



## **Conclusion**

Through the examination of religio-cultural practices of bonesetting and healing in Ini Local Government Area (LGA) of Ibibioland, it becomes evident that these practices are deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of the community and are influenced by religious beliefs, traditional customs, and social norms. The practice of bonesetting and healing has a long-standing history in Ibibioland, with roots tracing back to traditional healing methods passed down through generations. These practices have evolved over time, adapting to changes in societal dynamics, healthcare systems, and religious influences. More so, religious beliefs play a significant role in bonesetting and healing practices, with many practitioners incorporating spiritual rituals, prayers, and invocations into their treatment methods. The belief in divine intervention and supernatural forces shapes the way bonesetters and healers approach diagnosis, treatment, and patient care. Thus, Bonesetters and healers fulfill important social roles and responsibilities within the community, serving as healthcare providers, spiritual advisors, and cultural custodians. They play a crucial role in addressing the healthcare needs of the population, particularly in rural areas where access to modern medical facilities may be limited.

Despite the successes of bonesetting and healing practices in Ini LGA, the practitioners face challenges such as stigma, regulation, and competition from modern healthcare systems. In conclusion, the religio-cultural practices of bonesetting and healing in Ini LGA reflect the rich cultural heritage, religious beliefs, and social dynamics of Ibibioland. By recognizing the importance of traditional knowledge, fostering collaboration between traditional healers and modern healthcare providers, and addressing challenges through supportive policies and interventions, the community can ensure the preservation and continued efficacy of these valuable healing traditions for generations to come.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- x. Collaboration and communication should be encouraged between traditional bonesetters and modern healthcare practitioners to ensure comprehensive healthcare delivery.
- xi. Documentation and preservation of traditional bonesetting and healing practices should be advocated in order to maintain cultural heritage and ensure their sustainability.
- xii. General regulations and standards in bonesetting and healing practices should be implemented to ensure the safety and efficacy of traditional healing practices, including training and certification for bonesetters.
- xiii. Community education and awareness programs within the community should be provided in order to promote understanding of traditional healing practices and their potential benefits and risks.
- xiv. Traditional clinical centres for fracture treatment, and acquisition of bonesetting and healing skills should be established at least in each LGA in Ibibioland in order to enhance accessibility.
- xv. Further research into the efficacy and safety of traditional bonesetting techniques, including clinical trials and comparative studies with modern medical interventions should be encouraged and supported.

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<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Place of Interview</b>	<b>Date</b>
M. Ekpenyong	45	Teacher	Ikpe Ikot Nkon, Ini LGA	January 23, 2024
O. Essien,	61	Bonesetter & Farmer	Ikot Ukpomg, Ini LGA	January 14, 2024
M. Victor	55	Civil Servant	Ikot Udo Asan, Ini LGA	January 25, 2024
G. Udoh,	67	Bonesetter & Trader	Nkana Ikpe, Ini LGA	February 13, 2024
D. Mfonido	59	Medical Doctor	Ikot Ikpe, Ini LGA	January 23, 2024
C. Okokon	75	Community Chief / Farmer	Nkana Ikpe, Ini LGA	February 12, 2024
F. Edet	48	Bonesetter	Odoro Ikpe, Ini LGA	February 5, 2014
E. Eyo	54	Bonesetter	Ikot Ikpe, Ini LGA	January 23, 2025



## Biblical Restitution and the Nigerian Church: Some Lessons

Michael Oladele Olorunnimbe Ph.D.

Department of Religions,

University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

[olorunnimbe.mo@unilorin.edu.ng](mailto:olorunnimbe.mo@unilorin.edu.ng), 08059730654 and 08189088225

Olumuyiwa Aduralere Ajetomobi

Department of Religions,

University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

[ajetomobi.oa@unilorin.edu.ng](mailto:ajetomobi.oa@unilorin.edu.ng), 08067409917

Sunday Elijah Iyanda

Department of Religions,

University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

[elijah@unilorin.edu.ng](mailto:elijah@unilorin.edu.ng), 08034871397

### Abstract

*Restitution has been one of the controversial issues among the Nigerian Christian Church. Many Christians accept it; many do not accept it, while many are indifferent about it. To those who accept and practice it, they believe that, if one claims to have repented from his past sinful ways and failed to retribute for his past errors, he has not repented from his sins. The antagonists believe that, once you are forgiven by GOD, restitution is needless since we cannot retribute in all cases. The third group however, does not oppose nor support it. This has created and still creates misunderstandings among various Christian's denominations today. This paper aims to examine biblical restitution and the Nigerian Church. Some lessons. Its objectives are; to shed light on what restitution was practiced in the biblical days; the types of restitution. How it is being practiced now; and what some selected Churches teach on restitution. The methods adopted in this paper were comparative and empirical. The findings of this paper show that: restitution had been practiced in the Middle East before the formation of the Israelite nation and religion, restitution was introduced to the Israelites when the*



