

EVALUATING THE CONCEPT OF NONVIOLENCE IN MAHATMA GANDHI'S LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE: A CONTEMPORARY LEGACY

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ABSTRACT

The world has been bedeviled by the radical problem of violence in contemporary times. This paper explores the concept of nonviolence in Mahatma Gandhi's liberation theology and its implications for the Nigerian experience. The Gandhian philosophy provides a normative framework for social order and social change. The Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence is a reflection in the promotion of social movement, civil disobedience and the need for individual self-realization. The objective of this paper is to reveal that the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence revolves around the Christian ethics of love and peace. The Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence is built on the normative assumption of "peaceable global order". The paper aims to contribute a more wide-ranging and all-encompassing nature and understanding of nonviolence in society. This paper adopts analytical framework and hermeneutical methodology in discussing the Gandhian notion of nonviolence as a liberation theology. Findings, however, show that the Gandhian conception of nonviolence is greatly indebted to the Apostolic faith, mission and vision of Jesus Christ. The Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence is deeply rooted in Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Verdic thought. It guarantees the dialogical engagement and the comprehensive conceptions of the good. The Gandhian notion of nonviolence emphasizes the radical response to racist philosophy of the West. This paper, therefore, concludes that Gandhi's notion of nonviolence encompasses ethical considerations and pedagogical implications. This paper, however, recommends that if the Apostolic faith, mission and vision of Jesus Christ is strictly adhered to the world would be a better place for our humanity. Civil disobedience is a better option rather than violence in an emancipated global society.

Keywords: Civil Disobedience, Contemporary Political Theory, Metaphysics, Nonviolence, Gandhian Philosophy

INTRODUCTION

Humanity is bedeviled by the spate of violence and insecurity in the world. Violence remains a radical problem that is confronting the modern world. For Ike Odimegwu (2008, 6), the crises of the modern world in the area of politics are radical problems, and that the solutions to them must also reach down to the roots because fundamental problems require fundamental solutions if they would be solved. Unfortunately, violence spurs violence. Violence is destructive and counter-productive to society. Violence leads to human suffering, casualties, deaths, starvation, diseases, hunger and the loss of human dignity. For John Odey (1996, 216), violence puts human dignity at stake. The Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence presupposes that the normative context of

nonviolence remains the only veritable platform in resolving conflicts of interest in society. However, society has been bedeviled by incessant violence. Global society has been at the cross road and this has given birth to the right to civil disobedience. Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence represents the need for a multicultural society.

In addition, violence has metaphysical implication. Metaphysics plays a critical role in everyday affairs of life. It is a branch of philosophy that is not only restricted to certain concepts such as the God-talk, immortality of the soul, multiplicity of being, freedom, and other entities. For Ayo Fadahunsi (2004, 159), metaphysics makes itself interested more in the most difficult problems and readily fights on many fronts while going at a justified steady pace.

Furthermore, the Gandhian conception of nonviolence advocates the need for civil disobedience. Civil disobedience is an act of putting any oppressive government on the right track politically, educationally, socially, economically, legally, and culturally. Gandhi's theoretical stance provides a philosophical overview of the normative assumption of social order. For George Ukagba (2013, 39), a realistic social order is inseparably tied to a realistic human nature to the extent that any attempt to separate one from the other leads to an ontological disorder. For John Hoffman and Paul Graham, (2009, 499), order implies a stability in the possession of things, security against violence and a trust in others that promises will be kept. Social order is hinged on a mutual trust and common concern or mutual interest. For Paul Rahe (2007, 93), common interest should make us count on the assistance of our fellow men. The Gandhian contextualization of violence in juxtaposition to his notion of nonviolence revolves around a humanitarian principle and universal brotherhood. The objective of this paper is to showcase that Gandhi's liberation theology of nonviolence resonates within the ethics of Christian philosophy. For Pantaleon Iroegbu (2005, 21), ethics is the science and art of proper behavior. It is the science of good and evil. The good is what is to be done and the evil is what is to be avoided.

Nonetheless, the Christian ethics preaches the need for a good life, love and peaceful coexistence amongst human beings. The paper aims to contribute a more wide-ranging and all-encompassing reflection in the metaphysical implications of violence. This paper reflects in the fact that a strict adherence to the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence brings about what Alan Thomas (2006, 295) calls the comprehensive conceptions of the good.

