
PAULINE WORK ETHIC: A MODEL TO BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTERS AND CHURCHES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the concept of Pauline work ethic as a paradigm for pastors and churches in the 21st century. The work adopts both historical and sociological interpretation along with its economic implications on the church. It looks heuristically at the present challenges of full time pastoral ministry with the aim of using the work ethic as a model for ministers with the aim of shedding unnecessary financial burden on the church and strangulation on the part of the minister. The paper discovers among other things the paupership of the minister's family, poor access to good educational training, beggarly living as a result of poor remuneration and incessant schism and drop out because of over bearing poor financial standing of the church and pastors. The work concludes by recommending strongly bi-vocational training for all ministers just like Paul and the act of tent making. Ministerial training should therefore prepare the pastors for both challenges so that they can fully integrate themselves into the society. The minister should not see the church as his *Amos* rather; he should see his calling as an act of service to God. Lastly, the church should be encouraged to support ministerial work and just as Paul did and burdens should not be placed on her so that members can joyfully serve God in their own capacity wherein God has also called them to serve.

Keywords: work ethic, Pauline, economic, challenges, paupership, Baptist and *Amos*.

INTRODUCTION

Paul the greatest of the apostles did not fail to leave his footprint on the sand of time by introducing a new paradigm in Christian history during the early years. The era between AD 30 and AD 70 marked an epoch in which he made a stride in the *modus operandi* thus, giving a new direction to the leadership of the church as she expands. Tyson (1984) notes that there were two forms of Christianity namely: early Jewish Christianity and Pauline Christianity. These two forms are not totally different from one another but they are distinct, so it is necessary to note the points of agreement and disagreement. They largely overlapped in time, although Pauline Christianity did not come on the scene until after AD 40. On the early Jewish Christianity, Tyson (1984) corroborated by Theissen (1978) who strongly admits that modern sociological studies of earliest Christianity have shown that the movement was led by wandering charismatic preachers. These followers of Jesus felt compelled to give up their houses, family and possessions. Their separation from society and their rootlessness were in effect, protests against social structures and criticisms of economic systems that added to their authority. However, Conzelmann (1960) takes a different look at this period in Christian history. He sees Luke thought of the history of the world as the history of salvation and that he divided that history also into three epochs: the period of Israel, the time of Jesus and the period of the church. With little modification, the writer wishes to agree with Gotsis and Dodd (2008) on the division of the period. They note that it is customary to divide the development of the

earliest New Testament Christianity into three stages: The Jesus Movement, the Jerusalem Love-Community and the Pauline Mission. Gotsis and Dodd classification treat the development purely from the New Testament approach while Conzelmann undertook both Old Testament and New Testament approach – The period of Israel. The unique characteristic of Jesus Movement is that it is essentially a rural charismatic group centred on Jesus and his earthly ministry. Craveri (1966), notes that Jesus wandered through Judea and sometimes went beyond its borders as far as Samaria territories of Aenon and Salim. Judea and all surrounding territories were all agrarian societies. The second stage is the Jerusalem Love-Community. This can be viewed as the first urban missionary church that practised a communal kind of life with constant prayers, fellowships and the sharing of economic goods amongst brethren. Luke in the Book of Acts paints a portrait of the quasi-communal society based on self donation to support the propagation of the gospel. Acts 2: 42-45 and 4:31-32, yet a clearer picture of what the Jerusalem Love-Community was like. This was not without its own problem as we later see that Ananias and Saphira who tried to copy Barnabas (Son of Encouragement) died in the process. Hence, Apostle Paul's new directive to nascent convert remains that he should maintain his vocation wherein he was before the call so that he may not depend on the ministry solely for his daily needs. However, a change becomes necessary if it will not glorify God as his new Master.

Socio-Economic Life of Jesus and the Love-community

The life of Jesus and his disciples were told in various patches that we can glean together in order to establish the basis of the socio-economic life. Craveri (1966), notes that the home of the Mary and Martha, the brother of Lazarus provided much of the economic comfort that He and the disciples enjoyed.

