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Sin and Sin Offering as Sacred Space Among the Nigerian Sabbatharians: An Ethical Reflection[1]

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Abstract

Every traditional society had inherent indigenous patterns through which its values and morals were maintained. The world has become a global village where through the powers of the ICT, almost everything is crossing borders. The walls of ethical values and morality seem tottering, even as societies adjust and readjust through institutions in the fight back to equilibrium. Religion remains a propelling instrument in this endeavour. For the Sabbath Church in Nigeria, and as obtained in Igbo worldview too, values entail sacred spaces held in awe, which can as well be *de-sacralized*, and *re-sacralized*. Consequently, the Sabbath Church, an African Instituted Church, through its robust theology on sin and sin offering has developed some principles for the evaluation and restoration of value and values. When the peace and harmony of the society are distorted consequent upon a breach of the law, how does the theology of the Sabbath church advocate and guide into the restoration of the order? Adopting an historico-theological approach, this paper goes beyond unveiling sin and sin offering in the Sabbath church doctrinal practices, to advocate for a hyphenated home-grown ideology in defining and sustaining the values of a society. It contends that a sweeping generalization on ethical procedure across cultures would end up breeding formless and empty individuals and societies.

Keywords: Sin, Morality, Sabbath Church, Nigeria, Igbo, Worldview, African Instituted Church (AIC), Ethical Values, Sacred.

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[1] This paper is a part of my PhD Thesis to be submitted to the Department of Religious and Cultural Studies, University of Port Harcourt; titled "Ritualizing Animal Sacrifice Among the Sabbath Churches in Igboland."

Introduction

African Christianity has indeed come of age, having developed and localized its uniqueness both in liturgy and doctrine. Across the board, the different Christian denominational colourations on African soil have received the touch of this African uniqueness, injected vitality and vibrancy in Christianity, and catalyzed the demographic shift in global Christianity. For some theologians, this development, as championed by the African Instituted Churches (AICs), on the whole, represents a departure from the tenets of Christianity. While for others, Christianity is indeed demonstrating its global nature.

Before now the entire foundation of African Christian theology was interpreted from the Judeo-Christian spectacles, and thus adjudged inferior to the Western Christian foundation. This approach undermined the exclusivity of AICs to laying the foundation for the principle of translation (Sanneh 2009). But African Christian theology has a unique identity of the person of Christ. Christ and his sacrifice in African Christology have received an impetus to be placed, or rather contextualized, on a broader plain in the entire redemption plan of humanity (Schreiter 1997). African Christian space is not different from the African traditional space, where the spiritual is infused into and co-habiting with the physical. In this symbiotic existence, the sacred world is easily intercepted by the humans whose harmony with this all-important spiritual world is always sought. Whenever this harmony is broken, the African goes all out to restore the much-needed cordiality. Here is the central place of sacrifice in African Christology which the Sabbatharians in Nigeria exploit in sustaining sacrality and sacredness. This paper undertakes an ethical evaluation of the concept of sin and sin offering among the Nigerian Sabbatharians. The study is not intended to discover the Biblicism of the practice. It rather anchors on the belief that the sacred space determined by sin and the ritual of sin offering, among the Sabbatharians, requires an objective study.

Defining the Terms

   i.   **Sin**

The concept of sin in African Christian theology is broad. Firstly, in traditional Christian doctrine, sin is the conscious alienation or estrangement of oneself from God. It is an embodiment of selfishness, self-centeredness, pride, and above all being disobedience towards God. Summarily, sin is the breaking of the relationship between human beings and God (Oosthuizen 1992:16; Sakuba 2004:48). In traditional African definition, sin connotes a morally wrong act, both before God and the people. Whatever the society abhors; acts that cause pain in the end, whether to one or all, become sinful. Sin would then include such actions as smoking, drinking, beating one's wife or not wearing the correct attire in the church (Sakuba 2004).

Yet, African theologians are thrown into a dilemma when defining sin from the African perspective. The adaptation of African culture in Christianity by Africans has birthed theologies - African inculturation theology, African liberation theology, African Evangelical theology, African Pentecostal theology, and AICs theology (Sakuba 2004:39-45). These theologies emphasize either the human or spiritual influence that leads to sin. However, on a general note, sin in Africa is more than the deviation from God's dictates. It is the negation of the norm, a dislocation of the

harmony that holds man in balance in his existence in the cosmic order. Sacrifice becomes a means of reestablishing the harmonious order (Okeke 2016:124).

ii. **Sacrifice**

Victor Turner (1967:19) defines sacrifice as "formal behaviour prescribed for occasions not given to technological routine that have reference to belief in mystical being or power." Here, Turner, like Mary Douglas (1970:21) adopted the functional perspective, neglecting the primacy of the sacrificial belief system. But as Olupona (1990:2) observes, spoken words, incantations, sayings or sacred myths gain meaning in ritual contexts. On this premise, Awoniyi (2015) concurs with Richard Pilgrim (1978:65) that "a ritual is religious, if it carries an ultimate value, meaning, sacrality and significance for someone…."

Rituals are dynamic and function with a social frame of reference (Hultrkrantz 1976:136). True also in Africa context is that rituals involve visible and invisible elements to cleanse both the physical and spiritual worlds (Tamuno 1994:27). Hence, Idowu (1996:119) argues that no religion would be conceived to exist without sacrifice because it consolidates the relationship between a religious adherent and his (her) object of worship.

