

JAMES' CONCEPT OF WISDOM (JAMES 3:13-18): A VERITABLE TOOL FOR PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN NIGERIA?

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Abstract

Conflict is a global and social phenomenon. It presents itself in different shapes and shades. So many theories have been propounded as to the real causes of it. But St. James, in his characteristic manner of proffering solutions to conflicting issues, argued in the last six verses of the third chapter of his epistle to the Jews in diaspora that demonic or worldly wisdom is the main cause of conflicts and social or organisational growth retardations among people regardless of their social or religious inclinations even among members of the world's highly, if not most highly respected faith. This paper is therefore poised to examine the concept of wisdom according to St. James in the selected passages especially, in relation to peace and conflict resolution, and human development in Nigeria and by extension, the world at large. In doing this, the tools of conceptual and textual analysis are considered useful for effective elucidation of facts.

Keywords: Conflict, Wisdom, Peace, Resolution, Truth

Introduction

There are always rays of conflicts anywhere life exists. This can be seen in an individual when one seems to have some opposing thoughts running through one's mind. It of course evidences itself in the moody and melancholic looks the fellow wears. Such is more prevalent where there are two or more different individuals who seem not to agree on certain issues due to their different perceptions of such. It can degenerate to the level of having clusters of people with

divergent opinions and views about certain issues. The list is inexhaustible. This is why it is believed that conflict dates far back to the origin of life. Especially, as one ponders on the Biblical history, it can better be dated back to the time of fall when conflict which arose from jealousy led to the killing of a brother by the brother (cf. Gen.3:1-4:9ff). The same has become endemic in the society today especially in the nation-state of Nigeria where such has become an order of the day to the point that there is hardly no week that stories of woes are not heard in one part of the country or the other, particularly in the northern part the nation.

James in his characteristic manner of “emphasizing the place of work as evidence of salvation”¹ tried to proffer solutions to conflicts and the attendant consequences significantly exemplified by the type mentioned above in his five-chapter epistle to his Hebrew Christian brothers in Diaspora (James 1:1) towards the dawn of the Christian era. This he brought to the climax in the last six verses of the third chapter; using the imagery of false and true wisdoms to advocate that adherence or keeping to the tenets of the latter will of a surety solve the problem (cf. James 3:17-18).

It is against this background that it becomes necessary that one evaluates the issue of conflicts in the world, especially as it relates to the Nigerian society, using the template provided by St James. Okwueze asserts that perceiving religion as a social fact enables one to examine its societal relevance to wit, its regulation of conduct in the form of regarding as right and good or bad and evil certain conducts of individuals in society. He further states that such is “where religion links with societal development”². The fact that James and his fellow Biblical writers had the larger society (i.e. the world outside the four walls of the Church) in view as they put their thoughts together is no more than saying the obvious (cf. Exod.

¹ S. Motyer & J. Stott, *Men with a Message: an Introduction to the New Testament and its Writers 3rd ed.* (London: Evangelical Literature Trust, 1996), 123.

² M. I. Okwueze (ed.), *Religion and Societal Development: Contemporary Nigerian Perspectives* (Lagos: Merit International Publications, 2004), 2.

20:12-17; Jer. 29:7-8; Matt. 5:13-16; Rom. 13:13-10). The Scripture, as old as it was, remains relevant to all situations.

Conceptual Framework

There are certain concepts that are fundamental to this study especially as used by James. They include wisdom, peace, and conflict.

