

## Yoruba Family Values and Judeo-Christian Worldview: A Contextual Discourse

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**Abstract**

The Postmodern worldview has adversely affected the moral and religious values of our traditional institutions. Previous research has reported some shared religio-cultural values between African and Judeo-Christian worldviews. In modern society, the traditional family values of the Yoruba therefore became lost. Using historical, intercultural and interview methods, this paper engages the contextual cultural and moral discourse of the Yoruba traditional values and Judeo-Christian worldviews as a way to harmonize it with the Christian values for family living. The results are evaluated and applicable recommendations are made for the Afro-Christian communities.

**Keywords:** Yoruba people, family, cultural values, Judeo-Christian worldview, Intercultural, tradition.

**Introduction**

The search to realize African cultural forms in liturgy, music, organization and other spheres of Christian activity is not new in the academic efforts at 'indigenization of Christianity', 'Africanization of Christianity' or 'contextualization of Christianity' and other praxis or model it has taken (Peel, 2008; Oderinde, 2010). One major finding is the discovery that the African worldview is parallel to the Judeo-Christian worldview and this has provided the fulcrum on which related research or academic discourses have been launched. This African worldview is found in the people's mythologies, folklore, custom, culture, proverbs, and philosophy. Religious practices and moral values are one area of striking convergence between African and Judeo-Christian worldviews.

The Nineteenth Century European Missionary activities in Nigeria saw mass converts from the Yoruba religion to Christianity. Though much later, from around 1920 to the mid-1970s, the agenda was to Africanize Christianity of which the newly emerged Aladura movements, comprising mostly the said Yoruba converts to Christianity, were the exemplary case (Peel, 2008). The Yoruba Christians came into Christianity and despite their nagging sense that they were not at home in their new faith, they nonetheless found some relevance in the sacrificial concept of Christianity, the worship of God, Biblical moral chastity, Angelic intervention, prayer against evil spirit activities, the church teachings on respect for the elderly and obedience to parent, trusts in the relationship, teaching against marital infidelity, and good neighbourliness etc. These are shared concerns and areas of liturgical worship and religio-moral values espoused by both cultural and religious institutions. This paper seeks to answer the following questions: (1) 'What are the values that undergird the enviable parent-child relationship of the traditional Yoruba society?' (2) 'What connections can be made

between these traditional Yoruba family values and Biblical family values?’ (3) ‘What is the theological significance of the above to the Yoruba Christian’s development of an effective parent-child relationship in the home?’ and ‘How can the above provide a motivational tool or empowerment for the Afro-Christian communities in Nigeria especially Christians from the Yoruba people group?’

### **The Yoruba People Group of Nigeria**

The Yoruba ethnic group is one of the three major tribes in Nigeria. They originated from a common ancestor-Oduduwa from Ile-Ife in Osun State, South West Nigeria where the children of Oduduwa migrated to establish all other towns/cities in Yoruba land (Obatunde *etal*; 2019). The people and their language are known as Yoruba and within this categorization are several Yoruba sub-ethnic groups that are geographically located in the present Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ondo, Ekiti, parts of Kwara and Kogi states. In these states are found their distinct dialects and other cultural elements that identify each sub-ethnic group as Ijesha, Oyo, Egba etc. Generally, they all share the same worldview: cosmology, mythology, philosophy, marriage, health and therapeutic methods, gender relations etc. In traditional Yoruba society, the family is the basic social unit that provides a framework for most human social activity. The key components of the traditional Yoruba family structure: marriage, home, sexual relation, parent-child relationship, child training and discipline etc will be our succinct preoccupation here.

### **Heterogeneous Sex Marriage**

A cursory examination of Ifa texts (256 chapters) shows no record of same-sex marriages existed among the Yoruba (Olajubu, 2006). Also, according to [www.yorubareligion.org](http://www.yorubareligion.org), ‘The Yoruba religion is against being homosexual/Lesbian. The African traditional family set-up whether the nuclear or extended family is constituted by marriage between a husband/father who is a male and a wife (or wives) who is a female spouse. The traditional Yoruba family exemplifies this African family structure as opposed to modern cultural deconstruction that celebrates gay marriage and same-sex sexual activities. Same-sex marriages were alien to the traditional Yoruba thought system and society.’

