Pauline Christology in Philippians 2:5-11 and the Quest for African Christ

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As a contribution to the on-going quest for African Christ in African inculturation theology, this paper presents Christ as a model in selfless sacrifice. Paul’s admonition in Philippians 2:5-11 is employed to give the picture of Jesus’ selfless sacrifice resulting in his exaltation. Also, the example of an ancestor (Oluorogbo) in Yoruba mythology is presented to explain selfless sacrifice done by an African ancestor. However, it is argued that Oluorogbo’s sacrifice cannot be compared to Jesus’ sacrifice because among other things, Oluorogbo’s sacrifice is limited to a tribe, whereas Jesus’ sacrifice is universal. The paper ends by giving the picture of how selfishness manifests in some aspects of Nigerian life.

Key words: Christology, Pauline, inculturation, Philippians, Oluorogbo.

INTRODUCTION

The desire to make Christianity relevant to the way of life of the people evangelized was a serious issue that determined the success or failure of missionaries in Africa. It was this need that necessitated the emergence of Inculturation Theology in African. The argument of African theologians is that any theology applicable to Africa must take account of the Africans to whom the faith is addressed and take note of African culture, religion and civilization (Ikenga-Metuh, 1996). One of the major issues being discussed in Africa theology is Christology and many models of Christ have been proposed by African theologians. For example, Charles Nyamiti gives the model of Christ as ancestor. The question about the person and work of Jesus Christ is important because, without Jesus Christ there is no Christianity. That many ecumenical councils of the early period such as Nicene (325 A.D) and Chalcedon (451 A.D) had met because of the person of Christ further shows the importance of the person of Jesus Christ in Christianity.

The book of Philippians, most especially 2:5-11 the focus of this paper shows Paul’s ideas about Christ. Philippians 2 presents Christ as role model of humility (sacrifice and his attendant exaltation). The image of Christ as a role model of humility becomes important for the African whose continent has been rendered underdeveloped by the atrocious slave trade, the humiliation and degradation of colonization by Europe and corruption by fellow Africans who seek political offices for selfish reasons. This paper therefore sets out to examine the relevance of Philippians 2:5-11 to African Christology.

A) The Book of Philippians

There is no argument among scholars on whether or not Paul authored the book: Paul was the author. But the questions of where and when the book was written have generated arguments among scholars. Lightfort had believed that the book was first written among the 4 prison Epistles: Colossians, Philippians, Philemon and Ephesians. Today many scholars believe it was written last toward the end of Paul’s two years house arrest in Rome (Hewlett, 1979:1140). About the place of writing,
traditionally Rome was chosen. This has been challenged in recent times in favour of Caesarea or Ephesus, but the claim for Rome is still stronger than others (Brown, 2004:484).

The Philippians church was Paul’s first founded church in Europe on his 2nd missionary journey. He had a dream indicating that his ministry was needed in Macedonia. On getting to Philippi (named after Alexander’s father and a major Roman city) he baptized Lydia and her household (Acts 16:14-15). In the same city, Paul spent a night in prison after the deliverance of a girl who had the spirit of divination (Acts 16:16-18). It was in this city where the jailor and his household were converted (Acts 16:30-34).

According to Raymond Brown (2004:488), apart from the tone of gratitude and friendship, the prison experience of Paul and the situation at Philippi reflect in the letter. Paul’s experience in Philippi changed his orientation about death. In 1 Thess. 4:17, Paul had expected to survive till the Parousia, but in Philippians 1:20-26, he wrestles with the possibility of dying (2004:486). Paul wants the Philippians to stand firm in one spirit, be blameless and shine as light. Yet there were tense situations in Philippi then. One, there was dissension among some who had laboured with Paul in the city like the case of Euodia and Synthyche (Phil. 4:2-4). The cause is not clear, but it might be conceit and lack of humility. This probably prompted the idea in Philippians 2:3 where Paul advises that nothing should be done out of strife or vain glory. Two, there was external opposition to the Christian teachings causing them to suffer (1:28-29). Three, there were workers of evil called ‘dogs’ by Paul (3:2). (Brown, 2004:486).

The unity of the letter has been questioned by scholars due to the change of tone in 3:2 and others (Hewlett: 1979:1140). The uncertainty about the unity of the book was said to have begun at the end of the 19th century. Externally in the mid-20th century, Polycarp was said to have referred to Paul’s “letters to the Philippians” implying that there were many letters written by Paul to the Philippians. The letters referred to by Polycarp, according to Brown may mean the canonical letter and the lost ones or the canonical letter and 2 Thessalonians or the original forms of the letter before they were combined into one by an editor (2004:496-497).