*Mosaic laws were given to them; it was also practiced in the New Testament days and being passed down as doctrine; there are two types of restitution namely, voluntary and involuntary; and restitution as a doctrine has been subjected to various debate in various Churches in Nigeria. The paper concluded that restitution. If it is observed honestly and sincerely, can create avenues for proper reconciliation; but that it can also create problems if not properly and adequately handled as we cannot retribute for all our misgivings. Restitution, instead of causing division among Christian Churches should be used to unite and reconcile the victims and their assailants, as was done by Paul while returning Onesimus to Philemon.*

**Keywords: Biblical, Restitution, Nigeria, Church and Lessons**

## **Introduction**

One of the teething issues or doctrinal controversies in Christianity today is restitution. Some Christian Churches see restitution as a compulsory step or act for every convert, as they claim that restitution is important to show one's total and absolute repentance from one's sinful ways. However, restitution is given different meanings by different denominations. While some denominations believe that the only restitution one has to do is the one done by Abraham when he sent Hagar and Ishmael away from his household. Some people believe that sending Hagar away was not act of restitution, as the word restitution means restoring a thing to its proper or original state, or compensation. This school of thought only agrees that the only person who made restitution was Zacchaeus.

Some Pentecostal and Evangelical denominations, preach and teach restitution, which had its side effects on family setting, as they lay emphasis on the act of Abraham against Hagar, and one may not be surprised that a polygamist would, send his later wives away from his house under the guise of trying to correct his past error without making proper arrangement for the upkeep of the women and their children. Whereas in the Bible, the commandment on restitution was only applicable to the case of Zacchaeus, a tax-collector, who after hearing the sermon of Jesus, felt he had wronged some people by defrauding and cheating them; thus enriching himself at the expense of his people; voluntarily he decided to make restitution.

Restitution has been misunderstood nowadays, in a situation when a man decides to send his 'younger wives' away, claiming to retribute for his past mistakes of being a polygamist. Most of these women



were sent away with their children without adequate consideration and provisions for these children and their mothers. A case study was a kid robber arrested, who said that:

My mother was the second and junior wife of my father, my father was a polygamist, he later changed to Christian, and he sent my mother out of his house with five of us. And I am the first born of my mother; I am seventeen years old. My mother could not bear the burden of five of us. So I have to look for a way of helping my mother. I dropped out of school, when she could not afford our school fees, and decided to join the gang of robbers, with the hope of returning back to school later.<sup>1</sup>

This is one of the terrible experience of victims of the restitution practiced by some people in our country. The restitution set out by God in the Mosaic law is given little or no attention. The ancient law of restitution even set out in the Hammurabi Code of Law was not on the mental issue, it stated that: If a man has stolen Ox, or sheep or ass, whether from the temple or the palace, he shall pay thirty fold. If from a poor man, he shall render tenfold. If the thief cannot pay, he shall be put to death.<sup>2</sup>

The Pentateuchal law of restitution was given purposely to protect the properties of every Israelite, and to foster peace among the people. This law served as a punitive measure for offenders whose offences cannot attract capital-punishment. Which should serve as a way of restoring friendship to avoid cheating and promoting accuracy in the administration of justice among the people. Leaving the land of Egypt with a large livestock and traveling in the wilderness by a large multitude. There would likely be cases of missing animals, a mixture of livestock, and misplacement of property; which may lead to problems if found with someone. The offender is to compensate the owner by restoring the stolen animal and if need be pay a fine as restitution.

One is not surprised that people steal from others in various forms today; but the surprise is that people who stole from others, and public office holders looting the treasuries of their states; religious leaders mismanaging the money donated to their ministries, all claiming to be born again but failed to make restitution. Looking at these instances one would conclude that the problem of restitution in our churches is the issue of unfaithfulness on the part of our religious leaders. They could not enforce financial restitution, but they could enforce marital restitution by not giving Holy Communion to polygamists they can serve financial thieves holy sacrament and even appoint them to the church board.



## **Definition of Restitution**

Restitution, according to the *Oxford English Mini Dictionary* is “The restoring of a thing to its proper owner or original state and Compensation”.<sup>3</sup> The *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* also defines restoration as “bring or give back (something lost or taken away); return to a former place or position; repair, return to a former state”.<sup>4</sup>

This implies that restitution means returning a lost thing to its original owner; or restoring a lost thing to its original state, which may not express the way the property is, as at the time it was lost or may be a damaged property.