### **The Centrality of the Home**

The home institution is at the centre of everything the Yoruba society celebrates. Whether religion, morals, training, skill acquisition, discipline, settling of disputes, or sexual relationship. For example, when sexual activities are taken out of marital relationships in the home, the Yoruba society frowns and disapproves it as misplaced, negatively tagging it as prostitution. Adeyinka (2021) avers that if a married man or woman is involved in illicit sexual activities outside his/her marital homestead he/she is indicted as ‘on yan ale’ meaning ‘he/she is cheating on his/her spouse’ or if a woman is sexually active outside of her marital home, she is stigmatized as ‘on do ko’ meaning ‘a married prostitute’. In the traditional Yoruba society, a morally depraved member of the society is invariably a product or reflection of failure in the home at the child’s moral development. Some wise sayings and axioms espouse the significance and pivotal place of the home to the overall well-being of an individual, group, and social contract. Some of these truisms include:

*Ile lati nko eso rode* (Aborisade, 2021) meaning charity begins at home. *Ile lan wo, ki a to so omo loruko* (Oluremi, 2021) meaning, a child is named based on the family lineage. *Bi inu ile o dun, bi igbe ni ilu nri* (Oyenekan, 2021), meaning when a home is not favourable, the town will be like a forest. *Ile labo simi oko*, meaning home is the resting place of the farm labour. *Ile same dun j’oye lo*, meaning my home pays me is sweeter than chieftaincy title.

### **Child in Traditional Yoruba Culture**

In traditional Yoruba culture, children are perceived as the most precious gifts from the creator. As such parents normally ensure that children are well catered for as soon as they arrive in the world. So many activities are carried out to ensure proper upbringing that will

produce in every child the culture of a well-mannered child which is called *omoluabi*. Some of these rites are discussed below.

**Procreative Culture:** The modern anti-procreative culture in marriage is bizarre and foreign to the Yoruba, African family values. That is not meant to say that the Yoruba people group is irresponsible in childbearing. Their common adage underscores this: *Omobere, osibere*, meaning ‘irresponsible childbearing is tantamount to insufficient care’. This saying is meant to discourage taking procreative values to the extreme where children are given birth without adequate planning, leading to abject poverty. Adedeji (2021) observed that ‘It is a social aberration for a couple in marriages to take a practical decision against childbearing and rearing. Such disposition is as a result of Western influence and never African custom’. According to Oyekan (2021) an Octogenarian Yoruba traditionalist, the birth of the child is the natural expectation of a couple in a new marriage which friends, family, and community members pray for and celebrate. ‘Prayers for fertility and the early arrival of the new baby are a key feature of traditional Yoruba marriage rites.’ Customary marriage rites include prayers generally expressed as *Ehin iyawo ko ni mo eni o* or *lehin osu mesan,omo rere okunrin, omo rere obinrin, abi ro, abi ye* (Olaleye,2021). These prayers translate to mean ‘The gods will grant the wife early conception’ or ‘After nine months it is our prayer that your family will welcome an arrival of a baby boy or baby girl that will not be ‘still birth’

**Child’s Birth Rites:** According to Idowu (1996:192), on the third day after the child’s birth, the oracle is consulted for it. This site is called *ikose-waye* or *Ese n taye*, the first step in the world. The main purpose is to find out what sort of child it is, what is *taboo* to it, and what things are to be done to preserve its good destiny or to rectify an unhappy one. Before a child is born, the oracle is consulted and due rites are observed (Sadiku and Sodiq, 2004:513). The Oracle consulted defines all that the child should do and what he/she should not do. As the child grows, the oracle gives directions as to career, marriage partner, plans, *et cetera*. Once these are known, the parents would be guided on how to handle the training of their children.

In keeping with African tradition, parenting is a common practice among the Yoruba tribe in western Nigeria. Among the Yoruba, the birth of a baby is welcomed with joy and funfair. The *Iya Agbebi* (traditional midwives) from accumulated experiences (Oke, 2008:50) attends to the labour process and provides immediate attention to the new child and mother. The primary hospitable and caring instinct of women in the extended family is brought to bear in the preceding ante-natal care. This includes physiotherapy exercise to lose and strengthen the limbs of the baby to adapt to life outside the womb” (Oke, 2008:51). Children are regarded as the most valuable of all God’s gifts. Hence, they are described in such an exalted manner with all kinds of names and adjectives such as, *omo l’ade arugbo* (leaving a child behind at old age informs a sense of fulfilment), *omo ni ’yun*, (children are of great value like rubies), *omo ni ’de* (children are of great value likebronze), *omo lere aye* (having a child is the greatest achievement one has in life), *omo l’aso* (one who has a child is dignified), *et cetera*.

