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ANALYZING JESUS' RESURRECTION (MARK 16:1-20) IN THE CONTEXT OF AFRICAN REALITIES AMONGST 21ST CENTURY THEOLOGIANS

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Ikyernum Sachia EPHRAIM

(Ph.D. Student, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria)

ephraimikyernum@gmail.com, +2348142136603

Abstract

This paper analysis Jesus' resurrection (Mark 16:1-20) in the context of African realities among 21st century theologians. Justin Ukpong's theory of hermeneutical enculturation was adopted in the work. Secondary sources of data collection are mostly used in the work. Findings show that the idea of "resurrection" was first a common concept, partly existing in the ancient Greco-Roman world. It also appears in the Old Testament, the Inter-Testamental period, and the New Testament. Mark's resurrection story actually ends at Mark 16:8, while the later verses (9-20) were added by other evangelists or scribes who copied Mark, remedied the situation, and provided accounts of the appearances. The research supports those who establish that the empty tomb tradition was enough evidence to prove that Jesus resurrected. The resurrection story is crucial to Africans, as they believe in the reality of the resurrection even in the midst of the suffering they are experiencing, with the hope that God will renew all things and bring new life. Death, to Africans, does not separate someone from the family. Rather, the "living-dead" remain united and connected with the "living-living. Speaking of Jesus as an ancestor in Africa means He shares common parentage with them. He is mediating between them and God and modeling for them good conduct. The resurrection of Jesus Christ for Africans is a symbol of salvation, reconciliation, and the proof of Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

Key Words: Jesus, resurrection, Mark, Africa, Ancestor, suffering

Word Count: 240

Introduction

The resurrection of Jesus Christ (*ē anastasis tou iesou 2hristou*) from the dead is foundational to the Christian faith. It is referred to explicitly in seventeen books of the New Testament and is implicit in most of the remaining ten (Gerald, n.d.). In Mark's gospel, Jesus explicitly proclaims his resurrection no fewer than four times (Mk 8:31, 10:33-34 and 14:27-28). (Wesley, 2017) further reiterates that the resurrection is clearly given witness to in numerous places in Mark's narrative. In each scene that Jesus predicts his passion, he also predicts his resurrection (8:31; 9:31; 10:34). After the transfiguration, Jesus instructs the disciples to tell nothing of what they have witnessed until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead (Objole, n.d.). Although the disciples were unsure what this meant (9:9-10). When predicting the desertion of the disciples, Jesus tells them, "After I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee" (14:26).

Mark's gospel may not be a passion narrative with a long introduction, but from the time Jesus began to travel on the way towards Jerusalem (8:27; 9:33-34; 10:32, 46, 52; 11:8), the narrative is punctuated with hints of resurrection. Thus, one of the interpretive puzzles to be dealt with here is firstly: why Mark chooses not to narrate any resurrection appearances as part of his proclamation of the resurrection? This is in view of the fact that many readers from antiquity till date have understood the risen appearance absence from Mark as evidence that the gospel did not originally end at 16:1-20 but rather contained traditions such as those found in Mathew, Luke and John (Abogunrin, 1981).

In another point, what is one to make of an empty tomb without a risen Christ standing nearby in the garden, appearing on a mountaintop in Galilee, or at least joining a conversation on a dusty road heading out of Jerusalem before he vanishes? And thirdly, who is this mysterious young man that announces to the women at the tomb that "he is risen? These are the questions that will form the basis of the resurrection narrative in Mark.

The Concept "Resurrection" (*Anastasis*)

The concept "Resurrection" also called *anastasis* in Greek is a well-known term in the past. Using form criticism, it has been revealed that the ancient worlds, within the time of the Jews, were already aware of this concept, although the term varies (Hoogerwer, 2014). What then is the meaning of the concept "Resurrection? It connotes a standing up again literally. It is a resurrection from death (individual or general) or figuratively, a moral recovery of spiritual truth (Strong, 2011). But in this context, the Resurrection we are talking about is the one being raised back to life and never to die again. It is different from resuscitation. It is thus the raising of Jesus Christ from the dead (Hornby, 2011).

