

Ayodele Ayeni, C.S.Sp.

## The “Visit of God” (Ex 3:16) and Paul’s Missiology as Identity formation in Galatians

### A Biblical Justice and Identity Recipes for “The Changing Landscape of Religious Missionary Life”

#### Introduction

Ours is the age of justice.<sup>1</sup> Each time our contemporaries evoke #metoo, someone is either calling for justice in the form of recognition and respect or identifying in solidarity with the lack thereof. We may debate the parameters of justice; nevertheless, many cry for it in their own



ways today. Our streets, courts and social media platforms have become the arena to seek for justice. The place of the religious missionary life in this scheme of things colours what follows.

Indeed, since the promulgation of the document *Perfectae Caritatis* on the renewal of religious life, which should be read alongside *Lumen Gentium* 43-47 on the religious identity, the religious landscape has changed significantly. A detailed evolution of the transformations experienced thus far is beyond the scope of this article. However, the debate on the theme and limit of the concept of *sequela Christi* makes the imitation of Christ the cornerstone of the religious experiment and experience. If there is a singular contribution I want to make to the concept of “sequela Christi”, it is to argue

that we need to reformulate it to read “to follow God in imitation of Christ”. This is imperative, to see that *sequela Christi* has an antecedent in the activities of God-the-Father (Phil 2:11)<sup>2</sup> and must continue *in tandem* with the economy of salvation in which Jesus-as-Lord (Phil 2:11)<sup>3</sup> associates his followers in the “Great Commission” (Matt 28:18-20).

Beginning with the contemporary quests for judicial and public domain justice – justice through the courts and in the streets – signifying what I call “the age of justice”, I posit the “visit” of God to Israel in Egypt as the foundation of biblical social justice, pursued in the “visit” of God in Christ. I argue that every missionary endeavour must be a perpetuation of the theo-centric visits that are couched in “justice issues”. Consequently, I propose that the justice of God must be ours as well, if we must respond to the contemporary changing missiological landscape opened by the “age of justice”, my nomenclature for our 21st century.

A disclaimer is *ad rem* here. To attempt giving a comprehensive overview of the ideas floating in the academia as to how to ground the contemporary multi-polar world is herculean! I have no pretensions of doing any significant justice to their individual

<sup>1</sup> For a more comprehensive take on “justice issues”, see Ayodele Ayeni, “Evangelization as Justice Issues: The Spiritan Legacy for the World”, *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology* 34, 2022, 136-160.

<sup>2</sup> On this formula, see Ayodele Ayeni, “From the Formula ‘To the Glory of God the Father’ (Phil 2:11) to the Forgotten Theology of Phil 2:6-11 as Pauline Formula for Monotheism”, *Science et Esprit* 73, 2021, 359-374; Ibid, “From the Formula ‘To the Glory of God the Father’ (Phil 2:11) to the Forgotten Theology of Phil 2:6-11 as Pauline Formula for Monotheism”, *Science et Esprit* 74, 2022, 81-102.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

analyses. On the contrary, I wish to highlight some of the theories that have come to shape our collective thinking and debate about the world. It is up to the charisms of individual religious communities to adapt to the issues impinging on the unique contributions their charisms bring to bear on the world of today. Of course, I take it for granted that the unique charisms of all religious communities (Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life) are already addressing aspects of “justice issues”.

### 1. When “naming” circumscribes hermeneutics

It is my contention that we need to name or provide a name for our times. Within the concept of “naming” is a certain delimitation. Grammatically, proper nouns limit the scope of a name to one thing or person. In the world of ideas and concepts, naming guarantees a certain cognitive “mastery” for a functional use of a nomenclature/name. “Naming” our present time is heuristic, I believe, to providing an intellectual discursive engagement with missionary imperatives of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Without a clear naming of the present times<sup>4</sup>, whatever recipes proposed for it will not be adequate for the missionary religious response demanded by our times.

It is good to start out with previous attempts at naming the present times. David Tracy seems pessimistic about finding a grounding principle or a name for the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He points out the cracks in past harmonising theories – modernism and post-modernism – that name the current epoch:

#### **We live in an age that cannot name itself.**

For some, we are still in that age of modernity and the triumph of the bourgeois subject. For others, we are in a time of the levelling of all traditions and await the return of the repressed traditional and communal subject. For yet others, we are in a postmodern moment where the death of the

subject is now upon us as the last receding wave of the death of God. These three conflicting namings of the present situation are at the heart of the conflict of interpretations in that place which was once construed as the center of history – Western, including Western Christian theological, culture. But as its own conflict on how to name itself shows, that Western center cannot hold.<sup>5</sup>

I agree with the assessment of Tracy that the search for a name for our times should precede missionary engagement for efficiency purposes. To my mind, the reason for and the nature of missionary endeavours need clarifications if “[w]e live in an age that cannot name itself”, should missionaries want to be relevant to the needs of the world they evangelise. The exercise in naming helps religious missionaries to understand the contexts of evangelisation and approach it purposefully.

However, it would be naïve to imagine that all nomenclatural vestiges of modernism – secularism, liberal democracy, cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, etc. – have vanished from our vocabulary. As a matter of fact, “secularism” is the nomenclature that undergirds Pope Benedict XVI’s call for a “New Evangelisation” as an instance of the vitality of that concept today, and an attempt at naming our times. According to Pope Benedict XVI:

I opened the way for a reflection to begin on a subject I had pondered over for a long time: the need to offer a specific response to a moment of crisis in Christian life which is occurring in many countries, especially those of ancient Christian tradition . . . The term, ‘New evangelization’ recalls the need for a renewed manner of proclamation, especially for those who live in a context, like the one today, in which the development of **secularization** has had a heavy impact, even in traditionally Christian countries.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Since changes are so rapid and multifaceted, I chose to use the plural form of “time”.

<sup>5</sup> David Tracy, *On Naming the Present: God, Hermeneutics, and Church*, New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1994, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Benedict XVI, *Address of His Holiness Benedict XI*

Benedict XVI underscores three points of interest: (1) secularism is the name of our times; (2) secularism creates a crisis of evangelisation today; and (3) missionaries need a new approach to missionary engagement with the word today. These three elements aptly describe the preoccupation, I believe, SEDOS's conference of this year 2023 – “The Changing Landscape of Religious Missionary Life” – attempts to address.