Internally, Philippians 3:16 suggest that Paul might have written a letter previously to the Philippians. Paul’s travel plans found in chapter 2:23-30 is his usual way of concluding his letter coupled with the “finally” in 3:1. Also, he promised to send Epaphroditus back to them in 2:25-30 before talking about the gift he brought from them in 4:18. Some scholars feel 3:16-4:3 were inserted from another letter. Some theorize that a combination of two original letters in Philippians while some proposed 3 original letters. Brown however concludes that there is no doubt that there is a mixture of materials in 1:12-4:20, but many scholars still maintain that the present form of Philippians is the original form (2004:497). Lighfort in his argument concludes that the change of tone in 3:2 was because Paul was interrupted and resumed his writing with a new burden on his heart (cited in Hewlett, 1979:140).

According to Hewlett, one outstanding feature of Philippians is found in 2:6-11. He divides Philippians into 5: greetings (1-1-2); Paul and the Philippians Church (1:3-26); exhortation and examples (1:27-2:30); warning of digression (3:1-21) and encouragement, gratitude and final greetings (4:1-23). The focus of this paper is in the third division which he further divides as follows:

Exhortation to courage 1:27-30
Plea for unity 2:1-4
The mind of Christ; humiliation and exaltation 2:5-11
 Manifesting the mind of Christ 2:12-30

B) Paul’s Christology in Philippians 2:5-11

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: who being in very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death even death on a cross. Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (NIV).

According to Barry (2011:1), Paul’s encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus changed his orientation about Jesus. He then began to know Jesus Christ “according to the spirit” Christos Kata pneuma instead of “according to the flesh, Christos Kata Saka he used to know him. He began to address him as “Jesus Christ” “Christ Jesus” or simple “Christ”. In Philippians, Paul mentions Christ 51 times in the 104 verses of the book. Paul wants the Philippians to be united for it is their unity that will make his joy complete (2:1-2). In verse 3, he argues that if there will be unity, they must shun selfish ambition or vain glory, but embrace humility which means considering others better than oneself. Also, he admonishes them to; instead of looking for their own interest alone, to look for the interest of others also. To buttress his point in verse 4 about selfish sacrifice, he uses the next seven verses that center on Jesus’ pre-existence, life on earth and his subsequent exaltation to explain to them the need for humility.

Philippians 2:5-11 is a hymn or a Christological hymn. Scholars are divided on whether Paul composed, originated or quoted the hymn to buttress his point on Jesus Christ’s humility and exaltation. Brown points out the debates that surround the hymn. One, most think Paul wrote but did not create the hymn. Two, the
structure of the hymn is debated. Three, there is debate on whether or not the hymn was originally composed in Greek or Aramaic. Four, based on what is the exact meaning of 2:6 (the Morphe of God) there is dispute on the focus of its Christology (2004: 492-493). The concerns here is not the debate but the fact that at least no one denies Pauline authorship of Philippians and the Christological basis of the hymn which in Smith's words one can say 'whether Paul authored or quoted, either way ,he agreed fully with its content (Zachbardon, 2011:2).

The passage could be divided into 2:5-8 that describe Jesus Christ's activity (humiliation, loss, descent) and v 9-11 that describe God's response (Christ exaltation, compensation, ascension). The first division could be divided into 3: the pre-existence of Christ; His equality with God and the self-emptying of Christ. Paul implies in verse 6 that Jesus was in existence before his incarnation. He was in the "form of God" (morphe theou).

The exact meaning of this phrase as R. Brown points out above has become an issue of debate among scholars. Two interpretations are given. One by New International Version and the second one called Adoptionist view. The NIV interprets the Morphe of God as the nature of God. The Adoptionist view sees Jesus Christ as a parallel of Adam. According to the view, unlike Adam, Jesus was in the form of God, but did not reach out for equality with God in contrast with the first Adam in (Gen 3:5-6). This interpretation stresses the humanity of Jesus Christ and cannot convey the meaning of morphe Phil 2:6 presents. This is because as Barry (2011:6) says, the connection between morphe in Phil 2:6 with zelem and Demuth in Gen 1:26-27 is far too tenuous to posit a connection between Adam and Jesus Christ. What then is the exact meaning of morphe in Phil 2:6?