Resurrection in the Ancient World

Resurrection in the Greco-Roman world, according to many scholars partly or never existed in the real sense of it. During this time, only two traditions exist; the Homeric and Platonic. The writings of the Homeric on one hand never conceived anything close to what the Christians portray as the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Hendrickson, n.d). On the other hand, Hoogerwerf (2014) identified some Platonic beliefs that seem to portray the idea of the resurrection in the Greco-Roman world. According to him, Plato sketches in his *Timaeus* a cosmogony, in which the deity brings order in the chaos out of his goodness. This cosmos has to be the image of the

perfect, and was therefore not only provided with reason and soul (Tim 29-30), but also with living beings.

The creation of mortal beings was delegated to the created gods, but the father of the universe made immortal souls; one for each star (41b-d). He also put laws in the souls, such that human beings should be the most pious of all living beings. Only the immortal soul of the righteous who passes the test of life will return as a woman or yet worse, as an animal (42b-d). The resurrection is not simply assumed. Plato's view is accompanied by a moral aspect, which is clearly illustrated by the myth of 'Er' at the end of the republic. This myth perhaps not accidentally reminding of the heavenly journeys in the latter apocalyptic literature is about the experience of the hero 'Er', who returned to life, after twelve days (Resp 614b). He told that the souls of deceased people came to a place with access to heaven and Hades, and judges sent them to their respective place. After a while, they came back to choose a new destiny in life. That the best chance of the righteous was to choose life between the extremes.

After their choice, the soul drank on the plain of the oblivion, from the Lake without worries and returned by means of a falling star in the body. (Resp 614-619). Plato's Phaedo, staged as the last dialogue of Socrates on death role, which contains Plato's view on death and the soul. Death is the salvation of the soul from the body and the natural way is that the corpse, (*nekpos*) dissolves, decomposes and is blown away by the wind. (Phaedo 80c).

Socrates (a student of Plato) imagines that human beings after a positive judgment may go from the early prison to the real, ethereal earth, which lies as a sort of second floor upon our earth. By means of Philosophy, one can attain a yet better place in bodiless existence. It is only a story Socrates says but a story by which one should be enchanted. The idea of gradual ascension, along several levels of being shows an important aspect of the ancient world views. The ancient did not have a dichotomous view on the world, divided in a (material) natural and (immaterial) supernatural realm, but thought about the world as a hierarchy of essences (Martin, 1995). This view implies that matter is heavier on earth and finer in the higher realms. It also implies-an implication of significance with regard to the resurrection- that the stuff of a body can be construed variously.

Resurrection in the Old Testament Period

Among the Judean ideas of the resurrection, one can find ideas that are congenial to Greek views. On one hand, the author of the resurrection is in line with the traditional concept that there is no blissful after life (Eccl 3:18-21). On the other hand, in writings like the Wisdom of Solomon, the works of Philo of Alexandria and in the description of the Essence by Josephus (Bells 2.5-156), the predominant view is that the soul after a virtuous life would go to Hades or a heavenly realm (Hoogerwerf, 2014). Another way of expressing the expectation of life after death is to talk about rising up from the sleep of death; Resurrection, as confirmed in Daniel 12:2 says "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt" Evans (1970) posits that throughout the period covered by the Old Testament itself, the Jews seemed to have remained content with the traditional idea of '*sheol*' as the abode of the shade of all the departed, where life is hardly worth living. But the idea of resurrection was later conceived in the aforementioned scripture in 165BCE.

Most scholars like Gerald, (n.d) agrees that the doctrine of bodily resurrection is a fairly late development within the writings of Judaism. The first unambiguous statement in the Old Testament about resurrection from the dead is the one in Daniel 12:2 and possibly Isaiah 26:19. Although there are antecedents of it in the miracles of resuscitation performed through Elijah

and Elisha (1st and 2 Kings) and in images of a national revival within Old Testament prophetic literature (notably Hosea 6:1-2 and the vision of the valley of dry bones, contained in Ezekiel 37:1-14). Sinclair (1988) also adds that the concept of resurrection from the dead find expression about eight times in the Old Testament passages (Jb. 19:26, Ps 17:15, 49:15, 73:24, Isa 26:19, 53:10-12; Dan 12:2, 13). While resurrection terminologies are borrowed on two notable occasions (Ezk 17:1-14, Hos 6:2) to portray a future national spiritual restoration brought about by a return from exile.