Broadly speaking, the Gandhian conception of nonviolence is greatly indebted to the Christian ethics of Jesus Christ. However, the Christian ethics of Jesus Christ advocates the promotion of love, peace and the tenets of universal brotherhood. The Gandhian notion of nonviolence emphasizes the normative context of holistic principle in democratic setting. The Gandhian contextualization of nonviolence encompasses ethical considerations and pedagogical implications. This paper is divided into six sections. Section one is the introduction. Section two is anchored on the conceptual clarification of violence. Section three focuses on the conceptual clarification of nonviolence. Section four hinges on the conceptual clarification of civil disobedience. Section five is premised on Gandhian liberation theology and the Nigerian experience. Section six reflects in the concluding remarks. This paper concludes that Gandhi's notion of nonviolence reflects in moral teachings.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OF VIOLENCE

The act of violence is seen as a juxtaposition to the concept of nonviolence. Violence has destructive force. The act of violence showcases that it leads to man's inhumanity to man. The act of violence leads to the vicious destruction of lives and property in the society. The metaphysics of violence brings about human death, casualties and suffering. It leads to the vicious cycle of poverty and lack of national integration and environmental sustainability. We must take cognizance of the fact that the natural environment is very dear to us and we must do everything within our capacity to protect the natural environment. In other words, violence is anti-human because of its negative consequences.

Nonetheless, the concept of violence brings about disruption of society. A theoretical analysis of the unpalatable consequences of violence in society reveals that metaphysics remains one of the veritable tools needed to analyzing the concept of violence. Metaphysics, though deals with major abstract entities deserves acknowledgement with regards to its role in interpreting the concept of violence. For Ayo Fadahunsi (2004, 161), metaphysics deserves a credit for its high sense of reasoning without which no inquiry can be made into any theory, because looking into a theory requires a deep respect for reason. Jurgen Habermas (1997, xviii) in consonance with Ayo Fadahunsi (2004) believes that theory and praxis are dialectically linked.

Moreover, the concept of violence never leads to anything good rather it leads to social chaos and irreparable loss that could last for a lifetime. The metaphysics of violence reflects in the gross violation of freedom and human rights. As rightly observed by Anthony Anene (2019, 35), a critical understanding of violence reveals that it is fitting to define what the term really stands for. Violence stands for negativity and depravity. Put differently, violence has a negative connotation because it could be lethal. For John Hoffman and Paul Graham (2009, 453), violence itself is seen as negative. Corroborating the theoretical position of C. Harmon (2000, 2), John Hoffman and Paul Graham (2009) argued that indeed, violence is defined as a type of political depravity which unfortunately has become commonplace. Accordingly, John Hoffman and Paul Graham (2009, 453-454) further argued that the generalized opposition to violence comes out of the liberal tradition. Violence negates freedom. Violence is force that violates our moral and legal norm. For Battista Mondin (2007, 145), freedom is the concourse of the intellect and will. For John

Hoffman and Paul Graham (2009, 454), violence is unpredictable and irregular. J. Salmi (1993, 16), in agreement with John Hoffman and Paul Graham (2009), defines violence as an act that threatens a person's physical or psychological integrity.

Nonetheless, man's uncontrolled use of violence reveals him as a brute. For Sylvester Odia (2005, 50), alluding to the political philosophies of Plato, Aristotle, Puffendorf and Darwin, argues that "men began as brutes". Violent act is for the brutes as far as contemporary society is concerned. According to Mahatma Gandhi (1991, 95), violence is the law of the brute. The spirit lies dormant in the brute and he knows no law but that of physical might. On the other hand, the act of violence reveals that an emancipated global society could be completely destroyed if violence is not properly controlled by various countries of the world. The act of violence goes to show that violence brings about social rancor and uncontrollable indignation.