The term 'sacrifice' conveys both religious and secular meaning (Awolalu 1981:134). In the secular, sacrifice "means forgoing for a particular cause which is precious; denying oneself certain benefits and advantages for a particular purpose" (Awoniyi 2015:65). Sacrifice in secular usage is thus metaphorical. However, it is an extension of the foundational usage which is religious. This is basic in the African setting (Awolalu 1981). In line with this, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (2000) defines 'sacrifice' as:

> The offering of something, animate or inanimate, in a ritual procedure which establishes, or mobilizes, a relationship of mutuality between the one who sacrifices (whether individual or group) and the recipient – who may be human but more often is of another order, e.g. God or spirit. Sacrifice pervades virtually all religions, but it is extremely difficult to say precisely what the meanings of sacrifice are – perhaps because the meanings are so many.

There is no aimless sacrifice, even as the purpose differ (Tylor 1958; Van de Leeuw 1963; Jevons 1921:154; Westermarck 1932:98ff). Such purposes according to Awoniyi (2015:69) include:

- Expression of gratitude to the spiritual beings
- Fulfilment of vow
- Establishment of communion between man and the spiritual beings
- Averting the anger of the divinities and spirits
- Warding off the attack or evil machinations of enemies
- Purification of a person or community when a taboo or sin has been committed
- Preventing or expelling epidemics
- Strengthening the worshippers against malign influences.

The Sabbath Church in Nigeria: A Summary of its Mythology and History

The Sabbath Church in Nigeria is a home-grown Pentecostal movement that covers the Saturday Sabbath observing worshippers, whose historical and social contexts are woven around the Igbo of South-Eastern Nigeria. The Nigerian Sabbatharians differ markedly from the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA), and Church of God (Seventh Day) in historicity, vestment, belief and praxis (except in the observance of Biblical Saturday Sabbath).

The historical origin of the Sabbath Church dates to the prophetic movement of Dee Ekeke Lolo of Akwette in Ukwa East Local Government Area of Abia State. About the first decade of the 20th century, Dee Ekeke developed some prophetic faith-healing gifts like Prophets Wade Harris and Garrick Braide and operated a healing home which was swarmed by those seeking solution to sicknesses and demonic attacks. By 1915, he had begun observing Saturday Sabbath-keeping, as he was directed by the Spirit. Although he was illiterate, Ekeke preached against sin and practised animal sacrifice, as part of his religious orientation and ritual. However, Prophet Mark Onuabuchi, who was healed by him, established Christ Healing Sabbath Mission at Afube Amichi about 1957 and developed other structures which marked out the group as a religious movement. Mark Onuabuchi's missionary zeal and evangelism have led to the establishment of over 200 branches of the Sabbath churches in Nigeria and diaspora.

Of all the doctrines of the Sabbath churches, it is the upholding of the practice of animal sacrifice, which is dominant among the majority of its denominations that distinguishes the group from other Christian movements. The same ritual of animal sacrifice is, unfortunately, the raison d'etre the Church has been marginalized by the Mainline and Pentecostal Churches who adjudge the practice as unchristian (Gbule and Nwaka 2018).

The use of the terms Sabbatharian(s) and Sabbath Church(es) in this paper apply to those denominations that ritualize animal sacrifice.

Desecrating the Sacred Space: The Concept of Sin in the Sabbath church

The concept of sin among the Sabbatharians in Nigeria shows a strong leaning on both the Torah and Igbo traditional worldview. For the Sabbatharians, the origin of sin is linked to the story of the Fall in Genesis. Accordingly, sin connotes disequilibrium. It is a break or disruption of the law, orderliness, or coordinated sequence. This interpretation is pictured by Kakwata (2016) who avers that:

> human beings were created to live in relationship with God, others and nature, based on love. Sin is a detrimental element that destroys the image of God in humans and severs the mentioned fundamental human relationships. Such broken relationships create a gap, a separation from the source and sustainer of good living; the consequence of disobedience. Hence there is a clear indication that love is in crisis (273).

From his observation, sin becomes *lovelessness* and breeds poverty and lack (Wyngaard 2013:218-230; Kakwata 2016).

The rhetoric of the Sabbatharians disavows sin. Consequently, the expressions *mmeto* (uncleanness) and *mmeru* (defilement) embody the concept of sin. The Sabbatharians' theology teaches of the clean and unclean; sacred and profane; worlds. The clean world is the space of the sacred, the abode of the Divine. It is the reflection of purity (*Idi-Ocha*), holiness (*Idi-Nso*), integrity (*Izu-oke*), and perfection (*Izu-oke*). In this understanding, the sacred space could also be inhabited by clean humans. This confirms the inseparability of the spiritual and physical worlds from each other, and also demonstrates the possibility of being in touch with the divine as long as the channel is kept open through obedience to the rules of the community. The clean thus possesses the ability to overcome the negative forces of nature and to manipulate these forces to one's advantage. For the Sabbatharians, living in holiness guarantees blessings and protection provided by God for His people. The unclean world is the defiled space indicating *mmeto, mmeru*, and impurity *(Adigh-Ocha)*. The unclean operates at a low(er) spiritual ebb and is exposed to the dangers of living at the mercy of forces of nature and malevolent spirits (and powers). Hence, as a result of the infraction of the moral order and or ecosystem, punishments, destruction, failure in business, sickness, lack of peace, disunity, and even premature death are inevitable. Recognizing this inherent danger, the Sabbatharians are quick to restore the ritual harmony enjoyed before the moral infraction through sacrifice.