Another author asserts that the concept of resurrection therefore should not be viewed as completely separate from the concept of afterlife that takes the soul as primary vehicle. The astral resurrection of the wise in Daniel resonates with the return of the philosophical soul to its star in Plato (see resurrection story in the Ancient World). The difference is that the image of the raising up involves the body. The term “bodily resurrection” is actually Pleonasm. But it is not right to put too much weight on the exact bodily language with regard to resurrection (Trump, 2007).

In talking about resurrection, it takes place at the mythical level (like the myth in Plato) and is therefore not the object of offensive reflection. But even then, it should be noted that in the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint and early Jewish texts, the term *flesh* appears rarely to express the term “resurrection”. Anyhow, the bodily implications of the metaphor of rising up from the sleep of death, marks a difference with a dominant view of the Greek world, where the soul is the main vehicle for life after death. The view that the final blissful state in the afterlife for virtuous people and a life in a new body would have sounded weird at least to some Greeks. The idea of resurrection is not completely foreign as is attested. For instance; by the story of Alcestis who returned from the dead to her physical body (Stanley & Porter, 1999).

Resurrection in Inter-Testamental Period

It is only from the more immediate background of the New Testament that a doctrine of resurrection becomes perceptible. A bodily resurrection from the dead is proclaimed in the number of Jewish apocryphal and Pseudepigraphal texts, including 2 Maccabees, 4 Ezra, 1 Enoch and 2 Baruch (50-51) Jubilees, Assumption of Moses, Apocalypse of Moses, Psalms of Solomon, 4 Maccabees and (If they are pre-Christian) the testaments of the XII Patriarchs - This shows Inter-testament Judaism to be very diverse (a greater uniformity was not reached until post -200CE) (Perkins, 1984).

The variations of the resurrection expectation during this period include; (a) Resurrection of the righteous Israelite only (Psalms of Solomon, 1 Enoch 83:90) (b) Resurrection of the truly righteous and truly unrighteous in Israel for judgment (Dan 12:2 1 Enoch 6:36, 11 Baruch). (c) Resurrection of all men for judgment (Sybilline Oracles; 11 Esdras, Testaments of the XII Patriarchs). There are differences about place (resurrection to earth, to a renewed earth, to paradise) Time (To a messianic period belonging to this age, to eternal life in perpetuity) and form (a reconstituted body, a transformed body without body). These variations, found within a single work, reflect a considerable fluidity of thought, which was probably brought about by the impact upon Israel of new modes of belief, especially the Iranian (Evans, 1970), to which resurrection and the final judgment were by this time indigenous.

The Resurrection in the New Testament

When it comes to the resurrection in the New Testament, it is clearly the climax and height of the concept. It is recorded that the idea of “resurrection” appears explicitly in seventeen books

of the New Testament and is implicit in mostly of the remaining ten, (Gerald, n.d). Occasionally then, resurrection refers to mere reanimation, but it generally also implies transformation (1 Corinthians 15:52, raised immortal) and exaltation (Acts 2:32-33; 5:30-31) in its fullest sense. Resurrection is God's raising of persons from the realm of the dead to a new and unending life in his presence. It is an event leading to a state. From the foregoing, Evans superb monograph asserts that although resurrection is central to the New Testament, and explicitly mentioned except in 2 Thessalonians, Titus, Philemon, 3 John, 2 Peter, Jude and James, there is a notable scarcity in the recorded teachings of Jesus in reference to resurrection, or any distinctive contribution to the doctrine (Evans, 1970).

