

A Comparative Study of Biblical *Shalom* and Yoruba Concept of *Àlàáfìà* and their Implication for Wellbeing in Contemporary Life

Wole Adegbile
Department of Theological Studies
Africa International University
P.O. Box 24686, 00502
Nairobi, Kenya
Email: walewoleadegbile@yahoo.com

Abstract

This is a comparative study of the biblical concept of shalom and the Yoruba concept of àlàáfìà, learning from both Jewish and Yoruba cultures in order to draw particular principles for human wellbeing. The overarching question that guided the study is: What are the biblically grounded principles and practices of the Yoruba concept of wellbeing which can be applied in the search for development in contemporary times? The Yoruba concept of wellbeing in this study is gleaned from their proverbs and cultural practices, which are gathered from library resources. In their understanding of wellbeing, Yoruba people share a similar understanding with the Jewish concept of shalom. For Yoruba people, wellbeing is all about cosmic and social order which is encapsulated in the Yoruba word àlàáfìà. Likewise, in the Jewish context, the pursuit of wellbeing is about shalom. The Yoruba àlàáfìà and Jewish shalom both mean peace. In the two cultural contexts, wellbeing cannot be achieved without the deliberate pursuit of peace, which is precipitated on both vertical and horizontal levels of cordial relationships. The implications of the concepts of shalom and àlàáfìà for the search of development in the contemporary time are that: (1) Wellbeing is not measured by how much human beings possess, and therefore the pursuit of development should not be based on increasing material possessions; (2) Physical prosperity is enhanced and sustained by strong moral and ethical values; therefore, the pursuit of development in contemporary times should aim at placing importance on right living; (3) Sin, being the fundamental cause of lack of wellbeing, is better dealt with from the spiritual point of view rather than the philosophical point of view.

Keywords: wellbeing, development, shalom, àlàáfìà, Yoruba culture, sin, morality

Introduction

In this study, we seek to communicate a biblical truth from the Yoruba perspective. It is a comparative study that elicits the biblically grounded principles and practices of the Yoruba concept of wellbeing, drawing critical implications for the search of development in contemporary times. The Yoruba understanding of wellbeing is embedded in their concept of *àlàáfìà*, just like the biblical understanding of wellbeing is rooted in the concept of *shalom*.

When development experts talk about the wellbeing of a nation, it is usually rated in terms of socio-economic factors such as national GDP and per capita income. But what do both biblical and Yoruba perspectives say about wellbeing? Although there is a crucial place for socio-economic development as people pursue wellbeing; nevertheless, socio-spiritual development takes a more prominent position. This is one peculiar fact held in the Yoruba perspective of wellbeing, and affirmed by the Holy Scripture. In our comparative study of

shalom and *àlàáfíà*, we explore the definition of each concept and how it can be ensured. In this study, we have followed Robert Chambers' footsteps, who defined development as wellbeing (Myers 2011, 164 – 167). Thus, the terms “development” and “wellbeing” are mostly used interchangeably in this article.

The Biblical Concept of *Shalom*

In this section, we seek to explore the meaning of *shalom* and how humans can attain it according to God's plan. The concept is discussed both from OT and NT perspectives. We establish the supreme place of peace in human endeavours by examining God's plan for humanity, and the role of the biblical law in ensuring peace.

The Biblical Meaning of *Shalom*

Shalom is the Hebrew word translated as "peace". Its NT equivalent from the Greek is *eirene*. In this study, we shall use *shalom*, applying it to both OT and NT concepts of peace. This study holds that peace is the ultimate desire of God for humans, and it is also humans' peculiar desire for themselves. Israel's prayers, wishes and quest for peace are evident throughout the Bible, both in the OT and NT. The psalmist admonished his fellow Israelites to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. People wished to live and die in peace. For instance, Abraham had a good feeling when God promised that He would allow him to die in peace (Genesis 15:15). The priestly prayer for the people is also a prayer of peace.