The Sabbatharians classify sin in three dimensions; namely, sins against the heavenly beings, human beings, and the ecosystem. Sin against the heavenly beings occurs when the dictates and instructions of the Sacred are disobeyed. In the second instance, sin occurs when the moral and societal laws that are in line with the dictates of the Sacred are broken. Thirdly, malicious damage against the ecosystem is sinful. Care is taken to preserve nature and make it habitable. This sounds contradictory with the ritual of animal sacrifice that involves the killing of an animal, the cutting and burning of firewood, and the pollution of the environment through the smoke. But for the Sabbatharian, the moral appropriateness or otherwise of an act is interpreted from obedience to God's instruction. An action is considered appropriate once it is commanded by God; the consideration of the environment and other factors does not arise in such instance. The slaughtering of an animal for sacrifice, the cutting of trees for wood and the rising smoke during the ritual are not adjudged sinful. They are acts of worship; a demonstration of obedience and reverence for God. Through animal sacrifice, the Sabbatharians aver the restoration of the ecosystem and not its destruction which the act suggests ethically. The Sabbatharian would rather sacrifice that which God demands than allow the desecration of the sacred space - the destruction of the equilibrium in the relationship with the Supernatural. Thus the shedding of the blood of an animal for the Sabbatharian shows the extent to which they can go in restoring the harmony disrupted through sin.

Avoiding sin for the Sabbatharian is, therefore, a conscious act. Knowing "the right path that leads to life" (*Uzo n'eduba na-ndu)* is commanded, demanded and commended; ignorance is not an excuse. This normative principle - the right path - is accepted to have been already created in the Holy Bible and the societal norms that encourage the wellbeing of all. Humans have to search out what should be done; while the Divine has to dictate what should be done. Secondly, for the Sabbatharian, living a holy life entails following the principles attentively. Inattention is a bad premise that opens the door to sin. Inattention means failing to hear, taking no heed or

paying no attention; and therefore denotes disobedience (Kakwata 2016:278; Verbrugge 2000:29). Hearing (the word of) God means hearing Him beyond the mere perception of sound. It connotes conscious and keen attention, followed by total obedience without compulsion. Thirdly, holiness entails living above error. An error here does not refer to unwitting mistake. It rather expresses a deliberate transgression or a conscious decision against God's Law (Botterweck & Ringgren 2006:733-734; Kakwata 2016:279; Erickson 2013:517).

For the Sabbatharian sin is more than an act. It is a living force that can locate the sinner, his/her location, and the entire community where it is committed, with untoward consequences. This theology is derived from the interpretation given to Number 32:23

As stated earlier on, the Sabbatharians' stance on sin is anchored on the Old Testament and Igbo traditional worldview. In the Torah, the concepts of 'holy' and 'common' (or 'profane'), 'clean' and 'unclean', are integral in the relationship of God with His people. Since God is holy, anything associated with his service must also become holy, and thus, consecrated to him. The people that are approaching his presence, the location for the sacrifices, the meeting tent, its contents, the priesthood, and the sacrificial animals all must be holy. Generally, common things can be so consecrated, under the strict condition that they are clean. The rule is that what is holy is opposed to what is common, and what is clean is opposed to what is unclean (Jemphrey 2007:9). Following Jemphrey's (2007) analysis of Wenham's (1979:19) observation;

> • Everything that is not holy is common.
> • Common things divide into two groups, the clean and the unclean.
> • Cleanness is an intermediate state between holiness and uncleanness.
> • Cleanness is the usual intermediate state of most persons and things. (This implies that what is holy is set apart as somehow special.)
> • Clean things become holy when they are sanctified, but unclean objects cannot be sanctified.
> • Clean things can be made unclean by being polluted.
> • Holy items may be profaned and become common. They may even be polluted and made unclean.
> • The unclean and the holy are states that must never come into contact with each other. If an unclean person eats part of a sacrificial animal, which is holy food, he will be cut off from his people (Lev. 7:20–21).
> • Most importantly, sin and impurity cause profanation and pollution, while the offering of sacrifices reverses the process and brings about cleansing and sanctification.

Similarly, the Igbo traditional religious worldview presents man as existing in between two worlds – the physical world where he dwells, and the spiritual world that sustains all that entails peace and prosperity for him. The Igbo treads cautiously in between these two worlds. Sin for the Igbo brings the disruption of the peaceful order between the visible and invisible worlds. It entails a break in the sacredness of existence; the de-sacralization of the sacred space. The consequence of this disruption is dependent on the degree of the sin committed. Sins committed against the Earth goddess (*Ala*), the sustainer and conserver of the created order are treated with much seriousness. It is an abomination *(Aru)*. Consequently, failures, death, and destruction

are the punishment for *Aru* (Gbule and Nwaka 2019; Okeke and Onukwube 2016: 5; Nwoye 2011: 306-313; Ikenga-Metuh 1985; Mbiti 1976: 44; Arinze 1970). Thus, when unusual events happen; when misfortune strikes; when sickness defies medical and spiritual solutions; when failure becomes intractable; the Igbo consults a diviner to know the cause of the misfortune. Necessary measures are therefore taken to restore the individual to the ritual order previously enjoyed before the moral infraction.