Moreover, the conception of violence reveals that it is synonymous with brutality and forceful act. Accordingly, John Hoffman and Paul Graham (2009, 502), in their theoretical subscription, argued that violence is synonymous with force. For Subrata Murkherjee and Sushila Ramaswamy (2011, 154-155), the government ought to use force carefully even in external affairs and the use of violence could be controlled, but could not be altogether eliminated in contemporary human societies. The metaphysics of violence reveals that the uncontrollable use of violence could lead to sheer hopelessness of the human race. For instance, Gandhi and King shared theoretical affinity in their notion of violence. Both of them frowned at the use of violence in resolving human conflicts rather than resorting to round table talk or “communicative dialogue”. Conservative political philosophers such as David Hume and Immanuel Kant argued that violence leads to the social distortion or dysfunctionality of society. Immanuel Kant, for instance, frowned at the French Revolution of 1789 because it goes contrary to the freedom of the French government.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that both Gandhi and King were assassinated in the course of their nonviolent struggle. For John Odey (2005, 219-220), Gandhi and King were both violently assassinated in the course of their nonviolent campaign, those who do not admire them may feel justified to insist that nonviolence is a way of life that assumes a suicidal posture in a social conflict. Secondly, inasmuch as the sacrificial deaths of Gandhi and King did not seal out the propensity to violence in their respective countries, those who do not admire them may strongly question the usefulness of nonviolence in a violent world where many realities clearly demonstrate that power yields only to power.

Nonetheless, violence is synonymous with the abuse of power. For John Hoffman and Paul Graham (2009, 500), power is the capacity to exert pressure on a person or group of people so that they do something they otherwise would not have done in civil society. The metaphysics of violence leads to the misuse of power by disgruntled individuals in contemporary times and this has given birth to Islamic fundamentalism or terrorist attacks in the world. Gandhi never compromises in his nonviolent method. The core of Gandhi’s philosophical thinking is that the adoption of nonviolence brings about a well-organized civil society. Mahatma Gandhi (1927, 23), argues that common honesty and industry are enough to enable me to make a living and the human person should be equipped with a crushing sense of responsibility. Mahatma Gandhi (1927, 2) further argues that the individual should be equipped with a lasting impression of saintliness. On the other hand, political leadership should embrace the spirit of change that goes with the emergence of civil disobedience.

Moreover, civil disobedience is not an evil act but a social force that could put government back to the path of sanity. For Peter Drucker (1999, 73), in a period of rapid structural change, the only ones who survive are the change leaders. A change leader sees change as an opportunity. A change leader looks for change, knows how to find the right changes, and knows how to make them effective both outside and inside his organization. However, leadership implies a strong enthusiasm, selflessness, listening skill, managerial competence, moral fibre, intelligence and an inter-human relationship. For Aghamelu Helen (2009, 140), leadership implies an inter-individual relationship in social psychology. It will not be wrong to assert that Mahatma Gandhi was a change leader during his lifetime as far as his political theory is concerned.

Nevertheless, the metaphysics of violence showcases that violence is detrimental to the collective interest of a people. Violence fights against the common good of a people in a society. Politics is

a norm-governed activity that is aimed at the pursuit of the common good. Accordingly, Iain Mackenzie (2009, 5), argues that politics is best thought of as the pursuit of the common good. The Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence was practiced in the respective countries of India and South Africa. On the other hand, Martin Luther King practiced it in American civil society. Mahatma Gandhi (1991, 75) posits that his journey to South Africa endeared him as a man that was full of zest to try my luck in South Africa. For John Odey (1996, 65), after Gandhi had raised the nonviolent consciousness of Indians over their unwarranted sufferings and alerted the White authorities concerning their ill-treatment of the Indians, Gandhi turned his attention to the case that had brought him to South Africa. The Gandhian philosophy of nonviolent approach resonates within the principle of nonconformity. Gandhi, in his practice of nonviolence urges people to resign from government employment in the British colonial government. His major objective is to cripple the British India government economically, politically and administratively.

In addition, the power of the non-violent struggle undertaken by Gandhi and King, was reinvigorated by their positive disposition which lacked any shred of bloodshed, violence and retaliation. The theoretical stance of nonviolence as exemplified by Gandhi and King found reverberation among the British colonial administrators, who were antagonistic to political repression by violent means. The British had always been proud of the fact that political reforms in the modern era in Britain were brought about mostly by a gradual process.