Wisdom: Wisdom means much in context to many people. W. F. Kumuyi defines it as the ability to choose the most effective means to accomplish a given purpose. In another rendition, he describes it as the ability to use the best possible means to secure a desired result.³ According to Encarta Software Dictionary, while it may mean the ability to make sensible decisions and judgments based on personal knowledge and experience to some people, it could mean good sense shown in a way of thinking, judgment or action considered useful to some other people. As presented by the same source, it might mean an accumulated knowledge of life or of a sphere of activity that has been gained over time through experience.⁴ These definitions, as intelligent as they seem, do not capture the mind of James as he wrote his Epistle. W. E. Vine gives two Greek words for wisdom as applicable to James' choice of words. The words are σοφία, (*sophia*), and σοφος, (*sophos*). While *sophia* has a wide spectrum of meanings ranging from wisdom believed to have been bestowed from God (Rom. 11:33; 1 Cor. 1:21, 24; 2:7; Eph. 3:10), personification of wisdom (Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:35; 11:49), human wisdom in spiritual things (Luke 21:15; Acts 6:3, 10; 1 Cor. 2:6), human wisdom in natural sphere (Matt. 12:42; Luke 11:31; Acts 22) to its most debased form: earthly, sensual devilish or demonical (James 3:15); *sophos*, is basically used in reference to God and spiritual men and in very few instances in New Testament, to ordinary learning. In reference to God, without being mentioned except in a place, *sophos* is seen in His glory and splendour (Rom.

W. F. Kumuyi, *Complete Bible Study Series in One Volume 3rd ed.* (Lagos: Life Press, 1988), 55.

Encarta Dictionary, 2010 edition

16:27; 1 Tim. 1:17 and Jude 25), spiritual teachers in Israel (Matt. 23:35), believers endowed with spiritual and practical wisdom (Rom. 16:19; 1Cor. 3:10, 6:5; Eph. 5:15; James 3:13), and the naturally learned men (Rom. 1:14, 22; 1Cor. 1:19, 20, 26, 27; 3:18-20).⁵ In context, James was apt in his use of the two terms, *sophia*, and *sophos*. As could be seen in the text, indeed, right from the very outset of the epistle, James did not want to bother his readers with intellectual definitions of wisdom that would naturally characterise a writing of such calibre in his time like the author of Hebrews 11:1 when he dealt with faith. He, like most of his fellow Bible writers, was more interested in the practical life of the human person that can radiate the true character of God here on earth (cf. 1:17-25) as expressed in Jesus' teachings (scripture). Such decision would have been occasioned by the natural view of religious leaders especially among the Jews that the "wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (1 Cor. 3:19). Thus, what he gave was more of a description than a definition of wisdom. In fact, he has been describing it all along, with his talk of believing God, relying on God's goodness, doing what God's word says and living the righteous life that God desires (cf. 2:1-26). Here, he would label this as wisdom and describe it further as a humble submissiveness to God which results in a life of goodness, purity and peace towards other people. To him, such life disposition is capable of dispelling conflicts and ensures lifestyle of heaven on earth. The same will help a great deal to reduce if not eradicate conflicts in Nigeria which has significantly marred economic growth in the country.

Peace: Peace simply means absence of war or freedom from any form of disturbances, that is, conflicts of any kind either in intrapersonal or that of interpersonal or inter-tribal and even international levels. According to David J. Francis, it is primarily concerned with creating and maintaining a just order in society and

⁵ W. E. Vine, *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), 678-679.

the resolution of conflict by non-violence means.⁶ To Dzurgba, it is freedom from quarrel, strife, conflict, rioting, disorder, hostility, violence or war. Further to that, he says "it is freedom from fear, anxiety, uncertainty disturbance and tension" and that it is an atmosphere of calmness, security and safety"⁷. Speaking from the point of view of some Old Testament passages, Ecclesiastes 3:8 and Isaiah 45:22, for instance, Ebenezer O. Adeogun sees peace as having so much to do with health, prosperity, well-being, security, as well as quiet from war.⁸ Implicit in these views or definitions are such realities as healthy or newly healed, interpersonal or international relations, prosperity in social or economic matters, and the establishment of working political system that can benefit all.