Gundry (n.d) in affirmation further reiterates that in Mark 5, where Jairus begs for his dying daughter (5:23), Jesus is delayed (5:24b-34) and messengers meet them to report that his daughter is dead (5:35). Then Jesus refusing to listen to what they say, tells Jairus that "do not fear, only have faith" (5:36). When they arrive and encounter mourners (5:38) Jesus dismisses them saying "why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping" and they laugh at Him; then, he put them outside. Jesus proceeds to restore the girl by saying to her, "*talitha koum*" a transliterated Aramaic phrase that Mark translates (little girl, I say to you, arise, 5:41) and the young woman arose. That since Mark later used both *ēgeipō* (arise) and *anistēmi* (get up), it is to describe eschatological resurrection (see 12:18-27) as well as Jesus own resurrection (The formal in the resurrection announcement of 16:16, the latter in the resurrection predictions of 8:31, 9:31 and 10:34). The present story of Jairus daughter's resurrection, as Gundry observe foreshadows both.

He concludes that:

Jesus' denial that the girl is dead, although everyone else in the story agrees she has died (5:35, 40), is because Jesus resurrection of her seems to symbolize his own resurrection and the eschatological resurrection of the dead, which early believers understood Jesus to guarantee (See 1 Corinthians 15:20-22). Moreover, the fact that since Jesus Himself is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25), makes no need of Him discussing about it again; rather he demonstrates the concept through His rising from the dead-*nekros*.

This implies that resurrection and life is no longer a story circulating but has moved from the circumference to the center. However, many scholars argue that the raising of the dead in the gospels by Jesus is not resurrection itself but resuscitation, implying that Resurrection is the reuniting of the spirit with the body in an immortal state, no longer subject to disease or death (Resurrection of St. John's Gospel in African Context, n.d). Whereas the former was not the case, because the one's raised by Jesus still died again. That is why Jesus is often regarded as the first born of the dead (Rev 1:5).

While Paul's letters are the earliest Christian writings to mention the resurrection of Christ (Gerald, n.d), there is every indication that the idea was part of Jesus own believe and expectation. All four gospels record reference to it virtually in all strata (some may denied it is expressed in Q). Paul may have taken over the centrality of the resurrection as a theological idea of Jesus himself, although He certainly was present within the Pharisaic party of Judaism of which he was a member, (Witherington, 1992).

Wolter (1980-90) in affirming the resurrection of Christ asserts that the gospel of Luke and John presents other evidences of Jesus resurrection in bodily form, when they think that He is an unsubstantial ghost (pneuma), Jesus shows his recognizable arms and feet "a ghost does not have flesh and bones (pneuma sakra kai hotea ouk ēchei. Luke 24:36-40). In John, Jesus shows to them His arms and His side with the mark of crucifixion, and again to Thomas a week later

(John 20:19-29). Moreover, in the gospel of Luke as a second piece of evidence, Jesus eat some broiled fish (Luke 24:41-43). This is parallel in John's gospel when Jesus shares bread and fish with the disciples (John 21:9-14). The meaning of this motive is two folds; first, it was really Jesus who appeared and secondly, he had a resurrected human body. It was not merely a mirage of Him without a body. Unlike Paul, these two gospels portray the resurrected body as showing the marks of crucifixion and capable of taking in normal food. Luke even explicitly states that it has flesh and bones.

The Resurrection Narratives in Mark's Gospel

Subsequent to the fact that majority of scholars have agreed that Marks gospel finished at 16:8, (Cowell, 1937) with the phrase 'οὐδενι οὐδεν εἶπαν ἔΦοβούτο γαρ' (and they said nothing, for they were afraid). Mark's decision not to narrate any resurrection appearances as part of the proclamation of the resurrection, but to represent Jesus resurrection merely by depicting Jesus empty tomb and an anonymous young man claiming that he arose, has sparked much controversy among scholars. Below are some of the arguments laid in an attempt and counter attempt to provide answers to the issues being raised.

Why Mark chooses not to narrate any resurrection appearances as part of his proclamation of the resurrection.

