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LOOKING AT OUR YOUTHS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY AS THE AGENTS OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION OF HUMAN COMMUNITY

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Abstract

The essay is entitled, looking at our youths in the twenty-first century as the agents of social transformation of human community. The youths are called to transform the human community from within, making it new. The youths cannot fulfill effectively this task of transforming the human community unless they are truly and genuinely in-born in the root of religion. Religion is the accumulated wisdom of humanity about how we can relate to the human community. Youth is not simply age, but it can be born of age. Youth is something nurtured and tended by religion, starting with the most natural territory of one's self. The active presence of the youths in the vital process of transforming the human community is concretized particularly and effectively in the materials and literatures used on the pages of the essay. We are then led to consider the place of method of systematic theology of seeing, judging and acting, which gives certain guidelines to youths when engaging in transformation of the human community. The method offers the benefits of mutual participation and sharing of the youths in the existential life of a living community. The essay contributes in a greater measure to the inner life of the young people and enables them to develop a perspective which will open them to the depth dimension of their daily life. The result is that youths are placed into the tradition of systematic theology of seeing, judging and acting. The method gives the youths their psychic roots. We recommend to the twenty-first century youths to locate their psychic roots, to be fully active participants and not passive witnesses in the life of the community and to deepen their methods of the transformation of the experiences and memories of the human community.

Keywords: youths, transformation, religion, culture, Church, theology, human community

Introduction

The essay investigates the fruitful relationship between the young people and human community. Visibly, this paper looks at the youths in the twenty-first century as the agents of social transformation of human community. We are not looking for perfection nor for a saturated utopia. Any human community is made of saints and sinners, the holy and mundane, the sacred and the profane. The problem of looking at the young people in the twenty-first century is that one sees many separating their task-oriented mission of the transformation of the human community from religion. The task of social transformation of the human community is detached from the symbols of religion. The crisis of the youth from this point of view is the crisis of irreligiosity in the youths. The aim of the discursive essay is to enable the youths to develop an integral relationship with religion, to help them identify their charisma and mission in life and to focus them towards the service of transformation of the human community. In line with the methodology of systematic theology of seeing, judging and acting, it is incumbent to see first and to know who the youths are, and then judge or assess them, and then engage them into action through a systematic-theological reflection with the action of the Word of God, the gifts of Spirit of God, the teachings of the authorities of the Church. One needs to add that the spirit and method of today's Catholic systematic theology are rooted in theory and seeing, in seeking and searching for a new understanding of the apostolic faith, and in living faith and dynamic action or praxis.

Methodological Consideration

The transforming project is distinguished into two types: the transformation of the human person, the young people and the transformation of the human community. The first focuses on the human person, on the young people and sensitizes them with the ideals of the Christian religion, namely, symbols of holiness, hope, faith, love and Integrity, emphasizing that they may transform the human society through these values. The second also focuses primarily on the young people, emphasizing their social and religious services rather than on politics and government programs, but hoping strongly that indirectly, through the young people, some restraints will be exerted on the government and power politics, especially, on genuine politicians who are honest and those who value integrity or who do not compromise with their integrity in public office.

The way of looking at the problem of human community avoids forcing all people, groups and movements into one mold of action for the social transformation of the human community. It is not intention of this work to lump everybody together into the task-oriented project of social transformation. The youths who exercise the gifts of the Holy Spirit and are said to be charismatic, and who reject any form of violence are, specifically, chosen and engaged into this task-oriented discussion and project, "recognizing that transformation of society occurs through the witness of the young people"(Carter: 2006, 122).

The youths are witnesses, transformed to bear witness to the Word of God in the world. The nature of their transformative action or praxis does not consist in their unlimited capital, ownership of land and property, or income or wealth nor being specialists in religious affairs, or experts in economic, technical and scientific fields, in order to transform Nigeria into a wealthy country whose per capita income will be over 100 dollars at the end of 2023., but rather in the resources that lie in the power of the Word of God and life in the Spirit.

A new methodology in systematic theology on the Word of God and Spirit of God enables the youths to discern how they can engage in the transformation of the human community while maintaining their integrity and without being co-opted into rationalizing violent coercion. The theological resources of the youths for the transformation of human community are, namely, seeing, judging and acting. The theological resources rejected violent coercion as a method of transforming a community. The task-oriented method remains the guideline for the youths to carry out any type of practices that they can be engaged or involved in. This paper begins with the exposure-immersion method.