Moreover, nonviolence is useless if faced by a determination to kill the person adopting it but the fact is that a nonviolent practitioner should not fear death as exemplified by Gandhi and King. Accordingly, Sonia Sikka and Manvitha Sing (2024, 17-18) argued that nonviolence is a principle at the heart of Gandhi's moral, political and religious philosophy, fundamentally, the principle involves a dialogical commitment to not harming others in one's interest, but it is especially connected to a variety of peaceful coexistence and civil confrontation. Gandhi draws theoretical inspiration and motivation from Christianity, Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Verdic thought; and this represents an ideal of nonviolence in contemporary times as far as the political climate of society is concerned. Accordingly, Mahatma Gandhi (1991, 93) further heightened his theoretical position by arguing that in order to succeed in the nonviolent struggle, he suggests that the responsibility to be truthful was all the greater in a human conduct.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OF NONVIOLENCE

Mahatma Gandhi's social, political and religious philosophy is anchored on the ability to welcome the cold hand of death. For Mahatma Gandhi (1954, 163), death is the appointed end of all life. Accordingly, Mahatma Gandhi (1991, 93) further argues that nonviolence cannot be taught to a person who fears death and has no power of resistance. According to John Odey (1996, 216), nonviolence, therefore, requires soul-force, which is the moral courage of the highest order. Mahatma Gandhi (1991, 95) in agreement with John Odey (1996), argues that nonviolence is the law of our species. The Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence is in agreement with the rationality of normative outcomes of contemporary political discourse. The solution to violence as a radical problem requires dialogue and "communicative rationality". According to Ike Odimegwu (2008, 18), rationality is common to all men.

Furthermore, the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence reflects in what Alan Thomas (2006, 288) calls ethos of restraint. The contemporary political theory of the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence presupposes a moral teaching. For Gilian Howie (2009, 10), teaching is a social practice carried on in accordance with a social tradition. Put differently, the contemporary political theory of the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence is a form of a moral learning and it is in tandem with what Gilian Howie (2009, 11) calls learning to be a moral agent in a moral community. In addition to the foregoing, the human person is a moral agent defined by duties. For Pantaleon Iroegbu (1995, 95), duty is the internal imperative to do what is good and to avoid what is evil. For John Hick (2006, 39), evil means physical pain, mental suffering and moral wickedness. Accordingly, John Odey (1996, 216) argues that Gandhi's social, political and religious philosophy is motivated by the ability to confront an evil society and an oppressive government.

Moreover, the contemporary political theory of the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence presupposes what Gilian Howie (2009, 11) calls the recommendations of good practice and the benchmarking for the philosophy of social change; it guarantees the widening of participation and social inclusion; terms which resonated with liberal and humanistic principles of equality and social justice. On the other hand, the principle of equality and social justice are concepts within the tradition of liberal philosophy. The Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence has a contemporary relevance and at the same time reveals a form of social inclusiveness and the normative context of what Gilian Howie (2009, 5-6) calls an accrued political currency.

Nevertheless, the contemporary political theory of the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence resonates within the conceptualization of justice at the transnational level. For Ronald Badru (2016, 74), the transnational level starts with political liberalism and culminates in the liberal tradition of the respect for individual rights. The Gandhian notion of nonviolence is aimed at checking the excesses of social institution. Accordingly, John Hoffman and Paul Graham (2009, 198-199) argued that an institution is a rule-governed activity. Institutions evolve, rather than being created at a determinate point in history. Institutions suppress the asocial tendencies of human nature and then provide a focus for allegiance.

Furthermore, the contemporary political theory of the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence reflects in the fact that human beings are not robots and they can never be treated as robotic machines or "zombies". It is, however, worth noting that the contemporary political theory of the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence gives room for what Iks Nwankwor (2013, 329) calls an integral socio-political true existence. A true theory of integral socio-political engagement is therefore very necessary in the society. Worthy of note is that the contemporary political theory of the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence is a reflection in liberation theology. For John Odey (2005, 15-16), liberation theology, anywhere in the world and whatever manner or shape it operates, is the product of the awareness that oppression and exploitation of the less privileged people are man-made, sinful and therefore contradicts everything the gospel message of the Apostolic faith, mission and vision of Jesus Christ stands for. Accordingly, John Odey (2005, 17), argues that oppression and exploitation of the less privileged in society are not new. They existed before and in the time of Jesus Christ.