The LORD bless you and keep you;
The LORD make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
The LORD lift His countenance upon you,
And give you peace. (Numbers 6:24 – 26, NKJV)

With the coming of Jesus Christ, the emphasis on peace as an essential element to human life is further reinforced. He instructed His disciples, on the evangelistic journey, to give them the blessing (greetings) of peace (Matthew 10:13; Luke 10:5-6). More essentially, when He was leaving the earth, one of His final words to the disciples is: “Peace I leave with you; My peace to you; not as the world gives do I give to you” (John 14:27, NAS). Likewise, in the apostolic teaching, the gospel of Jesus Christ is a message that brings peace to humanity (Acts 10:36; Roman 5:1). Philippians 4:7 describes the nature of the peace of God as an experience that is beyond human understanding.

What then, is the meaning of peace in the biblical context? In his explanation of the biblical concept of *shalom*, Yoder notes that the Bible attributes three shades of meaning to the word. This first meaning of *shalom* is physical, having to do with people's physical wellbeing, such as health and safety from all harm. Yoder notes that "Shalom is marked by the presence of physical wellbeing and absence of physical threats like war, disease, and famine" (2017, 13).

The second meaning of *shalom* is a social implication, which "can refer to positive good relationship between nations or groups as in 1 Kings 5:12 or Judges 4:17" (ibid.). The third meaning of *shalom* is morally implied, which "can be used as the opposite of deceit, as in Psalm 34:14, where the psalmist exhorts the seeking and pursuing of *shalom*, which is the opposite of speaking evil and lies" (ibid., 15ff). Considering the three shades of meaning of *shalom*, we can conclude that *shalom* entails wellbeing in all areas of human life. As such, it can be defined as the holistic wellbeing in both individual and communal human lives.

God's Plan for *Shalom* and how Humans can Attain it

It is clearly indicated in the Bible that God possesses a strong desire to bless His people. He sets out to act in favour of humanity. He blesses Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1:22, 28; 5:2). He blesses Noah and his family after the flood (Genesis 9:1). He promised to bless Abraham (Genesis 22:17). He promised to bless the nation of Israel (Deuteronomy 28). He instructed the Israelites' priests specifically on how to bless His people (Numbers 6:24-26).

God's blessing is "a divine utterance expressing [His] will to confer future favour" (Hastings n.d., 307). The blessing of God, when received by humanity, offers a solution to their predicaments. "When God brings [His blessing] it means he will destroy all that is evil and wrong in the world and restore all that is right and good, and that leads to human flourishing. [Blessing] means all things are made new" (Shaw 2014, 100). Therefore, the essence of God's blessing is so that humans can live a life that is free of discomfort and flourish in all areas.

Although God was set to bless humanity, nevertheless, their story is full of acts that make them forfeit the blessing of God. In the Garden of Eden, all was well until Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Their disobedience was followed by their ejection out of Eden. Because of their disobedience, the relationship between God and humanity was thwarted. Meanwhile, God's original intention for humanity, which is of holistic wellbeing, is depicted in the life in Eden: a life with all provision without toil, life of a cordial relationship with God in the cool of the day, life in a well-watered garden. Adam and Eve sinned, their sin provoked divine curses, and they forfeited the favourable life in Eden.

The story that followed is the story of Cain killing his brother Abel, and then the waywardness of the descendants of Cain, up to the time of Noah when the sin of humanity seemed to have reached its apex.

"Now the Lord observed the extent of the people's wickedness, and he saw that all their thoughts were consistently and totally evil. So the Lord was sorry that he had ever made them. It broke his heart" (Genesis 6:5, 6, NLT).

The intensity of human wickedness in Noah's time made God destroy everything with water. Noah found favour with God, his family was rescued together with selected animals, and there was a new beginning. Again, in Genesis 11, there was human rebellion against God in their attempt to build the tower of Babel. The narrative of the wickedness of humanity did not stop until Revelation. Jeremiah describes the heart of a typical human being: it is desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9).

Nevertheless, God is still at work restoring humanity to the original state of Edenic blessing. God wants to bless humanity, and He wants them to enjoy His blessings by all means. This is borne out of His care and love for them (John 3:16a). God's care for the sinful state of the human race is evident in His effort to restore them to Him. Because of this, He initiated the story of redemption, pivoted in the story of the call of Abraham (Genesis 12). Through Abraham, God chose a human race for Himself through which He will execute His redemption plan. He chose Israel (Wright 2006, 194).