Benedict XVI's intuitions on secularism are still with us today. Indeed, secularism still makes the rounds of our academic discourses, but Charles Taylor argues that it is shading off its old meaning as understood as being atheistic or anti-religion (the “moment of crisis in Christian life” of Pope Benedict XVI), while mutating into a “defender” of God in public places. For instance, Taylor portrays secularism as protecting religion when he says that,

It is generally agreed that modern democracies have to be ‘secular.’ There is perhaps a problem, a certain ethnocentricity, involved in this term. But even in the Western context the term is not limpid. What in fact does it mean? I believe that there are at least two models of what constitutes a secular regime. Both involve some kind of separation of church and state. The state can't be officially linked to some religious confession; except in a vestigial and largely symbolic sense, as in England or Scandinavia . . . We think that secularism (or *laïcité*) has to do with the relation of state and religion; whereas in fact it has to do with the (correct) response of the democratic state to diversity.<sup>7</sup>

---

to Participants in the Plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, 2011, par. 1–2.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Taylor, “Why we Need a Radical Redefinition of Secularism”, in Eduardo Mendieta et al. (ed.), *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, New York, NY: Columbia University Press/SSRC Book, 2011, pp. 34–36.

It is important to recall that Taylor calls our age “A Secular Age”.<sup>8</sup> “Secularism” has been one of the mainstays of Taylor's contributions to the understanding of our times. His conception of secularism, however, does not square with that of Pope Benedict XVI. While Taylor thinks that secularism defends diversity and religious freedom, the very diversity Taylor defends offends the unitary perspective that Benedict XVI sees as the pre-condition for comprehending our age.

Pope Benedict XVI is not alone in considering the inability to have a common descriptive nomenclature for our time as being part of the crisis of our times. Jean-Paul Sartre argues the same position from a Euro-centric position, when he says that “Europe is springing leaks everywhere. What then has happened? It is simply that in the past we made history and now it is being made of us”.<sup>9</sup> This statement admits that non-Europeans too are thinking and shaping their lives in other ways. Missionaries would need to take account of other currents of thinking when they engage the world and abandon a demoded view of a unipolar world.

### 1.1 Reading the Present Times for Missiological purposes

If Taylor calls our age “secular”, its North-Atlantic coloration has not gone unnoticed by its failure to address the realities in the Global South. This simply means that the “Secular Age” as the name of our times remains sectional and not global. The same criticism, *mutatis mutandis*, could be leveled at Pope Benedict XVI's couching of the “New Evangelization” in secularist garb.

---

<sup>8</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Harvard, Mass./London, UK: Harvard University Press, 2007, p. 1 (Taylor's footnotes reveal his debates with other scholars, who think that secularism is a by-product of modernity).

<sup>9</sup> Amartya Sen, “What Happened to Europe?” in *The New Republic*, August 2, 2012 (<https://newrepublic.com/article/105657/sen-europe-democracy-keynes-social-justice>) accessed on January 7, 2021.

Benedict XVI's encouragement to a return to "a unitary matrix", which will favor evangelization and the faith in Europe, falls short of the *catholica* – the universality and universalism of the Church. He argues that:

It often happens that Christians are more concerned for the social, cultural and political consequences of their commitment, continuing to think of the faith as a self-evident presupposition for life in society. In reality, not only can this presupposition no longer be taken for granted, but it is often openly denied. Whereas in the past it was possible to recognize a **unitary cultural matrix**, broadly accepted in its appeal to the content of the faith and the values inspired by

developed at a particular moment of their history, because the faith cannot be constricted to the limits of understanding and expression of any one culture".<sup>11</sup>

Although Catholic position on secularism seems to be playing catch up with the academia, nevertheless, multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism<sup>12</sup> further stretch the borders of our secular world. The idea that every human being should feel comfortable where they find themselves is the trump-card of cosmopolitanism championed since Greek sophist philosophy.

More than cosmopolitanism, secularism and modernism, liberal democracy has far reaching impacts around the world. Missionaries must not fail to realise that



it, today this no longer seems to be the case in large swathes of society, because of a profound **crisis of faith** that has affected many people.<sup>10</sup>

If Pope Benedict XVI's position on secularism in Europe wears Sartrean looks of a collapsed unitary centre, Pope Francis' appropriation of secularism opts for the Taylorian perspective – diversity. According to Pope Francis, diversity should be the context of evangelisation today: "We cannot demand that peoples of every continent, in expressing their Christian faith, imitate modes of expression which European nations

liberal democracy, in all shapes and sizes, is trending around the world. Despite alternative political systems, missionaries need to attend to "freedom" and the way people construe it. Liberal democracy, with its double signification of "freedom and equality", finds resonances globally. John Charvet surmises the indices of liberal democracy in these terms:

Liberalism attaches fundamental value to leaving individuals as free as possible to decide for themselves what to believe, where

<sup>10</sup> Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter *motu proprio*, *Porta Fidei*, 2 (emphasis added).

<sup>11</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013, par. 118

<sup>12</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Cosmopolitan Patriot", *Critical Inquiry*, vol 23:3, 1997, 617-639.



to live, who to associate with and how to conduct their economic and sexual relations.... freedom and equality must be interpreted together to form the basis of a coherent practice [of liberalism]. For instance, suppose some people believe that their religion requires them to persecute, expel or even kill non-believers.

The kind of freedom Charvet articulates has a tint of post-modernism in comparison to Giddens' summary of Jean-François Lyotard's exposé on post-modernism: "The post-modern outlook sees a plurality of heterogeneous claims to knowledge, in which science does not have a privileged place".<sup>13</sup> Is this not an opening for "God-talk" and the return of God into public square?

One of the weaknesses of the unipolar world, and the different theoretical currents I mentioned earlier, points to the fact that a group of individuals are thinking for others, while considering the others simply as the recipients of the think-tanks' position. This scenario is fast disappearing. A strong current of self-representative and self-appropriation of ideas is trending all over the world today. It wears the label "#metoo". Individuals subscribe personally to the condemnation of injustices and call for justice in its stead. They seek justice in the streets and before tribunals. These individuals refuse the idea of sacred cows and hiding places for culprits of injustice. Some have embraced both extremes of "wokeness", far removed from its Afro-American civil rights movement's foundations.