During the birth of a child, there is usually a ceremony to celebrate the arrival of a new baby. Prominent among the activities that are organized as part of parenting among the Yoruba is the naming ceremony (*Is’omo l’oruko*) which is an initiation of the baby into society, (Sadiku and Sodiq 2004). It is held on the eighth day and is usually organized to welcome, mark and celebrate the arrival of a new baby into the world and the family. Therefore, it is not necessarily a religious celebration, baptism or christening. The naming ceremony is almost as old as mankind and it is an important aspect of Yoruba culture. Children are identified by the names they bear. This is why choosing the name of a baby is highly significant. *Is’omo l’oruko* (child naming ceremony) usually carries with it a big party in Yoruba society. Among the Yoruba people, like any other Africans, names are given to children with a purpose. Thus, it is said, “*Ile laawo k’ato s’omo l’oruko*” (One looks at the circumstances of one’s household before naming a child (Sadiku and Sodiq, 2004:513).

Most times, names are given to a child to reflect circumstances surrounding his or her birth such as family background, the position of the child in the home, parents' experiences, religious inclination, sense of gratitude, *et cetera*. For instance, in Yoruba culture, babies born in unusual ways may be named Ajayi (baby born face downwards), Dada (baby born with curly hair), or *Oke* (baby born with an unbroken membrane). Furthermore, examples of babies born on special occasions include *Abiodun* (baby born during a festival), *Bosedede* (baby girl born on Sunday), *Babatunde* (baby boy born after the death of a grandfather), *Yetunde* or *Iyabo* (baby girl born after the death of a grandmother) (Sadiku and Sodiq, 2004). In the same manner, a child born on the road is named *Abiona* while *Atinuke* is a child that is being pampered from the womb. *Ebun-Oluwa* means the Lord's gift. *Ojo* is a male child born with an umbilical cord around his neck, while a female child with the same experience is *Aina*. It is common to see a child in Yoruba land being given religious names such as *Ifabiyi*, meaning *Ifa* gave this; *Sangoyomi*, *Sango* (god of thunder) saved me; *Orisabunmi*, (the deity has given me this); *Ogunkunle*, *Ogun* (god of iron) has established himself, *et cetera*. Like most societies, the importance Africans attach to the issue of a child is shown by names given to him/her at birth. For example, *Omoboriowo*, (a child is more valuable than money), *Omoyajowo*, (child is worth more than money), *Omolola* (child is wealth), and *Omolade* (child is crown) are a few common ones.

Some of the ceremonial items used in naming ceremonies among the Yoruba people of western Nigeria include water, sugar, salt, honey, *orogbo* (bitter kola nut), *obi* (kola nut), and *ata're* (hot pepper). Each of these items has significant meanings and it is believed that when used to offer prayer by a very elderly person in the family during *is'omo l'oruko*, what usually follows is abundant blessings and outstanding successes for the child. Normally, the child is taken in the arm of the elderly person who conducts the ceremony and declares the name of the child publicly after the blessing. The declaration of the child's name is followed by libations which are a gift of wine to the spirits asking for their protection for the new baby. The ceremony is concluded with feasting.

The practice of Male Child Circumcision or the complete removal of the male sex organ foreskin has been reported in literature and oral tradition as a common cultural practice among the Yoruba ethnic group. However, there are differences in the perception of Female Child Circumcision (FCC) which may involve surgical partial or total removal of the external genitalia or other injuries to the female genital organ as discovered among some Yoruba such as the Egba and the Ijebu, both in Ogun State. In short, while there is general acceptance or positive perception toward Male Child Circumcision, there are Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) practising and non-FGC practising communities within the same ethnic group of Yoruba, South West Nigeria (Obatunde *etal*; 2019; Adeokun *etal*; 2006).

