

Disciplining as a Development and Humanization Process Agenda

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Abstract

Disciplining is often perceived as a punitive measure, aimed at controlling and conforming individuals to societal norms. However, this paper seeks to reframe disciplining as a development and humanization process. By drawing on critical pedagogy, human development theories, and social justice frameworks, this research proposes a transformative approach to disciplining. The paper argues that disciplining should focus on fostering personal growth, self-awareness, and social responsibility, rather than merely punishing or controlling behavior. By emphasizing empathy, self-reflection, and restorative justice, disciplining can become a catalyst for humanization, promoting positive relationships, and community building. The proposed framework challenges traditional notions of disciplining, encouraging educators, policymakers, and practitioners to adopt a more holistic and compassionate approach. By prioritizing development and humanization, we can create safer, more inclusive, and equitable environments that nurture the well-being and dignity of all individuals.

Keywords: Disciplining, Development, Humanization, Critical Pedagogy, Social Justice, Restorative Justice.

Introduction

This paper seeks to stimulate our thinking on the issues involved in disciplining and human development, which is the *raison d'être* for church's engagement in development initiatives. The paper assumes that disciplining should not be done in isolation but should be connected and applied to real ministry situations which affect the things disciples of Christ grapple with in their everyday life situations. If this assumption is true, and one opines so, there is therefore need for a multi-dimensional approach to Nigeria and indeed Africa's development challenges through the optics of the "Great Commission" in Mathew 28:18-20. It is a well-known fact that currently, Nigeria and indeed Africa as a continent is plagued by development failure¹. The causes of development failure in Africa has been

¹ Ogbu, Kalu. 2000. *Power, Poverty and Prayer. The Challenges of Poverty and Pluralism in African Christianity*. 1960-1996. New York: Peter Lang. P52.

identified and discussed for many years². However, most of these discourses have approached the problem from scientific, economic and political dimensions. Various governments, development policy makers, for example, have in the past failed to recognize the influence of Christianity and the important role its theology could play in addressing development challenges in Nigeria, “a nation adjudged to be notoriously religious”³. But, recognizing the fact that solutions to the current development challenges require a multi- and inter disciplinary approach, it has become crucial for Christianity as one of the dominant religions in Nigeria and indeed in Africa where it is believed that theological discourse is gradually taken the centre stage, to respond to the development challenges in Nigeria.⁴

In talking about the Church’s prophetic witness through disciplining in the context of the current development challenges one quickly recalls the long history of Church involvement in social, economic, and political development, which promoted the well being of all people in church and society during its early period. The historical antecedents of the church provide much insight into the importance of religion in the transformation of states leading to holistic developments and social revolutions⁵. This fact is hardly contestable judging from the leading role the church and other religious organizations played in the transformation of Europe and the colonization of the world from the 16th to the 20th centuries. In fact, as records show, explorers, priests, administrators, statesmen and soldiers served their respective empires for “God, gold and glory”⁶. The above is very true of the Nigerian experience. Therefore, it would be interesting to see the Church in Nigeria

² Conradie, Ernst. 2008. *The Church and Climate Change*. P.1 See also, Karungi, T. A. Byarunhanga. 1989. “The Church’s Role in Environment Protection” in Agbasiere, Joseph T. and Zabajungu B. K. (eds) *Church Contribution to Integral Development*. Eldoret Kenya: AMECEA Gaba Publications. P.228.

³ Ukah, A F.K. 2003. “Advertising God” in *Journal of Religion in Africa*. (Val. Xxiii). 2 P. 204 (There are several examples that illustrate this assertion. First, the Anglican Church has more members in Nigeria than anywhere in the world. Second the number of the Roman Catholic members in Nigeria is only comparable to those in Brazil in terms of population. Third, the rate at which Pentecostalism is growing in Nigeria is faster than anywhere else in the world. This religious characterization, with which Nigeria has come to be associated, is therefore seen as an advantage to be explored in the search for a multi-dimensional approach to the development challenge which is now needed to bridge the gap created by the non inclusion of Christian theology in development discourses over the years).