The idea of peace, as expressed in James' choice of the term εἰρήνη, (*eirēnē*) essentially conveys the idea of rest. James, here, that is, by the use of *eirēnē* meant a state of untroubled, undisturbed, well-being. Spiros Zodhiates et al in context of this passage assert that peace of mind, tranquility arise from reconciliation with God and a sense of a divine favour.⁹ In their 1991 edition of the same work, they had earlier stated that such was part of the meaning of the word when it was used as a form of salutation in greeting (Luke 24:36; John 20:19, 21, 26) and also when taking leave (Mark 5:34; Luke 8:48; Acts 15:33; James 2:16). As one who had enjoyed the peace of God and knowing the benefits thereof, James decided to advise that having such would tremendously help in not only relational issues but in developmental matters of the church and, of course, that of the larger society. Therefore, rather than strife arising from jealousy as

⁶ D. J. Francis, "Peace and Conflict Studies: an African Overview of Basic Concepts" in S. G. Best (ed.) *Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies in West Africa* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 2006), 17

⁷ A. Dzurgba, *Prevention and Resolution of Conflict: Local and International Perspective* (Ibadan: John Archers (Publishers) Limited, 2010), 36.

⁸ E. O. Adeogun, "The Concept of 'Shalom' in Ancient Israel and the Relevance in the Search for Peace in Nigeria" in S. O. Abogunrin (ed.) *Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies vol. 10* (Ibadan: M Alofe Nigerian Limited, 2013), 3.

⁹ S. Zodhiates et al (eds.), *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2008), 1598.

will be seen later, James instructed his readers to allow the peace which comes from God to take control of their minds because the result is unquantifiable. It includes personal wholeness, soundness and well-being, social well-being, and general prosperity.

Conflict: Like any of the concepts examined above, conflict does not lend itself to a particular definition though it has a common meaning regardless the context or angle through which it is perceived or discussed. By having a common meaning, this author says that it simply means the presence of any form of turbulent situation within oneself, between two or more persons, among nations et cetera over issues of common interests or the likes. Perceiving conflict as having ontological basis in human needs, David J. Francis defines it as the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups.¹⁰ In the same vein, Isaac O. Albert quoting L. A. Coser defines conflict in social perspective. To them, it is a “struggle over values or claim to status, power, and scarce resources, in which the aims of the conflicting groups are not only to gain the desired values, but also to neutralize, injure, or eliminate rivals”¹¹. Either the own definition or the subsequent ones, conflict, as indicated from the onset of this work, is a common phenomenon among human beings. It can be personal, social cum political, or religious. The definition by Coser and Albert more appropriately captures the concept the way James would want to put it if he had lived in our time. Tying James 3:14 and 4:1 together, one would see vividly the mind of James. He was disappointed by the envy and jealousy that characterised the attitudes of people in the Church. In 4:1-2, he yelled: “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasures that war in your members.... You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war....” The terms *πολεμος*, (*polemos*) translated as fight and *μαχη*, (*machē*), which literally means quarrels

¹⁰ D. J. Francis *op. cit.*, 20.

¹¹ Cited in I. O. Albert, “Mapping the Discourse: History, Social Conflict and Conflict Management” in *A History of Social Conflict and Conflict Management in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Peace and Conflict Programme, 2006), 1.

were aptly used by James. Commenting on this passage, Olatunde A. Oderinde opines that the major source of quarrels and conflicts in the church centres on a desire for recognition, honour, power, pleasure, money and superiority.¹² To such, the conflicting fellows, the satisfaction of selfish desires becomes more important than righteousness and the will of God (cf. Mark 4:19; Luke 8:14; Gal. 5:16-20). When such occurs, Donald C. Stamps et al believe self-centred conflicts are often created in the fellowship.¹³ Such can be likened to the rifts in the world today and the examination of same is the thrust of this paper, particularly, in relation to the various politico/social strife in the nation-state of Nigeria, which is all-encompassing in the sense that it cuts across all facets of the peoples' national life, however, it is fundamentally political.