Exposure-Immersion Method

The proposed topic advances the theory that radical Christian youths have throughout the centuries and in many countries of the world transformed the human community, through religion. The essay pointed out that religion transforms human community through shared symbolisms of holiness, hope, faith, love and life of integrity of individual persons and groups.

The theoretical questions are based on the youths. How do we see the youths in twentieth-century Nigeria? Who are the youths? What is the relationship between the youths and religion today? Can we identify in the lives of youths today some wrong attitudes of young people towards religion, religious practices, and spiritual values? Why are we interested in the youths and their religious and social matters? Why is the religious dimension of social life so important and indispensable for the transformation of the human

community? What are the varying factors that influence the faith needs of the youths today? How can youths influence society and avoid becoming violent? How do we link the spirituality of our youths to the manifestations of charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit today? How are the youths responding to God's Word in their daily life? Are the young people at home with their charisma and talents? How does the Catholic Church carry the youths along with the spirit of synodality and communality?

The United Nations Organization (UNO) defines "youths as those between ages 15 and 24. The term youth can also be extended to those who are between 15-25 years of age. Among the category of this people, during the teen years they struggle to establish their identity with their peer groups, while at the stage of young adulthood, they form and maintain intimate relationships with others (Macions: 1987, 124). In this sense, the youths are neither children nor are they adults. Youth period is a time in a person's life between childhood and adulthood (Ojore: 2000, 12).

The term young people is used interchangeably here throughout this discussion with the term youths. The term young people includes the word youths. Young people is a term which covers both age groups, that is, those between the ages of 10 and 24" (Emmy: 2001, 45). In 1996, "more than half of the world's population is below ages of 10 and 25, about 60 per cent of these live in developing countries, like developing countries of Asia and Africa (Shorter: 1996, 103). (Ojore 2001: 27) says in Africa, the youths constitute about 50 per cent of the total populations. The fact, therefore, is that the youths ensure the continuity of a nation, of a country, of a society, of a Church, and of human community as a whole. They are the carriage of religion, culture, customs, traditions, religious and moral values of their people into a future and promising generations. (Ojore, 2001, 27).

Route to Judgment-Assessment

The question here is: How is the social conditions of the youths today analyzed? "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God" (Acts 4:19). This work begins with analyzing the problems of the youths, in relation to religion, within the context of present-day society. Our young people live today in a human community full of contradictions and deep-rooted social and religious crises. We make no judgments about specific young people, whether they are right or wrong or about particular religions, whether they are true or false systems. Judgment is based on the ideals of religious symbolisms of holiness, hope, faith, love and integrity in relation to young people today.

The social analysis begins with the obstacles to the holiness of life of the young people of our times. Personal observation shows that many young people are afraid of being saints, of being called holy Mikes, holy Martins, holy Bens and so on. It is a common phenomenon to see young people who have completely abandoned attending Church services and religious ceremonies simply because they were being laughed at and caricatured by their peers. Many young people are detriments and pollutants of the source of holiness of life of their peers. They easily contaminate and destroy the cisterns and environment of the holiness of people around them. Many are obstacles to the road of holiness: they block the road of holiness to others; they do not enter nor allow others to enter.

(Durkheim 1966) views religion as something sacred, that which people set apart as extraordinary, inspiring awe and reverence. Distinguishing the sacred from the profane is the goal of all religious beliefs. Religion, then, is a social institution involving beliefs and

practices based on the conception of the holy and the sacred. Religion is founded on the concept of sacred and holy (Durkheim: 1966, 62).

The sacred dimensions of religion is en fleshed in rituals, or formal ceremonial behaviour. In the Christian religion of the Catholic Church, the formal ceremony of the Holy Eucharist is the central ritual of the Christian community. In the belief of a Catholic faithful, the water and the wine consumed by the community during the Holy Eucharist are never treated in a profane manner as common food and drink in ordinary day life but as sacred and real symbols of the Holy Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

Systematic-Theological Reflection

Systematic theology characterizes or forms the integrity of the Christian doctrines or the organic relationship between the Christian doctrine. The new nature of Catholic systematic theology is conceived as that system that brings and integrates the entire Christian doctrine together. Systematic theology is the source of the unity or integrity of the Christian doctrines and it does not allow any doctrine to stand in isolation from the other. In this sense, the doctrine of Eucharist and the doctrine of the mission of the youth to transform the human community are related.