⁴ In Africa Christianity has taken a giant lead, becoming the most Christian continent with its centre of gravity shifting southwards. See Nwangwu, M.G. 2008. “Religious as Agents of Evangelization for the Church as Family of God” *Africa Ecclesial Review* 41 (1) 267-281, Lott, A. 1995. *Incluturation of Religious Community Life in Africa*. *Africa Ecclesial Review* 37 (1) 239-254, De Gruchy, S. *Undated. Caution, Creativity and Construction*, Unpublished Manuscript.

⁵ Gustav. H.K.D. 2003. “Christianity and National Development in West Africa: Dilemmas and Possibilities” in James L. Cox and Gerrie ter Haar (eds) *Uniquely African Christian Identity from Cultural and Historical Perspectives*. Asmara Eritrea: Africa World Press, inc. p.157.

⁶ Gustav. H.K.D. 2003. “Christianity and National Development in West Africa: Dilemmas and Possibilities” p.157

especially the Anglican Communion relive once again, the Church Missionary Society's (CMS) tradition of engaging the local folks through socio-economic development vis a vis the Great Commission

The Nexus of the Great Commission and Disciplining

The Great Commission is basically about mission and evangelism of the church which centers on the Good news to the world. The Good news, more than every other thing, is very important and precious to deliver to the world. The Great Commission is encapsulated in the *Missio Dei* which is about working to further God's kingdom through discipleship. The establishment of God's rule on earth is central to the message of holistic redemption epitomized in the mission of Christ through discipleship. In this regard, the world must be presented with the Good News in order for the needs and pains of the world to be cured. For the Good News of Christ to become an antidote to the pains and needs of mankind, it has to be proclaimed and shared by reaching out to people-the essence of disciplining. Talking about the need for reaching out to people as the essence disciplining as reflected in the Great Commission, Warren⁷ asserts that "the church exists by mission as the fire exists by burning" indicating that the church is the only society which exists for the benefit of its non members.

Disciplining is a process of imparting the life of a teacher to a student or apprentice or a follower. It is a systematic method of making a student/apprentice conform to the character and personality of his/her master.⁸ It involves training and dedicated learning. Christian discipleship in our context therefore implies a personal apprenticeship under the master Jesus with a view to becoming like Him. The aim of Christian discipleship is to fulfill the mission of Jesus as stated in Luke 4:18-19- "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me: He has sent me to announce good news to the poor, to proclaim release for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind; to let the broken victims go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour*". From the Jesus "manifesto", we deduce that both the Great Commission and discipleship are all aimed at salvation which entails not only the redemption of an individual soul or spirit but also the renewal and transformation of all aspects of creation, including its development structures.⁹ Lending his support to the church's engagement in socio-economic and development concerns as part of this redemption agenda, Leonardo Boff, a proponent of Liberation theology, asserts that:

⁷ Warren, M. 1979 *I believe in the Great Commission*. Hodder and Stoughton: Great Britain.

⁸ Gathogo, J.M. 2007. The Significance of African Religion in the Reconstruction of Post-cold War Africa. *UNISA. Journal of Theology and Religion in Africa*. Vol.31

⁹ Kent, A. Van. Til. 2007. *Less Than Dollars A Day*. P.92

The gospel is nothing but the proclamation of the reign of God: the full and total liberation of all creating, cosmic and human, from all its iniquities, and the integral accomplishment of God's design in the insertion of all things into his own divine life. Concretely, then the reign of God translates into community of life... in a universal communion of brothers and sisters in solidarity with one another in the use of the fruit of the earth and the work of human hands.¹⁰

In the light of the above, Christian discipleship is given impetus in the use of Christian theology and other faith resources to fulfill Great Commission and further act against the dominant culture of economic growth and other social factors which do not recognize the integrity of creation, which dehumanize and prevent people from becoming like the Master Jesus. Conversely, the Marxist literacy critic Fredric Jameson has greatly contributed to our theological understanding of the negative effects of the culture of economic growth without boarder or consideration.¹¹ His examination of the emergence of the cultural dominance of capitalism in the era of postmodernism is insightful and useful particularly for our theological reflection on the crisis of culture with regards to the current developmental crisis. This is because the way he describes the postmodern era as "a time when capitalism penetrates the pre-capitalist enclaves of nature and the unconscious, reducing all human action, including politics to some form of consumption"¹² is precisely at the centre of our theological argument against the current global economic structure hugely determined by the system of global governance. Our theological engagement should therefore be responsive to those factors which in their very nature stifle true discipleship and collective witnessing.¹³

What is the Connection between Disciplining and Development?