Textual Analysis (James 3:13-18)

While the central theme of the book of James could be **faith that works**, the theme of this segment of the book could equally be **the wisdom that aids faith**. Before now, James has been writing about how the tongue can be used and the destruction that can occur when one's own double-mindedness towards God and others is allowed expression in his words. He, here, turned to the deeper issues of wisdom he spoke of in 1:5-8 where, in reference to Solomon's wisdom passage (Prov. 2:1-7), he advised his readers to pray to God for wisdom whom he said is generous and gives good gifts to those who ask such of Him which George H. Guthrie calls the focal passage of James' wisdom discourse.¹⁴ This wisdom, as presented by James, is capable of making available all grace that can enable one to conveniently face any life's trial without being compromised as well

¹² A. O. Oderinde, "John the Baptist's Message of Repentance and the Rebranding Nigeria Project: a Re-Reading of Luke 3:7-14" in J. D. Gwamna (ed.) *African Journal of Biblical Studies* vol. XXVIII, No. 1, (2010)

¹³ D. C. Stamps, *Life in the Spirit Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 1990.

¹⁴ G. H. Guthrie, "The Epistle according to St. James" in T. Longman III & D. E. Garland (eds.) *The Expositor's Bible Commentary rev. ed.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 248.

as warding away all kinds of strife in the church and by extension, the larger society, and thereby certainly ensuring development if adhered to (cf. 3:17-18).

v. 13. James' rhetorical question, "who is wise and knowledgeable among you", at the beginning of the passage reveals his mind-set and, at the same time, who actually he had in mind. He most probably had the aristocrats or the ruling class in mind who were aptly represented at the beginning of this chapter as the teachers who should learn how to control their tongues and at the same time be temperate in all they did (3:1-12). The question was addressed to two kinds of people in this class namely those who did not care about true wisdom but only wanted the status of being thought wise, and those who honestly aspired to being wise. To the former, the question was a challenge; James' answer would expose them for what they were, but to the latter, the question was an invitation; James' answer would divulge the way to attain their aspiration. By implication, James was, here, saying that he was about telling the true nature of true wisdom; and that all his readers should treasure such whether among the aristocrats, the middle-class, or the low class. James, in the question, talked about **wisdom and knowledge**. There is a high tendency that those who know more would think themselves better than the others. Consistent with his previous instructions, James, here, required actions that authenticate words because knowledge and wisdom are never the same. Wisdom is not shown by what is thought or said, but by what is done and how one lives. As writes Ian Mackervoy, "true wisdom does good works. Just as we can see real faith in what it does, so we know this wisdom by its actions. We will know a wise person by his good life. A wise person will be meek. The wise person does not desire honour or fame. When other people do wrong to him, he does not do wrong to them. The Spirit of God gives us the strength to be gentle and humble".¹⁵ James' notion of humility is worthy to note and the same characterises his concept of wisdom. Humility, to him, simply means the teach-ability by which one is to be ready to

¹⁵I. Mackervoy, F/james-ibw.com

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accept the word of God as in 1:21 where he emphasized that humbly accepting God's word entails doing the word.

v. 14. James, in his wisdom narrative, quickly identified some dangerous traits to his idea of wisdom. Such, he called "bitter jealousy" and "selfish ambition". If rather than the righteous pattern of living, which manifests true wisdom, a person holds to bitter jealousy and selfish ambition, another kind of wisdom is evident. The term translated "envy" in NIV and "jealousy" in RSV could be used in positive sense in the Bible time in reference to one that had an intention to imitate another or a strong show of interest in something in which sense Paul advised the Corinthians to be imitators of him as he imitated Jesus (1 Cor. 11:1). George H. Guthrie opines that the context in which the term is used especially with the addition of the word bitter (*πίκρος*, *pikros*), makes clear that James had a vice in mind as he wrote.¹⁶ While Jealousy in context refers to an intense inappropriate sorrow over another person's achievement, "selfish ambition probably refers to some part of the church setting themselves over against others and advancing their agendas". The first thing James had to tell his readers here was that if the feelings in their hearts were like such as described, they should not boast and be false to the truth because no wisdom, especially the wisdom of meekness, can come out of jealous and ambitious heart; and that such would put a wedge not only between the believers and God but among themselves, particularly, to those one may be in love with.