Moreover, the contemporary political theory of the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence reflects in what Ronald Badru (2016, 73) calls liberal internationalism. On the other hand, the contemporary legacy of the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence presupposes the internalization

of justice. For Martin Cohen (2008, 17), justice is to Plato the correct ordering of the organism, that is, the political state. For Leon Baradat (2008, 226), the state had mystical properties; it was at the center of life, with incompatible purpose and meaning. On the other hand, Michael Foster (2001, 280) in agreement with Leon Baradat (2008) believes that a state is made a state by a certain structure of organization, as the body is made an organism by a similar structure among its parts. In the state this structure is composed of the laws and institutions by which the people are governed. For Paul Rahe (2007, 46), Plato's notion of the state is motivated by laws and mutual covenants.

In addition, the contemporary legacy of the Gandhian conception of nonviolence reveals the normative context of democratization in society. The contemporary significance of the Gandhian conception of nonviolence presupposes what Mogobe Ramose (2002, 106) calls interhuman relations. The Gandhian conception of nonviolence gives room for the promotion and protection of freedom, rights and privileges. People have the civil rights to protest against any oppressive government. For Chinenye Udeze (2009, 87), human rights are basic, unborn or inseparable qualities or characteristics in us as human beings. They are tools used to achieve and satisfy our needs as human beings in pursuit of respect and protection. Human rights include social rights, political rights, economic rights, civil rights and cultural rights. These rights are universal and apply to all persons without discrimination.

Worthy of note is that P.E Nmah (2009, 169) asserts that human rights represent demands or claims, which individuals or groups make on society. Human rights could equally connote moral claims, which are continually evolving. For Ukachukwu Manus (2010, 455), human rights are defined by the context of an increasingly inter-dependent world as the privileges a person is entitled to in any society because he or she is a human being. For Joseph Omoregbe (2007, 96-97), human rights are embedded in the right to self-determination. The right to self-determination includes the right to freedom and civil disobedience. Everybody is free to do whatever he likes with himself so long as what he does is not detrimental to the peace and security of the society and does not infringe on the rights of others.

Nevertheless, human rights are embedded in the smooth functionality of some social facts in society. Based on this theoretical subscription, Moisamai Molefe (2019, 145) alluding to J. Griffin's theoretical position, argues that rights are understood to be a function of some of human nature, specifically those facts of it that make human life worth living. For Joseph Omoregbe (1999, 13), the human race, is one species, with one nature. The contemporary legacy of the Gandhian conception of nonviolence represents a normative context of the respect for human dignity and personhood. Accordingly, Moisamai Molefe (2019, 145) argues that the normative idea of personhood embodies a perfectionist, or a self-realization moral theory. Moisamai Molefe (2019, 145-146) further heightens his theoretical position by arguing that personhood as a political theory of duties endorses the universal appeal and political currency of rights. However, civil disobedience reflects in the promotion, protection and expression of individual rights. Accordingly, John Burr and Milton Goldinger (2008, 292), argued that individual rights are the means of subordinating society to moral law.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

The Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence has inspired the whole of humanity. Contemporary society is at cross road due to the emergence of global violence that has resulted in Islamic fundamentalism, racist philosophy, inter/intra tribal wars, ethnic sentiment, religious fanaticism/bigotry, man's inhumanity to man, gross violation of human rights, lack of constitutional democracy, lack of religious tolerance, absence of rule of law, lack of due process and lack of freedom of expression. However, the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence advocates the need for a sense of goodwill, peaceful coexistence, empathy, compassion and the purity of intention. The Gandhian conception of nonviolence envisages the theory of social change. The philosophy of social change requires coordinated scheme of social cooperation. For Joan Ferrante (2003, 545), social change represents any significant alteration, modification, or transformation in the reorganization and operation of social life. The Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence advocates the need for reciprocal relationship.

In addition, the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence advocates the need for peace and dialogue in society. The Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence represents a pragmatic understanding of society. It is germane to note that sometimes violence can be justified due to the complexity of human nature. From the Marxist perspective, violence is the only language the bourgeoisie or capitalist can understand because sometimes reforms keep the pillars of the building intact and what brings it down is violence. Capitalism as a global system is characterized by an exploitative tendency. The Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence is at variance with the Marxist tradition. The palpable nature of the complexity of human beings and cultural diversity in contemporary times calls for a critical understanding of the metaphysical implications of violence. Gandhi and King assert that nonviolence remains the best measure of jettisoning evil in the world. For Ron Ramdin (2004, 15), King began his intellectual quest to find a way of eliminating social evil in American civil society. It is, however, worth noting that nonviolence emphasizes the critical understanding of the emergence of modern societies. The Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence emphasizes dialogical engagement, moral commitment, enhancement of empathy, compassion and "communicative interaction".