In the Contemporary English Dictionary, restitution is defined as:

1. The action of giving something that was lost or stolen back to its proper owner, the restitution of property to the owner
2. Compensation (Law) especially in the form of money, for injury. Make restitution for the damage done; restitution claims.<sup>5</sup>

The dictionary while defining restoration also includes that it is the act of returning something to a former place, owner, or condition: the restoration of a stolen property. With the meaning recorded from the dictionaries, one would agree that restitution is the returning of a lost or stolen property back to its original owners; which means the man who stole other people’s money, or misplaced their property can retribute by returning the property he stole or misplaced back to its owner.

*Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, puts it in legal perspective when it adds thus “(Law) compensation especially in the form of money, for injury, etc. or damages done.”<sup>6</sup> Someone who stole or misplaced another man” property may be said to have stepped on the toe of the owner of the misplaced property. This even becomes more painful, when the property is stolen, as no one would love to be friendly to a man who stole his property; and this can cause some psychological trauma, that is why one may agree with *Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* when it talks about damages. The legal profession also sees restitution ‘as a way of correcting the errors of the past’. Thus they know that erasing things that affect the mind takes time as such wounds do not heal in time. Therefore, these legal practitioners opined that restitution can only alleviate the problem of making a settlement, in the form of a fine, replacement, or payment of damages. This may not be quantified as it may be difficult to do that.



## **Types of Restitution**

After we have looked at the meaning of restitution, it will also be of advantage if we look at the types of restitution. Though we may not be able to mention the type I categorize restitution into two and these are:

1. **Voluntary Restitution:** This is restitution in which the man who committed the crime, volunteers to retribute for his misdeeds, either by returning or restoring the lost or stolen property to the right owner. This was the case with Zacchaeus who pledged to return what he might have falsely or forcefully collected from people. This type of restitution can also take place in a legal issue when the counsel to the accused agrees with the plaintiff to restore the property or retribute by paying damage for the damaged goods or stolen goods. This type of settlement is called of court settlement; since the two parties agreed to work a way out, by restitution.
2. **Involuntary Restitution:** This restitution is enforced on the accused either by a higher authority, state, or court to serve a punishment for the error committed. This may be in the form of fines, damages, or convictions. Under this type of restitution, the value of such property is determined, and the accused would then be forced to pay for the restoration of the property or given a condition of punishment. For instance, the Management of the University of Ilorin, enforced a penalty fee of one thousand five hundred naira as restitution during the student's rampage on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2004. Properties of the University and some individuals were destroyed by the students, and this act disrupted the school calendar. This money was paid by each student before the resumption of the academic work.

In the law courts, fines can be administered on culprits which they were to pay into the state purse while damages are to be paid to the plaintiff. When the judge might have decided the case in favour of the claimant of these damages, the culprit is then asked to pay damage to compensate the complainant which may serve as compensation for him or a jail term may be imposed on the culprit as punishment. This type of restitution is not voluntary but enforced.



### **Original of Restitution among the Israelites**

The Israelites left the land of Egypt where they were enslaved for over four hundred years after God had demonstrated His power by punishing the Egyptians with ten plagues. This would not have been if the Israelites had not served the Egyptians after about seventy souls from Jacob's family sojourned in Egypt during the famine in the reign of Pharaoh Amenophis III when Joseph sent for his father and family members.

After about four hundred and thirty years, God decided to set the Israelites free and He thus sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh. This Pharaoh oppressed the Israelites; he even massacred all the male children born then. So after God had demonstrate His power, He asked the Israelites to go to their Egyptian Lords and request whatever they desired. The Egyptians granted them their requests by giving them gifts of gold, silver poultry and livestock. The people left Egypt and started a journey towards the wilderness. About six hundred thousand men left Egypt with much property, which included livestock and cattle. (Exodus 12:36-38).

Later they got to Sinai, one needed to understand that Moses served as judge to the Israelites whenever there were strives in their midst; one may however opine that such strives would range from stealing, fighting, misplacing of other people's property, and other vices in the society, such were the cases that were brought to Moses in the wilderness that prompted Jethro his father-in-law to complain thus:

Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand about you from morning till evening? .....what you are doing is not good. You and the people with you will wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you; you are not able to perform it alone. Listen not to my voice, I will give you counsel, and God be with you! You shall represent the people before God, and bring their cases to God; and you shall teach them the statutes and decisions, and make them known the way in which they must walk and what they must do. Moreover choose able men from all the people, such as fear God, men who are trustworthy and who hate a bribe; and place such men over the people as rulers of thousands, hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And let them judge the people at all times, every great matter they shall being to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves, so it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this, and God commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people also will go to their place in peace. (Exodus 18:14-23).



This prompted Moses to choose Judges for the Israelites, these judges would administer justice in lower offences varying from stealing to fornication and other light offences. The LORD had not given them the commandments that ought to guide them in their daily activities. Though misunderstandings caused by these acts might have taken place before then thus the arrangement made for them in the commandments given to the Israelites.