Morphe has varied meanings. It has a common use in Greek and Jewish literature written in Greek. In Greek, it means appearance or shape, but philosophically especially as used by Aristotle; it means 'essential being' or 'nature'. Examining the word contextually, the word refers to the nature of God since in the same passage Christ takes the form of a servant (morphe doulou). In all Paul's letters, morphe is used in two places and it is in this passage. It is used in Mark 16:12 to convey the meaning of outward appearance. This same usage is found in other Jewish literature written in Greek, the Septuagint and second temple texts. But the meaning (outward appearance does not correspond to the contextual usage of morphe in Phil 2:26 where the morphe of God is compared with the morphe of a servant (Barry, 2011:4).

Barry (2011:3) would therefore suggest that the philosophical use of morphe is better chosen here. This, he further substantiates by referring to the use of equality with God in the passage. Since Christ is said to be equal with God, morphe means the essential being or nature of God. According to Thayer it is the form in which he appeared to the inhabitants of heaven as opposed to the form of a servant which is human. It is that which is intrinsic and essential as opposed to schema which means figure, fashion and shape as that which is outward and accidental (2006). This implies Jesus’ pre-existence. Jesus did not consider this equality with God to be a harpagmous (which could idiomatically mean that Christ did not consider his equality with God something to be used for his own advantage, though this interpretation is much disputed). He instead emptied himself or ‘made himself nothing’. To empty (keno) is to nullify, render void or eliminate. This could be explained by the participle clauses ‘taking’ the very nature of a servant and ‘being made’ in human likeness and then submitted to the humiliation of crucifixion. Jesus did not empty himself of his divine nature but his right by virtue of ontological status. So he had in him both a divine and human nature but lacked sinful nature. According to Kent, the use of ‘take’ shows that the morphe of a servant was an addition. He adds to his existence as deity, an existence of humanity (cited in Barry, 2011:6). The use of the word therefore ‘dio’ (also means on which account) in verse 9 means that as a result of Jesus’ humility, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him a name that enjoy total submission by things in heaven, earth and under the earth. In the next section, I present the concept 'African Christology'.

C) Proposed African Christology

Christology concerns with the study of the person and work of Jesus the Christ. African Christology therefore is an attempt to inculturate Christ in African culture. Incultivating Christ in African culture is important for Christ to be meaningful to Africans. As Pope John Paul II rightly said “Christ in the members of his body is himself African” (cited in Uzukwu, 1996:152). Although letter to the Hebrews presents Jesus as the same yesterday, today and forever, (Heb. 13:8) this unity is portrayed in the New Testament by means of different images and metaphors. He is the good shepherd (John 10), the representative (Rom 5), the forerunner (Heb 6:20), the firstborn of all creation (Col 1:15). All this prove the relevance of cross-cultural reflection on Christ (Dynnem. 1990:164). Many models of Christ have been proposed by African theologians. These include, Jesus as ancestor, elder-brother, elder, liberator, chief, king, guest, master of initiation, healer mediator, loved one and leader. The models are numerous. Some are discussed here due to their direct relevance to Phil 2:5-11.

Charles Nyamiti from Tanzania proposes the idea of Jesus our Brother-Ancestor. He sees God as our parent-ancestor (Goergen, 2001:2). He believes Christ and African Ancestors are similar in many ways. The authority of both is based on consanguinity and their exemplary lives. Also, the authority is conferred on them by their
death. As the ancestors are thought to be closer to God at their death, Christ's death confirms his supernatural status. Their new status facilitates and requires a continuous relationship with their earthly survivors. This is marked by regular communications (sacrifices and oblation for ancestors, prayer and the Eucharist for Jesus). As a result of this relationship, they become models of conduct and sources of inner vital power. However, Christ is more than ancestors in that as God-man he transcends them and as redeemer, prophet and king he accomplishes more than their mediation of power. Also, through his Holy Spirit, he makes it possible for believers to participate in divine nature as sons and daughters in a way that goes beyond relationship with any ancestor. And in his resurrection, he has begun to gather all his people to himself (Dyrness, 1990:166-168).

According to Kwame Bediako from Ghana the relationship between Christ and the ancestors should be thought of a much more complex and dynamic way than Nymitii suggested. For him, Jesus Christ came to establish for all people, an adoptive pasts, his death heals both the remoteness that we feel from God and the disruption caused by sin. His death also entrones him on the "stool of power" (like the Akan king who sits on the ancestral stool) from where he sends his Holy Spirit and mediates God's power. By sitting on the seat of God's power, Christ has desacralized the rule of the king. The role of the king and by extension, the ancestors relates to the social solidarity of the people while Christ takes that of mediation of life or of salvation. So, for Bediako the coming of Jesus cut off the ancestors as the means of blessing (Dyrness, 1990: 168-169).