Furthermore, the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence reflects in the need for a multicultural society and human rights. For Jurgen Habermas (1997) human rights are universal rights. However, the right to civil disobedience is a universal right. It reveals the need for human emancipation and the principle of self-realization. The concept of nonviolence reflects in the liberation theology of Gandhi and King. The Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence anticipates social, political, religious and cultural integration. It gives room for social cohesion. For John Hick (2006, 3), religion often makes for social cohesion.

Moreover, the contemporary political theory of the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence is deeply rooted in the Kantian tradition of moral duty. The philosophy of nonviolence as exemplified by Gandhi and King showcases the sacredness of the humanity of man. For John Odey (2005, 13), Gandhi and King shared many things in common in advancing the sacredness of the humanity of man. Gandhi's philosophy is a radical response to the racist philosophy of the West. Accordingly,

Maduabuchi Dukor (2009, 182-183) argues that the dismembering of human race is not only historical (as Darwin would argue in his theory of evolution), but also was accentuated and propagated by racist philosophy. However, racist philosophy; by extension man is related to the soul of another and which by implications is legal and social legitimization of the lopsided human race. Gandhi's nonviolent philosophy is a radical response to "the lopsided human race".

Nonetheless, many scholars have associated nonviolent resistance with civil disobedience. There is an inextricable nexus between nonviolence and civil disobedience. Civil disobedience is the legitimate means in which people in the political state express their grievances to any oppressive government whenever their needs and aspirations are not met. For Wolfgang Kersting (1992, 346-347), many critics mistake violent revolution for civil disobedience. However, civil disobedience and violent revolution do not convey the same meaning. According to Wolfgang Kersting (1992, 347-348), civil disobedience means the legitimate manner in which the people express their grievances to any oppressive government. For John Hoffman and Paul Graham (2009, 429), civil disobedience is the nonviolent breaking of a law on moral grounds. Civil disobedience occurs in a liberal democratic setting. Although, few people may ever engage in civil disobedience in their lifetimes and it is not a peripheral concept, for the justification of civil disobedience touches on the moral basis of majoritarian democracy.

Worthy of note is that John Hoffman and Paul Graham (2009, 431) argued that civil disobedience has then these components: (a) it involves breaking the law—it is not simply legal protest; (b) there are moral reasons justifying the action; (c) the aim is to change a law or policy; it is not intended to bring down an entire political system--- civil disobedience is not revolution. For Joseph Omoregbe (2007, 104), civil disobedience can therefore be seen as a call to a ruler (a government to come back to the path of sanity and justice). According to Joseph Omoregbe (2007, 104-105), civil disobedience is an exercise of one's natural right—the right to resist injustice and oppression. It is an appeal to an erring government to come back to the path of justice marked out by the natural law, an attempt to rectify a wrong and unjust situation for the benefit of the entire society. Accordingly, Joseph Omoregbe (2007, 103), further heightened his theoretical position by arguing that those who intend to carry out the act of civil disobedience must first of all inform the government in advance of their intention to do so. Civil disobedience is not a selfish act, so it should not be carried out for selfish motives. For Joseph Omoregbe (2007, 103-104), civil disobedience should be done in the interest of justice with a view to getting the government to rectify a wrong, unjust or oppressive situation for the benefit of the entire society. On the other hand, civil disobedience is a public act. On the other hand, the concept of nonviolence has been given different misconceptions. John Odey (2005, 215-216), in his theoretical subscription argues that:

Owing to the different ways different people approach the term, it is rather difficult to arrive at a very concrete definition of nonviolence. This difficulty does not pose a problem towards a good understanding of the meaning of nonviolence in the conception of Gandhi and King who are its most practical exponents in contemporary times. Contrary to some misconceptions that it is merely a tactical alternative to violence, the only weapon available to the weak and the cowardly who cannot demand their rights by violence, a passive acceptance of evil, and that its success depends entirely on the goodwill of the oppressor,

both Gandhi and King saw it as a way of life, an active resistance to evil and a weapon for those who are brave.