We have spent a couple of minutes looking at the relationship between the Great Commission and disciplining. Now let's turn our attention to look at the connection between disciplining and the issue of development. The term development has been conceptualized in many often-inconsistent ways, in the last forty years. There are various definitions of development, which we briefly look at here. This can be illustrated by the development of a definition used in the 2010 Human Development Report of Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (Alkire 2010). It starts off in 1990 with the widely used definition of development by the economist, philosopher and Noble Laureate

¹⁰ Boff, Leonardo. 1989. *Faith on the Edge: Religion and Marginalized Existence*. San Francisco: Harper and Row. 73.

¹¹ See Miller, Vincent, J. 2004. *Consuming Religion Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture*. New York, London: Continuum.p.63-65.

¹² Miller, Vincent, J. 2004. *Consuming Religion Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture*. P.65

¹³ Dieter, Hassel and Rasmussen, Larry (eds) 2001. P.126

Amartya Sen, in which development is defined as "a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy" (1999:3). Whilst the 1990 report consists of the clarifications of concepts, the 1991 to 1993 reports reflect the importance of human capital in the process. Between 1994 and 2010, human security, gender, economic growth, poverty, consumption, globalization, human rights, technology, democracy, millennium development goals, cultural liberty, international cooperation, water, climate change and migration, the dimensions of development, are firmly entrenched as the focus points. These dimensions have culminated into a more comprehensive statement of human development, as "Human development aims to expand people's freedom-the worthwhile capabilities people value-and to empower people to engage actively in development processes, on a shared planet. And it seeks to do in ways that appropriately advance equity, efficiency, sustainability and other key principles"(Alkire 2010:24).

Development is a complex issue that has many different and sometimes contentious definitions. "Development is a process by which people gain greater control over themselves, their environment and their future, in order to realize the full potential of life that God had made possible"¹⁴ A basic perspective equates development with economic growth. The United Nations Development Programme uses a more detailed definition. According to them development is 'to lead long and healthy lives, to be knowledgeable, to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living and to be able to participate in the life of the community. Achieving human development is linked to a third perspective of development which views it as freeing people from obstacles that affect their ability to develop their own lives and communities. Development, therefore, is empowerment: it is about local people taking control of their own lives, expressing their own demands and finding their own solutions to their problems.

Development is one of the most compelling concepts of our time. During the 1950s and through to 60s, the economics tended to dominate the debate and essentially determined its intellectual scope and mode. In the 1970s the humanitarians dominated the development debates. The third phase, that is, 1970s through the 80s saw another set of developmentally minded individuals propounding the "integrationist" perspective. We must admit that theologians are late comers in the development debates, arriving at the turn of this millennium. We are not concerned here with the classical definitions of development. Development is a state in which things are said to be improving; a process in which something passes by degrees to a different stage (especially a more advanced or mature stage, act of improving by expanding or enlarging or refining. It is also an act of developing of disclosing that which is unknown; a gradual unfolding process by which anything is

¹⁴ Ronald, J. Sider. (ed) 1981. *Evangelicals and Development. Toward a Theology of Social Change.* Australia: The Paternoster Press. pp.19

improved.¹⁵ Development generally means the improvement and realization of human potential.¹⁶ Development means too, that people should be able to read and write, and in Africa this is a problem as most people are still illiterate. An economist of the world Bank, Joseph views development as “a transformation of society, a movement from traditional relations, traditional ways of thinking, traditional methods of production, to more modern ways”.¹⁷ He argues that a characteristic of traditional societies is the acceptance of the world as it is; the modern perspective recognizes change; it recognizes that we, as individuals and societies, can take actions that, for instance, reduce mortality, increase life spans, and increase productivity. Globalization and information technology influence this change from traditional to modern societies, through information-transfer.

