Such conclusions has placed Africans on the apple strings of westerners who see Africans as black monkeys and lacks the knowledge of God and so are not qualified for eternal bliss in heaven.

Having seen the three fold duties of a Christian theologian we have to understand reasons for studying theology. The views of Dick (1833) quoted by Mac Arthur and Mayhill (2007) may be of vital significance. According to them Dick outlines the seven reasons for study of theology thus:

- To ascertain the character of God and its aspect towards us
- To contemplate the display of his attributes in his works and dispensation
- To discover his designs towards man in his original and his presents state.
- To know his mighty being as far as he may be known, (which) is the noblest aim of human understanding
- To learn our duty to him, the means of enjoying his favour, the hopes which we are authorized to entertain and the wonderful expedients by which our fallen race is restored to purity and happiness.
- To love him, the most worthy exercise of our affections
- To serve him, the most honorable and delightful purpose to which we can devote our time and talents.

Without studying theology, it will be extremely difficult to study God and understand His works amongst men and other creatures out of His divine disposition. Not understanding the method of Gods intervention in human affairs means mans insensitivity to His mercies and love to mankind. According to Christ’s command in Mathew 28: 18-20,” the command is “go ye into all the world and preach the world”... Theology’s main concern is to root down Gods divine ownership of the earth and heaven and His merciful promise to harvest the earth at the close of age. Theology exposes man’s inability to catch up Gods divine presence seeking power and protection in the lesser gods and authorities. Theology pulls up our understanding that man’s

life depends on God's love and depending on Him assures our strength in Him. When we do not depend on God, we die daily and become liable to the attacks of the enemy.

Theologizing In the Era of Covid - 19

The last moments of the year 2019 witnessed the dawn of a strange sickness known as Covid -19. The sickness which started in the Chinese city of Wuhan was formally known as Wuhan virus. Its spread to all the countries of Europe, America, India and Africa has made the sickness a pandemic. The rate of spread has quadrupled globally resulting to the death of close to a million person and still adding in minutely basis. Capizi and Baer (2020) report that the spread of the covid-19 pandemic is having many unfortunate consequences, unexpected deaths, sudden unemployment strains on healthcare system around the globe, economics near collapse and much less significance, old musings by theologians about the cultural significance of all this.

Entrance into the year 2020 resulted to global fight against Covid-19. Governments and peoples of the world formed "Centers of Disease Control (C.D C) who continually analyzed on daily basis the rate of spike of this disease and methods to be adopted to stem the tide of infection and rise in the numbers of people affected. Some of the measures adopted globally include social distancing, wearing of facemasks in private and public places including Markets, Shops, Supermarkets, Buses, Churches , Mosques, Social and Religious functions and so forth;limiting any function to not less than 50 persons and each group maintaining social distancing, daubing the hands with sanitizers, checking temperature level with temperature check apparatus and soon, as the rate of infection spiked with time, many countries introduced total lockdown" and banned flights from all the countries affected by the disease. Even within the countries, lockdowns were introduced whereby human traffic were reduced to the barest minimum except for essential services like health emergencies .Government within this period started providing social palliatives for their citizens to reduce the suffering of their citizens. It was like a period of war. Medical services in counties were actually over- stretched as medical officers were exposed at the frontlines of battle against the disease. Death tolls of medical officers continued to rise by the day. Capizi and Bae again bemoaned saying:

To be sure, as in times of plague and war in this plague too, we are separated from our grand parents, parents, brothers and sisters, our

circles of friends, our social clubs, our communities of worship. Many even are cut off from loved ones who are succumbed to the disease. Such sever separation, viewed against the background of biblical witness might be interpreted as a sign of judgment, an event that exposes both our social failing and individual sinfulness, and yet the purpose of God judgment is always to bring about renewal. Separated from those we love, we appreciate more deeply how important they are to us. Unable to meet our friends on a whim, we recognize the importance of tending to and nurturing friendships by writing letters and emails and meeting electronically. Separated from our communal sacramental celebrations of God defeat over death, we learn to hunger more deeply for the communion by which God has saved the world. Every trial can become opportunity to hear Gods voice more clearly and grow more fully in his grace, and so, too, can it be with this one (p.2).

Following Capizi and Baers observation many countries banned church worship, in some counties like the United State, Britain etc, Church worships were done through electronic streaming, face book and other means, means of grace were banned by clerics and each church service witnessed strict Covid- 19 protocols of social distancing, daubing hands with sanitizers and wearing of face masks. With these precautions and protocols being observed the spike of covid-19 infection not abate nor did it record low. The spread continued to quadruple.

With the rising infection hitting the entire global populace, faith of the people was highly hit and the record ranked all times low. What does the pandemic portend for the faith of the people? How does the church react in the face of such global scourge? is there any sort of expectation at the end of age? Will faith heal those whose lives have been battered by the lives lost because of the pandemic? Doing theology with the pandemic in vogue therefore faces big challenges. Many conspiracy theories have been raised that for faith, the pandemic signals the ends of the world and the second coming of Jesus Christ.