As a chosen nation, God gave Israel His commandments, which make them a special people (Exodus 19). It "was a nation founded in fulfilment of God's promise on the twin pillars of *divine rescue* and *divine law*" (Hughes 2008, 45). God delivered the people and set them apart as a peculiar nation governed by His law. The law given by God to the Israelites has a direct relationship with His blessing. The Israelites enjoyed the fulfilment of God's blessing when they obeyed the divine law.

For instance, when they were at the verge of entering the Promised Land, He reaffirmed His promise to bless them. However, the condition for tapping into the fulfilment of the promised blessing is obedience to the commands He has given them (Deuteronomy 28). If these commandments are obeyed, the people of God will enjoy His blessings. Nevertheless, the blessing of God has to do with *shalom*.

Whenever God blesses His people, His intention for blessing them and the end result of His blessing is so that they can experience wellbeing. Therefore, the ultimate end of God's blessing is so that people will experience *shalom*. As such, God's blessings and *shalom* go hand in hand, for His blessing to His people is a blessing of *shalom* (cf. Numbers 6:24 – 26; Jeremiah 29:11). Thus, we can draw a strong connection when we talk about the divine law, blessing and *shalom*. This connection is well expressed in Cafferky's words:

The principles contained in the Decalogue have a direct relationship to the realisation of promised blessings of Shalom as experienced in the community as a whole. The Commandments are not merely a random, arbitrary list of ethical "dos and don'ts" for individuals. They form the prescription for how the community as a whole can experience Shalom through individual and collective behaviours.
(2014, 1)

Obedience to the Decalogue, the divine law, plunges the people into the blessing of God, which is God's expression of His desire to facilitate their total wellbeing, i.e. *shalom*. Hence *shalom* is God's blessing to His people which can be realised by obedience to the divine law. Meanwhile, the implication of people's obedience to God's law is that they maintain good conduct in their relationships with one another and with God.

God's commandment, with a call for obedience on the part of the Israelites, is a relational decree – a relationship with Him which results in good relationships with others. His commandment to the Israelites regulates “a social order that is to be maintained through a right relation to God... The vertical axis of God/people covenant facilitates a horizontal axis in which the people bind themselves legally and morally to one another” (Hoelzl & Ward 2006, 7).

The commandment has both spiritual and socio-physical dimensions, as reflected in Jesus' summary of the Law:

Jesus replied, “The most important commandment is this: ‘Hear O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind, and all your strength.’ The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’” (Mark 12:29 – 31, NLT)

The spiritual dimension to God's commandment entails a relationship with God, who portrays Himself as a jealous God “who will not share your affection with other gods!” He will punish those who choose not to love Him but serve other gods by punishing their children up to the third and fourth generations (Exodus 20:5, NLT). The spiritual dimension of God's law is simply to love Him with much commitment that is not shared with anything else. The biblical concept of love for God implies faithfully following Him and keeping His commandments (Ephesians 6:24; James 1:12; Exodus 20:6).

The socio-physical dimension of God's commandment entails that God expects people to relate with one another having the wellbeing of others in mind. When people live up to the socio-physical dimension of God's commandment, this is what happens: people are so mindful of one another that they do not do what will hurt someone around them (Proverbs 3:29). The socio-physical dimension of God's law has to do with daily ethics, making decisions and taking actions that are considered right before God. Most of our daily actions

and activities have some implications on the lives of other people. Therefore, God has given necessary guiding principles that will make life better, not just for us as individuals but also for other people around us. The socio-physical dimension of God's law is, therefore, directed towards our daily lifestyles.

For instance, the Scripture commands that “Let every person be subject to the government authority” (Romans 13:1). What if road users choose to violate highway laws and overload their vehicles? What will happen if the taxpayers choose to avoid tax payments? What if people choose to violate town planning order and build houses wherever they please?

All of these have negative implications on some other individuals. Overloading would spoil the road and create potholes that may claim the life of an individual. Evading taxes reduces government financial pool from which money could be taken to provide amenities. Building houses anywhere may imply that road access to someone else's house would be blocked.

The Ten Commandments spell out critical moral principles. What if people begin to steal one another's properties? What will happen if people begin to kill other people's family members? Again, these also rob some people of their wellbeing. The socio-physical dimension of God's law is, therefore, responsible relationships with fellow humans and nature around us for the sake of the wellbeing of all.