**Child discipline and training:** In Yoruba culture, training begins as early as the first week of birth (Odumuyiwa, 2006:3). This is because *kekere ni a ti i pa eekan iroko nitori pe bi o ba dagba tan, ipa ko le kaa* (it is easier to start the training and pruning of a child as early as possible, because if the child grows old, such training will be difficult (Oderinde, 2014:9). As the child grows, it is the duty of the mother together with other women in the family to train the child and nurture him/her. 'The discipline of children is an important issue among the Yoruba,' (Oderinde, 2014:9). According to Dopamu (2004:176), the Yoruba use certain words and expressions for 'discipline' and 'indiscipline.' When a person has self-control, it is said: *O ko arare ni ijanu* (He shows self-control). A person that shows great restraint in his actions, attitudes, and social and public life is described as having *ikoni-ni 'janu* (restraining, restraint). The person that develops the right attitude to life and does the correct thing always is described as having *igbowosi* or *agbowosi* (correct behaviour, etiquette). People say of him: *O mo bo ti gbowo si* (He knows how to behave). It can also be said of him: *O hu iwa eto* (He behaves rightly and correctly) Here, *ito* or *eto* (correctness; suitability) is used to denote a disciplined action. Discipline is associated with all aspects of life including habits, acts,



works, attitudes, relationships, hygiene, morality, ethics, and any other matters that involve man and his environment. In the same manner, Omobola (2012:311) argues that parenting in Yoruba culture also includes parents deliberately putting temptation in the mind of the child to test honesty, perseverance and truthfulness to mention but few. If any child falls into the trap, severe punishment is meted out to him/her. This type of training was given to children they believe was functional and relevant to the needs of society.

**Religio-Moral Instruction:** The Yoruba of South West Nigeria places a high premium on parenting. This is demonstrated in the use of some Yoruba maxims. Such wise sayings are given here with their literal translations such as *omo ti a ko ba ko ni yoo gbe 'le ti a ko ta*, meaning a child left untrained will eventually be the doom of his/her parents. An important aspect of training in African Religion is the teaching of *Odu* corpus to those children from the *Ifa* Religious background. Odumuyiwa (2006:3) noted that “A child from *Ifa* background is taught some *Odu* corpus and the moral teachings attached to such corpus.” The Yoruba also places a high premium on domestic and moral training of a child right from childhood. For instance, from childhood, virtues such as greetings, humility, honesty, hard work, respect, *et cetera*, are all inculcated into children for them to behave well in society. When greeting, a male child prostrates himself to his parents, elders and chiefs while a female child kneels. Apart from this, the mother prepares and feeds the child with a meal like *eko* (pap) that is good for different weather. As the child grows, he/she learns to crawl, sit, talk and walk with the mother guiding him/her.

Children are exposed to basic domestic responsibilities such as cooking, washing plates and clothes, grinding pepper, pounding yam and yam flour, fetching water and firewood, sweeping and so forth. Not only this, children are adequately disciplined in moral training to implant in them some moral values to become *Omoluabi* (a well-mannered person), the ultimate goal of child training. *Omoluabi* is a Yoruba philosophical and cultural concept used to describe a person of good character. The *omoluabi* concept signifies courage, hard work, humility and respect. An *omoluabi* is a person of honour who believes in hard work, respects the rights of others and gives to the community in deeds and actions. Above all, an *Omoluabi* is a person of integrity. These attributes are the core values very much cherished in Yoruba land. According to Agbetakin (2010:60), “The ultimate goal of the Yoruba is to be *Omoluabi*. *Omoluabi* means child born by *olu-iwa* the head/chief source/originator of *iwa* (Character). This is the quintessence of the Yoruba Race. Hence, to be an *Omoluabi* is to be of good character in all its ramifications (Ige, 2011). When somebody is referred to as *Omoluabi* in Yorubaland, he is the epitome of a ‘thoroughbred’.

### **Child and Family Values in Biblical Perspectives**

Our concern in this section shall be the Judeo-Christian worldview and Biblical disposition to family values centre around the child, parents, home, community, customary practices and biblical injunctions. The Biblical historical narratives and scholars’ research reports shall be our guide. The Biblical historical documentation of the first human marriage institution, home and family amply captures the foundational family structure that was later built on in Judeo-Christian society. The new home received ‘parental blessings’ from God for fruition, multiplication and dominion over external circumstances. The leadership of the home was handed over to the man- Adam because he existed first and was given the direction for the home (Gen.2:15-23; 3:16; Oderinde, 2012:24). One can see the joy, excitement and appreciation for the gift of their children from the name given to them. The first male child, Cain means ‘I have received a man from the Lord’ while the name Seth, the third son (born after the murder of Abel the second son) suggests that ‘God has given us a son to take the place of Abel who was killed by his brother Cain’ (Gen 4:1, 25). Naming a child to reflect specific circumstances at birth, in the home, after some religious or personal experiences etc, was common practice in Jewish culture. Samuel means ‘for I have requested him from the Lord’, while Joseph means ‘The Lord shall add to me another son’ and Naphtali means ‘with

great wrestling have I wrestled with my sister and I have prevailed' (1 Samuel 1:20; Gen.30:8, 24).