The celebration of the Eucharist is the celebration of the Word of God, in action. As Bevan (2005) expresses it: "the Eucharist transforms the Church into what it is, by transforming it into mission" (p. 295). The Eucharist finds its "entrance into the presence of the Triune God and always ends with the community being sent forth in God's name to transform the world in the image of God" (Bevans Stephen:2005, 295). The image of God that resonates most closely in Christian anthropology has its foundation in the Trinity. Christians baptized in the name of the Trinity are transformed into the image of the Trinity - *imago Trinitas*, making concrete in their life, especially in the social transformation of human community. First of all, human beings' image find its fulfilment in relationship and communion with God(at the vertical level) and with each other(at the horizontal level). Second, the image of God is a vocation and mission to work with God in creating a human community that reflects God's perfect giving of God-self to the world in his Son through the Spirit, and more particularly, in creating a human community of equality and mutually, justice and peace.

This brings out the inseparable relationship between justice and the Eucharist. In the same manner, the holiness of life derived from the Eucharist is an impetus to point to the holiness of the entire order of creation, including men and women in the midst of creation, and to call all people into authentic life of relationship with God. The holiness of the young people is not for themselves only but for the transformation of the world into a just community of love.

The hunger for the Holy Eucharist contains the hunger for social justice. The strength and energy of the young people to transform the human community comes from the Eucharist, which is the celebration of Word and Sacraments. The Eucharist is the weapon at the hands of the young people for the transformation of lands, countries and nations. The Holy Eucharist is the source and summit of the life of the youths(Vatican II, Sacrosanctum Concilium, no. 7). The Eucharist as a doctrine is called (1) spiritual food that give strength for action - for my flesh is the real food John 6:51-55; and (2) spontaneous prayers of mind and hears - lift up your hears, we have lifted them up to the Lord. The Eucharist is a pattern of prayer.



Schmemmann (1961) holds that the epiclesis of the Eucharistic prayer that is addressed to the Holy Spirit to transform the gifts of bread and wine into Christ's Body and Blood, is not invoked upon the gifts alone, but also the priest prays that the Holy Spirit will descend and transform the also the people, the Eucharistic community as well (Schmemmann Alexander:1961, 90).

What is the theological utility of the epiclesis to the human community? The goal of the Incarnation and salvation in Christ is crystalized in the epiclesis because when the eternal Word of God took upon himself the Incarnation, that is, the human flesh: it happens so that we would receive the Holy Spirit (Athanasius, *De Incarnatione* 8, PG 26, 996 c). Through the epiclesis we are transformed as a community and we are sent out into the world, endowed with spiritual graces for the service of the human community, to transform it into a community of peace, justice and freedom.

It is not possible to speak of epiclesis in the Eucharist without speaking about pneumatology epiclesis in human community. The young people transform the human community in the power of the Word of God and through the power of the Spirit of God not only for themselves but for the good of the whole human community among whom they live and work. Just as the Word of God, the Spirit of God then becomes the force for transformation of the human community. A second area of reflection, then, analyses the Spirit of God in the perspective of transformation of the human community. One cannot speak meaningfully of transformation of the human community except in the perspective of the Holy Spirit. The epiclesis pneumatology relativizes the healing of individuals in the community and makes the mission of healing of human community, a mission of the community. The healing of the ills of human society will no longer be left in the hands of experts but in the hands of the community as a whole.

Contextualization of the Theology of Social Transformation

At this juncture, the systematic theology of seeing, judging and acting begins its new orientation of social transformation of the human community, supremely with the theology of the Spirit of God in history. The new orientation endorses the view that the Holy Spirit is the Lord, the Giver of Life. Life is the central meaning and goal of every social transformation. Transformation of the human community comes down to the issues of life, that is, to the issues of religion, morality and integrity.

At this stage, the question boils down to how could the virtues of religion, morality and integrity be inculcated into the lives of young people through families, the Church and schools for the effective transformation of the human community. How does one come in terms with life and social transformation of the human community? The African religious worldview of life is a topical issue among theologians. The people of Africa see life at the center of all existence. Obiefuna (2013) exerted a powerful insight into the value of life in African ontology and global bio-ethical and put the key idea of life into its proper context.

Life is a powerful feature in African religion. In African thoughts, life belongs to the first principle of order. Modernity has crumbled down this order. How does one describe the central meaning of life in African context? In the wisdom of our ancestors, it is recognized that for a person to be true to his/her personhood as a human being or to live an authentic human life, that person has to share and participate in life of others, especially, by interacting with other human beings, that is, he/she has to be in relationship with other human beings - a person is a person with, through and in others. The relational aspect of

African life provides our template within which a social transformation of the human community takes place.