What is important to note, at this juncture, is the liberal individualism attendant in #metoo movements, which religious missionary life needs to contend with. The opened window of secularism that provides for legally defended religious freedom is the opportunity religious missionary life needs to

cash in for evangelization today. However, the flavour of evangelization must be tainted with justice issues for it to be palatable in our times.

## 1.2 God the Problem: The Challenge of "The Changing Landscape of Religious Missionary Life"

For members of SEDOS, as a Christian group, the major challenge of the present "changing landscape" is the general refusal to put God as the referent of human life and liberty. Individualism has trained most of the peoples of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to start their definition of liberty from the self – "the government of the people, by the people and for the people". It encourages consensus adhesion to issues individuals feel attracted to. It has arrived at the bus stop of #metoo. However, mapping the contours of "God the problem" for discursive purposes, Gillespie construes "secularist modernity" in these words:

Modernity is a secular realm in which man replaces God as the center of existence and seeks to become the master and possessor of nature by the application of a new science and its attendant technology. The modern world is conceived as the realm of individualism, of representation and subjectivity, of exploration and discovery, of freedom, rights, equality, toleration, liberalism, and nation states.<sup>14</sup>

The contrived autonomy of individualism and its attendant crises are déjà vu. In the past, occasioned by the "nominalist crisis", the turn to the individual engendered two sources of malaise—moral and philosophical crises—that so unsettled the late medieval age that three approaches to resolving them ensued: 1) there was the rise of humanism as a source of moral compass from non-Christian sources, to fill in the gap left by theological disorientation. Petrarch preferred Roman models or stoic ideals as moral

<sup>13</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Stanford, CA/UK: Polity/Stanford University Press, 1990, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity*, London, U.K./Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 2008, pp. x-xi.

stalwarts.<sup>15</sup> Cato, Cicero and Seneca are some of the Roman authors he explored for moral compass. This humanism will evolve in two directions—Southern (Italian) and Northern (Christian) humanisms. 2) The evangelistic simplicity of Christian life and the “*Imitatio Christi*” were the options of the non-clerical members of the Church begun by Francis of Assisi; and 3) the nominalist theology that challenged the *status quo ante*.<sup>16</sup>

The late medieval identification of the Church with both spiritual and political powers made the dichotomy between the sacred and the secular impossible. This situation was built on centuries of amalgamation of faith and reason or the marriage between Jerusalem and Athens. The philosophical foundations of Christian articulations of doctrines, especially Platonic philosophy, foisted during the Christological debates that bedeviled the early years of Christianity, began to reveal fissures with the nominalist twist. The disintegration of the medieval organistic theology (organon), where reality was conceived as a whole or as one, initiated a crisis of unity in the Christian faith that the Reformation, Counter-Reformation and Modernism will fail to adequately address, but continues to our day in the form of “The Malaise of Modernism”.<sup>17</sup>

The moral and philosophical crisis the world is experiencing currently, I suggest, alongside Claude Geffré, do not write the dirge of God. On the contrary, religious missionary life only needs to re-strategize its approach to mission. There is clearly room

for evangelization today, as Geffré avers in his analyses of modernist twists and turns:

Si on veut déceler les racines de la dynamique propre au processus de modernisation, on doit faire appel aux concepts de subjectivité et de rationalité. Le passage à la modernité coïncide avec l'émergence d'un sujet humain conscient de son autonomie et avec la victoire d'une approche rationnelle de tous les phénomènes de la nature et de la société (qu'il s'agisse du progrès scientifique, de la mécanisation industrielle, de la rationalisation d'une économie de marché ou de la centralisation bureaucratique de l'État moderne). Or, sous la double modalité d'une subjectivité inviolable et d'une rationalité triomphante, on constate que le christianisme et la modernité entretiennent des rapports qui ne sont pas seulement faits de rivalité conflictuelle. On peut découvrir aussi des rapports de proximité.<sup>18</sup>

Aside the “conflictual rivalry” between Christianity and modernism which Geffré underscores, I make bold to suggest an intuition on “biblical justice” as one recipe for the crisis that religious missionary life faces in its work today.

## 2. Thinking Biblical Justice through the “visit” of God (Ex 3:16) as Recipe to The “Age of Justice”

After an excursus on the state of the question on “naming” our times, it is high time I suggested an alternative from a theological perspective because “missionary religious life” is the focus of this article. Consequently, the multifaceted theories of “naming” our times the academia throws at us spur me to interrogate the overarching tendencies of people across all continents in response to happenings to other human beings, animals, and ecology elsewhere. I notice that justice issues galvanise peoples

<sup>15</sup> Today, promoters of “cosmopolitanism” return to the sophists. See Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Cosmopolitan Patriots”, *Critical Inquiry* 23/3, 1997, 617-639; P. Kleingeld, “Cosmopolitanism”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2002, (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/cosmopolitanism/>) accessed May 6, 2023.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity*, passim.

<sup>17</sup> In this book, Taylor lists the elements of modernity that challenge the status quo ante. See Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*, House of Anansi Press, 1991.

<sup>18</sup> Claude Geffré, “La modernité, un défi pour le christianisme et l'islam”, *Théologiques* 9/2, 135–156; Jean Ladrière, “Théologie et modernité”, *Revue théologique de Louvain*, 27/2, 1996, 174-199.

around the world. It is commonplace to observe the use of “#metoo” to empathise and demonstrate against whatever impacts others negatively without having to know personally the people affected. For example, the ArabSprings in North Africa, #Endsars in Nigeria, the undying civil rights issues in America, the call for colonial accountability, post-colonial literature, immigrations, Islamophobia, antisemitism, gender violence, wokeness, veil crisis in Iran, etc. they all receive global solidarity under “freedom” and respect.

The cries for justice across all continents and the supports that gets from all and sundry suggests the nomenclature the “age of justice” as the harmonising concept to describe our times. All seekers of justice around the world are those reshaping and “naming” our times as the “age of justice” and accountability. These peoples are Africans, Asians, Europeans, Latinos, Euro-Asians, Americans, name it. But how does one implicate Christian missionary endeavours in this age of justice?