Sin Offering in the Sabbath church

For the Sabbatharians, sacrifice is a means through which the profaned can be cleansed, sanctified and the holiness restored. Sacrifice not only gives hope but as well creates room for continuity and restorations. In other words, holiness, profanity, cleanliness and uncleanness are luminal states. Restoration is the essence of the sacrifices. Following from this, Jemphrey (2007) makes a good observation which applies to the Sabbatharians theology on sin. He says that

> While both impurity and sin are antithetical to holiness, and the disorder of impurity is symbolic of the disorder caused by sin, the relationship between impurity and sin is somewhat complex. Sin inevitably causes impurity and certain sins, especially in the sexual domain, are explicitly said to be defiling (e.g., in Lev. 18:6–25). On the other hand, not *all* ritual impurity is sin; for example, contact with a corpse, which is sometimes unavoidable. However, to *deliberately* defile oneself in contradiction to God's prohibitions is sin (see e.g., Lev. 21:1–4). So is the failure to deal with ritual impurity in the prescribed way (11).

Most commentators have translated sin offering as the principal expiatory offering (Jemphrey 2007:16). Keil states its purpose as "putting an end to the separation between man and God that had been created by sin" (cited in Wenham 1979:93). Jemphrey (2007), however, aligns with more recent commentators, such as Milgrom, Wenham, and Hartley, who render 'sin offering' as 'purification offering' (*hattat*). Jemphrey (2007) summarizes the reason for this rendering thus:

> • The other blood offerings in their different ways atoned for sin, and so simple to translate *tafj* as 'sin offering' obscures the precise function of the sacrifice.
> • Morphologically, it corresponds not to the Hebrew 'qal' form of the verb *tafj* 'to sin', but to its Hebrew '*piel'* form, which means 'to cleanse, decontaminate'.
> • In various places where the offering is connected with purification (e.g., Lev. 12:8; 14:19), the rites are said to cleanse people from bodily pollutions.
> • Lev. 15:31 states the purpose of this offering: "You must separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness so that they do not die in their uncleanness by polluting my tabernacle which is among them" (as translated by Wenham 1979). This, coinciding with the application of the blood to various parts of the tabernacle, demonstrates that the particular emphasis of this offering is not so much the reconciliation of human beings with God as the purifying of Yahweh's sanctuary from uncleanness (16-17).

Purification offering, whether as 'sin' offering or Yom Kippur, helps deal with the pollution connected with the effects of sin and of physical uncleanness that affects congregation and dwelling place. This ensures that as the people come into the presence of their God, the unholy and unclean, which could bring about death, are kept away from the tent, thereby ensuring the anticipated presence of the Divine. The 'sin offering' and its procedure as followed by the Sabbatharians is documented in Leviticus 4. The Sabbatharians set the Levitical sacrifices in their context, but at the same time determine and apply their purpose in the context of the New Testament. In other words, they present the Levitical assertion that Yahweh desires to have a dwelling among his people; even in the face of the continued tension created by the rebellion of man against the holy God. Considering this Divine demand for holiness, Yahweh, through sacrifice, provides a way for the people to be holy and to restore a broken relationship. Drawing from this biblical injunction, the Sabbatharians developed a unique theology through sin offering in explaining the relationship between the Divinity and humanity, and how this cordiality is restored when dislocated.

In the sacrificial system of Leviticus, the sin offering is differentiated from guilt offering based on the liturgy and acts that lead to the sacrifice. But to the Sabbatharian (excluding the Priest), the worshipper simply follows the guidance of the Priest who understands the two offerings and directs appropriately. What is important to the individual and community is not what happens but the necessary steps to be taken to restore the lost glory, and introduce tranquillity in the order.

Some Examples of Healing and Re-Sacralization of the De-Sacralized[2]

In the Sabbath Church theology, healing goes beyond the individual. The society, a spot, a community could be defiled, and healed. Far from the orthodox conception, illness, for the Sabbath Church, is the dislocation, destabilization, distortion, and defilement of the sacredness, balance, peace and tranquillity of the individual, an entity, and/or society. Healing, therefore, encompasses the deliverance of an individual from the holds of powers of darkness; the liberation of an entity, community from the influence of negative forces; the restoration of the physiological and psychological states of a person; and the restoration of the cordiality and harmonious relationship between individuals and communities and the Divine.

We shall look at some specific examples from Our Lords Sabbath Mission[3], observed by Chigozie Samuel Nwaka. The names used in these instances are pseudonyms. Eberechukwu has lived in the USA for over 21 years. When they married, Emeka her husband was the best loving and caring husband and father. Midway into their

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[2] Part of this section featured in the paper J.N. Gbule and C.S. Nwaka (2019) "The Persistence of Igbo Worldview in the Sabbath Church Healing Liturgy and Praxis," presented at World Christianity Conference, PTS New Jersey. March 15-18th 2019.