V15. The best way James sought to encourage his readers who might be wrestling with these temptations of jealousy and selfishness was to state categorically where such kind of "wisdom" can come from and where it leads to. "This wisdom is not such that comes from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, and devilish". As a matter of fact, James would say, to find the source of this corrupt so-called "wisdom", one has to look somewhere other than "above", talking in reference to heavenly realm where God lives. He had earlier proclaimed in 1:5

¹⁶ G. H. Guthrie *op. cit.*, 249

that God is the one to ask true wisdom from particularly because He is a generous Giver of such gift; “Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights....” (1:17). In regard to this, George H. Guthrie writes that “the ‘wisdom’ of which James speaks in 3:15 is neither good nor perfect and has its source elsewhere. First, it is earthly (ἐπιγῆιος, (*epigeios*), emphasis mine)”¹⁷. This term, continues Guthrie, “could be used of what is typical of earth in contrast to that which is characteristic of heaven. Paul uses the word in this way at 2 Corinthians 5:1, for instance, to speak of the ‘earthly tent’, the physical body”. He believes that James used the word more in line with Philippians 3:19, where Paul spoke of the immoral pattern of life followed by the “enemies of the cross of Christ”. Thus, the wisdom James spoke of here “has a twisted nature, an immoral bent. Secondly, in Guthrie’s view of this wisdom as unspiritual (*pseuchikos*, GK), there is an allusion to Jude 19 where worldly people are those that cause division in the church and such is demonic. The wisdom of the world which comes by way of comparison with others is really “anti-wisdom” as it leads to nothing but destruction and death. Yet, such is regarded as sophisticated, advanced, and adult. James was, however, certain that there is nothing good that could come out of one trying to justify his jealousy but such is highly prevalent in virtually all facets of human endeavours.

v. 16. James, in this verse, brought his analysis of this earthly or worldly wisdom to a conclusion by describing the fruits. The “bitter jealousy” and “selfish ambition” spoken of in v.14 will always bring about “disorder and every vile practice” because “the works of this wisdom are bad and of no worth”¹⁸. The word translated “disorder”; ἀκαταστασία, *akatastasia*, in Water Bauer’s *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, is said to mean opposition to established authority, and unruliness; it also conveys the idea of unsettled state of affairs, disturbance, and tumult.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 250

¹⁸ I. Mackervoy *op. cit.*

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The vile (φάυλος, *phaulos*) practice “has to do with bad or morally base actions, and the word ‘every’ (*pan*) added to the description indicates that the earthly wisdom is the source for all actions and activities out of line with God’s righteousness”¹⁹. There can be no good result when, on the average, people are motivated to protect, advance, and focus on themselves at the expense of others.

v. 17. Having exposed danger of the wisdom of the world, James now brought to the fore the wisdom that is helpful, the wisdom from above. He described it as “pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity”. The term rendered pure (αγνός, *agnos*) conveys the idea of holiness, cleanliness, and innocence. In context, the word is used in contrast to “every vile practice” spoken of in v.16. Saying that this wisdom is “peaceable” (ειρηνικός, *eirēnikos*) shows and explains it as being conducive to a harmonious relationship as well as placing it in contrast to the earthly wisdom which breeds disorder (v.16). Basically, the wisdom that is from above is “gentle” (επιεικής, *epieikēs*), equitable, fair, moderate, forbearing, not insisting on the letter of law when dealing with others.²⁰ In context, James associated God’s wisdom with His meekness. The wisdom is also “open to reason” (ευπειθής, *eupeithēs*), compliant, obedient, submissive. The obedience referred to here is not the passive type which is characteristic of the worldly wisdom which James wrote against; good will and mutual understanding are rather implied. Describing this wisdom as “full of mercy” (μεστήζέλεος, *mestēseleos*), presents it as having the nature of consistently expressing kindness or compassion towards anyone that is in need. The word of Jesus quickly comes to mind as one reads that God’s wisdom is “full of good fruits”: “You will know them by their fruits” (Matt. 7:16, 20). George H. Guthrie writes that “the close association of the people of Palestine with agriculture made the concept of ‘fruits’ a ready figure for result, outcome or product one’s pattern of life (e.g., Mt. 3:8;

¹⁹ G. H. Guthrie *op. cit.*

²⁰ W. E. Vine *op. cit.* 262.