With faith of Christian rising and some others been derailed almost throughout the globe and the calamity Pitayana (2020) submits Pope Francis (2015) second encyclical, *Laudato Si.* . This encyclical said that faith allows us to interpret the meaning and the mysterious beauty of what is unfolding “ (p.1). According to the Pope, at the time of great difficulty, that is exactly the time when our faith resources are being called to active service. The Pope also says that faith

provides us with tools and instruments' for unraveling the truth and meaning by spiritual insight and intelligence. Faith provides with the power to transcend the present material conditions and to perceive the beauty that is shrouded in mystery and yet opening up like the petals of flower at spring time. Hope then lies in the assurance that out of a situation of crisis there is hope for a new life and a new beginning. That is faith. But can this faith subsist?

Pitayana was commenting on South African case. According to him, Covid 19, is more than public health crisis. It is a much a matter of health as it also a social economic disaster. As a public health crisis, it has focused the attention of the state on the one threat to public health but while doing so, it may have diverted attention from other public health crisis in the country including HIV/AIDS, neo-natal natal and child health facilities, health necessary in a country like South Africa. It means that the entire economy has to be repurposed for an indeterminate period. For Nigeria the pandemic come at a time when the economy is on junk status and set on a non- reversible path towards a dire recession. It is difficult to imagine how unwelcome all these moves could have been. Unemployment is at high levels, so high (at an official 70%) that it is difficult to say when such a large number of Nigerians were out of work. Covid 19 has forced a strong level of poverty, inequality bothersome and for many Nigerians, hunger and starvation are constantly daily hazard.

In this era, it is expected that a democratic government or even any form of government shall provide advocate health care and nursing system to reduce the impact of the pandemic to its citizens. Christianity on the other hands must strive to ensure within the democracy or the form of government in power to maintain faith in God. Being a Christian implies that one has made informed choices for life (Deut;30:19).

It is often stated that society today's is confronted with choice between safe living and livelihoods. The implication is that government has to prioritize health care system, reduce infections, provide medical and nursing care for the sick and do whatever is possible to save lives. The suggestion is that to do so may entail, of necessity, accepting that the economic well being of citizens and the economic health of society may well get compromised in the process that is a non choice. The truth is that human well being requires both good health and quality life. It can never be either/ or, in other words what is required is nothing less than fullness of life.

Some Theological Insights To Covid -19

Professor N.T. Wright made a tacit statement thus “Christianity offers no answer about the corona virus. “Wright according to Pitayana opines that:

[1]It is no part of the Christian vocation to be able to explain what is happening and why. In fact, it is part of the Christian vocation not to be able to explain and lament instead.... And out of that there can emerge new possibilities new acts of kindness, new scientific understanding, new hope, new wisdom for our leaders? Now, there is a thought (p.1)

In this statement of Wright, there is no challenge thrown to Christians theology on the issue of theodicy, Christian explanation, the authority of the Bible. In other words, Wright points Christian curiosity and philosophy to precisely where it will find no answers. To put it differently, he offers no solution to the Christian faith dilemma but restates the problem. In a sence, Wright himself introduces a measure of *deus machina* to the problems much like what he is critical of. How does “laments” produce “new possibilities”?

A challenge was thrown to Wright Christian defeatist views that it is not possible to find new heights, new possibilities in laments. According to Pitayana, Owen Strachan challenges Wrights notion that there can be no hope and explanation about Gods activities in the world. For Strachan Owens notion goes against all the evidence of Christian life that God is omniscient and that Christians are called to a life of hope. Strachan ends his attacks on Wright thus:

We came away from his article neither gripped by the force of resurrection hope nor struck by the beauty of a true and defensible gospel of grace, instead we are left pondering that God laments evil and suffering, yet does so without fullness of knowledge or power (p.5).

There is no doubt that a huge challenge has been posed to the issue of doing Christian theology in this era of pandemic when Christians and other non- believers had doubted Gods mercy and love, for mankind. Is God able to roll out this pandemic in his omniscient mercy and ever flowing and love? There is no doubt that the potency of Gods power over global misery has been put to test. Pitayana again referred to likely issues raised by the chief justices of the Republic of South Africa MogoengMogoeng as he fielded questions from the Jerusalem Post. He lamented that the Covid pandemic has caused even people of faith to doubt suddenly the faith that they used to have in the Almighty God is not there

anymore. People are fear stricken. Clearly in his Christian lexicon faith generates fearlessness even in the face of danger. In any event fear is not a condition of being without faith. Faith may well be a recognition of the presence of God.

In Nigeria, it is central to human heart that God is still omniscient, love, in-ephemeral and just. It is true that in most cases, the democracy in Nigeria had failed to develop expected panacea to the fear generated by the pandemic, Christianity and other religions have continued to encourage the fearful that in every condition of life, God is. Doing theology therefore in a developing country like Nigeria has become not a struggling enterprise but a strong tower where hope is built and peoples confidence in God restored more sincerely and faith strengthened more strenuously. The Church in Nigeria has continued to strengthen the faith and confidence of worshippers in areas of prayer, fasting and exhortation in the face of the pandemic. In fact, burying those who died due to the attack of the pandemic has restored confidence that with God all things are possible. Christians and Muslim clerics have continually presented to the worship populace that God is capable to deliver and to save those who trust in Him. Theology therefore has become a life bedrock in Nigeria.