[3] Our Lord's Sabbath Mission was founded by Most Rev Wilfred John Nwaorisa Nwaka in 1965 (See Chigozie Samuel Nwaka (2004). *Our Lord's Sabbath Mission: Origin, Growth and Development.* Unpublished M.A. Dissertation. Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt.). Currently

marriage of over twenty years, Emeka suddenly develops some unhealthy character towards the wife and children. After all the efforts to restore peace in the family failed, Eberechukwu resorted to prayers. It was revealed through prayers that in the family of her husband, the males do not find joy in marriage and fall short of their expectations in life because their forbearers sacrificed a virgin girl to their family deity. It was recommended that family liberation has to be conducted for the family. Neither Eberechukwu nor her immediate family was in Nigeria to take the prayer warriors to their family for the liberation prayers. As the Priest directed, Eberechukwu simply sent someone to get some sand from her family. The liberation prayer was conducted for Eberechukwu's family using the sand, after which the sand was taken back to the family. A week later, Eberechukwu called to express her joy that her husband has started being a responsible and loving father and husband. In the procedure for the family liberation, the sin offering was an integral part of prayers. The demand that a handful of sand from the family be used goes to show that the predicament of the family links to the de-sacralization of the original sacredness which the family possessed. This desecration opened the door for the consequent punishment that befell the family even in the faraway USA. The use of sand from the family carries the presence of the entire family. This anchor on Igbo cosmology where the land is revered as the producer and sustainer of life. It is the nodal point of all that exists, and the point of return. Every individual is linked to his or her family land. Thus, any act performed on that land has been indirectly performed on everything that is linked to that earth. It is on this basis that the Sabbath Church concept of land liberation draws its efficacy on all that is linked to that land.

Blessing lives in the USA with her family. She suddenly took ill and was rushed to the hospital for medical checks and treatment. Her medical checks gave her a clean health bill, even as her condition deteriorated. She lost consciousness. Back home in Nigeria, it was revealed that she had a spiritual attack from a deity previously served by her forbearers which demanded her to be its priestess. Burnt offering was recommended on her behalf to break the covenant linking her to the deity. Blessing regained consciousness a day after the burnt offering was performed. She was later discharged from the hospital healthy. What happens in the burnt offering is captured by Jemphrey (2007).

> The death of the animal is substituted for the death of the sinner. This transfer of sin is symbolized by his placing his hands on the animal. The agreeable smell of the burning animal rising to heaven symbolizes God's acceptance of the substitute (15).

Sin Offering and the Sabbath Church Christology

Waruta (1997:53) avers that Christology is an interpretation of who Jesus is in line with the Biblical expositions and every context and situation; and not merely the provision of a catechetical answer or a pious evangelical slogan. It develops out of the quest to answer the question associated with the person of Christ as he fills the gap in the daily life of the people. Africans have shown a great understanding of picturing the image of Jesus Christ in the context of their religious consciousness. Of all the faces of Jesus in Africa (Schreiter 1997), his mediating role between humanity and divinity has marked him out as conspicuously occupying the three main religious specialists' position of the prophet, the priest and the sacred ruler (Waruta 1997:53). The Sabbatharians agree with the position of Jesus as the High Priest, as promoted in

the book of Hebrews. Yet, there is the theological interpretation that Jesus' priesthood did not negate or abolish the role played by the priests during and after his work on earth (Matthew 5:17-19). To this, Jesus presides over the Sabbath priests as the Elder brother, the First among equals. For the Sabbatharians, Jesus, through His sacrifice, showed himself as the High Priest who did not sacrifice an animal, but himself to restore the relationship between God and humanity, which was lost through the Fall of Adam. The sacrifice of Jesus is thus reconciliatory by removing the barrier (sin) that separated the (defiled) entire humanity from approaching the Holy God (2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Hebrews 2:17). Having finished his earthly priestly work, Jesus has taken his pride of place 'on the right-hand side of God the Father', while the priests on earth continue to perform their solemn duties, considering the fact *sin* and *guilt* continue to be part of human daily interactions, even unknowingly. Hence, the Levitical sacrifices, though they picture the personality of Jesus in the entire relationship between God and humanity, stand as a demonstration of God's love to keep the door of reconciliation open in the relationship between divinity and humanity as human beings go through practical experiences of their daily living. The theology expressed here suggest that the Levitical sacrifices are meant to keep, ever fresh, the opportunity of restoring humanity to purity at all times, should they defile the sanctity of their relationship with the supersensible world. By this, the harmony in the created order is maintained, and all the constituent parts of the enlarged society are placed on the same plane where both the individuals and the community are saved from the consequences of any value or moral breakdown.

Conclusion

Sin breeds pollution. What differs among the religions that are linked to the Bible, in this case, is how the defiled is restored to flow in cordial relationship with the Divine. For the Sabbatharians, the sin offering, better understood as 'purification offering' or 'reparation offering', purified the sanctuary and the people and restored the sacrality of the entire system by removing the defilement of sin that occurred when the law is broken.

The Sabbath church continues to apply the Levitical sacrifices to the reality of Christ as the mediator and High Priest. The concern of this paper is not the truism of the theology but its application that has helped the religious movement to maintain the equilibrium that sustains the values and morality in the created order. To the outsider, this may seem a lack of faith in the 'accomplished' works of Christ against sin. While this is not the concern of this paper as well, it is pertinent to note that the Sabbatharians, as opined about other African Christians, see no evidence to suggest that the work of God proclaimed by Jesus will soon transform the world and remove pain and suffering from human experience (Magesa 1997:151). The Sabbatharians' stance is presented by Wenham's (1979) assertion that

> the sin offering uses a medical model: sin makes the world so dirty that God can no longer dwell there. The blood of the animal disinfects the sanctuary in order that God may continue to be present with his people. The reparation offering presents a commercial picture of sin. Sin is a debt which man incurs against God. The debt is paid through the offered animal (111).