The Bible contains multiple justice issues, especially the relations between Israel/Judah and its neighbours. There are intra-Israel/Judah justice issues as well. However, I locate the root of God’s justice that perdures into the New Testament in the concept of the “visit” (*paqad/episkeptomai*) of God in Ex 3:16: “Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely **visited** you, and *seen* that which is done to you in Egypt” (KJV).

The context of Ex 3 provides us with three major arguments that shift the understanding of justice away from its legalistic etymological definition – *jus-juris* – to intervention for liberation and salvation. The “visit” of God (Ex 3:16) makes justice “God’s intervention” in contexts **he considers as unjust**, after “visitation”/ “inspection” and “seeing” the accusation put forward by complainants. The “visit” of God

is for salvation and liberation<sup>19</sup> from unjust structures and shackles. It is context specific, hence, defies precise definitional circumscription.

The visit of God is an intervention in all justice issues to bring about salvation and liberation. Above all, it is an invitation to be imitated. Wherever God intervenes for justice, his disciples must follow suit. My contention is that the examples of God’s “visits” are the circumscriptions and jurisdictions of intervention for justice in all generations.<sup>20</sup>

The second uniqueness of the visit of God (Ex 3) is its desire to create a harmonised human identity as children of God. God’s “Paternity” of humanity is the biblical formula of universal identity.<sup>21</sup> The segregationist identification of Israel under its genealogical definition<sup>22</sup> – the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – was both substituted for by the unique name YHWH and the subjugation of all other names of deities under YHWH or monotheism.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The dominant contexts of the use of God’s visit *paqad/episkeptomai* in the Hebrew Scripture is to punish. However, Luke alone takes up its salvific understanding and associates it with the soteriological actions of God in Jesus Christ. Our interest in the positive use of God’s “visit” presupposes Luke’s appropriation of the “visit” of God as salvific in the *Benedictus* (Lk 1:68, 78-79) and the raising of the dead son of the widow of Nain (Lk 1:68-78-79).

<sup>20</sup> The idea of “*memoria Dei*”, which I cannot develop here, is germane to this understanding, because the Holy Spirit leads the Church “into complete truth”. See Ayodele Ayeni, “‘*Memoria*’: A New Hermeneutic Principle in Pontifical Theology? The Encyclical *Lumen Fidei* and its Tillardian Contextualization”, *Science et Esprit* 69/3, 2017, 401-426.

<sup>21</sup> Marie-Joseph Lagrange, “La Paternité de Dieu dans l’Ancien Testament,” *Revue Biblique* 5, 1908, 481-499.

<sup>22</sup> Frank Crüsemann, “Human Solidarity and Ethnic Identity: Israel’s Self- Definition in the Genealogical System of Genesis,” in Mark G. B (ed.), *Ethnicity and the Bible*, Leiden: Brill, 1996, 57-76.

<sup>23</sup> Christopher Seitz, “The Call of Moses and the ‘Revelation’ of the Divine Name: Source-Critical Logic and Its Legacy”, in Christopher Seitz and Kathryn Greene-McCreight, *Theological Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Bervard S. Childs*, Grand Rapids,

The third identity foundation of Ex 3 is the fact that Israel went out of Egypt a mixed-race<sup>24</sup> to stamp its multi-racial, multicultural, and cosmopolitan credentials. Römer collocates the emergence of YHWH as the God of Israel-Judah and all nations via textual additions and reconfigurations of the identity of YHWH as God in the Torah.<sup>25</sup>

The prophecy of Is 61:1-2 enlarges justice issues and the obligation for intervention or visit of God to include proclamation of the good news, binding up of broken hearted, liberation from captivities and prisons, and the savour of God's beneficence. This prophetic agenda was taken up by Luke in his inaugural speech in the synagogue in Capernaum (Lk 4:18-19) with the addition of healthcare needs as justice issues – "recovery of sight for the blind". The shifting goal post and the changing boundary of justice issues the Bible enunciates enables every generation to discern and add extra justice issues to its toolkit of contexts for intervention in the name of justice.

It is important to note that Luke is the only Gospel that takes up the salvific understanding of the visit of God (Ex 3:16) in two places in the New Testament: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for he has **visited** (*epeskepsato*) and redeemed his

people . . . because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall **visit** (*episkepsetai*) us from on high" and " 'A great prophet has arisen among us!' and 'God has **visited** (*epsekepsato*) his people'" (Lk 7:16). Besides continuing with the visit of God as intervention for salvation, Lk 7:11-16 includes economics in justice issues. The poverty of the widow of Nain and her prospective destitution at the death of her only son leads to Jesus' visit/intervention to restore her son back to her to forestall a crashing poverty from befalling her.

The whole idea behind this section is to argue that biblical justice issues ties together identity formation and justice. For justice to be biblical and Christian, it must aim at the eradication of differences, and it must take its cue from God. It follows that the "age of justice" is a Christian religious missionary vision of evangelization that implicates the obligation to guarantee justice and common identity. This identity, as we will see with Paul, has dual citizenship – heavenly and earthly.

### 3. The Great Commission of Matt 28: 16-20

If the visit of God is construed in salvific terms and the making of a united human identity as children of God, Munachi Ezeogu's reinterpretation of Matthew 28:16-20 from a literal exegesis focuses on the identity formation purposes of the Matthean "Great Commission" text. He reads the purpose of the Great Commission as the mission of incorporating non-Jews into the community of the redeemed, since Matthew's gospel is known for its preference for Jewish tendencies. According to Ezeogu:

Matthew 28:16-20 has traditionally been read as a programmatic text to establish Christian belief and praxis, such as baptism, the Trinitarian doctrine, and above all, world mission. This study seeks to uncover the literal sense of the text, which should guide its practical appropriations . . . Positively, the thesis proposes a new model for reading Matthew 28:16-20 not as establishing Gentile

---

MI/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Publishing Company, 1999, 145-161; Baruch Halpern, "YHWH the Revolutionary: Reflections on the Rhetoric of Redistribution in the Social Context of Dawning Monotheism", in Alice Ogden Bellis (ed.), *Jews, Christians, and the theology of the Hebrew Scriptures*, (SBL symposium series 8), Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000, 179-212; Thomas Römer, "The Problem of the Hexateuch" in Jan C. Gertz, Bernard M. Levinson, et al. (eds.), *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck: 2016, 813-827.