Worthy of note is that John Odey (2005, 216-217) further heightened his theoretical position by arguing that King's conception of the end of nonviolence culminates in the creation of the beloved community. For Ruch Omi and K. C Anyanwu (1984, 340), the community makes it possible for the individual to find meaning and purpose in life. However, nonviolent protest has a tremendous power that can act as a sort of moral *jiu-jitsu* on the opponent, makes him question his violent ways, and eventually paves the way towards a change of heart and reconciliation with his victim. Nonviolence means so many different things for different people depending particularly on their religious convictions and attitudes in life. Moreover, there are others who understand nonviolence as the best method that could be used towards the resolution of social conflicts.

In addition, nonviolence through rational dialogue is the best way to resolving conflicts of interest. For Emmanuel Ebo (2009, 559), conflicts sometimes reoccur as a result of surreptitious attempt to create social imbalance in the polity by some individuals and groups. Nonviolence has been regarded by its exponents as the best method in resolving conflicts of interest. For Ben Eboh (2009, 557), conflicts have always been associated with man, since the emergence of society. It has threatened the very existence of man and pervaded the life cycle of most nations, communities and individuals. Crisis has been an age long problem dating from the earliest times to the very present. According to Alloy Ihuah (2021, 268), conflicts have grown, spread and intensified over the past decade and today poses a threat to national survival and development.

MAHATMA GANDHI'S LIBERATION THEOLOGY OF NONVIOLENCE AND THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

The Gandhian notion of nonviolence is deeply rooted in the normative context of society. The Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence has not been able to grapple with the current situations in Nigeria. Nigeria is confronted with the spate of violence and insecurity. However, insecurity in Nigeria has been predominant owing to the problem of incessant violence. For Inameti Udo (2021, 175) the Nigerian government is ultimately responsible for the security of lives and property of its citizens. Alloy Ihuah (2021, 269), posits that insecurity (including food and housing insecurity), health hazards, socio-political instability and other challenges are connected to the Nigerian society especially when it is aided by terrorism and violence. Accordingly, Gbari Sylvester and Anselm Odo (2021, 201-202), argued that the security challenges in Nigeria is a determined issue that always calls for government attention. The Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence is hinged on the principle of liberalism. For Alan Thomas (2006, 294), liberalism depends on a moral background culture in a society.

Nevertheless, contemporary Nigeria society needs to embrace peace and dialogue in resolving conflicts of interest. For Alloy Ihuah (2021, 272), Nigeria must therefore make concerted efforts to maintain growth and strengthen conflict management mechanisms. However, religious tolerance must be championed by the Nigerian society in order to guarantee peaceful coexistence amongst the people. According to Jurgen Habermas (1997, 165), contemporary human society requires dialectic of normalization. It is, however, worth noting that Nigeria should draw theoretical

inspiration from the Gandhian contemporary political theory by adopting the normative principle of nonviolent resistance in resolving conflicts of interest. Accordingly, Jurgen Habermas (1997, 178), further argues that communicative, political action should be defined in the interest of a peaceable global order that still remains to be realized.

Worthy of note is that Nigeria as a country should key into this Habermasian tradition alongside the Gandhian template of nonviolence. One of the critical elements in guaranteeing conflict resolution mechanism is the adoption of rational dialogue and to use the words of Jurgen Habermas (1987, 391) communicative interaction which is based on a critique of functionalist reason. Communicative interaction is confronted by some new problems. For Jurgen Habermas (1987, 392), the new problems have to do with quality of life, equal rights, individual selfrealization, participation and human rights. Dialogue is the only recourse to peaceful coexistence and universal brotherhood.

Moreover, civil disobedience rather than violence should be embraced by the Nigerian government. Unfortunately, civil disobedience as an act of protest has been frowned at by the Nigerian government. This has led to the oppression and the massive killings of innocent people by the Nigerian government. For instance, the brutal killing of peaceful protesters at Lekki Toll Gate in Lagos State, Nigeria in 2020 during the End-SARS saga is a case in point. In 2020, millions of Nigerians went into the streets to protest against the excesses of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). The End-SARS protest started as a peaceful protest or nonviolent protest until it was hijacked by some unscrupulous elements and it later turned into a bloodshed and widespread violence. Many Nigerians were killed in the process.