Thus, the sinner is discharged and acquitted.

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Rethinking Facts and Values: How Normativity Establishes the Fact of Values and the Value of Facts

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Abstract

C. S. Peirce claimed that logic is a normative science (CP, 1.281). It is not about how people think, but how they ought to think, and so he classified it as a branch of ethics. Elsewhere he argued the contrapositive, that purely self-interested individuals would have to be irrational in all their inferences (1878, 615). They could not constitute valid thoughts regarding either the value of their ends or the reliability of their means. Determining value, like determining meaning more generally, depends on taking a participant stance within social and disciplinary practices. Any legitimacy that disciplines, and moral and rational practices more generally, have rests on the accountability provided by participating in such communal activities. "Objectivity" in the disciplines does not mean seeing things as they are in themselves, or somehow getting back to "the given" behind our interpretive activity, but seeing things in light of, and being accountable to, certain procedural and evidentiary norms. To invoke "norms" here is to recognize something that evades Hume's Law, as a norm is simultaneously a value grounded in a fact and a fact grounded in a value. This is not to simply affirm what Hume denies, but to question the dichotomy between facts and values he presupposes. A statement of fact is an act we must be accountable for, and our ethical task is not merely a matter of assessing and choosing between alternatives that are just there and forced upon us, like railroad tracks laid down in advance, but a matter of constituting the paths themselves, and hence reconstituting the world.

Keywords: Facts, values, normativity

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It is commonly believed that facts are not merely distinct from values, but that they are utterly independent of them. Sometimes this dichotomy is expressed by saying facts are real and values are ideal, where the dichotomy is between what is the case and what ought to be the case. Other times, more cynical voices express the dichotomy by saying that facts are objective and values are subjective, where what is real is contrasted to something arbitrary, private, idiosyncratic, illusory, or otherwise illegitimate. In all these cases, the facts are thought to be just there, fully formed, regardless of and wholly independent of our thoughts and judgments about them. Wilfred Sellars dubbed this thesis "the myth of the given." The correlates to this notion that objects are merely given is that knowers are passive observers and that "objectivity" means seeing things from a neutral god's eye view, a view from nowhere that makes no presuppositions whatsoever, a kind of total open-mindedness. And values involve some kind of additional and distorting lens that makes some kind of arbitrary and illegitimate assumptions. Values are thus merely subjective opinions or prejudices that float independent of reality.

Following this line of thinking, it has often been argued that one could passively observe the facts without acknowledging or buying into any values, or one could rationally manipulate and strategize about this reality in a purely private, subjective and self-serving way. One such immoralist, Thrasymachus, argues in Plato's *Republic* Book 1, that the only reason people need to heed moral values is that society punishes those who violate them, so if we had a ring that made us invisible, we could ignore all social and moral norms with impunity, and it would be rational to do so in order to better promote one's self-interest. Socrates, of course, disputes this and argues that even with such a ring, ignoring values would be neither possible, rational, nor in our self-interest, as without them an immoralist would be unable to form ends of action or calculate rational means. Later in the *Republic* Socrates argues that the Good is like the sun-- it is both the source of the being of the world, and what makes it intelligible to us (504 b-509 c). In this analysis, there simply are no facts without values.

We will ultimately defend the Socratic thesis that thinking of facts as separable from, or independent of, values, or values as separable from facts, is incoherent. An adequate understanding of normativity recognizes an intrinsic relation between facts and values.

Hence, the wholly self-serving tyrant or the ego-driven immoralist could neither think clearly nor do what he wills.

Given that this thesis was widely recognized in many ancient traditions, why do so many people in the contemporary context think facts are independent of values? One explanation is that in the major strands of the empiricist philosophical tradition in Europe there arose a strong and persistent dichotomy between facts and values. Thinking through the modern debates surrounding epistemology can help us understand where this dichotomy comes from and why many people have found it so compelling.

It is illuminating to note first that the rise of the modern fact/value dichotomy followed the disintegration of the moral cosmos widely embraced in classical and medieval times, and generally embraced by most major traditions in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. It is a direct reflection of the modern European disenchantment of the

world, where everything real was reduced to its materiality and stripped of purpose and teleology, leaving only blind efficient causes. First physics, and then biology, adopted methods of explaining change that eschewed any appeal to ends, purpose, or design. Consequently, values were no longer a credible part of this objective world. The real world is material and all legitimate explanations and reasons are causal, and all non-causal explanations were thought to be as illusory as magic, witches, and gods, and were banished to the realm of subjective superstitions. This means that human intentions could no longer be taken at face value but have to be accounted for in terms of psychological, social and economic forces. The growth of the social sciences reflects this shift. Students go to college not to learn, to get better jobs, or to make friends, as they consciously and subjectively think, but they go to college due to the pressure of complex objective psychological, social, and economic forces.

Ironically, the hard-headed materialism and realism of early modernists like Hobbes soon gave way to the equally hard-headed skepticism of Hume. With Hume, empiricism follows Descartes into the theatre of the mind, where all we can observe and know is limited to superficial sense impressions. This serves to extend the subjectification of values to the subjectification of facts. Even our experiences of the substance and connective tissue of the material world lack independent reality and are fictions created by the mind.