Consequently, the idea of restitution came when God gave the people His commandments recorded in Exodus 20-23. One needs to realize that perhaps stealing may not be a capital offence before the advent of the Ten Commandments when theft was made to have a lighter penalty; but one needs to state here that as far back as 2123BC, a king once lived called Hammurabi. He subdued both Sumer in the south and Akkadia, including Assyria, in the north, and made Babylon the capital of a new territorial and commercial empire.

According to Ronald Harker, “it was Hammurabi’s code of Laws that came into force before the Mosaic Law?”<sup>9</sup> It shows that since the Israelites took their origin from Akkadia, which was said to have been captured by Hammurabi, there was a very likelihood of Abraham having this code of Laws with him, as he traveled along. Another aspect was when God was speaking with His angels, He was quoted thus: Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall become a great and might nation and all the nations of the world shall bless themselves by him? No, for I have chosen him, that he might charge his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice. (Genesis 18:17-19. King James Version).

With the view of Ronald Harker as expressed earlier, one may ask at this point is that on what basis was Abraham to charge his household after him to keep the way of the LORD? How was righteousness measured then, if Mosaic Law had not been introduced? If one is to answer these questions, it shows that a law had been in existence before Moses and even before the formation of the Israelites nation. Probably it might be Hammurabi’s two hundred and forty-eight codes of laws. So the issue of restitution might not be strong to those nations after all, but because the Israelites were the new generation that sprang up from these near Middle East nations.

The law of restitution was given to the Israelites to guide them on how best to use other people’s property and how to be their brothers’ keepers. This practice limited capital punishments in the wilderness, as such punishments were meted out on blaspheming, murder, desecration of God’s temple,



adultery, and fornication. In many verses of the Bible that span the Pentateuchal laws, we have restitution. The first mention of restitution was on Mount Sinai when God gave the Israelites the commandments that would help them in the wilderness and when they would get to the Promised Land.

Cases of theft were rampant since the Israelites were not the only ones who left Egypt, other nations also followed them. Those were later known as the proselytes<sup>8</sup>. Those people have different backgrounds and customs manners but because of circumstances, they became part of the Israelites. Exodus 12:48 mentions these people as part of those who left Egypt. So with this setting, it would not be an exaggeration, if we have a clash of interests and clash of personalities. Therefore, God had to give His people a law that would usher them into a life of liberty.

Though in Hammurabi's code of Laws, 'a man who stole an ox, sheep or ass, whether from the temple or palace (signifying the rich) would pay thirty fold, and if from a poor man, would pay tenfold; failure to pay the thief shall be put to death.'<sup>9</sup>

This shows that the law that was in force before the Israelites also made way for restitution. John Drane says "The social and legal of customs the patriarchs are often different from those of later Israel. The fact that these have been preserved in the stories of the patriarchs suggests that the people who wrote them down did not try to assimilate them to the practices of their day, but handed on authentic traditions as they had received them."<sup>10</sup>

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So these laws might have been in existence but might be weak, so God enforcing this law wanted to make it effective. Because it was on record that Abimelech the king of Egypt paid restitution to Abraham, after he had returned Sarai to Abraham, Genesis 20:8-10 gives us insight that Abimelech paid sheep, goats, cows and other things to Abraham to appease him for taking Sarai as wife.

God in Exodus 22:1-7, was saying that if you steal anything from your fellow there is a way you can correct your fellow; there is a way you can correct your mistake and appeal for the forgiveness of your victim. He said, "if a man steals an ox, or a sheep, and kills it or sells it he shall restore five oxen for



an ox, and four sheep for a sheep”. So if a man would pay such a heavy fine for stealing, he would caution himself and not contempt his neighbour’s goods. With this, we can deduce that there are similarities between Hammurabi’s code of laws and Mosaic laws.

These acts of restitution were to be taken seriously so that anyone who failed to pay restitution could be sold into slavery. This can also be in the form of debt payment, giving back where one has been defrauded, and since it aimed to promote peace, it required that the culprit need to confess to the offended and apologize to those slandered. Through this one restore the property forcefully taken or false-fully taken. Since this law is part of the moral law, it shows it can be towards God or our fellow man. This is the right mood one should be in to serve God; He wanted Israel to serve Him in the wilderness, without grumbling and malice; which can occur when there are misunderstandings, frictions, and other evils which can turn the people against each other and that would disenchant them from serving the Lord.

On many occasions, God gave many laws that would enable them to restore strained relationships, before restitution could be done. There must be reconciliation in which confession has to be made so that the victim would gladly forgive the culprit, who would gladly retribute for his error or offence.

We shall examine some verses of the Bible that deal with restitution before the Pentateuch law, such as when God told Abimelech king of Egypt:

Now, therefore, restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet and he shall pray for you, and you shall live; and if thou restore her not, know that thou shall surely die, thou, and all that are them. And Abimelech took sheep, and oxen and men servants and women servants and gave them to Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife. So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his manservants; and they bear children (Genesis 20:7, 14 and 17).