By good luck, he had encountered an extremely hospitable family From the moment of his arrival, Jesus had established a warm and close friendship with the two women: Martha, the elder and more sedate, went great lengths to assure the stranger of a fitting welcome in the quiet intimacy of the house in Bethany, preparing himself for the ordeal of preaching in Jerusalem. (Craveri, 282)

Moreso, when Jesus commissioned the twelve disciples, he gave specific instructions that should guide their conduct. Matthew mentions the economic status "do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belt"(Matt. 10:9). Kee (1971) commenting on the slim resources notes that the itinerant messenger of the gospel should not take with him, they should appear ascetic in nature with no sandals and staff, they are to look out for a worthy accommodation with anyone in the city hence, their welfare is to be taken care of by their host as long as they remained in that city. Benedict (1989) adds that the missionaries are to depend on local hospitality, to share the life of the people to whom they are sent with all the risks and inconveniencies this entails.

In the Jerusalem Love-Community, Luke affirms that community of goods was the order. Members were required to liquidate their assets and lay same at the apostles' feet for even distribution among brethren according to needs.

There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need. Thus Joseph who was surnamed by the apostles Barnabas (which means, Son

of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field which belonged to him, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. (Acts 4: 34-37)

Josephus Flavius states that the apostles tried to live like Essenes. They despise riches and their community of goods is truly admirable; you will not find one among them distinguished by greater opulence than another. Possibly, they practised the law that made members on admission to confiscate their property to the order that results in a single patrimony as every individual possession joins the common stock. Gaebelein (1981) in his comment on the generosity of Barnabas in Acts 4: 36-37, notes that he demonstrates the type of extraordinary social concern that was from time to time expressed by believers in Jerusalem. This native of Cyprus whose Hebrew name means *son of encouragement* distinguished himself through stewardship service that led to the spread of the church from Jerusalem to Rome. He is often introduced as one who sold a field and gave the money to the apostles for distribution among those in need. Barnabas gave a practical demonstration of Christian social concern undoubtedly under no compulsion of either precedent or rule. Lockyer (1958) in like vein attests to his magnificent generosity. He took records of deeds by the Levite and he notes that he was the first to sell his own property and gratefully sacrificed the money to the common fund of the first Christian community as against the popular opinion that Levites do not possess such property as did Barnabas.

From the foregoing, both Jesus' Movement and the Jerusalem Love-Community share similar characteristics – the gospel was being supported by individuals and households willingly without coercion and the missionary is fully supported by the gospel enterprise in the non-urban settings. Jesus' family and the home of Mary and Martha whose brother is Lazarus was a usual resort for Jesus and the disciples. However, there was a paradigm change, the gospel has now outgrown the agrarian settlements; the spread of the gospel into the cities – The Pauline Mission. He visited major cities like Asia Minor and Greece, which represented a major extension of the purview of Christianity. In one of his earliest Christian documentation: 1 Thessalonians dated about 51-52 AD that predates the gospels (synoptic), he wrote dealing with specific problems of various churches, providing advice and theological guidance to his new Christian communities. Gotsis and Dodd (2008) admit that although they cannot be divorced from their cultural, historical and literary context, they do reveal certain coherent views of the society they relate to, its institutions and structures. Thus, Paul's economic ideas once identified and set in their socio-cultural context are found to be markedly different from those of the Jerusalem Love-Community and strikingly dissimilar to the Jesus Movement's perception. The introduction of proto-work ethic to Christianity is a Pauline innovation. New adherents to Christianity were required by Paul to remain in their specific calling except where these entailed sinfulness and no wholesale liquidation and disbursement of capital assets is recommended. Radical gospel precepts concerning property, poverty and wealth are thus partly compromised by a new theology more accommodating to the economic conditions of human co-existence; unlike the others who lived with the mind of the second coming in a strong perspective.