This aspect talks about the problem of the ending of Mark's resurrection account (16:8). For scholars have come to agree that the long ending (16:9-20) was a latter insertion. That the original resurrection account abruptly ends at 16:8. As such, it depicts Mark as having no resurrection appearances. So, while Mark depicts Jesus as undergoing all of the experiences, he prophecies about his death and resurrection, he neglects to confirm Jesus resurrection appearance? (Abogunrin, 1981). In response to this vacuum, Busch & Brockport (n.d) opines that;

One reason the risen Jesus never appears in Mark, despite Jesus four predictions of resurrection and Mark's presumed knowledge of Jesus resurrection appearances to the disciples is that, a conclusion featuring Christ's appearance would transform Mark's dialogue appearance, between overwhelming suffering and faith into a dialogue, even propagandistic monologue, which Mark will not tolerate

But this position does not hold water. To some, most notably Weeden Sr, (1971) in his book "Mark; Traditions in Conflict" has argued that, Mark's story of Jesus transfiguration (9:2-8) is a misplaced resurrection account, if this is correct, then Marks displacement of the account constitute a refusal to present it as an actual appearance of the risen Christ. To Streeter (1924) John 21 is based on the lost ending of Mark. That a single un-mutilated copy had reached Ephesus and there had been preserved or that Mark visited Ephesus in the course of his imprisonment in Rome (Col 4:10, II Tim 4:11) and there communicated to the Church his account of the resurrection appearances which had survived locally in writing or as an oral tradition. But Streeter (1924) says that this hypothesis is only a guess.

Burkitt (1990) on his part argues that Mark contains nothing that interested the early church which was not in Mathew or Luke. Hence a generation or two after the gospels have been completed, Mark ceased to be copied. Later in the face of the struggle with Gnosticism, the canon of the gospels had to be defined. The Roman church then remembered among the archives that there was an old copy of Mark and insisted on its being included. But the end of the roll had been torn off and there was no other copy in existence from which to repair the

loss. But the wider circulation of Mark in the first century is suggested of its use by Mathew and Luke. It is incredible that all copies save one could have disappeared after continuous circulation for about 50years. Burkitt's view can only stand if it can be argued that the incident occurred to the original copy before copies of it were made for circulation.

Some suggest that it is possible to conjecture that the scroll was damaged, but if so, it must have happened to the original copy or else to a very early copy. Another suggests that Mark died perhaps, Mark died suddenly or that he fled Rome as a result of the Neromian persecution, leaving the gospel unfinished. This suggestion is not impossible but the nature of the case cannot be confirmed. For Rawlinson, Mark intended a continuation volume similar to Acts and would not therefore have regarded 16:8 as the virtual end of his story. But it would seem that the only course open is to admit that we do not know the original ending. If the foregoing is the case, then it would mean that certain individuals or Churches who recognized that Mark ended uprightly in 16:8 must have supplied the various endings to rectify the abnormality. In doing this, they probably made use of the existing traditions (Qtd in Abogunrin, 1981).

Others say that the first thing to note about Mark's implied readers (i.e, hearers) claims is that they were Christians. Since, therefore, Mark's original readers would have already known the story of the Christ Event, (the resurrection). Mark could assume that when he made major changes to the story, his audience would recognize what he had done. But this is not true since evidences in Mark indicate that he was writing for the purpose of evangelism to the Gentiles. Guy (1954) thinks that Mark ended his gospel in 16:8 because he was an unpolished writer. Meyer (1921) feels that little or no explanation is needed because the gospel as it stands is always intended to end with a flight of the women from the tomb. The resurrection is hinted but not directly described. It was in Mark's view a mystery too sacred to be committed to writing. But from the passage, it does appear that Mark intended to analyze an appearance to Peter and probably including some other appearances.

However, someone suggests a solution which seems appealing to the research that, if we need to remember that Mark entitles his work, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, Son of God" (1:1). The author has promised to tell his readers only the beginning of the story. Mark's narration does indeed end, but the story continues, or at least has the potential to continue. Indeed, it is the audience's job not to complete the story, but to continue it. To complete the story would mean that the audience simply claimed that the disciples did meet Jesus in Galilee, much as Matthew completes Mark. To continue the story, however, means that the readers become characters in the ongoing story of the Christ Event after the empty tomb (Peterson, 1980).