Benezet Bujo situates Jesus in the origin of human life in Africa establishing him as Proto-Ancestor by God. Another model of African Christ is that of Jesus as a healer. This becomes relevant to the African view of total well-being of people and of the community as a major religiosity of the African. A sickness or illness that affects a part of the body attacks the whole person; a person intimately related to his family, king and the world. Christ becomes the way to a healthy relationship which leads to life. This is because his healing ministry aims at giving wholeness to man and since what affects a person affects the whole community in Africa, Jesus as a healer brings wholeness to the whole community (Uzukwu 1996:157).

The death and resurrection of Christ, Uzukwu asserts, that bring life become, a good lesson for Africans. His Paschal Mystery may sharpen the focus of the community on what is already the ancestral experience of health (socio-cosmic of an individual life lived for others as paradigm) and that the community or individual reaches health and well-being only by bringing healing to the other. Jesus the healer therefore makes the Christian community to be a healing community (1996:159). It is in this sense one can say that Jesus as healer is also Jesus the liberator because the two are inseparable (Goergen, 2011:3).

It is important to state at this juncture that these models of African Christology are very good in their own right. They have in different ways shown who Jesus is and what he has done in African understanding. However, they do not emphatically stress the importance of these models as example for Africans to emulate. Most of them seem to present these models in terms of what Jesus is to Africans or has done for them not as the model of the type of life they are expected to live. It is this vacuum that this research attempts to fill. That is to look at the relevance of the Christological model of Phil 2:5-11 to African Christology. In what follows, I examine the model of Jesus as the type of life he expects humans viz a viz Africans to live.

D) Jesus as Role Model of Selfless Service to Africans

The Christological view of Paul in Phil 2:5-11 is that of Christ who lived for others through sacrificial humility. The humility which made him empty himself of his divine morphe, be subjected to humiliation on the cross consequently led to his exaltation. It is also clear from the passage that Paul presents Jesus to the Philippians as a role model while enjoying them to embrace unity which is realizable in humility or in one seeking the interest of others first. The message is for all irrespective of their status. After all Jesus was equal with God before his incarnation but emptied himself of the privileges embedded in it and became human to save humanity. Paul expects this type of humility from his readers.

That he wants the Philippians to follow the example of Christ is seen in verse 5 when he says 'let this mind be in you as it was in Christ' (tuto gar phroneisthew en umin o kai en christo Jesou). The word 'mind' is translated 'attitude' in NIV. That means the Philippians should make it their way of life: what they demonstrate in all their interactions both among one another as Christians and toward non-Christians. This "mind of Jesus" refers to his humility, and selfless sacrifice. This is expected to reflect in the people's social, economic, political and religious lives. Africans like the Philippian Christians are expected to live this type of life seeing Jesus Christ as their model ancestor whose sacrifice supersedes the sacrifice of any African ancestor.

In traditional Africa, there are examples of ancestors who lived a selfless life and this earned them the honour done them today. Jesus therefore could be said to be our humble and sacrificial ancestor. Oluorogbo among the Yoruba modelled what Jesus did on the cross, though in a limited manner. According to the Yoruba Oral tradition, Oluorogbo died for his people, the Yoruba race. This was as a result of the vow made by his mother Moremi. Moremi according to Arogundade (2001:14) was a beautiful, pretty and famous life heroine who succeeded
in knowing the secret of the Igbo warriors that used to ravage the Ife.

According to the myth, the Igbo used to attack Ife on market days and carried their children and wives away to their towns. They were dreadful and their appearance used to make Ife people think they were spirits. Hence, anytime they came, they succeeded in carrying Ife children and wives away without confrontation or resistance from the people. The raids persisted and the people captured would not be seen in Ife-Ife again. Moremi decided to save her people from this embarrassment by surrendering to the Igbo in one of the raids. An Igbo traditional ruler took interest in her, married her and revealed the secret of Igbo to her. She discovered that what Igbo were doing was to cover themselves with grasses and this made them look like spirits. What the Ife would do was to tie Ogunso (a means of making fire among the Yoruba) to a long stick and light them up with fire; the fire would burn the grasses that covered them and stripped them naked.