Fully a Tentmaker, Fully a Preacher

Ordinarily, just like Paul did in several instances in his epistles, the gospel preacher will like to lay claim to his call as the basis for receiving financial support from the church as

the Levites did in the Old Testament. Such approach to ministry from Paul's view can only be practiced if the gospel had not grown just like the beginning of the early church under the apostles (Boer, 15)

Paul, Silas, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians...You yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were not with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, labouring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. (2 Th 1:1;3:7-9) After this he left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them; and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them, and they worked, for by trade they were tentmakers. And he argued in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks. (Acts 18: 1-4 RSV).

From the above text, Gaebelien (1981) argues that Paul on entering this large and thriving city may have asked for a master tentmaker or leather worker to seek a job from so that he could support himself by his trade. This may not be too different but reveals his self supporting ability from his own trade to avoid being a burden to the Christian family. Moreso, it showed his diligence in practical skills and good training as a Jewish boy who left his home quite early to prepare himself for the challenges of life which has become a talisman for self support and personal convenience which he did not gain from ministerial training. His stay with the family of Aquilla, who are coincidentally tentmakers and leather workers gave him the sense of pride to both reason with the Jews and Gentiles in their synagogue. Anie (2003) in his work challenged the gospel ministers on the need for theological education. He however, did not think about the nature of the society and the personal welfare of the minister as a member of the society. The question he would have addressed himself to is: "does the theological education alone produce a sound mind in a sound body?" He failed to see beyond theological challenges to economic and sociological burdens that the preacher will be faced with daily in the dynamic society that has become globalised.

The emphasis of theological education is mainly centred on ecclesiastical functions but there is a constant interaction between the church and the society thus, the minister should have an outfit that can serve adequately as a supportive measure just like Paul. Such venture as Apostle Paul argued made him to make full payment for what he ate. The absence of any form of tentmaking among the religious ministers in the Baptist setting as well as some other Historical churches have resulted in underemployment and impoverishment of members because the total care rests on the congregation while the minister on his own part suffers some form of setbacks too as he is made to always open his hand for alms and or free donations which is usually not a form of good living. The challenges of urbanisation should not be underestimated by the mission in the same way. The Pauline movement emerged mostly in celebrated urban centres of Graeco-Roman antiquity that had a quite different type of intellectual life, value systems and socio-economic behaviour of which we can take a leaf from to cushion the effect of economic hardship from the national economy as did Paul to the church in Jerusalem. The

engagement of skilled men as ministers as Pawson (2003) notes from the defence that Paul, gave to his accusers in Thessalonica will further serve as a boost to the credibility of the gospel they preach and not mere flatters or opportunists.

Opportunists or Servants Serving

Like a free market economy, the church has almost become the cheapest and easiest means of making living today. Oftentimes, Paul made reference to his encounter as the basis of his apostleship. As touching his zeal prior his conversion, he worked tirelessly as a Pharisee. He was not idle rather he had the license to practise his vocation, both legal and as a tentmaker. On becoming an apostle, he did not forsake his act of craftsmanship as we see in some denominations especially among the Pentecostals today; most of their ministers are tentmakers who willingly give to the cause of the gospel like Paul. The era of non-tentmakers give room to quacks without certification to practice for the purpose of self aggrandisement, a leeway from unemployment and wealth accumulation from unsuspecting members (Stambaugh and Balch, 1986). The paradigm of Paul emphasised self support and calls on the pastors to be fully equipped before launching out. Garrison (1999) notes that Paul deliberately chose "lay" strategy of working for his living to set a pattern of every Christian being a disciple-maker and of everyday Christians giving leadership and planting churches. This is why the early church spread so fast. This was no super feat of a spiritual superman. Everyday, workplace Christians (tentmakers) did it then; some are doing it today and we can launch ourselves into it! Gotsis and Dodd (2000) report that Paul in such an urban milieu, the economic problem had to be redefined and re-evaluated; the problem of scarcity emerged, not in the context of an agricultural population as in the gospel but, between urban Christians engaged in a variety of economic activities. This may be the reason why the Pauline epistles do not reveal profound hostility to economic process such as capital accumulation, investment and ownership of wealth not commonly seen in the synoptic gospels especially Luke where such is given.