<sup>24</sup> James Chukwuma Okoye, *Israel and the Nations: A Mission Theology of the Old Testament*, New York, NY: Orbis Books, 2006, 3.

<sup>25</sup> See Thomas Römer, "La naissance du Pentateuque et la construction d'une identité en débat", in *L'identité dans l'Écriture, Hommage au professeur Jacques Briand* (Olivier Artus et de Joëlle Ferry (Eds.), Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2009, 21-43.



mission but as a magisterial commissioning whose intent is to authorize the admission of Gentiles to the teaching office of Matthew's Jewish Christian church.<sup>26</sup>

Ezeogu's reinterpretation of the Great Commission squares with justice issues because evangelization emphasizes the visit of God as incorporation of all and sundry into membership of the children of God. The Great Commission cosmopolitanizes the identity of the children of God to include everybody, not just the Jews. By extension,

3:28: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus".<sup>27</sup>

The cry for justice that is ubiquitous today restructures status, gender and racial inequalities Paul suggests Christianity and its missionary endeavours should put an end to. He puts forward the unity of humanity in a universal adoption as children of God: "because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying,



despite the "changing landscape of religious missionary life", evangelization remains an imperative of inclusive identity making for all missionary endeavours.

#### 4. The Triple Identity Reconciliation of Justice Issues in Galatians

The configuration of human identity as the children of God inaugurated in Exodus gets a boost in Galatians. The new depiction of a united and universal human identity in the expression "#metoo" evokes the need to consolidate on the triple strata of reconciliations Paul underscores in Galatians

"Abba! Father!" (Gal 4:6).

The preoccupation of our age of justice issues calls upon all peoples to recognise and construct one humanity with respect for everybody's dignity, race, culture, gender, etc. As far as missionaries are concerned, their unique intervention in justice issues is based on faith and springs from the imitation of a God of justice, who visited for salvation and justice in the Hebrew Scripture and continued the justice intervention in his Son in the New Testament.

<sup>26</sup> Ernest Munachi Ezeogu, *The Purpose of the Great Commission: A Historical-critical Exegesis of Matthew 28:16-20*, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation submitted to St. Michael College, University of Toronto, 2004.

<sup>27</sup> Michel Gourgues, "'Ni Juif ni Grec, ni esclave ni libre, ni mâle et femelle' (Ga 3,28). Sur une contribution de la première génération chrétienne à une affirmation des droits humains", *Science et Esprit* 69/2, 2017, 241-262.

#### 4.1 Baptism as an Element of Identity (Gal 3:26-29)

The grammatical change from “we”, first person plural, to “you”, second person plural, entrenches the purpose of Paul’s tortuous arguments from Gal 3:1-25, as well as shifts the focus of identity definition away from himself (Gal 2:18-21) to the Galatians (Gal 3:26-29). Here, the concepts of “justification”, “cross” and “law” are absent; other nomenclature (baptism, Abraham, sons [children], etc.) replaces them. The point this section underscores is the cumulative nature of Paul’s identity debate; there are more arguments to substantiate Paul’s claim to identity hybridity, besides those enumerated in Gal 2.

Pauline scholarship considers “in Christ”<sup>28</sup> a formula with a precise content and utilization. It takes for granted the Christ-event as an aggregating reality. It incorporates the idea of the cross, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, among other existential elements of the life of Jesus Christ. In this context, “if you belong to Christ” (Gal 3:29) adds to the meaning of “in Christ” (Gal 3:26) as its pre-condition. The conditional clause, “if”, makes “in Christ” a factual state that makes possible the partitive or genitive statement “of Christ” about Christ. Consequently, it underscores the status of Galatians as being grafted unto Christ.

The formulation, “Christ Jesus”, that makes Christ precede Jesus focuses attention on the Messianism of Jesus. The hermeneutic principle of promise-fulfillment comes to play in that apposite taxonomy – Christ Jesus. The intertextuality of Paul’s arguments

demonstrates the congruities between the Messiah promised and the bearer of the name Christ Jesus. That Paul dispenses with “Jesus”, that is in apposition to Christ, underscores the emphasis on “Christ”. This exclusion of Jesus in “if you are of Christ” is in order to make Christ the focal point of adjunction to Abraham as the “promised one” of old (Gal 3:16), as the capstone of his argument regarding Abraham’s link to Christ Jesus and Christians.

#### 4.2 Identity Nomenclature – Heirs and Children

The titles of “heirs” and “children” that Paul argues for in Gal 3:26-29 cannot be separated from Paul’s argument begun in Gal 3:1. Baptism provides the source of the identity change from its Old Testament bases (Gal 3:7, 16) to the Christ-event (Gal 3:26-29). The declarative statement, “you are children of God”, followed by a dependent prepositional clause, “through faith”, provides two supplementary arguments to the nomenclature “heirs” and “children”. First, Paul correlates (partitive) “belong to Christ” and being “in Christ” with faith in God. Second, Paul correlates “heir to the promise”, the link with the Old Testament (Gal 3:7, 16) with “children of God”, the present situation Paul defends (Gal 3:26).

The diachronic relevance of “God” and “faith” fulfills the requirement of promise-fulfillment biblical hermeneutics and the continuity between God and the works of his Messiah. Paul makes the children of God of today, the heirs of God, according to the plans of God (Gal 3:8-9) in the Old Testament, where Abraham himself was justified based on faith (Gal 3:6), just as God’s children are justified by faith now (Gal 3:26). God and faith are the strings that unite the work of God in the present “in Christ Jesus” with the promises of the past. By implication, whether called an “heir” or a “child”, both titles have the same referent – every human being. God no longer permits for status and racial differences among human beings because they are all his children, notwithstanding the nomenclatural

<sup>28</sup> I favor the position of Bouttier on this issue for two reasons: first, he successfully counteracted the reading of “religionsgeschichte schule” group’s claim that “en Christō” means a “sphere of influence” reminiscent of mystery religions; second, he connects “en Christō” to the meaning of the Christian life, in a sequel to his book “En Christō”. See Michel Bouttier, *En Christ: Étude d’exégèse et de théologie paulinienne*, Paris: PUF, 1962, pp. 5-30; Ibid, *La condition chrétienne selon saint Paul*, Genève: Labor et Fides, 1964, p. 1 footnote 1.

usage.