With the above-cited verses, one would agree that restitution can lead to restoration, which would heal a wound inflicted on someone; and when the culprit restored his pray, restitution can be said to have been performed. Here, Abimelech took Abraham's wife for himself, even though he was ignorant of Abraham's prank, God still punished him, but he was asked to restore the man's wife. From Abimelech's own will, he decided to pay restitution because of the punishment he received for snatching Abraham's wife though innocently. After the payment of restitution, Abraham then prayed for Abimelech's and his household and they were healed, thus friendship was restored.

After this, Israel as a nation had to receive a law that guides against negligence and its effect on people as William M. Smith says: In case of hurt done to oxen or other cattle, mischief done in malice is the great transgression, but mischief done through negligence is not without fault. If cattle fight, and one kills another, the owners shall equally share in the loss. In the wilderness where they lay closely encamped and had their flocks and heads among them, such mischiefs as these last mentioned were likely enough to occur.<sup>11</sup>

This shows their similarity and how tight the space between them was. (Exodus 21:22-36).

God also considered the fact that not only would animals be cattle fighting each other, but he also wanted us to know that offence can take any form, thus He gave some explanations to the eighth commandment concerning theft. God wanted them to know that stealing can take any form; it can be from the rich to the poor, and vice versa. That was why when he said "thou shall not steal" (Exodus 20:15). He knew that the rich may think, stealing can be from the poor against the rich. Thus He explains the law and its contents.

He categorized theft into several ways which include

- a) If a man steals any cattle and they are found in his custody.
- b) If he had killed or sold the sheep or ox he had stolen and thereby persisted in the crime.
- c) A house breaker, who breaks into a house in the night, and is killed in the process.

One would however look at these in the light of what the society is Exodus 22 gives us insight into ways through which restitution offences could be committed. They are:

- 1) Theft of cattle, sheep, house breaking



- 2) Trespass – when one’s cattle graze into another man’s field spoiling his crops and other things
- 3) Damage done by fire, this could happen as a result of bush burning, when stray fire would get into another man’s property or farm and destroy them.
- 4) Trusts, when you breach the confidence response in you, by defrauding your employer, someone who places you as a steward of his property.
- 5) Law about marriage and societal relationship
- 6) Injuries done to other people, either through attack
- 7) Extortion of money from people.

With these at the back of our minds, we would then understand what restitution entails. All the conditions set show negligence, carelessness, and anger, which can lead to a breach of peace, trust, and enrichment from the public purse. It goes on and on. It shows that there were culprits and victims the culprit committed the crime, while the victim was at the receiving end. These were also mentioned in Leviticus 6:1-7 and such people were prevented from making offerings to the Lord when restitution for those crimes had not been made.

We cannot live without offending ourselves but we can make peace through restitution and decriminalization.

### **Restitution in the Time of Israelite Kings**

Ever before the installation of any ruler in the land of Israel, the people had to consult prophets to enable them to know what to expect during the reigns of the king. This started with Saul. They were to rule according to the Pentateuchal laws which included restitution, as the kings too are expected to pay restitution if they erred against their subjects. But little of this was heard in the time of King Saul.

When David became King after Saul, as indicated in David’s response to Prophet Nathan’s accusation through a parable of a rich man who had many sheep, but who could not host his guest with one of those sheep, but took the only one that belonged to a poor fellow man. David was furious with the wicked act as he said angrily, “As the Lord lives, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die; and he shall restore the lamb fourfold.” (2 Samuel 12:5-6). This shows that the law of restitution was in



force during the reign of King David. It even extended to using man's life to pay restitution as was the case with Shimei son of Gera, a Benjamite for slander when David escaped from Absalom, he was to later pay for this act with his life.

It was not limited to David, perhaps King Solomon had the law of restitution in mind when he said "Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry; But if he be found, he shall restore seven fold; he shall give all the substance of his house" (Proverbs 6:30-31). This shows that anyone who stole then under any excuse must pay restitution which would be at the discretion of the judge. The judge may ask him to pay in fivefold, fourfold but Solomon was talking of sevenfold, as probably threefold may be paid into the state treasury.

Nations around Israel also have restitution in their ways of life to promote peace and unity, and at times to set a trap for other nations. The latter was the case with Benhadad King of Syria, when he told Ahab "The cities which my father took from thy father I will restore and thou shall make streets for thyself in Damaskus" (I Kings 20:34).

Ahab thought this offer by Benhadad was a sincere restitution to later discover that it was a poison wrapped with honey. It was a political gimmick used to trap Ahab. Restitution is made to restore strained relationships between nations, when they return cities captured during wars back to the original owners. Even after the Jewish nation returned from their exile to Babylon the law of restitution was still practiced as Malachi also emphasized the importance of it to make the brother relationship that exhorted among them for peaceful habitation in the land. So the kings of Israel also encouraged restitution as a way of pacifying their subjects of their honesty and care.