There is a commonality between discipline and development in the sense that both are about engaging in the process of humanization from physical and spiritual perspectives. This is clearly understood by reflecting on the Great Commission. This commonality is reflected in thinking about development theologically. The link between disciplining and development is based on the creation of a symbolic universe. Whatever can be used to motivate and improve people’s lives is based on this symbolic universe. After all, people want to talk about God in terms of inspiration and aspiration thereby bringing hope to them in hopeless situations. It is for this reason that for me the church should read the bible from a developmental perspective. This makes sense if we take the bible to be about holistic salvation of creation. Jesus said that he came that we may have life in abundance (John 10:10). This should be the humanization agenda of the church. The commonality between disciplining and development means that we should engage in praxis- the cycle of experience, analysis, reflection and action to complete the humanization process which is the main thrust of the Great Commission. The church’s engagement in a theology that deals with development needs a crucial consideration because the dominant development paradigm which offers to proffer solution has unfortunately become the one that is also responsible for much of our development and ecological crisis. This therefore introduces us to the need for a theology that deals with the role of the church in development issues. This has become necessary because if the earth’s resources are irreparable damaged or deplete through development, the earth’s life support mechanism would be impaired and the entire life forms would be at the risk of extinction. Therefore for the human life and the life of the earth in general to be sustained while at the same time engaging in development, we need to reappraise the church’s mandate enshrine in the “Great Commission”.

¹⁵ Shutte, Augustine (ed0. The quest for Humanity in Science and Religion. The South African Experience. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.

¹⁶ Kiggundum, M.M. 2003. Managing Organizations in Developing Countries: Chicago. Kumarian Press.

¹⁷ Todaro, M. 1997. Economic Development in the Third Worlds, London: Longman

Anglican Perspectives on Discipleship and Development

We have looked at the development challenges and the role of Christianity in providing solution as part of our collective witnessing. Now we turn attention to the Anglican involvement in development concerns. It is necessary that we understand the Anglican concept of mission. This understanding is important because it is the Anglican *Mission concept* that provided the framework for Anglican perspective and engagement on development. Archbishop Roman Williams says this of Anglican involvement in development initiatives “Anglicans are in international development because of a certain set of convictions about humanity. We believe that because human beings are made in the image of God, they are not made to be slaves”.¹⁸ The Anglican understanding of mission which is not much different from the universal church concept of mission therefore corroborates this vision of the image of God. Specifically, the Anglican mission goals include the following five elements:

- (i) To proclaim the good news of the kingdom;
- (ii) To teach, baptize, and nurture the new believers;
- (iii) To respond to human needs by loving service;
- (iv) To seek to transform unjust structures of the society.
- (v) To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.¹⁹

The Search for “Development Concerns” in the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) vis a vis Discipline

Looking at the ‘vision’ of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), from a development perspective, one sees an adumbration of some key elements of development principles. However, a critical reflection with “development lens” could raise some key fundamental issues. Firstly, the ‘vision’ is mainly concerned with *charity* rather than issues of justice and real development initiatives. It is so inundated with charity that is completely excluded the issues of socio-economic and political empowerment from its priority. Socio-economic and political disempowerment is another form of injustice and impediment to true discipline and development. Because of this omission which is very significant in development initiatives, I conclude that the ‘vision’ did not reflect in practical terms the core development reality of the nation.

A further probing into the ‘vision’, shows that theological engagement is visible absent- it did not engage theologically in the prevailing socio-economic and political issues plaguing

¹⁸ Williams, Rowan. Undate. <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/1> (accessed on 13th March 2009).

¹⁹ Warmback, Andrew. 2005. *Constructing an Oikothology*. P. 78

the country. This observation is categorically based on the fact that issues of low economic growth, unemployment and poverty in its many ramifications with characterized the Nigerian society, are some of the critical areas where the church has not positively made much impact in terms making its prophetic voice to be heard in an unmistakable, less cacophonous and non confusing manner. The church has not responded empathetically to issues of internal economic policies which favour the rich and pauperize the majority of the citizens with its resultant entrenchment and extension of inequality and class divides.