The dimensions of God's commandment are ordered both vertically and horizontally. Adhering to the two dimensions of the commandment is the way of *shalom*. Meanwhile, the vertical axis facilitates the horizontal one. No one can genuinely maintain the horizontal axis without giving heed to the vertical one. With a relationship with God, people will be enabled by His divine power to do the right thing, as required by Him. This is God's promise for His people in the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31 – 34). He wants to help them live a life that pleases Him so that they can experience *shalom*.

The ultimate desire of God for His people is that they experience *shalom*. He would not have had this intention for His people had He not found peace to be supreme. For the Israelites, peace is all they desired from God. For God, peace is all He desired to give them. Therefore, *shalom* is the fundamental human need in pursuit of wellbeing. In fact, *shalom* is wellbeing. It can be ensured by obedience to the law, out of reverence to God. As a matter of fact, God has enabled His people to live a life of obedience to them through life in Christ Jesus.

The Yoruba Concept of Àlàáfíà

In this section, we seek to explore the Yoruba meaning of *àlàáfíà* and how it can be ensured in the society. We based our definition of *àlàáfíà* on the analysis of the proverb *àlàáfíà l'ójù* (Peace is supreme), from which we establish the supremacy of peace in all human pursuits. In our discussion on how *àlàáfíà* is ensured among the Yoruba, we dwell on two proverbs: (1) *Àìmo iwàáà hù ni kò jé k'áyé gún* (Cosmic chaos is as a result of human failure in the areas of good character); and (2) *E jé ká seé bí wón tii seé, k'ólè bààrí, bíi seérí* (Let us do it the way it is usually done, so that we may have the usual result).

The Meaning of Àlàáfíà in the Yoruba Community

A well-lived life among Yoruba implies many things, but first, it begins with having *emí* (breath of life) within oneself, and therefore the proverb, “*B'émì báwà, ise kótán*” (If there is still breath, there is no limit to actions or achievements). Meanwhile, a life merely characterised by breath is not admired by anyone. Beyond the breath that keeps human beings

alive, an admirable life is marked by many desired factors. Therefore, “when the Yoruba think or speak of life with reference to a person or society the meanings they attach to it embrace good health, prosperity, longevity, peace, and happiness” (Awolalu 1970, 21).

However, of all the elements of quality life and wellbeing, *àlàáfíà* (peace) is foundational. Next to *emí*, *àlàáfíà* is the prerequisite for all other human pursuits and achievements. When human beings have a mixture of *emí* and *àlàáfíà*, Yoruba believe they have everything. Nevertheless, once human beings have *emí* in them, the primary thing they should pursue with that *emí* is *àlàáfíà*. This belief is encapsulated in the saying, *àlàáfíà l’òjù* (peace is supreme), to which the Yoruba firmly hold in all human pursuits.

Àlàáfíà in the Yoruba language is a word to represent the absence of conflict or sickness. A community or an individual lives in *àlàáfíà* when there is little or nothing to worry about. It is also the same word used for health. Talking about *àlàáfíà* in terms of the absence of illness, Yoruba use it as a perfect synonym of the word *ìlera* (health). The use of *àlàáfíà* in terms of the absence of illness is not limited to physical health; it also refers to emotional and psychological wellness. In this sense, *àlàáfíà* is used interchangeably with the phrase *ibale okan* (peace of mind), which is experienced when a human soul is satisfied with elements of life such as prosperity, longevity and happiness.

To stress the significant place of peace (regarded in terms of health) in human life, the common parlance goes: *ìlera* (i.e. *àlàáfíà*) *l’ògùn orò* (peace is the potent charm for wealth). This proverb has a similar implication with the English saying, “Health is wealth”. As such, for Yoruba people, *àlàáfíà* is the foundation for human prosperity.

Talking about *àlàáfíà* in terms of the absence of conflict or chaos, it has its connotation in the words, *isòkan* and *irépò* (Ekanola 2017). The word *isòkan*, when translated, can be expressed as “producing oneness” (*ise-okan*); whereas *irépò* can be translated as being friends with one another. However, while *isòkan* can be simply translated as harmony, *irépò* can be translated as unity. Therefore, in this sense, there is *àlàáfíà* among people when relationships are cordial, and all people are united in purpose.