The Empty Tomb Tradition

In reaction to the sparing evidence provided by Mark's story about the empty tomb (16:6) as one of the proofs of Jesus resurrection appearances, there seems to be a contradiction by scholars about the empty tomb in Mark (and other empty tomb references in the gospels) as not being a substantial basis for Jesus' resurrection. While some scholars see the empty tomb tradition as probably in part an answer to Judaism's denials of Jesus resurrection/vindication by God and likely in part an anti-docetic apologetic, (Helmut, 2001). According to the former, scholars like Zangenberg, argues that; in the gospel of Mark (CA 70 CE) the empty tomb story convinces that Jesus body is translated to heaven (Mark 16:1-8). But for Bultmann, (1963) the empty tomb is just a legend and Jesus' bodily appearances as mere inventions by communities.

Allen (n.d) in his opinion states that:

The story of the empty tomb without resurrection appearances offers to the readers the resurrection not as a past event but as a present and ever-future experience that the empty tomb points to Jesus presence with the Mark's community. This experience of the resurrection however is not guaranteed. The community must seek it. The community stands as the symbol of the eschatological presence of God, but must seek the resurrection by doing what the disciples did not get a chance to do in the narrative. They must return to Galilee if they wish to see Jesus.

Allen's position however seems to be more of a theological interpretation without concise evidential proof. Wright (2005:676) in affirming the basis of the empty tomb (and the resurrection appearance of Jesus Christ to his disciples) as the proof of his resurrection, beautifully argues that:

.....On one hand, if the tomb was found empty, but Jesus did not appear to his followers, it would have been assumed that someone had taken the body. On the other hand, if the reported appearances of Jesus took place, but his body still remained in the tomb, the disciples would have believed they had seen a ghost or a vision as it was a well-known phenomenon in the world of the time

Thus to him, the empty tomb is the evidence of Jesus bodily resurrection. Evans (2001), wonders how well this applies to Mark, to him;

...New Testament text reports the ease with which the opponents of Jesus resurrection could challenge the empty tomb as evidence of it. Matthew 28:11-15 recounts the Jewish religious leaders and Roman authorities conspiring to start a rumor that Jesus' disciples had stolen his body-a prima facie more likely explanation of the empty tomb than the claim that Jesus from the dead...

In conclusion therefore, the empty tomb as argued by scholars decisively resolves no question about Jesus resurrection, especially when paired, as in Mark, with the absence of the risen Jesus Himself. But in my resolution, the empty tomb tradition was enough evidence to prove that Jesus is raised from the grave. For if Jesus never rose from the grave, then his corpse would have been discovered and the real truth revealed, since nothing can be hidden under the sun.

Analyzing Jesus' Resurrection (Mark 16:1-20) in the Context Of African Realities Amongst 21st Century Theologians.

Many 21st century theologians analysis the resurrection event in African sense of hope in suffering and Reality. One among such is Barth (1956), who makes a connection between the resurrection and redemption, in that the resurrection is an act of God's self-disclosure of which its purpose is the reconciliation of humanity to the divine community. Thus, Africans stands a chance to benefit from this salvific reality.

Moltmann (1990), Sobrino (2001) and Crossan (2003) have also ably elaborated the themes of justice and politics. The reality of the resurrection event and the faith it generates in the Christian life are applicable to the African sense of hope in suffering. Africans believe in the reality of the resurrection and that despite the suffering they are experiencing, be it in bad leadership from the government, God will surely renew all things and bring about new life. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the source of hope and redemption in the situation of suffering. The resurrection as a redemptive event makes sense in the African context of suffering; as the Easter event reveals the identity of God as one who is concerned with and enters in a living relationship with all humanity. Therefore, this God is concerned with the

plight of the suffering Africans. God also desires to redeem the suffering African masses from all forms of suffering. Viewing the resurrection from a Theo-centric point of view in the African framework of suffering enhances a strong foundation for the Christian faith and hope because God is the ultimate source of hope in all situations of suffering.

Furthermore, as seen in Sobrino's call, Jesus' resurrection event has to do with praxis: giving hope to the victims of oppression – in the African sense, giving hope to the suffering Africans – and a way of living as Christians. Hope for the suffering Africans here includes participating in world transformation through acts that will enhance peace, justice and human solidarity, and preaching the truth that justice has been done to the victims of suffering through God's triumph over evil and death in the resurrection. The church in Africa is challenged to not only preach about God's justice and care for the suffering Africans, but also to engage in acts that are aimed at upholding and reflecting God's justice and care.