### 4.3 Baptism Confers A Universal Human Identity

The identity appellatives verse 28 conjures are co-extensive with the formula “into Christ”. The phraseology “you were baptized into Christ” expresses “motion” of incorporation or aggregation. The indefinite quantitative pronoun “hosoi” implies that a limitless number of people can be incorporated into Christ by the medium of the ritual of Baptism. From what history teaches us about baptism, at the time and now, it bears a public character and an expressive articulation of belief. This surmises the context for the public profession of faith in Christ Jesus, as the demonstration of the act of incorporation and self-definition/identity referent<sup>29</sup> from the reality of the Christ-event. With the figure of Abraham that looms large behind Jewish identity definition is juxtaposed the “Seed” to correlate Christ and the descendants of Abraham. The Christ into whom a limitless number of people are incorporated, through baptism, is the same as the “Seed” of Abraham that was promised (Gal 3:19) and who has come in Christ Jesus. Implicitly, instead of the circumcision that makes one a descendant of Abraham, baptism substitutes for it to make people God’s children through Abraham’s offspring – Christ.

A lesson not to be missed here is the emphasis on the descriptive formulae of Christians’ “graftedness” unto Christ. First, they are a part of Christ or the partitive formula; second, “in Christ Jesus”/ “put on Christ” or the existential formula; finally, the ritual/baptismal formula “into Christ”. The complementarities among these formulae preclude “mythologization” of the history of religion school. One way “faith”, as vertical union with God, manifests itself is in the human gesture of appropriation of identity through the acceptance of the ritual of baptism.

If identity definition pitted Paul against Peter (Gal 2:15), the role of identity as a force for existential unity, in place of division, is the core of Paul’s argument in verse 28. Paul’s appropriation of the trito-Isaiah (Is 61:10) concept of “cloth” (v. 27) as a sign of a new identity of oneness (v. 28) strengthens his imagery of baptism as symbol of unity, because it confers a new identity of oneness for the many (*hosoi*) who receive it. The notion that Christ is the cloth they all put on precludes multiplicity of identities and suggests uniqueness and inclusiveness of the identity that comes by faith in Christ.

The grammatical import of the aorist “enedusasthe” (v. 27), an action that takes place once and defines the future, corroborates identity conferment with the baptismal event, whose impact on those who went through it is the subject of Paul’s identity hermeneutics. If Paul uses the grammatical present, “you are one”, with the addition of “in Christ”, he sets up an ideal (“in Christ”) in quest of existential concretization or actualization (“you are one”). It is exactly because the existential horizontal reality of oneness was lacking that it led to Peter’s and Paul’s altercation and necessitated the hermeneutical demonstration of the Christian identity formation. This implies that the religious ideal occasioned by “in Christ” requires human project for its existential realization.

The dyads, “there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female”, have a dual function. First, their enumeration speaks to the stratification of the society and community of Paul, even if the strict preoccupation of Paul is the dyad “Jew and Greek”,<sup>30</sup> because of the unique identity issue engendered by table fellowship (Gal 2:12). Second, the verb “*eneimi*”, in its classical usage, “*eni*”, references “in Christ”, and the existentially incongruent reality of

<sup>29</sup> The link between baptism and identity is underscored in verse 28.

<sup>30</sup> See Ayodele AYENI, *The Antithesis “Neither Jew nor Greek” in Gal 3:28a: Its Context, Application, Meaning and Origin*, Frankfurt: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2012.

the day and time of Paul – social stratification.

The social stratification references the first two sets of dyads – “Jew or Greek” and “slave or free”. These are nurtured stratifications. As for “male and female”, nature or creation is its origin. The implications of baptism, then, is two-fold: to understand gender division from the complementarity of nature, in God’s scheme of things, while poised to eradicate the differences human beings have nurtured (“there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free”). Consequently, Paul’s identity argument respects the order of creation and not nurture. The fact that Paul retains the different roles of males (father/son) and females (mother) – “God sent his Son, born of a woman . . . crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Gal 4:4, 6) – supports my position.

The religious and faith reality created by “in Christ” encourages those in Christ to engage in the eradication of nurtured differences at different levels of social cadre, gender, racial, religious, status, national, etc. The fact that Paul engages Peter with the hermeneutic of identity is already a positive step for all generations, for them to add their own bit to the project of one identity defense. Besides the physical ritual of baptism as an element of identity, there is a spiritual element as well. To this spiritual element or the Holy Spirit, we now turn. Lest we forget, this means that Paul reclaims God’s prerogative in identity definition against human or nurtured identity separation.<sup>31</sup>

#### **4.4 Holy Spirit as an Element of Identity (Gal 4:4-7)**

“The promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal 3:14) Paul mentions earlier garners attention after the arrival of Christ/faith (Gal 3:23-25). The clearest articulation of “time”, for theological purposes, in Galatians, is in Gal 4:4-5. These verses correlate, on the one hand, the divine perspectives on identity –

“God”, “his Son” and “time”; on the other, “time” implicates human beings – “woman”, “law” and “adoption of children” in God’s application of time to human affairs. Paul reconciles the divine and the human elements in God’s paternity – “Abba! Father!” It is at the juncture of God’s paternity of humanity that identity takes its new meaning via the Holy Spirit.

The concept of time has been subject of articles<sup>32</sup> and books;<sup>33</sup> none of these cited writings correlates time and identity; rather, they either attempt to correct the incorrect use of the concept of “time” (James Barr and Pidoux) or they preoccupy themselves with the semantics of “time” (Gourgues and Dumais) and its modernist twist (Peter Eicher). My interest is to delineate the functionality of the reality created by “God”, “his Son” and “time” on Paul’s mission of identity awareness campaign in the letter to the Galatians.