Although *àlàáfíà* is related to harmony and unity among human beings; nevertheless, it has an implication on the physical and spiritual environments. *Àlàáfíà* also implies cosmic order, which entails that nature around, seen and unseen, must exist and operate in manners that do not raise any alarm or worries. This is depicted in the saying, *Kí eku máa ké bíi eku, kí eye máa ké bíi eye* (That the rat squeaks like a rat, and that the bird chirps like a bird), which indicates the necessity of harmonious life in the natural environment.

The Yoruba perception of *àlàáfíà* as the absence of conflict or chaos also entails a harmonious relationship with the spiritual environment. The Yoruba environment, like that of most African communities, is made up of the ancestors, deities and *Olódùmarè* (the Supreme Being). Meanwhile, *Olódùmarè* is at the centre of the spiritual environment. A relationship with Him can be maintained through the intermediary role of the deities and ancestors. This, therefore, entails that the human community maintains a relationship with the three entities of the spiritual environment. When this happens, the environment enjoys *àlàáfíà*.

The summary of Yoruba understanding of *àlàáfíà* is that individuals and the community live in physical and psychological health, maintaining a cordial relationship with one another, the environment and God. It is defined by the availability of all that brings satisfaction to the human soul and existence. Awolalu is therefore correct when he submits that *àlàáfíà* “is the sum total of all that is good that man may desire – an undisturbed harmonious life” (1970, 21). Thus, we conclude in this study that *àlàáfíà*, as conceived by the

Yoruba, is all about holistic human wellbeing. One would therefore be correct to use the word “peace” as a synonym for “wellbeing” in their view of life.

For Yoruba people, peace is wellbeing. It is practically defined by elements such as joy, happiness, increase in prosperity and longevity. The idea of peace as wellbeing in Yoruba traditional thoughts does not imply that there is no longing for material prosperity at all. However, so basic is the Yoruba perception of material wealth that it is believed that “*Bí ebi bá kúrò nínú isé, isé bùsè*” (If hunger is out of one’s struggle against poverty, poverty is already conquered).

How to Ensure Àlàáfíà in the Yoruba Community

As we seek to discuss Yoruba means of ensuring *àlàáfíà* in the society, we shall examine two sayings: (1) *Àìmo iwàá hù ni kò jé k’áyé gún* (Olanipekun 2017, 225); (2) *E jé ká seé bí wón tii seé, k’ólè baàrí, bíi seé* (Adelowo 1990, 165).

Àìmo iwàá hù ni kò jé k’áyé gún is a saying that originated from *odù Ifá* (literary corpus used in the worship of *Ifá*, Yoruba deity of wisdom). It can be loosely translated as “Cosmic chaos is as a result of human failure in the areas of good character”. This gives us a hint that good character is one prominent factor in ensuring *àlàáfíà*, in Yorubaland. This is because, as the saying indicates, when people lack good character, the society will run into chaos.

A cultural concept in the Yoruba moral system that stresses the importance of good behaviour is *omolúàbí*. The concept has to do with people becoming paragons of all good characters. An *omolúàbí* in the Yoruba society is the ideal human, who observes all moral laws and gives respect to the ancestors, deity and *Olódùmarè* (Adedayo 2018). He shuns all *iwà láabi* (evil characters) and embraces *iwà rere* (good character). When the society has all or many of its members as *omolúàbí*, *àlàáfíà* will be inevitable, as Olanipekun rightly notes that, “a well-ordered society is possible with everyone imbibing *omolúàbí*’s attributes” (2017, 228).

For Yoruba to ensure *àlàáfíà* in the society, the elders advocate that *E jé ká seé bí wón tii seé, k’ólè baàrí, bíi seé* (Let us do it the way it is usually done, so that we may have the usual result). This saying implies that cosmic and social order are the result of doing the right thing. Everyone must do the right thing by staying committed to *àsà àti ise* (culture and custom); they must do the right thing by not violating the *èwò* (taboos) of the community.

Àsà àti ise are strongly believed to be handed down by the ancestors. This is why it is said that *àsà àti ise àwon baba wa* (culture and custom of the ancestors). *Àsà àti ise* are the laid down rules as to what things must be done and how they must be done. It is also believed that taboos are given by the deities (Adelowo 1990, 163). They are the set of things that must not be done. This is why it is said that *èwò ni, akí í seé* (it is a taboo; therefore, it is forbidden).