What do we mean by social transformation of the human community? These are some ways by which we recognize a transformed community. Employers make workers happy. Workers are paid in time and social justice and peace are promoted. Resources are equally and justly distributed. Employments are offered to the youths. Physical environment and education are provided. Growth in young people increases in geometrical manner. When a human community is not transformed, the bodily growth in young people is hindered and there is loss of the values of life and dignity of the human person - Life becomes meaningless. Hunger and starvation unbalance styles of life. Diseases spread at different levels. Young people are left at stealing, smoking, violent action and so on. The concern here is with the basic issues of human life.

What are the evil effects of untransformed human life and community? Many areas of human life have not been transformed in our country. For instance, the ugly effects of the untransformed health system of our country stare us in the face. Medical officers go to strike, irregularly. In various ways, life is threatened in our community: Many people in Africa today are physically sick, many others are socially ill, a great number of the people of Africa are economically bed-ridden, the majority are psychologically displaced persons, uncountable youths are no longer towing the avenues of religion as path of life and morality is completely relativized, while others are suffering political disorders. Medical doctors educated in Germany, France, England, the United States of America and so on concentrate on the cure of physical ailments that threaten human life. Corollary to this, this paper is concerned here with the transformation of life in the human community through spiritual growth and healing of the human community, as well as social transformation. Where does one begin to transform the health of our community? How does one rebuild the healthcare environment of our today and the future?

In order to transform and rebuild the healthcare of today and tomorrow, collaboration and collective responsibility are needed from both physical and spiritual dimensions of the members of the community to create a sustainable and inclusive healthcare ecosystem in Nigeria. The human life has spiritual values. Rather than focusing on the physical - on the government - this paper is focusing on the spiritual - on the young people. For young people to grow in spirituality, inevitably, he/she must grow in the love of God, in prayer and in commitment to his/her religious faith.

To neglect one's spiritual nature is to deface God's image in us, for the scripture says "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you" (1Corinthians 6:19). The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church and the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity spoke of the significance of workings and gifts of the Holy Spirit to the human community, in our times. First, the principal gift of the Holy Spirit to the human community is the gift of life. The Holy Spirit is the life-principle of the human community. There is a correlation between the Holy Spirit and life in a community - the Holy Spirit is the Lord and Giver of Life. The Holy Spirit is always available to bring life to the human community. This is the starting point of the departure towards the task of social transformation of the human community.

Second, the Holy Spirit is at work in human community, in order to transform the community and its members, more fully, into the image of God, namely, into the Trinitarian image of unity, justice and peace in a human community. A reasonable picture of a Christian

anthropology presents the human person as constricted around a spiritual reality, which goes with material reality, where an interactive ability develops an anthropology between the spiritual and the material, producing values required for human growth and integrity.

The doctrine of the Christian anthropology teaches that a human person is created in the image of God, is fallen, and restored to generate a new life within a community in the service of others. Religion engages us in the choices to act in pursuance of goodness, compassion, mercy, truth, peace and justice. To be counter-cultural, to abhor violence, wars, destruction and shedding of the blood of a human person. The young people are to learn the importance of working with the gifts of the Holy Spirit in order to transform the human community.

Where does one find the young people who are invested with the mission of transformation of the human community through the Spirit of God? They are found in parishes and around our dioceses. There exists the Catholic Youths' Organization of Nigeria. The Catholic Charismatic Renewal of Nigeria, and so on. The Catholic Charismatic Renewal of Nigeria is composed of a sizeable number of young people, emerging from the inner life in the Spirit, springing forth from the intense life of prayer. They trace their origin to the life in the Spirit.

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement, which is a relatively current movement in the contemporary Catholic Church today was originated in 1967. The word renewal expresses that there is a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Catholic Church of the twenty-first century. The spirit of the renewal reawakens Catholics all over the world to the gifts of the Holy Spirit and to the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, meaning a personal experience of the graces of God already sacramentally received, in time and place. The CCRN has two purposes. First, certain areas of human life are declared as mission areas and assigned to the Charismatic groups so that these areas depend on their healing ministry, irrespective of their financial and physical resources. Similarly, the Charismatic group keep the mission spirit of the early Church in different ecclesiastic communities and dioceses. To get an integral vision of today's mission of the CCRN, therefore, Obiefuna (2012) provided some approaches in the management of Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Igboland.