21:43; Gal.5:22; Eph. 5:9)” and concludes that James’ proclamation was that the product of a life characterized by God’s wisdom is good. This wisdom also presents itself to be without uncertainty (αδιάκριτος, *adiakritos*), unwavering, and impartial. Implicit in this wisdom as expresses *adiakritos*, is the fact that it is not judgmental or divisive. As a matter of fact, Ptolemy used the word in regard to human virtues.²¹ The “wisdom from above” is without insincerity (ανυπόκριτος, *anupokritos*), pertaining to being without pretense, and genuine (Rom. 12:9). Such sincerity is the antithesis of hypocrisy. It is used in reference to a genuine or non-hypocritical love (2 Cor. 6:6; 1 Pet. 1:22). It is honest in all that it does and with all people. It does not work for its own benefit.

v. 18. James rounded off the section with this thought that “harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace”. His teaching, here, is that true wisdom is the wisdom of peace and those who have this wisdom do good works, that is, true wisdom from God, given as gift of God, bears fruit and that fruit is the harvest of righteousness which has as its roots peace with God and peace with others. Earlier in the chapter (v.12), James had said that plants naturally bear fruits according to their nature. Having more to do with the conditions in which a crop of righteousness is planted, he insisted that peacemakers sow this crop in the soil of peace. The implication, however, is that a righteous community grows only in atmosphere of healthy relationships where a high premium is placed on peace (cf. Eph. 4:15; 2Tim. 2:22).

Implication on Peace and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria

As earlier noted, our text essentially urged those in the cadre of teachers in the church who claimed to possess wisdom in the level that others did not have it to show evidences of their wisdom by their lifestyles other than the way they spoke. Those in the cadre of

²¹ F. W. Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature 5th ed.: a revision of Walter Bauer’s Version in German Language* (Chicago: University Press), 19.

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teachers were essentially the leaders in the church given the fact that the writer included himself among those that taught (3:1). Interestingly, James had to focus on them because it was their responsibility to provide leadership for good governance of the people and such they needed to do using the wisdom from above (3:17) and the same is the reason for the choice of the text. The question that may arise is how this wisdom can be communicated to the masses given the hardened nature of the hearts of men in authority, who by all means desire to keep the rest of humankind under full subjection? May it suffice such to know that what is known as Christianity is a reproduction of the lost "Edenic" life where God related with man on personal basis as social life was also predicated upon godly ideals,²² and since there are other sects who claim to relate with God on personal basis and possess teachings that are capable of moulding positive character traits, it will be reasonable to believe that what Christianity is believed to be is what they are expected to be also. James would ask all of such to produce proof for their claims (James 2:14-26).

It is by means of ideas that nations are ruled and when the ideas are evil due to the value systems of those in power, the consequences are always that of disaster and anarchy. Besides, when the values of those in power are evil their values become the values of the people also. This suggests why Dickson E. Rogers says that "nations are built on good characters of individual citizens, and that good characters will often make the best of bad situations while bad characters will make the worst of the good situations"²³. The advice of Olatundun Oderinde that "it is the responsibility of every citizen to develop good characters in order to develop a great nation because those in power emerge from among the masses"²⁴ quickly comes to

²² C. I. Nwanguma, "Theology and Human Development: Issues and Prospects" in N. I. Samwini and D. Ayegboyin *Theology in Africa: Challenges and Prospects*, (Kumasi: University Press, 2013), 6.