Furthermore, the objective of the End-SARS protest was aimed at ending police brutality and incessant extortion of money from the Nigerian populace by the Nigerian Police Force. Unfortunately, despite the End-SARS saga of 2020, the Nigerian Police Force is yet to learn its lessons on the grounds that incessant extortion of money from the Nigerian populace and police harassment of young Nigerians is still ongoing in the country. The Nigerian Police must learn from the mistakes of the past. Nigeria as a country should solve radical problems such as police brutality, unnecessary harassment of the Nigerian youths and other social crises especially in the area of politics. The nonviolent protest in 2020 was very unique because the Nigerian economy was shut down for days and at the same time it undermines ethnic, religious and cultural barriers. In other words, it brought Christians and Moslems together to fight an unjust course. For John Hoffman and Paul Graham (2009, 205), politics is a series of crises to be solved.

Nevertheless, the absence of peaceful coexistence in contemporary Nigeria has resulted in serious socio-economic and political challenges and these include insecurity, starvation, hunger, diseases, poor healthcare system, poor educational system, infrastructural deficits, farmer-herdsmen clashes, inter/intra tribal wars, establishment of internally displaced persons (IDPs), and the wanton destruction of lives and property. The Gandhian contemporary political theory resonates within the need for social integration and inclusivity. The Gandhian contemporary political theory requires the need for social cohesion in Nigeria. However, humanity should draw its theoretical inspiration and motivation from the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence and this would bring to the foreground respect for individual rights. The respect for individual self-realization remains sacrosanct in contemporary times.

Furthermore, the Gandhian contemporary political theory rests on “the comprehensive conceptions of the good”. However, “the comprehensive conceptions of the good” rests on the democratic community. For Innocent Asouzu, (2004), the idea of the common good refers to a common source of collective legitimization beyond the dictates of the ego. Accordingly, Innocent Asouzu (2003, 155), posits that the common good brings to the foreground the principle of harmonious complementation. Unfortunately, “the common good has eluded Nigeria due to elite politics and endemic corruption in the socio-economic and political structure. For Eribo M and Mathew Izibili (2010, 29), corruption reigns supreme in elitist regime as the allocation of state resources are for the benefit of the mighty that is the ruling class at the expense of the ruled. Accordingly, Chris Okoli (2009, 59) argues that corruption is as old as human history and has affected and decimated society down the line to some degree, not sparing its institutions. The extent of decimation reached an all-time high by the dawn of the modern era and particularly at the turn of the 20th century.

Moreover, the shaky foundation of the socio-economic and political structure of Nigeria has resulted in the social imbalance that the country is currently experiencing politically, socially, economically, culturally, educationally, religiously and historically. However, the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence reveals the need for the liberal tradition. The liberal tradition demands respect for individual rights, constitutionalism, religious tolerance and rule of law. The Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence reflects in the principle of utilitarianism; that is, the promotion of the greatest good of the greatest number championed by Bentham and Mill. Accordingly, Leon Baradat (2008, 297), suggests that government should do whatever would produce the greatest happiness of the greatest number in the society.

Nonetheless, the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence is built on the normative basis of the ethics of self-restraint. Alluding to Samuel Shefflers’s “ethos of restraint”, Alan Thomas (2006, 294) argues that the Shefflerian “ethos of restraint” reflects in the basis of the demanding duty of self-restraint required of citizens in a politically liberal society. What Samuel Sheffler (1995) and Alan Thomas (2006) are positing in essence is that Nigeria should embrace the “ethos of restraint” in resolving conflicts of interest.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

So far, this paper critically examines the concept of nonviolence in Mahatma Gandhi’s liberation theology and the Nigerian experience from a contemporary perspective and concludes that the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence is built on the normative context of social order and social change. The Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence reflects in a social movement. The Gandhian conception of nonviolence is built on the Christian ethics of love, peace and solidarity. Gandhi’s notion of nonviolence has ethical considerations and pedagogical implications. This paper recommends that if the Apostolic faith, mission and vision of Jesus Christ is strictly adhered to the world would be a better place for humanity. Civil disobedience is a better option rather than the act of violence in an emancipated global society.

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