The church itself must be seen to care for those suffering and also advocate for the evenly sharing of resources. African Governments should be called to formulate social and economic policies that are meant to address the plight of the suffering masses in Africa. In a nutshell, if we are to develop an interpretation of Jesus' resurrection from an African context of suffering, the basis, focus and purpose of the same God must be taken into consideration. It is God who brings about new life and who accomplishes responsibility in us for the ultimate purpose of granting hope to the hopeless.

Another African reality is interpreting resurrection in terms of ancestorship. The question now is who is an ancestor? African ancestors fit into a broad schema of African religion. African Traditional Religion (ATR) believes in a supreme God which people access through divinized spirits a "diffused monotheism" of sorts. Many Africans prefer not to directly approach God (or an important person), as it implies disrespect or irreverence. Earthly ancestors acquire a supernatural status at death. They ascend to a position of mediator between God and their human descendants. The ancestors are elders deserving respect and veneration. Ancestors merit honour because they brought benefits to their people when they "lived among them." The ancestor is a source of life for living descendants.

In African thought, death does not separate someone from the family. Rather, the "living-dead" remain united and connected with the "living-living. To speak of Jesus as our ancestor essentially means he "shares common parentage with us. To him belongs the role of mediating between us and God, as well as modeling for us good and proper conduct. In return, we maintain a 'sacred communication' with him that is not broken by the reality of death. The term does seem helpful to explaining Jesus soteriological function. The notion of ancestor parallels key biblical explanations of Jesus: "mediator" (1 Tim 2:5; Heb 8:6), "high priest" (Heb 7 & 8), and even "second Adam" (Rom 5). Overall, the term seems beneficial for helping Africans who seek connection with the supernatural world through traditional religions to understand the role and function of the resurrected Jesus Christ. He has gone before us to great glory, now intercedes to God on our behalf, and deserves all of our reverence and obedience.

Applying the term ancestor to Jesus does require some qualifications. Unlike Jesus, ancestors were sinners who remain physically dead. And unlike ancestors, Jesus endured the shame and humiliation of the cross for all people. Jesus is a unique ancestor. Jesus ancestorship subsumes and eminently transcends the limited notion of brother-ancestorship. Jesus Christ completes and perfects what Africans believe to be brother-ancestor. Christ is no longer an ancestor among many others, but the universal Brother-Ancestor par excellence. His preeminent status and function displace the place and role of natural spirit-fathers.

African theologians thus speak of Jesus as Proto, Supreme, or Greatest. “Jesus Christ is the only real and true Ancestor and Source of life for all mankind, fulfilling and transcending the benefits believed to be bestowed by lineage ancestors. Ancestral Christology” has the potential to communicate an accurate picture of Jesus Christ— “the glorifier and the glorified, Glory Himself”—in African terms

Conclusion

There should be a conclusion by relating the theories of resurrection to the understanding of the Africans/ African context. Let the conclusion be well thought out and be the conclusion indeed. The resurrection story is crucial to Africans as they believe in the reality of the resurrection even in the midst of the suffering they are experiencing, with the hope that God will renew all things and bring new life. Africans believe in the reality of the resurrection and that despite the suffering they are experiencing, be it in bad leadership from the government, God will surely renew all things and bring about new life. Death, to Africans does not separate someone from the family. Rather, the “living-dead” remain united and connected with the “living-living. Speaking of Jesus as ancestor in Africa, means He shares common parentage with them. He is mediating between them and God and modeling for them a good conduct. The resurrection of Jesus Christ to Africans is the symbol of salvation, reconciliation and the proof of Jesus Christ as Messiah

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Notes on contributor

Ikyernum Sachia Ephraim is a PhD student of the Department of Religion Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. You can contact him on: Email: Ephraimikyernum@Gmail.Com, Gsm +2348142136603

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To connect this author: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5280-9712>