She managed to escape from Igbo land and came to Ife to relay her discovery which the Ife followed the next time the Igbo came and it worked. They were able to overcome the Igbo and this stopped the Igbo from coming again. Meanwhile, before she surrendered herself to the Igbo captors, she visited Eshinmirin (a Yoruba river goddess) asked for her support and vowed to sacrifice to her, the first thing or person that would come to welcome her on her safe return. When she came back, it was her only son (Oluorogbo) that first came out to welcome her. Since Oluorogbo was her only son; she was reluctant to surrender him for sacrifice and begged Eshinmirin for an alternative which the river goddess rejected.

As a result of the reluctance of Moremi to sacrifice her only son to Eshinmirin to redeem her vow, the river threatened and began to carry away Ife children that came near the river. Hence, there were always cry and sorrows in the households that lost their children to Eshinmirin through drowning. In order to end this menace and knowing that it was his sacrifice that would end it, Oluorogbo voluntarily surrendered himself to Eshinmirin for sacrifice by being drowned in the river in the presence of all the people. This singular act of Oluorogbo therefore made him an object of veneration by the Ife as their saviour and that of the world at large. (Arogundade, 2001:14-21). Bolaji Idowu (1979) confirms this when he writes that “Oluorogbo is... called the first minister of Oloдумare and the saviour of the world” (1970:106).

Oluorogbo's case is that of an ancestor who humbly sacrificed himself for the deliverance (salvation) of his people. This is what Jesus came to do as recorded in Philippians 2:5-10. However, Jesus’ humble sacrifice is better than Oluorogbo’s in many ways. In the letter to the Philippians, Paul shows that Jesus had the essence of God, but Oluorogbo was just a man before his sacrifice. Also, Jesus' sacrifice led to the salvation of the whole human race, Oluorogbo's is for the Yoruba, though the Yoruba have extended his deliverance to be for the whole world due to their mythological belief that Ile Ife is the source of the whole world. Also, Oluorogbo sacrificed himself to redeem a vow, but Jesus’ sacrifice was purely a voluntary act.

E) Appropriating the Sacrificial Model of Jesus in the African life

This model of Christ is important for Africans. In most of the models given so far, what Jesus did as a model has been emphasized more than what he expects from his followers. But the model of humility and selfless sacrifice shows what Christ model and requires from his followers. Before His departure in John 17, he prayed and asked for the unity of his followers. One answer to his prayer is ecumenical movements among Christians and dialogue with people of other faiths. In addition to this, the need for unity in the family, organization, schools, in the community, the state, the nation and the world at large cannot be over emphasized. But it is only possible when every member approaches issues with humility and selfless sacrifice.

In social interactions, humility which means seeing others as those who are better than oneself helps to maintain unity and without unity, there cannot be progress or achievements. Humility makes a person to accept insults from others. If a suggestion is made by a person and it is rejected for a better one, humility makes the person to accept the other view and cooperate for its successful actualization. In Phil.2:3, Paul advises “...do nothing out of strife or vain glory but in humility, each counting others as those who are better than himself”. The bane of Africa viz a viz Nigeria is that of greed and selfishness instead of selfless sacrifice. This reflects in all aspects of her life. Also, it is the reason behind corruption, money laundering, political killings, bombings, kidnapping etc that are ravaging the African continent and have rendered her underdeveloped. Nigeria is probably one of the most religious nations in the world but also one of the most corrupt nations. Nigeria was plunged into a perpetual state of underdevelopment because of the selfishness and greed of her people.

Most of the political killings, bombing, kidnapping and post-election violence and court cases witnessed in Nigeria in recent times were borne out of ethnicity and religious intolerance most of which are direct outcome of greed and selfish sacrifice. For instance some believe that a particular political office belong to them and should not go out of their ethnic group, religion or gender. They therefore do everything to make that office hereditary and if they do not succeed, they make sure whoever occupies the position does not succeed. This is because they occupy elective offices for selfish reasons not for the common good. Social justice demands that the rights of all people in the community are considered in a fair and
equitable manner. Any attempt to displace them normally results in bloody violence. Refusal to accept defeat at the poll among Nigerian politicians is a sign of greed and selfishness. Also, rigging in election is a proof that the person concerned is seeking elective office for selfish reason.