From the foregoing, it appears to me that the ‘vision’ does not encapsulate a holistic ministry – s ministry which seeks to touch all aspects of human needs. This shows a new theological paradigm for the church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) has become imperative in order for it to challenge in a radical way those structures of the Nigerian society which impede true discipline and negatively affect the lives of the people-the marginalized in the society. True discipline must aim at societal transformation especially in the areas of socio-economic and political development. This has become imperative since the church if it does not engage or struggle side by side with the people in sharing their joys, sorrows, anxieties and daily burdens, would not be fulfilling the Jesus manifesto.

The areas of socio-economic and political concerns are of utmost importance to me because many of the problems which cause suffering and particularly as a result of poverty have their roots in socio-economic and political structures of many societies including the Nigerian society.²⁰ People are marginalized and pauperized because precisely the socio-economic and political structures are designed to affect them negatively. Reflecting on the absence of theological engagement in the Nigerian society, Madu asserts that the hour of liberating struggle has struck for theology in Nigeria.²¹ What Madu, implies is that our theological discourse should cease to only concentrate on what has been generally referred to as “the ambulance ministry” while ignoring the socio-economic and political causes of poverty that make people sick and troubled.²² Okolo could not agree more with Madu when he argues that “theology has to engage itself in the political, economic, social and religious transformation of the people, in transforming societal structures which breed humiliation, agony and death for a large section of the Nigerian community”.²³

Secondary, from the church’s ‘vision’ document, it is clear that the Church of Nigeria does not have a well researched and articulated policy position at the national level which

²⁰ Buffel, O. A. 2007. *Journeying with the Poor as they struggle for Survival and Freedom: Pastoral Work Amongst the Poor*. Presentation at a Ph.D Seminar at the University of Kwazulu-Natal, School of Religion and Theology. P.1

²¹ Madu, Emeka. J. 2004. *Honest to African Cultural Heritage*. Onitsha: Coskan Associates. P. 117

²² Pattison, S. 1988. *A Critique of Pastoral Care*. London: SCM Press Ltd. P.83

²³ Madu, Emeka J. 2004. *Honest to African Cultural Heritage*. P. 117.

specifically aims at development issues in the country. At diocesan levels, there may exist some evidences of diocesan engagement in development issues. For example, we know that the Archbishop of the province of the Niger and the Bishop of Awka Diocese, the Most Rev. Maxwell Anikwenwa, in his 2002 synod address, led the entire synod to deliberate on a synod theme titled “our Common Future-Human Environment”. There may as well be some other dioceses that have engaged in development initiatives, but this has not been reflected at the national church.

One if therefore inclined, to believe that the absence of the national development policy document of the Church of Nigeria could, suggest at least two things. It is either that the church has no priority on development issues, or that it is not aware of its potential as an agent of change to influence the ways in which development is understood and pursued and this is responsible for the reason why the church has not engaged actively in the current development problems plaguing the nation. The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) has not shown enough commitment to the issues of development in a more pragmatic way in spite of its vision of being a caring church which is one of its fundamental aspirations. Although it could be argued that other issues of social development are vaguely encapsulated in the social welfare commission, the welfare commission has no definite agenda or programme to engage in the issues of the current “double-earth crisis” of environment and poverty challenges which touches on the human development index.

This invisible commitment is attributable to the church’s naïve knowledge of the inextricable link between environment and development issues in general. The church’s naïve knowledge is portrayed in the manner in which it has in practice seemed to have followed the traditionally perceived view that ecological and economic concerns are separate and that the church’s primary assignment are to proclaim the gospel: development issues is not considered as its main evangelical or mission thrust.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we must be reminded that the Church still remains a source of great hope to millions of people who are to be disciple first through acts of caring and charity but, above and beyond these, through engaging in the humanization process in order to de-envelop their potentials. For the Church to make a difference in the quality of the life of people (both spiritual and material) it needs to make its prophetic voice to be heard loud clear and take stock of its CAPITAL and mobilize all its faith resources including its theology to engage in the Great Commission. Doing this requires a theological paradigm shift from our current “ambulance ministry” to a theology of development that seeks to address the holistic person in a holistic perspective.

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