The act of certification without vocational skill that can facilitate employment which will save the lean resources of the church calls for a closer examination. The religious minister just Paul is not a member of a Qumran community or a convent rather, he is one of the society hence; he should have both eyes on the church as well as his paid job. Aluko (nd) notes that the right attitude ought to be inculcated in the minister and the church of God on the need for mutual assistance. The church is solely established on the premise of a sincere call by God The church should not be seen as an avenue for creating wealth or an employment opportunity for the unemployed. Moreso, the gospel ministers should not run the church as a business with the aim of making profit through her members. Paul the great apostle, did not lay his burden on the congregation in all the cities where he had churches established. He was self-supporting and graciously giving to the needy as the case may be. The materialistic attitude of some ministers today runs contrary to Paul's work ethic which showed self sustenance. In an interview with some pastors who practice tentmaking, it reveals that one of the reasons for the rapid growth and development of the young denominations and parishes is the fact that they give little support to their pastors rather, the Pastors give to members as well reach out to like minds in the society where he is also engaged in a paid job. Pastor Ohre Mark adds that he as a well trained Mathematician working full time has also seen the reason why he should adopt

tentmaking attitude. He argues that some other parishes where the pastors work, they simply engage their colleagues in the work place through personal invitation since they are of equal status or more superior, they respond more quickly than to an outsider's invitations. Rev. Iworin Godwin a member of a Pentecostal church states that his Bishop is more interested in working class men and women who respond to the gospel to serve as pastors in any new branch that is to be opened. He went further to add that since the church was established, those who serve in full time capacity have been encouraged to get a paid job within their locations. Only in the rural areas do such pastors on full time presently exist. However, the phenomenon was quite different from a cross-section of members interviewed in one of the Mainline churches. They decried the continuous demand for money by their pastor for every program he wants to embark upon. Dn. Joe Akpo who works closely with the pastor said that he has personally advised him to look for a job somewhere since the church's income is going down.. Rev. Jackson Oge who is full-timer, decried the ugly situation he has been enduring for the past 10years as a minister on full-time. He adds, "I need a supplementary job, I hope to acquire a circular degree that can enable launch myself out on the job very soon." Many Historical churches including Baptist fall into this category. Some of the ministers are term "full-time", their livelihood depends on the church solely. The Pauline work ethic is not only progressive but its supportive and thus the answer to under-employment, overdependence on the church and the ability to meet ones personal needs without living beggarly on members is not there. Mrs. R. Isiorhovoja also shared the same opinion with Reverend Oge.

Derivable Benefits from Tentmaking in Ministry

Here are some reasons why tentmaking is a fruitful way of doing ministry that one can possibly view as model of the New Testament from the Pauline Epistles.

1. The whole gospel: God is interested in the fullness of our lives, not just in our spiritual activities. One of the first callings God gave to us as humans was to "work and take care of" the garden that he had planted (Gen 2:15). The garden was that day's society. The calling to us is the same as it was for Adam and Eve. God still wants us to work and take care of the society that he has created.

2. The whole world - part two: Friendships and relationships are two key channels that God uses to lead new people to the salvation in Jesus Christ. In a workplace new relationships between those who know Jesus and those who do not know him are created in a natural way. As everyday ambassadors for Christ we can point towards the one who gave us a new life. The Irish evangelist Gypsy Smith said "there are five Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and the Christian. Some people will never read the first four."

3. The whole church: There are two very common ways people respond when they attend seminars on tentmaking. One group of people say that they never thought their skills or their profession could be used in mission. The idea of tentmaking makes it possible for them to be directly involved in advancing the gospel. Others say that they do not think they will go overseas. But they have gotten a new vision on how their faith can be integrated into their daily lives in their workplaces and elsewhere.