²³ D. C. Rogers, *Dickson Biblical Research Library* (Cape Town: Africa International Mission, 2000), 232

²⁴ A. O. Oderinde, 80.

mind. But, good characters will hardly be developed where godly ideals are not given the right place in the society. This is where the leaders in Nigeria, both social and religious, especially the religious are called to task. And the social, particularly because they have significant roles to play in promoting specialization in a field like Religious Studies, which primary task is character moulding that is fundamental to human and national development. The religious leaders of all groups should on their parts, as a matter of urgency and necessity, desist from their undue emphases on prosperity theology engendered by greed and avarice and develop lessons and messages that can help to mould characters of the people. Anything short of this ensures "disorder and every evil practices" and such has been the case in Nigeria since independence.

The political elite groups who belong to one religious group or the other have not been sincere since they took baton from the colonial masters. The mess started with political brigand that was anchored on ethnicity and tribalism, which ushered in the military who promised to build a united Nigeria. Olu E. Alana asserts "that the military's stay in power for about 29 years remains the worst thing that has ever happened to Nigeria and Nigerians as the return of democracy in 1999 has not even helped matters."²⁵ The ruling class, he adds "is only interested in itself. It neither formulates policies nor executes programmes that could improve the socio-economic lot of the people."²⁶ This is largely obvious when the government policies by design or default further worsened the poverty level of the masses such that a nation that is believed to be "one of the biggest economies in the world and the best in Africa ranks among the poorest in the world"²⁷. James would quickly tell people that such ideas could only "come from demons" and the same has been the cause of the various political conflicts and insurgency cases in the country. The religious

²⁵ O. E. Alana, "Jesus' Cleansing of the Temple: a Call for Socio-Religious Action in Nigeria" in S. C. Abogurin (ed.) (Ibadan: M. Alofe Nigeria Enterprises, 2017) 278.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Boniface Imeowo, "A discussion on Nigerian Issues on the Subject Matter"

leaders deserve so much blames in this regard. It is in this light, D. F. Asaju has vehemently asked as follows, what is the effect of the various Churches and Mosques in Nigeria given the innumerable vices in the nation which is inconsistent with what both religions claim to have as their moral teachings?²⁸ Those involved in one vice or the other bear either Christian or Muslim names.

The counsel of Socrates (450 B.C.) that humanity needs "education" in order to know the real purpose for life becomes most essential in this regard. In the first place, the Christians in Nigeria should be aptly taught to live like Christians doing things in the "fear of God" which is "the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 1:7) on which basis James proffered his "wisdom" solution that "harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace". Secondly, the Qur'an should be better taught in the Mosques. The idea of going into worship places to destroy lives is inconsistent with the teachings of Qur'an (cf. Sura 2:190-193; 5:85) nor is the holy Qur'an in agreement with mass destructions that characterise the activities of Boko Haram and other such Islamic groups because Islam stands for peace.²⁹ Those in traditional religion should review their tenets because all we see now is contrary to what we are made to believe in their teachings.³⁰ Better still, let the counsel of James be strictly adhered to by all, otherwise, where there is deviation in any religion, justice should be effectively carried out.

This wisdom worked in Israel under Solomon before his fall that his fame was all over the then world hence his reign was that of peace (1 Kings 10:1-10,13-29), the same was true in Israel under Josiah (2 Kings 22:1-23:23). It also worked in US under Abraham Lincoln and Ronald Reagan.³¹ It is certain that what South Africa is enjoying today with respect to peaceful co-existence and national

²⁸ D. F. Asaju, "A Puzzle on Nigerian Situation"

²⁹ I. L. Akintola, "A Discussion on Boko Haram Issue on Channels Television"

³⁰ A. Ekwunife, "Values in Traditional and Modern Society" in M. I. Okwueze (ed.) *Religion and Socieial Development: Contemporary Nigerian Perspeicive* (Lagos: Merit International Publications, 2004), 255.