First, given Hume's empiricist model of the mind (1748, Sect. 2-3), where all our ideas have to be copied from sense impressions, our ideas of substances, as enduring and self-subsistent realities, cannot be copied from the outward impressions of colors, shapes and movements that appear on the stage of the mind (1748, Sect. 4). Since Hume assumes a tabla rasa theory of the mind, and he admits we do have *ideas* of enduring and self-subsistent substances, he must look elsewhere for their origin. He concludes that these ideas must be copied from our inward sentiments and feelings as creatures of custom (1748, Sect. 5). It is not lost on Hume that this puts the supreme fact of realism, the objectivity of objects, on the same subjective ground as values and emotions.

When one is limited to observing a series of discrete and superficial sense qualities, not only do we lack outward impressions of substances, but we lack any outward impressions of causal connections. This leads to a powerful version of the problem of induction. All associations of ideas which are not deductively or analytically true, true by definition, will appear as contingent matters of fact, and there is no way to observe connections, let alone *necessary* connections, between them (1748, Sect. 4). Although, being creatures of custom, we will come to anticipate, and intensely believe, the appearance of a second event upon the appearance of a first event, heat upon the appearance of flame, for example, all that we observe with the outward senses is one discrete event followed by another. In effect, this makes all knowledge, all matters of fact, utterly contingent and "anecdotal." Correlation does not imply causation, and in Hume's empiricist model of the mind, all we ever can have is correlation.

The ultimate and frequently cited expression of the dichotomy between facts and values is Hume's Law: you cannot derive an ought from an is (1738, iii, 1, 1). Given that the world of our experience is limited to the theatre of the mind and has to be built up out of discrete and superficial sense impressions, what appears as reality

lacks any inner purpose or intrinsic value. All statements of facts or values are really just beliefs in the mind, and these beliefs are no longer about reality but about someone's subjective experience. From the fact that "Sue believes 'x is good'" we cannot logically infer "x is good," as the original fact merely says something factual about what Sue believes and not anything about the actual value of "x." In this way, all statements of value are reduced to facts of anthropology or psychology, so we can never infer what ought to be the case from what is the case.

Hume's skeptical challenges wake Kant from his dogmatic slumbers. They make Kant realize that every effort to extend knowledge under the empiricist assumption that knowers are passive observers who merely conform to objects as they are in themselves, fails to account for the possibility of Newtonian science and its success in describing universal and necessary laws of motion (1786, Second Preface). Just as the appearance of movement in the heavenly bodies above us is due to the rotation and revolution of the earth, and not merely to the motions of the heavenly bodies themselves, Kant's Copernican revolution in epistemology seeks to make a virtue of Hume's subjective turn by recognizing that the objects of our experience appear to us as they do, not because things are really like that, but because of our own synthetic interpretive activity. In other words, Kant discovers the crucial role of the "synthetic a priori," the inescapable and legitimate ways our mind employs specific presuppositions to actively shape our experience and make appearances intelligible. All sense intuitions are experienced through the application of the a priori concepts of substance and causality. He thereby addresses the problem of induction and reestablishes the "objective" validity of our knowledge of objects, and the conditions for the possibility of universal and necessary laws of nature. In so doing, Kant's Copernican revolution leaves us no way to experience or know things-in-themselves, thus ending both the notion of objectivity as passive observation and facts as givens, on one hand, and the notion of subjectivity as always an obstacle to knowledge, on the other hand.

The inability of isolated empirical experiences to produce universal and necessary laws for a passive subject has a direct parallel in morality. No sensory stimulus, no empirical force, and no historical, psychological, or social fact, can produce a state of genuine moral obligation (1785). Again, what is needed is the active contribution of a non-empirical, and non-contingent, a priori source. We are truly subject to moral laws only to the extent that we are sovereign with respect to them, since we are only obliged to obey laws we can recognize as the legitimate creation of our own independent, and hence a priori, exercise of reason. Kant uses synthetic a priori principles to reestablish the legitimacy of moral judgments. Only a rational being has this capacity to form principles, and adopt courses of action, that rest on pure a priori grounds.

Thus, Kant locates the source of the Moral Law in the purity of Reason, a faculty that is meant to determine the will to adopt courses of action on a priori grounds, independent of all facts of experience. Pure sincerity in friendship holds as a moral obligation even if all historical instances of friendships were self-serving, because the source of obligation rests on a priori grounds and not on contingent historical conditions. The moral obligation to treat persons as ends in themselves remains even if as a matter of empirical fact all persons have always used one another as means to their own subjective ends. Thus the a priori syntheses that determine experience, what

is the case, are fundamentally different from a priori syntheses that can determine a good will, what rational beings ought to do. Whereas the laws of nature that determine the facts of the phenomenal world arise through the immediate application of the a priori concepts of Understanding in experience, laws of freedom are created through the autonomous exercise of Reason. So Understanding determines what is empirically real (and transcendentally ideal) while Reason determines genuine moral obligations.