Pitayana still raises theology tool of action According to the writer, Christian theology works with tools in history, philosophy culture and language studies, to express this idea of the human, especially in its relationship with the understanding of God as well as in its resultant moral life. Theology works with heart and mind, feelings and intellect. To do so, Christianity is aware of the centrality of the relationship with God in the disposition of human to do good and to create healthy and fulfilling relations and an understanding of Jesus in ones life. An understanding of Jesus known as Christology, distills the totality of faith in terms of the origins and destiny of the human (eschatology), as well as a tradition of thought and practice that is continuous with the mind of the earthly Jesus and the faith in the glorious and Risen Christ of the Trinity and in the life of the historic Church. Christian theology (it has been said) is first and foremost about the human and totally of human relationships. Contrary to what some people might perceive and even voice out, theology is not just preoccupied with death and obsessed with heaven and with the ultimate destiny of the soul. It is in seeking to be fully human that one seeks to understand what God will for one's life. Theology enquiry is devoted to the totality of life and all that influences and shapes that life and all relationships or community that gives meaning to that life.

For that reason, Christian theology is about the imagination. To bring holy mysteries within the human understanding, Christian theology utilizes a set of conceptual tools. It is by the power of imagination that so much of Christian life makes sense at all. To do so, it is through myths and symbols, story and meaning, worship and human expression in music, dance and movement, in poetry and in art feeling and ecstasy, that the story of faith can be freely told, faithfully observed and clearly understood to the extent that human nature with all its limitations can allow. So central is theology in the intellectual shape of the university that Niehbor, for instance, saw theology as a servant among disciplines of the university. “ As a fellow servant of truth in this sense, theology takes its place in the university alongside other inquires never separated from them, never dependent upon them, never isolating itself with them from the totality of the common life which is the universe. Like theology therefore Christian faith cannot simply be located at the margins of life but must actually constitute the very epicenter of ones being becoming the deep pond of knowledge disturbed by a pebble causing outward ripples to the outer world.

It is actually true that corona virus pandemic has affected Christian theology in the level of worship and integrity in Nigeria. In some cases, the “new normal” is for the priest to wear face masks and speaks like a mask in a mass. Worship has therefore become a daunting task for the clergyman in Nigeria context. Communication between the Alter and the Pew has been hampered. In this worship, sacraments have also been affected by the new ways of being that have been imposed by having to live with the corona virus. But being church is a about the visible expression of unity and community as well as the reconciling presence within and without the community. Worship is that which seals Christian life into togetherness. Technology has been an excellent means of bridging the distance between people and thus brings about the collapse or location and place of events. However, worship is also about togetherness, sharing, holding hands, gesture and facial expressions, voice and laughter or smiles. In order words, all the senses are fully engaged in the act of worship.

Conclusion

Having seen the extent at which Christian theology impacts life and the ministry of the 21st century clergyman in Nigeria, it become adequate to say that it is sine quonone to Church and academics. Theology is the source of life of ministry and “the servant of all university courses” So doing theology is not only what is practiced in the church, it is the totality of life in the community. Theology is found in social life -

music, worship, Eucharist, eschatology, theodicy, rituals, symbols and symbolisms where it plays out both human joy and being (being not infinitesimal as it practiced but pervades all aspect of life), and also become a binding force in the time and era of human sorrow (being a tool of encouragement to the living in course of burying the dead).

In the period of pandemic as the globe is being weighed down stringently by Corona virus or Covid- 19, theology weighs in as not just the ultimate hope for Nigeria but for the whole world. The word of God is preached and the knowledge of God and the love of Christ enshrined in the souls of the global community fear- fixated by this pandemic. It is true that not just the Christian world but the whole universe including the atheists must be doubting the potency of God in removing such pandemic, theology wades into reassure humanity that the love of Christ is shared equally to both the saved and the unsaved. Theology removes the fear that all will die as a result of this pandemic

People may be asking or even seeing this pandemic as an act of divine judgment on the sins of the world. It may actually be humanly expressing and notionally addressed, whether notionally or expressed convincingly theology reiterates that even in Gods Judgment of the universe, He is not dastardly wicked to wipe out the good with the evil men. The God of the whole earth and heaven is a righteous judge and will not sin. Everything He does is good and that in the hour of His anger, He remember mercy and the spiritual intercessions of his worldly saints.

Coronal virus (Covid- 19) has actually thrown up technology as a substitute for theology. But this cannot be for technology is ushered in to cushion the effects of the pandemics (Oxygen plant, inhaler, sanitizers, facemasks, social distancing, hand washing), the truth still remains that technology has not succeeded in replacing theology adequately. In fact, technology has heightened the gulf between men orchestrated by social media. In Nigeria, the covid-19 pandemic has forced in virtual worship in many urban churches but has created a large gulf between the alter and the pews. Theology brings in the divine touch into the life of the global church including that in Nigeria through the life imparted by Christian theologians in the lives and ministry of the believers.

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