The *àsà àti ise* and *èwò* in Yorubaland are believed to be of divine origin. This is because they originated from the ancestors who, according to tradition, had a rapport with *Olódùmarè* in their days. As such, *àsà àti ise* and *èwò* are handed to them by the *Olódùmarè* who intends that people do things in the right way so that the result will be as it has always been for the ancestors in their lifetime.

According to Adelowo, the saying *E jé ká seé bí wón tii seé, k’ólè baàrí, bíi seé* (Let us do it the way it is usually done, so that we may have the usual result) is often used in relation to traditional rituals. This stresses the need for rituals to be done in the proper way, at the correct time, and by the right people (1990, 165). Hence, any act of negligence in

traditional rituals to the gods and *Olódùmarè* will result in chaos in the society. Meanwhile, the reason for traditional rituals is so that people atone for their sins before the gods, and ask for their protection and blessings.

From our examination of the two proverbs above, it becomes clear that wrongdoing is a critical factor that disrupts *àlàáfia* in society. In general terms, all wrongdoings are regarded as sin. Hence, we can submit that sin is the enemy of *àlàáfia* of an individual or society. In the Yoruba's mode of dealing with sin, it is believed that every individual has their roles to play. Likewise, the community and its head have their roles to play. For the individual role in dealing with sin, it is held that, *Owó ara eni làáfí tún iwà ara eni se* (An individual person builds his/her character with his/her own hands). The communal role in dealing with sin entails that members of the community hold their neighbours accountable for their actions.

For instance, it is said that *Bí ará ilé eni bá ñ je aáyán, e kilò fun* (Sound a note of warning to a neighbour who eats cockroaches). It is believed among the Yoruba that whoever eats a cockroach will soon suffer from severe stomach ache. When one's neighbour suffers from stomach ache, his screams in the night will prevent neighbours from having a peaceful night's rest. This is why it is a neighbour's responsibility to sound a note of warning to whomever he/she finds eating a cockroach. The proverb is also an indication that when someone violates *àsà àti ìse* and *èèwò* in the community, not only the defiant will suffer from the consequence of the violation, the entire community will.

Àlàáfia is the foremost thing in human existence. It is violated by sinful behaviours; when people fail to do things the way they ought to be done, in the ways of the ancestors handed down to them by the Supreme Being. Ensuring *àlàáfia* in society is, therefore, a matter of upholding moral and ethical standards. Meanwhile, upholding moral and ethical standards is a spiritual duty in that it is an act of obedience to divine instruction. Thus ensuring *àlàáfia* is a two-dimensional pursuit – spiritual and socio-physical.

The Implication of the Yoruba Concept of *Àlàáfia* and the Biblical Concept of *Shalom* for Wellbeing and Development in Contemporary Life

1. Wellbeing is not measured by how much human beings possess

Both concepts of *shalom* and *àlàáfia* stress that peace is the fundamental factor with which human wellbeing should be measured. Hence, according to both concepts, human wellbeing is not primarily measured by material possessions. In their perception about human wellbeing the Yoruba, therefore, share a profound similarity with the Scripture, compared to the development orientation that is founded in Eurocentric cultures.

Eurocentric culture, in which capitalist ideology and protestant ethic are rooted, places much premium on capital accumulation, entrepreneurial attitudes, and material wealth *inter alia*.... While these attributes are not completely absent, they are certainly not at the top of the priority ladder, in the context of traditional Africa. (Njoh 2006, 2)

Therefore, like the biblical *shalom*, the Yoruba concept of *àlàáfia* speaks against materialism. It speaks to the greed of capitalism that teaches people to measure human wellbeing and development by skyscrapers, giant castles, sophisticated automobiles, massive economic power, and so on. It speaks to the human tendency for undue competition and greed for power that makes humanity to move helter-skelter around the world in search of fortunes. Healthy competition is good in that it brings about remarkable achievements in business, technology, science, and so forth, but it should not be at the expense of the more important thing – *shalom/àlàáfia* in the world.