Kant's transcendental solution to Hume's skepticism, his immediate use of a priori concepts to establish the objectivity of objects in experience, and his use of a priori reason to establish the validity of values, comes at the price of preserving Hume's dichotomy between them. Kant shows the incoherence of, and dismantles, the dichotomy between "objective" and "subjective," but the dichotomy between facts and values is now enshrined in the difference between the faculty of Understanding that determines experience and the faculty of Reason that determines genuine moral obligations. The synthetic use of the a priori concepts of understanding, like substance and causality, determines the laws of nature and conditions the empirical facts about what is the case. The synthetic use of a priori reason to create unconditional or categorical principles determines moral ideals about what ought to be the case. For Kant these are utterly independent realms. Consequently, despite Kant's rejection of the myth of the given, and it's correlate the passive observing subject, and his profound recognition of the a priori synthetic activity of the subject as the necessary condition for both the intelligibility of facts and the legitimacy of values, the fact/value dichotomy remains. The faculties of Sensibility and Understanding combine to constitute the phenomenal world of our experience, the facts, while the faculty of Reason soars independent of these facts to create ideals and to stipulate what ought to be the case. With Kant, we still cannot derive an ought from an is.

Willard V. O. Quine (1951) identified two dogmas running through the empiricist tradition, from Hume and Kant to 20th Century positivists and logical empiricists. The first dogma is that there is a sharp line between analytic judgements—judgments that merely reflect the apriori work of reason where the subject of the statement contains the predicate and need only be deduced from it--and synthetic judgments that depend on a contingent *a posteriori* (empirical) experience since the predicate is not logically derivable from the subject. The second dogma is one of reductionism, where any meaningful statement is equivalent to a logical construct of simpler beliefs regarding empirical experience. Kant, like Hume, assumes both of these dogmas. Quine shows convincingly that both of these dogmas are incoherent and should be abandoned.

Hegel and Nietzsche had already abandoned the two dogmas of empiricism a century before Quine. By rejecting Kant's fundamental distinction between the faculties of Understanding, which constitutes the facts of human experience, and Reason, which constitutes ideals and genuine moral obligations, they effectively undermine Hume's Law. Hegel's phenomenology of Geist is simultaneously a story of empirical historical change, and a story of the creation of values through the self-actualization of reason. The historical facts regarding the spirit of an age determine the values and ideals those in the age hold, and their use of these values and ideals in turn determine the world. Nietzsche's genealogical story of how the will to power perpetually re-appropriates and reinterprets the world as received from the past, in order to give it the form of a function in the present, is more disjunctive and open-ended and hence

less tidy than Hegel's story, but it still serves to create a value-laden world that is full of meaning and purpose. Hence for Hegel and Nietzsche the sharp dichotomy between facts and values– and the Kantian dichotomies between empirical desire and rational will, necessity and freedom, heteronomy and autonomy, or between psychology and morality--all fall away.

In other words, Hegel and Nietzsche replace both sides of the fact/value dichotomy with normativity. To invoke "norms" here is to recognize something that evades Hume's law, as a norm is simultaneously a value grounded in a fact and a fact grounded in a value. This is not to simply affirm what Hume denies, but to question the dichotomy between facts and values he presupposes. Robert Pippin notes that a statement of fact is an act we must be accountable for, and our ethical task is not merely a matter of assessing and choosing between alternatives that are just there and forced upon us, like railroad tracks laid down in advance, but a matter of constituting the paths themselves and hence of getting the facts right (2009). In this way understanding the world around us is like reading a sentence—it is made possible due to our participation in a social/historical community. So, while a distinction between description and prescription seems to map onto the older fact value dichotomy, it makes more explicit that both description and prescription involve, and depend on, active participation in social practices, and hence they involve neither passive observation on one hand, nor an isolated and arbitrary subjectivism, on the other hand. So now, drawing on Hegelian and Nietzschean traditions, Pippin concludes that the emphasis is on the prima facie and provisional rational legitimacy of these free-floating and self-correcting processes (2008).

Consequently, objectivity does not require that we buy into the myth of the given. Contemporary disciplines no longer need to take "objectivity" to mean seeing something like it is in itself. Objectivity now means seeing something in light of, and being accountable to, certain procedural and evidentiary norms, as these norms are determined by the appropriate normative practices. This means that speaking is an act of agency, a deed, and hence speech acts, like other kinds of action, entail obligations of various kinds. Other people can hold us responsible for what we say just as they hold us responsible for what we do. Determining facts, like determining values, or meaning more generally, depends on taking a participant stance within social and disciplinary practices. This participant stance is common to everything from doing science to parenting—all that differs is the practice in question and the contextual norms in play. The strength of a claim to truth, like the morality of an action, depends on measuring up to a variety of relevant communal norms. Any legitimacy that disciplines, and moral and rational practices more generally, have rests on the accountability provided by participating in such communal activities.

C. S. Peirce claimed that even logic is a normative science (CP, 1.281). It is not about how people think, which is the subject of empirical psychology, but about how they ought to think, and so he classified it as a branch of ethics. Elsewhere he argued the contrapositive, namely that purely self-interested individuals would have to be irrational in all their inferences (1878, 615). They would not be able to constitute valid thoughts regarding either the value of their ends or the reliability of their means.

In conclusion, those who presume to separate their ends from their means, those who suppose values all float independent of facts, and vice versa, will fail both morally

and rationally. On the other hand, rational agency—whether in using logic, doing science, or raising a child--requires participating in normative practices, and participating in normative practices requires respecting communal norms, and hence recognizing both the fact of values and the value of facts.

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