Many rulers in the land of Israel restored land back to owners who originally owned the land. Israel gave the Gibeonites severe members of Saul's family, to appease the Gibeonites for Saul's killing of Gibeonites. So the act of restitution was practiced by Israelite monarchs.



## **Payment of Restitution**

In the case of Abimelech, he could not quantify the gravity of his sin against Abraham but from his discretion, he paid what he felt could be paid as restitution to Abraham. In the Mosaic laws, for each action like a breach of trust, theft, misplacing other people's property, fire damage, or one's livestock into another man's field, their penalties or restitution varies. While some are to be paid the same as what was erred, some are not to be paid thus.

In the case of a house breaker, who was killed while trying to break into a house would bear the consequence on his head. But despite this, he still has to pay restitution if he was not killed, he must pay restitution and if he could not pay the restitution, he would be sold into slavery for his theft. For trespass, when one's cattle graze into another man's field, what to pay by the careless owner of the cattle for his negligence act as restitution must be the best of his possession, which must be acknowledged to be the best; which means that it must cover what was damaged.

For damage done by fire, the man that caused the fire damage must suffer for his careless, "paying heavily for the damage his carelessness had caused his fellowman; for if he had been a bit careful, the problems would have been averted. For betrayal of trust, if the man upon whom a trust is placed betrays the man that placed the trust in him, in terms of goods and services, he must bear the consequences of his act of betrayal, thus he was to pay restitution.

A runaway slave can be returned to his master and such a slave was to remedy all the inconveniences he subjected his master to. This was the case with Onesimus (Philemon 1). David was talking of restitution in four-folds, and possibly, death for the supposed culprit, which means the decision of David was based on the laid down rule on restitution over sheep. But King Solomon's suggestion in Proverbs 6:30 -31 was seven fold of stolen property and even the culprit's house. This simply deduced that restitution can be paid with all that the culprit possesses including lands and household properties, if they can be used to pay for the damages done, or the inconveniences that their acts might have caused their victims.



If Hammurabi's law affirmed the death penalty to pay restitution, Mosaic law only said the defaulter should be sold to make up for his inability to pay the restitution fee.

### **Purposes of Restitution**

As earlier stated no law does not have purposes for its promulgation. As we know there is what we call friction in human relationships which may happen as a result of some personality clashes. And that there is the likelihood that a society that has laws must have defaulters and if there are defaulters, there should be punishments for such offences. While giving us insight into why restitution was legislated by God, W.F. Kumuyi says: Restitution is the act of making right all wrongs done against our fellowmen, which involves the restoration of stolen properties to their rightful owners, paying debts, giving back that which has been taken by fraud, making confessions to the offended, apologizing to those slandered, uncovering wrong doings, that were covered in the past e.g. pretence, lying, making right all wrongs concerning marriages career and every area of life.<sup>12</sup> This confirms our earlier statement that restitution covers all aspects of our daily living and that it also serves as a way of restoring peace among people who have been friends but for certain reasons ranging from carelessness, negligence, sharp practices, cheating, dishonest, and many other vices became enemies. Restitution brings about reconciliation. So why restitution must be paid?

Restitution becomes necessary first and foremost to have a conscience clean of offence towards God and before men. We at times sin secretly against ourselves, which would cause a sort of quality conscience whenever we come across our fellowmen whom we sinned against or erred. Until immediately after this is done, we would have a clear conscience before God, and we would be able to approach God in worship and prayer. This is the purpose of God leading the Israelites out of Egypt to enable them to worship Him in the wilderness.

Secondly, restitution is a sign of repentance, absolute repentance from one's past life. This is a sign of repentance, which opens the door for reconciliation as confession precedes reconciliation. So if we try to resolve what we wrongfully took by restitution it would create a lasting union and trust between the people.



Thirdly, it serves as a way of caution to people not to spoil or misplace or be careless in handling other people's properties without spoiling their properties knowing fully well that whatsoever you spoil or misplace you will pay it back, will create a sort of fear in them.

Another purpose of restitution is to make the notion be your brother's keeper' and the golden rule 'do unto others what you would others do unto you' effective. Consequently, this would erase distrust among the people who have been traveling in the wilderness, encamped together from converting another man's property to theirs, and would make them watch their fellow's property in his absence.

The law of restitution eases cheating and inequality in the administration of Justice among the Israelites. A thief who ought to have been stoned to death for stealing would have to pay restitution tantamount to when his victim was given a sort of inconveniency for not being able to use his property when he needed it most. It also served as a way of reducing or minimizing capital punishment or the death penalty for offences that can be punished in other aspects, thus creating an opportunity for offenders to ask for forgiveness from their victim either through reparation or restitution, as restitution also gives room for survival of the offender.