The Scripture indicates that nothing else can satisfy the human soul like the peace given by God (Psalm 4:7). Things that give true happiness and joy are immaterial. Against the romance of materialism, deepened by African exposure to western culture, we all must be reminded that *àlàáfíà l'ójù* (peace is supreme). We all must know as a community of people in Africa that rather than pursuing material things, we should pursue peace with God because “For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world [with all its pleasure], and forfeits his soul?” (Mark 8:36, Amplified). We all must remind ourselves, “A dry crust eaten in peace is better than steak every day along with argument and strife” (Proverbs 17:1, Living Bible).

2. *Physical prosperity is enhanced and sustained by strong moral and ethical values.*

Development practitioners of all orientations agree that “what is morally good and right is bound to the flourishing of human persons and human communities” (Schweiker 2003, 359). According to Mangalwadi, corruption costs the world about 1 trillion dollars every year (2017). In Nigeria as of 2014, an average Nigerian was at a loss of about 1000 dollars every year, due to corruption. If the situation is not salvaged, the loss will rise to 2000 dollars in 2030. The country loses billions of dollars to corruption every year (PricewaterhouseCoopers n.d). Therefore, in this way, applying the principle of *shalom/àlàáfia*, which advocates for moral and ethical living, leads to the economic development of a nation.

3. *Sin, being the fundamental cause of lack of wellbeing, is better dealt with from the spiritual point of view rather than the philosophical point of view*

The Yoruba recognise the need to seek higher powers in matters of sin. They seek atonement from God. In fact, their moral codes have a divine implication, in that it is believed that they are handed down by *Olódùmarè* through the ancestors.

As we have noted earlier in this study, sin is the ultimate inhibitor of wellbeing. However, God has made a provision for victory over sin through the work of redemption. Turning back to God is the only way through which we can daily live out the principles that ensure true wellbeing and development.

Therefore, it is not enough for an individual to guard his/her behaviour through personal effort; it is also important that he/she taps into God's provision to help humanity do His will. Speaking about the Yoruba concept of *omolúàbí* (person of good character) from the Bible, the Bible holds that no one can attain the height of *omolúàbí* by personal effort alone. The way to become an *omolúàbí* before God is through the righteousness of Christ that is imputed to us (2 Corinthians 5:21). Other than that, the demonstration of *ìwà rere* (good behaviour/character) that comes through personal effort, at its best, before God, it is still like a filthy rag (Isaiah 64:6; Roman 3:10).

Although not totally in agreement with the biblical teaching, the basis for Yoruba appeal for good character is not as far away from the Scripture, compared to that of contemporary development theories. While contemporary development theories also acknowledge the place of *omolúàbí* in ensuring wellbeing of humanity, their appeal for morality is based on humanistic ethics (d'Orville 2015) that is void of spirituality.

Yoruba's appeal for good character is not just based on “humanism” but also divinity. In the biblical term, divinity only entails the Trinitarian God – *Olódùmarè* minus ancestors and deities. This is where Yoruba religious thought misses the point by placing traditional deities and ancestors in the same realm with God. Contemporary development theories miss the point by leaving God totally out of the scene.

In the biblical order, God is the reason why humans should not do evil since all evils are done against Him (Genesis 20:6; 29:9; Leviticus 5:19; 6:2; Psalms 52:4). The way to be right with Him is through the imputed righteousness of Christ. In fact, this can be appropriated when one gives him/herself to spiritual activities (walking in the Spirit, cf. Romans 8:4; Galatians 5:16).

The manifestation of *iwà rere*, which makes a person an *omolúàbí*, otherwise known as kingdom lifestyle as taught by Christ, must be the primary focus in the pursuit of wellbeing. They can truly be manifested through a spiritual walk with God; hence, the need for biblical restoration of Yoruba spirituality, putting God alone at the centre of morality and all human activities.

Conclusion

The biblically grounded Yoruba principles and practices about wellbeing are rooted in the concept of *àlàáfia*. This concept is similar to the biblical idea of *shalom*, which holds that material things do not measure human wellbeing. The Yoruba concept of *àlàáfia*, in line with the Scripture, teaches that physical prosperity is enhanced and sustained by strong moral and ethical values. It is also in consonance with the biblical truth that sin, being the fundamental cause of lack of wellbeing, is better dealt with from the spiritual point of view rather than the philosophical point of view.

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