In the quest for logic, I take Gal 4:4-5 as the micro-context within the macro-context of Gal 4:1-7. The thematic shift from Abraham (Gal 3:29) to the discussion of the second dyad of Gal 3:28b (free person and slave) is a pretext for arguing that Gal 4:1 begins a new argument; hence, it serves as a point of delimitation for the macro-context of our pericope (Gal 4:1-7). And the change from

---

<sup>32</sup> Peter Eicher, “Temporalisation de l’éternité: Le Seigneur du temps et l’origine de la modernité” in *Temps et eschatology. Données bibliques et problématiques contemporaines* ed., Jean-Louis Leuba, Paris: Cerf, 1994, pp. 215-234; Michel Gourgues, “La ‘plénitude des temps’: Polysémie d’une formule néotestamentaire (Mc 1,15; Ga 4,4; Ep 1,10)” in *En ce temps-là: Conceptions et expériences bibliques du temps* eds., Michel Gourgues et Michel Talbot, Montréal: Médiaspaul, 2002, pp. 113-135; Marcel Dumais, “L’événement eschatologique et le temps: Jalons herméneutique” in *En ce temps-là: Conceptions et expériences bibliques du temps*, pp. 89-111; G. Pidoux, “À propos de la notion biblique du temps”, *Revue Théologique et Philosophique* 2, 1952, pp. 120-125.

<sup>33</sup> James Barr, *Biblical Words for Time*, Studies in Biblical Theology 33, London: SCM Press, 1962; Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, London: (publisher not indicated), 1951; John Marsh, *The Fullness of Time* (New York, N. Y.: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1952).

---

<sup>31</sup> The two “missions” (Gal 4:4, 6), of the Son of God and of the Spirit of the Son of God, speak more about this.



human slaves and their eventual adoption as children (Gal 4:7) to the discussion of “enslavement to gods” (Gal 4:8) makes Gal 4:1-7 a new pericope,<sup>34</sup> with verse 7 as the end of it.

Firstly, the concept of “time” clarifies the meaning of the “heir presumptive” of Gal 4:1. The correlation between an “infant heir” (Gal 4:1) and an “heir through God” (Gal 4:7) indicates two roles played by “time”. “Time” changes the conception of a legal<sup>35</sup> action – since adoption law – and sets up a new set of relationship by the conferment of a new identity – “heir through God” (Gal 4:7). As a legal infant heir, the power of inheritance was postponed, and a certain portion of “time” must pass before its actualization. The “heirship” at stake is not goods or material possession to be acquired, without precluding those, but identity naturalization as a “child” or adoption/identity conferment.

The assertion of Gal 4:7 suggests that “sonship” has replaced “heirship” because of God. God leads to the actualization of “time” and assures the identity transformation through the Holy Spirit. By implication, the state of “slavery” is the absence of God’s intervention in the concept of time. But how did God impact time, to achieve the transformation of the identity of an infant heir into a son? This question is important because of the debate around Paul’s dual heritage (Jewish and Greek legal concepts) apparent in Galatians.<sup>36</sup>

According to time phrase “until the appointed time” (Gal 4:2), the “infant heir” suffers a “time” constraint, set by the father,

before acceding to “sonship”, which is the inheritance he awaits. If this time constraint lasts, the infant heir’s “lordship” overall remains in potency. However, the possession of the “spirit of his Son” (Gal 4:6) provides a proof that the “time set” has elapsed and a new time has begun. The “time” of the Spirit of God’s Son has arrived, which corresponds to the beginning of a new time and the end of the old time.<sup>37</sup> It is pertinent to understand that it is not time-as-a-whole that is changed, but the portion of time in relation to the adoptive requirement!

There are taxonomical mutations between Gal 4:2 and Gal 4:6: the “infant heir” is now replaced by children; “set time” is substituted for by the “Spirit”; and God or “Abba Father” takes over the role of father in-charge of time. One notices that the first level of correlation, when talking about a “slave” and an “heir”, plays out in the divine level first, before incorporating the human level. The legal conditions for adoption cede places to a divine vision of adoption that does not respect human legal conditions – the Spirit. For Paul, the Christ-event is the new parameter for judging identity, because it is by sharing the Spirit of the Son of God that we gain our identity.

Furthermore, the human condition to be changed or transformed is that of “slavery”. The condition for achieving it requires divine intervention. Apparently, human affairs and conditions, without a direct intervention by God, allow for slavery or “identityless” infants. Consequently, becoming “children of God” must be by adoption and as a “gift”<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Although “*stoicheion*” links Gal 4:3 to Gal 4:9, the implication of that vocabulary is only made evident in Gal 4:8-11. The role of Gal 4:4-5 provides the reason that overrides the concept of “*stoicheion*”.

<sup>35</sup> “*Klēronomos*” is the legal term for an heir, one who is not a biological child. See Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “The Irrevocable Will” in Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, *Keys to Galatians, Collected Essays*, 2788-5533; Marc Rastoin, *Tarse et Jérusalem: La double culture de l’Apôtre Paul en Galates 3:6-4:7*, (ABib 152), Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2003, pp. 180-182.

<sup>36</sup> See Murphy-O’Connor and Rastoin cited.

<sup>37</sup> “A new creation” (Gal 6:15; 2 Cor 5:17). See Moyer V. Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul’s Letters and Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002; T. Ryan Jackson, *New Creation in Paul’s Letters: A Study of the Historical and Social Setting of a Pauline Concept*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010.

<sup>38</sup> Two ways to understand “gift” here are legal and God’s magnanimity. In their discussions of the legality of adoption in antiquity, Rastoin and Murphy-O’Connor place the initiative in the adoptor. As for Barclay, the fact that “redemption” precedes adoption, the concept of gift is not far-fetched. In the words of Barclay, “The metaphor of adoption makes clear that ‘sonship’ can come about only through *receiving* a new status and a new identity, as granted by God”.

received from God. This is to say that God circumvents the conditions imposed by “*ta stoicheia*” and proposes an alternative route – the Spirit of his Son. It could be argued that all relating to “*ta stoicheia*” are contrary to God’s designs for human identity conferment or definition. The overthrow of the works of “*ta stoicheia*” is imperative for a new comprehension of time to become evident.