It also averts hereditary enmity, as God directed that if the offended person has died, then the restitution should be paid to his kinsmen, and in the absence of that it thought of man. This settles the anger of God on the offender. It is a commandment from God that the Israelites are encouraged and commanded to observe.

### **Christians' Understanding of Restitution in Nigeria**

As earlier stated, the view of every Christian on any topic or issue has to do with the process and manner in which the preacher presents such issue. Restitution has been an issue of which many Christians in Nigeria have diverse understandings. While some understand the literal meaning of restitution, many do not seem to understand what it means. Our focus here is to examine what some denominations understand restitution to mean.



### **Christ Apostolic Church (C.A.C)**

This Church was founded in 1930, through the call and ministry of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola. The Church is one of the first set of Indigenous African Churches popularly called the Aladuras. The Church was fully involved in evangelism work from the 1960s to the early 1980s. notable among the evangelists are Prophets T.O. Obadare, Timothy Iyanda, S.K. Abiara, and D.O. Babajide.<sup>14</sup> Through the activities of these people, the Church became expanded to have repented from their evil way and embraced Christ. These converts said that restitution is a must for every Christian, who wants to restore his friendship and relationship with God. The Church believes that, for one to enjoy what real salvation is, restitution must take place.

Christ Apostolic Church believes that if one truly claims that he has been saved, he should retribute for his past mistake in various ways. Firstly, he must return what he had falsely taken from people back to them. However, no additional percentage was to be added according to the directive of the Holy Spirit and by applying God's wisdom. Some Pastors have diverse opinions on whether restitution covers all errors, especially the experienced ones who believe that one should be cautious in practicing restitution. This group of Pastors believes that restitution cannot solve all the errors one committed, but that it can only reduce the burden. To these Pastors, restitution is not practicable in all cases, lest one would end up causing problems rather than solving the existing ones. They opined that it takes special intervention of God, for the husband of that woman to bear the agony of seeing a man confessing to his wife's infidelity. They believe this cannot be restituted but rather it can end up causing problems in the family. They also give an example of a notorious armed robber, who had killed many people. They thought that he might not remember the number of people. They believed that he might not remember the number of people he had killed. And that going to the families of his victims may spell doom for him. So they believe that in such cases, restitutions should be mad between men of God. But in other aspects, restitution can be paid for instance returning properties to their original owners, and payment of damages where necessary.

Another group of Pastors in C.A.C believed that restitution is total and should be paid absolutely. They believe that there should be no exception in the act of restitution. They believe that, once the Lord has forgiven you, you can take the step of faith by going to your victims to confess. This group cited Paul



who confessed to his complicity in the murder of Stephen, as an example of such an act. They also said David perhaps might have confessed his adulterous act with the wife of Uriah to the public.

This group also believes that you can retribute by returning to your first wife, by sending the second wife away. They believe that the second wife is a weed in the family and not wanted. To this group of Pastors, such a man is not fit to partake in any serious activities in the church, because he is not worthy. They believe that for his conversion to be total, he must do away with his second wife. While some want the children born by the woman to stay in the family, others want them to be sent out with their mothers.

The last group seems to have an opinion which is different from the two earlier groups. They remain silent on the issue of restitution. They believe that the greatest restitution has been done with the blood of Jesus on the cross. They believe that “Whoever that is in Christ has become a new being, old things have passed away behold they have become new” (II Corinthians 5:17). To this group the blood of Jesus had washed all these guilds away. Members seem to be divided among these groups.

### **Cherubim and Seraphim Church (C&S)**

The Church was founded in 1925, through the evangelical and prophetic activities of Moses Orinmolade and Abiodun Akinsowon.<sup>15</sup> The movement spread rapidly as people heard of the miracles of healings wrought by its leaders. Three years after the inauguration of the church, the founders broke apart and set the pace for one succession that followed. Ayegboyin and Ishola conclude that “Among the practices that portray the Africa-ness of the C & S are its procedures of saying prayers, practice of polygamy, and practice of exorcism and so on.”<sup>16</sup>

However, people may think the movement does not preach restitution. However, in the past, most of their leaders did not preach restitutions, as some were core polygamists. Some because they are prophets, did not even understand what restitution was. But in the last few years, some of their leaders have been teaching restitution, examples of such leaders are prophet G.O. Fakeye of C&S. Movement Ayo Ni O, Lagos,<sup>17</sup> Prophets Segun Akorede, Ademola Popoola (both of C&S Movement No 1 Muritala Mohammed Way Ilorin), Segun Are (C&S Church Movement No 3, Kunlende Ilorin) respectively and many others.