³¹ S. Nelson, "A discussion on Nigeria and America in Comparison as related to study"

building is as a result of the application of this “wisdom” when Nelson Mandela let go the past and allowed all equal opportunities in the country after defeating the apartheid party. This author believes that application of this wisdom will be useful in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, it will be interesting to state that it is the application of demonic or worldly wisdom that is characterised by jealousy and every kind of vices that causes conflicts in societies. This is Biblical as it is social and rational. Although, most Christians will argue that the wisdom discussed in this paper can only be accessed by Christians alone through the means of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22-24), but as posits in this paper, the wisdom is open to all. One can be godly without necessarily being a Christian. The examples of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1-4; Isaiah 45:1-8), Mahatma Gandhi whose policy was basically “non-violence”, Lee Kuan Yew and many others are sufficient to tell that anyone who yields himself to reason will be of great use to humanity regardless of the religious affinity. It is a common belief that all truths are parallel. The concept of wisdom by James is a universal truth though documented in the holy Bible. It is applicable to anyone that can reason, just like Apostle Paul subscribed to some Greek views like “Bad company ruins good morals” (1 Cor. 15:33) credited to Menander, for instance, without being a pupil to any of the Greek philosophers.³² Qur’an, of course, has similar positions across its chapters.

According to Shahid Athar, Muslims are asked to follow the good examples of earlier prophets. "In the matters of faith, He has ordained for you that which He had ordained upon Noah, and unto which we gave you (O Muhammad) insight through revelation as well as that which had enjoined upon Abraham, Moses and Jesus. Steadfastly uphold the faith and do not break up your unity" (Sura 42:13).³³ Thus, the position of this paper is not about the superiority

³² S. Motyer & J. Stott, *Men with one Message: an Introduction to the New Testament and the Writers*, 86.

³³ Shahid Athar, “Reflections of an American Muslim” from imana.org (2008)

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of any Religion but a working idea from a sacred book considered helpful to Nigeria and Nigerians and the entire humanity at large which is evident in the selected text.

As pointed above, it is evident that like Apostle Paul, Mahatma Gandhi, for instance, would have accessed the Biblical teachings though he never yielded to the Christian faith. This could be substantiated by the statements credited to him that Christians "live far below the teachings of their sacred book"³⁴ and the other that Jesus was "an embodiment of sacrifice and a Divine Teacher"³⁵. Much may, however, not be said about Lee Kuan Yew in this regard. But his autobiography confirms that he studied in Europe. It is on record that most European countries' and American's constitutions, policies and values were basically developed from the Biblical truths and teachings. The same was their guiding principle in their formative years as it were.

This is why their laws and systems work even where individuals on their personal bases may be evil.³⁶ Both of them might have, no doubt, been disappointed by the unprecedented racism and some terrible vices, as it were, which they could have noticed in Europe and America but they were forced by reason to adopt the good things they saw that worked in the places they studied and the result is what we see today in not only their own countries but in many countries in Asia. Such vision would have particularly informed Gandhi's belief that **one has to be the change he wants to see**. The same could be said of Yew when he decided that **he and his team must not disappoint the people**. However, whether these two men subscribed to Biblical teachings or not is not the point here, the truth is the fact that they were not adamant to the voice of reason or their consciences.

If a significant number of Nigerians, especially among those in power, can follow suit and at the same time adhere to the

³⁴ Gary Maxy, "A Lecture on Christian Ethics at Wesley International Theological Seminary, Owerri, Nigeria in 1991"

³⁵ S. Motyer & J. Stott *op. cit.*, 42.

³⁶ Gary Maxy *op. cit.*

instructions of James and the position of this paper, not necessarily because they want to be Christians but because they see such reasonable, Nigeria will certainly become a dream nation. Rather than formulating selfish policies and creating programmes that will only worsen the economic conditions of the masses like the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) that helped nobody in the nation, things will change for better. There will be such policies and programmes that will engender peaceful co-existence, functional curriculum for school children, economic development and many other good things. There will be job and wealth creation. Such will aptly justify the portion in the national anthem that says that Nigeria is a "place where peace and justice reign."