4. Building the nations: As tentmakers we are using our professional skills to build the nations. God wants us to repair the broken walls and restore the streets (Isa 58:12). In many of the nations where the Gospel is little known the unemployment rate is very high. In these areas God is in a special way calling Christian business people to create viable workplaces and at the same time model what businesses based on Biblical principles look

like. Paul became one with Priscilla to both cushion the effect of evangelist cost and to create an enabling environment for the gospel.

5. Modelling and Influencing others: A tentmaker lives under the same conditions as the ones he or she works with. In this way a tentmaker can model what it means to live out faith in Jesus in daily life. Professionals are usually hired as experts. This gives them influence beyond professional knowledge. Tentmakers and business people often have good connections even at the highest levels of society; this according to Paul gives credibility to the gospel.

6. Using your skills in season: God has designed us in different ways. Tentmakers can use both their professional and personal skills to glorify him. The Bible tells us that there is a time for sowing and a time for reaping. If our only aim is to lead lost souls to Jesus, we may feel that we fail if we come to a mission field where we mostly are sowing. In such tough circumstances the joy of the professional job we are doing can help us to persevere greatly while we watch the seed of the gospel grow.

7. Tentmaking works: After travelling and working in the huge area between Jerusalem and Illyria for some years, the apostle Paul concludes that "there is no more place for me to work in these regions." (Rom 15:23). Paul has worked as a tentmaker, he has modelled how to integrate faith and work, he has led people to Christ and he has appointed other working people as heads of the churches that have been started. Now he sees that the good news about God's kingdom is carried onwards by Christians living out their faith in their everyday lives. (Garrison, 2011)

CONCLUSION

The journey from the early days of the church to the present era is not aimed at the condemnation of any strategy adopted by a denomination rather, it seeks to present a more holistic approach that will be cost effective for both the church and the ministers, who labour in the vineyard. The era of laying burden on the church's lean resources in the name of full-time should be seen as outmoded by any group with serious missionary concern. The act of tentmaking should be seen as the most feasible way, the manner in which Paul did his missionary campaigns. The time for only ecclesiastical training void of personal vocation for ministers in the 21st century is not only suicidal and dysfunctional but it is totally unacceptable in a globalised world wherein the message can be communicated through diverse medium. The statistics of growth from churches with this practice clearly outshines the old full-time ministry with confinement to vicarage while some others take the gospel with them as they go. They see themselves and their vocation (tentmaking) as an act of service to God.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The paper seeks to recommend as follows:
- The gospel minister should be adequately equipped in training and personal vocation for him to contribute meaningfully to the growth and development of the church.
- Religious ministers should not expose their families to untold hardship and strangulation while they fold their hands to watch others engage in private paid jobs as an act of tentmaking.

- The church communities should not seek to practice any form of ascetism in a globalised world like ours, rather they should seek ways of propagating the gospel while meeting their personal needs.
- In consonance with present challenges, churches should not seek full-timers, some of whom are gold-diggers and naïve, seeking opportunity to reap cheap harvest through the church.
- A more careful study should be carried out to examine the Pauline paradigm of economic ethic and the modality of adapting same in order to experience the desired growth.
- There is the need for a closer investigation of growth strategies as adopted by other denomination which can be understudied as a model.
- For there to be rapid church growth, new churches/parishes should only be given to bi-vocational ministers who may not depend on the church's coffers.

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Interviews

Pastor Ohre Mark, 45 years old, Clergy, Redeemed Christian Church of God, was interviewed at Ovu on 02-04-11.

Dn. Akpo Joe, 58 years old, Baptist Member, was interviewed at Ughelli, on 08-04-11.

Rev. Iwori, G. 46 years old, Clergy, Christ Missionary Crusaders' Church, was interviewed at Agbarho on 04-05-11.

Rev. Oge, Jackson, 52 years old, Clergy, Christ-Life Baptist Church, Abraka, was interviewed at Abraka on 04-05-11.

Mrs. Isiorhovoja, Rita, 38 years old, Anglican Member, was interviewed at Eku, on 08-04-11.

Rev. Opiri, Jackson, 42 years old, Clergy, Baptist Church, Igun, was interviewed at Abraka on 04-06-11.