The manner in which the immediate past governor of Ekiti State, Dr. John Kayode Fayemi accepted his defeat in the last concluded gubernatorial election in the state has been praised by many as a rare development. In his speech a day after the election that took place on Saturday June 21 2014, he commented he had earlier spoken to the winner Mr. Ayo Fayose and congratulated him. He stated patriotically that ‘if indeed this is the will of the Ekiti people, I stand in deference to your will. If the result of the elections is an expression of the voice of our people, we must all heed your voice’ (Odunsi, 2014:1). Thinkers have referred to his action as commendable and worthy of emulation if Nigeria and indeed Africa will develop. The governor implies in his speech that election should not be a ‘do or die affair’ except persons involved seek elective positions for selfish reason which is always the case in Nigeria. His acceptance of the result of the election is a n example of selfless sacrifice and humility our pericope encourages.

Negative manifestations of ethnicity pervade all aspects of Nigerian life. It bred the neglect and greed of the political class that led to agitation for resource control and rotation of power. It also reflects in the academia and economic system in Nigeria. In the academia, Onigu records that ethnicity began from the University of Ibadan over the appointment of Professor K. D. Dike an Igbo as the Principal of the then University College, Ibadan. He was said to have been mentally battered by the phenomenon of ethnicity from his Yoruba colleagues within his campus. The man who was accused of ethnicity himself regretted in his 1960 speech that ‘the educated Nigerian is the worst peddler of tribalism’ (Onigu, 1990: 140). In most Nigerian universities today appointment and promotion are not always based on merit but on ethnic, religious, familial and personal interest. This is not a true reflection of the life of selfless sacrifice lived by Jesus. In most of its manifestations, negative ethnicity gives the picture of selfishness which Christ’s sacrifice contrasts. Ethnic groups would not have agitated for their share of the ‘national cake’ if the people in the position of authority had upheld the principle of equity, common good and social justice in the sharing of the people’s common wealth. Whereas Jesus’ sacrifice was selfless and it was not for his own people only; he died for the whole world.

The problem of greed and selfish sacrifice also manifests in religious institution in Nigeria and the world over. Hence, religion has been accused of performing ambivalent roles. Therefore many see religion as a promoter of crimes and exploitation. Karl Marx for example believes that religion is the opium of the people and an instrument in the hand of the capitalist to oppress the poor. Although most of the punches on religion are not supposed to be directed to religion qua religion, they are supposed to be directed to those who profess to be religious without the corresponding morality. The activities of most religious leaders in Nigeria especially confirm Karl Marx’s view. The situation in most churches is that of the rich (that is the priests) getting richer, while the poor are getting poorer. The priest who controls many cars, lives in well furnished apartment still collects ‘prophet seed’ and other offerings from the poor who are not sure of how and where the next meal will come from. As a volatile cultural order which in turn influences other cultural orders in society like politics, economy, social institution and others, religion is easily used for selfish reasons to cause chaos and instability. The problem of Boko Haram, a religious (Islamic) sect in Nigeria is an example in this direction. It is unfortunate to see that the activities of Boko Haram which have resulted in loss of lives, property, cost Nigerian government millions of naira, have both political and economic undertones. This is an outcome of selfishness which Paul teaches against in our pericope. Selfishness is also one the reasons behind breakaways in religion especially among the new religious movements, Ilega (1998:268) argues that selfishness is a major reason. Many pastors suddenly receive the vision to start a new movement because they believe they are not getting what commensurate with their input in the mother church: it is the leaders alone that monopolize and enjoy all the goodies that come to the church.

If the humility and selfless sacrifice Jesus exhibits in this passage is imbibed by Africans and Nigerians in particular in all aspects of their lives; political, social, economic, religious, and academic, it will reduce corruption and all the social and political vices going on in the country. Politicians will seek elective offices for the common good and not for selfish reason of amassing wealth. If every Nigerian seeks what will benefit others in all his/her endeavours, it will make the country to progress and the vision 20 2020 will be a possibility. Vision 20 2020 is the vision by Nigerian government to make Nigeria one of the 20 technologically advanced nations by the year 2020.

Conclusion

This paper discusses the relevance of Philippians 2:5-11 for the quest for an African Christology. In the passage, Christ is presented as the example of humility and selfless sacrifice. This is what he expects from Africans to ensure development on the continent. Ancestors like Oluorogbo among the Yoruba also paid a humble sacrifice for his people. It is in this way that the Yoruba people for example, can understand Christ as their humble and sacrificial ancestor par excellence.
However, *Oluorogbo*’s sacrifice is incomparable to Jesus’ sacrifice.

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