They all preached financial and economic restitutions, but marital was left out as they do not talk about it. Though C&S practiced polygamy, the idea of some of their prophets asking people to send their wives away for witchcraft was not done to serve as restitution but to show that the treacherous acts of the woman had been revealed and to prevent evil from falling on the husband. The new sets of leaders in C&S Movements nowadays are no more polygamists but they preach monogamy as a solution to spreading sexually transmitted diseases. They condemned the old ways when their leaders were polygamists.

### **Deeper Life Christian Bible Church**

This Church was founded in the 1970s, by Pastor Williams Folorunsho Kumuyi, who is among the Scripture Union frontiers in Nigeria. Also, he was an elder in the Apostolic Faith. He was also a lecturer at the University of Lagos. The Church preaches and teaches Holiness which should start from one recognizing himself as a sinner. He also preaches that restitution can be made in various ways. Excerpts from their journal read thus:

God” Word teaches that Restitution is making amends for wrongs done against our fellowmen, restoring stolen things to their rightful owners, paying debts, giving back where one has defrauded, making confessions to the offended and apologizing to those slandered so as to have conscience void of offence towards God and man.<sup>18</sup>

The church does not limit the issue of restitution to the above statement, which made it mandatory for anyone who wants to walk with God to pay restitution. It also creates restitution in some unnoticed things which include “uncovering wrongs that were done in the past e.g. pretence lying, making right all wrongs concerning marriages, careers and every area of life.<sup>19</sup>

In Deeper Life Church, restitution should be absolute and total, it should also cover all facets of our daily living if we are to reconcile ourselves to God. The church however gives reasons why we must make restitution. The reason proffered was to make our conscience void of offence before God and



men. Stressing that “our conscience cannot be clear if, after we have repented from our sins, we still hold on to stolen items (including stolen wife or a stolen husband), wealth gotten by fraud, or a career based on falsehood, such as a forged certificate.”<sup>20</sup>

In Deeper Life Church, marital restitution is a must for anyone who practices polygamy. Even if the husband is not willing to send the younger wife away, the younger wife should pack out of the house. The Church is silent on what should become of the offspring of the union. It emphasizes financial restitution in all ramifications and even stolen properties. It also accepts restitution being made for using a forged certificate. Restitution in Deeper Life Bible Church has no reservation rather the Church wants restitution to be absolute and total, sparing no one and no gender.

### **The Apostolic Faith Mission**

The denomination which was founded in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century is believed to have originated from Oregon, Portland. For this study. We shall examine Stephen J. Land’s work on the doctrines of the Apostolic Faith Church. Land says:

The concern for righteousness is expressed in relation to conversion and continuing in the way. That repentance be preached and taught among the people, to be followed by Godly sorrow of repentance. This would lead to confession of sins (Luke 15:21). One is then expected to forsake his sinful ways (Isaiah 55:7, Jonah 3:8). Restitution is to follow, after which faith in Jesu Christ comes last (Ezekiel 33:15, Luke 19:8).<sup>21</sup>

This shows that in the Apostolic Faith Mission restitution involves repentance and conversion. Land also added these to his early claims “the blood of Jesus will never blot out any sin between man and man (which) they can make right; but if we can make wrong right, the blood graciously covers (Mathew 5:23,24 and 27)”.<sup>22</sup> This statement shows that if restitution is not done with our fellowmen, divine forgiveness cannot be sought for such error. W.F. Kumuyi, an elder of the Apostolic Faith Church may have this concept, thus his emphasis on the importance of restitution. To show the importance of



restitution, lands further says: It seems that God's gracious justification or pardon through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ in no way removes the necessity of restitution and reconciliation among persons whenever possible (if they are within range and still living).<sup>23</sup>

We should then opine that if the blood of Jesus cannot be effective without restitution, then the message that "And the blood of Jesus Christ His son cleanses us from all our sins" (1 John 1:7) becomes irrelevant. Jesus while giving us the Great commission did not add any other clause than "believe, be baptized and be saved" (Mark 16:15-16) restitution if need be should have been added then. In the case of Zacchaeus, Jesus did not compel him to retribute; he only did that of his own volition.

Having examined these churches, which cut across indigenous churches, the evangelical, and the Pentecostal, we need to also stress at this point that some Orthodox Churches do not have anything to say on marital restitution, since there is no need for it. While most of our Churches have divergent views on marital resolution, they all agreed that we should also encourage corrupt public officers to retribute for their corrupt practices.

## **Conclusion**

So if the Church had enforced restitution, money and treasury looters would have been sanctioned to see that these corrupt leaders practiced restitution. This should start with church leaders. If restitution aims to create peace, what our people practice today does not promote peace but problems. Therefore we should then see how the restitution we preach and teach will correct past mistakes and promote peace in our country. Our Church leaders should also give more support to the fight against corruption in our society.

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