Apart from Catholic Youths' Organization of Nigeria, Catholic Charismatic Renewal of Nigeria and similar groups are active and their members carry out the work of evangelization at all human lengths in religious matters, with elements and forces of prayer. They hold the people together in prayer and hold each other together in prayer and lend a deep faith and a certain charisma to the community. The Catholic Charismatic Renewal uses this holistic approach of systematic theology(seeing, judging and acting), which is both charismatic and holistic approach in its nature. As charismatic individuals, they are agents of God's Word, in the transformation of the human community that see people needing internal and spiritual healing.

This paper discussed a new method of healing among the charismatic agents. The Catholic Charismatic Renewal of Nigeria enters a second tenor in their mission to the human community, first, as predominantly young men and women they see the human community in need of external and physical healing and with second eyes, they see the human community as needing internal and spiritual healing as well, and the action of each individual member of the group or community is important for the whole, in realizing the programme of social transformation. -the whole is greater than the sum of it.

In the past, the method and mission of Catholic Charismatic Renewal was principally to be understood in terms of healing individuals physically, we have now realized and become convinced that the appropriate meaning of healing is to be understood as a holistic concept. First, such a concept caters for the healing of the whole human person by transforming the person's spiritual, religious, moral, physical, mental, educational, social, environmental, economic and political dimensions of life - live a holistic life. Second, this implies also a systematic transformation of life in the various segments of human community. Who can deny the central importance of healing for human community? We see shallow interpersonal relationships and promiscuity, sexually transmitted diseases and homosexual practices, use of contraceptives and practice of routine abortion, increased poverty of young people and children growing up without secure relationships with parents. Self-transformation of the youths is the best option for our situation.

Youth transformation of the human community involves the young people seeing their task-oriented mission or corporate responsibility as trying to heal the ills of the human community, animated by the consciousness of the power of the Spirit of God in their life. This new method of healing or transformation of the human community transcends the former method of healing based only on physical ailments of individuals in the community. The human community is not completely healthy, it is seriously ill and needs to be revived by a prayer that sees, judges and acts. The new method of Catholic Charismatic Renewal is holistic. It is systematic in character. It is the guidelines for the youth for the transformation of the human community.

What is one needed (non-monetary) thing that the guidelines prescribed for the young people to do in the area of community development and social transformation of the human community? The guidelines do not give the potentials and powers of social transformation to wealth, fame, honor nor money. Certainly, money is not the only thing to be focused upon in self-transformation and the social-transformation of the human community. Naturally, money will flow easily, when young people consciously live a life that flows from the life in the Spirit, a life of prayer, a life of sanctity, a life of hope, faith, love and integrity. Prayer is free and voluntary and has unimaginable force or velocity to travel from earth to heaven, from places to places and from persons to persons, transforming and renewing the breakages and broken organs and systems of the human community. Prayer has a large impact in human community and communities situated at home and overseas.

The exercise of prayer is best performed in a Charismatic group or Charismatic community where prayers have eyes to see human sufferings and injustice in the human community. Where prayers can judge and assess human and social conditions of a people in a context. In a charismatic community, prayers act to transform the human community. Today, we give the youths this guideline when engaging in the social transformation of the human community. The central point is to use the method in systematic theology. This guideline is one needed (non-monetary) thing that youths can possess, forming a handbook in the social transformation and development of the human community. Money is important, but prayer that sees, judges and acts is absolutely indispensable.

Conclusion

This paper began by interpreting religion in relation to young people and situating our thinking about religion in the symbols of holiness, faith, hope and love. The essay considers religion more as a symbol of holiness, faith, hope and love, not as an obstacle to progress

and human development, but as a stimulus of a social transformation of the human community. Charismatic groups and other ecclesial communities, like the Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria, should be able to break up the vicious circle of social injustice and violence in the human community. We see this human community specifically as embodied in Nigerian identity, and in doing so, we used the methodology of systematic theology to see how the young people can be of importance in the social transformation of the human community. Young people with charisma should practice holiness and increase faith, hope, and love consciously. They are to become the symbols of hope for all people. This paper recommends that the heroes of Nigeria, who are placed over the human community, should not misuse their privileged positions in the government, society and politics, nor exploit it at all to create disadvantages for the people of other religions and ethnic groups. Such operations are no longer ways of transforming a human community but rather a dis-service to the community.

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