When “time” is construed from the vicissitudes and vagaries of galactic movements or “*ta stoicheia*”, the meaning of “fullness” (*plērōma*) becomes easier to discern (Gal 4:4). Since “the fullness” (to *plērōma*) is used partitively (“of time” – *tou chronou*) of “time” in the expression “to *plērōma tou chronou*”, “completeness/fullness” appears to be a fair translation for “to *plērōma*” in Gal 4:4. The idea of “to *plērōma tou chronou*”, from its context, suggests incompleteness and an anticipation for something to happen, from the verb *erchomai*, but lacks what it takes for its completeness. The complex sentence in which Paul places “to *plērōma tou chronou*”, as a dependent clause (*hote de ēlthen to plērōma tou chronou*), conditions its completion in God’s initiative. It is the action of God as having sent (*exapesteilen*) – an aorist verb that indicates a single action of the past – his Son that completes the meaning of “to *plērōma tou chronou*” and suggests the translation of “to *plērōma*” as “completeness”. Consequently, “arrival” (*erchomai*) makes imperative the comprehension of “time” as being in motion towards its (to *plērōma*) “completeness”.

The partitive importance of (to *plērōma*) becomes obvious in Gal 4:4, because of “redemption” (*exagorasē*) or the lacuna that “completes” time. The subjunctive use of “redemption” (*exagorasē* – “that he might redeem”)<sup>39</sup> demonstrates an aspect of time, not time in its entirety, that needed “completeness”; that is, “time” requires to be

given a new meaning. The attributive use of the “law” to correlate or describe the nature or the kind of “redemption” at stake, the redemption of those “under the law” addresses the specific part (partitive) of time, not the whole of “time”, affected by “to *plērōma tou chronou*” – the transformation of the role or meaning of the “law” of identity or identity definition: that was what was impacted by “to *plērōma tou chronou*”. Identity definition through the law was overtaken by the possession of the Spirit of the Son God as a new index of identity.

#### 4.5 Identity as Physical and Spiritual

The dual origins of the emissary from God (Gal 4:4) pave the way for a new identity, from the union of the human (woman) and the divine (God) in him; a new parameter for defining identity is thereby set forth as human (physical) and divine (spiritual). The time at which God sent his Son was the “completed time” – “to *plērōma tou chronou*”.<sup>40</sup> Prior to this time, the “law” defined human identity. From the “completed time”, when the law no longer defines human identity, the Spirit of God’s Son<sup>41</sup> changed identity requirement to adoption via the possession of the Spirit of the Son of God. This means that, just as Christ shares in the Divine/God as Son and in the woman as human, human beings too share in God, through the Spirit of God’s Son, and in human nature, through human birth. The order of nature or creation is respected (born of a woman) and the Divine order respected (the Spirit of the Son of God).

It follows that the “mission” of God, through his Son, is identity conferment via adoption in his Son. The reality of this adoption, because the Son of God has redeemed humanity puts in place a new mode or

See John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Power of Grace*, 58; *ibid*, “An Identity Received from God: The Theological Configuration of Paul’s Kinship Discourse,” *Early Christianity* 8, 2017, 354-372.

<sup>39</sup> My literal translation.

<sup>40</sup> “Therefore, the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian” (Gal 3:24-25).

<sup>41</sup> “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death” (Rm 8:2).

channel of adoption in the mission of the Son of God, who is divine and human. What Paul demonstrates in Gal 4:1-7 is God's universal adoption of human beings as his children, through his Son. If God's intent is this universal adoption, Paul makes the creation of the awareness of what God has done his missionary mantra – justification, baptism and Holy Spirit! Identity awareness requires the guidance of the Spirit of the Son of God over that which is natural or physical.

The role of a “woman”, the implication of nature in identity definition, extends the meaning of (*phusis*) nature (*hēmeis phusei Joudaioi* [Gal 2:15]) to humanity, without reservation. Also, the necessity for “redemption” from sin, levels out any difference (*ouk ex ethnōn hamartōloi* [Gal 2:15]) among peoples. God identifies with human beings through his Spirit in them, in addition to their physical component. The arguments of Gal 4:1-7 introduces a divine or spiritual element into the physically stratified human beings of Gal 3:28. Adoption and God's Fatherhood of humanity, through justification, baptism, and the gift of his Son's Spirit, trumps any humanly contrived ethnic definition of human beings and favors identity over ethnicity, sameness over nurtured differences. If the twentieth century society still perpetuates segregation among human beings, it simply means that the ethics of identity has not been sufficiently practiced. Let us explore this indispensable ethics as an integral element of identity in Galatians.

#### 4.6 General Implication

The foundation of religious missionary life is biblically based. The theories of wokeness, cosmopolitanism, secularism, etc. do not condition the approach of religious missionary life's evangelization endeavours. On the contrary, missionary enterprises bring to bear the good news of God's intervention in human history to bring about reconciliatory salvation among all the divides that put human beings at loggerhead – status, race, gender, etc.

Galatians synthesizes the reconciliation of humanity – Jews, Greeks, slave, free persons, male and female – achieved at the expense of the blood of Christ and the reconciled identity as God's children that ensures from it. The justice quest of humanity, under the auspices of #metoo, calls for the primordial justice of God to intervene and rid the world of injustices. The Holy Spirit invites religious missionaries today to engage with emerging justice issues for a better world.

#### Conclusion

“The ‘Visit of God’ (Ex 3:16) and Paul's Missiology as Identity formation in Galatians” provide twofold recipes for “The Changing Landscape of Religious Missionary Life”: firstly, it names our age the “age of justice” to provide a cognitive context for missionary engagement with the world of today. The implication of this is that it proposes that God and Jesus Christ are champions of the “age of justice” because they have left us a legacy of interventions or visits of salvation to imitate in our “age of justice”. Secondly, religious missionary life today should engage “wokeness” and all the variants of freedom in vogue from the Christian identity that Paul describes for it to be Christian and worthy of promotion by religious missionaries.

The consciousness of injustice must characterise religious missionary's relations with the world to discover new areas of intervention besides those already outlined in the Bible. The plights of the aged, migrants, children and the evangelization of social media are instances needing creative intervention to bring about the visit of God by missionaries. As the list of the zones of intervention enlarges, trust in the Lord of the harvest will lead missionaries through the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit to remain relevant to every age up until the end of time!