The Judeo-Christian society is Patriarchal and patrilineal. Also, 'in Jewish culture women and daughters were held in less regard' (Amolo, 2011:240). The leadership and headship of the home are steered by the father who in most instances customarily decides what direction the family should take. The birth of the child is expected, prayed for and celebrated (Gen.1:28, 24:60; 1 Samuel 2:20). This is because children are seen as divine blessings for the marriage and as continuity of the family lineage and culture (Gen.5; 25:9,12,19, 24:60; 36:22-29; Psalm 128, 127:3-5; Matthew 1:1-17). For a woman to be barren is seeing as a curse, a shameful thing (Gen.16:2; 29:31, 30:1, 23; I Sam.1:6) for which YAHWEH-the God of Israel intervention is sought (Gen. 25:19-21, 28:1-3; 30:17, 22; 1Samuel 2:1, 6, 10-17). After YAHWEH identified with Abraham, who became the ancestral progenitor for the Jewish race, the customary eight-day circumcision of the male child became a divinely instituted birth ritual, though a covenantal symbol (Gen.17:10-11; 21:4). Much later, with Moses, their customary and civil lawgiver, 'the ceremony of purification' for the male child in the Temple was added as a religious rite. Jesus Christ, the message of Christianity, as a child was equally subjected to these rituals (Luke 2:22-24).

The Christian society grew out of Judaism religion and culture, therefore these values, naturally are imported and adhered to, even though they are spiritualized in many ways. Marriage rites in Christian society today as in the Jewish culture are a communal affair that prioritizes the parental blessings, the decision of the father in handing over the bride, feasting, and payment of dowry by the groom's family (Gen.24:53-54; John 2:1-10). The chastity of the bride is a pride and in Jewish culture, it is usually confirmed and celebrated by her virginity being intact on 'the first night' with her husband (Gen.34:1, 5, 7, 26-30; 2 Samuel 13:2, 10-14, 18-21). The Christian tradition also forbids pre-marital sex. The Judeo-Christian religious and social structure does not accept homosexual lifestyle, gay marriage or same-sex amorous relationships. YAHWEH in the Old –Testament religious law of the Jews legislate the death penalty for such abominable practices (Lev.18:22; 20:13). This position was further reinforced by the New Testament moral regulation for the Christians (Romans1:26-27). Both cultures are pro-creative; espouse heterogeneous gender marriage in an extended-polygamous or nuclear-monogamous Judeo-Christian society.

A review of the history of the Jews found in the Bible shows that it is replete with socio-religious noble feats executed by outstanding young people of different ages. Even though it was a strongly patriarchal society where male chauvinism festered, the male child is preferred, and women and children are rated as second-class citizens. Nevertheless, we encountered the family record of young boys and girls like Moses and Joseph in Egypt, Samuel in Israel, Esther in Persia, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in Babylon who turned out as deliverers, administrators, Judge, political leaders, religious and moral instructors. From a Socio-religious perspective, the above establishes the fact that YAHWEH the God of Israel could entrust the well-being of his people to the hand of these young people who saw themselves as nationalists serving the good purposes of God and the interests of their society.

A parallel illustration of this was encountered in the Gospel record of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, his Apostles and early church traditions and teachings. Jesus often related in a friendly manner with children, he performed miracles for children, healing and delivering them from evil spirits. He even raised a twelve-year-old girl from the dead (Mark 7:25-30; 9:17-29; 5:22-24, 35-43). He taught that children should be 'received' or 'provided hospitality' in his name (Mark 9:33-37). Jesus was indignant with his disciple's attempt to shoo the children away when their parents brought them to him for his blessings (Whitehurst, 2004:139).

The early Christian society followed Jesus' perspectives of children as demonstrated in their instructions in the Epistles. We find metaphorical and concrete usage of childhood terminology about childbirth, infancy, childhood and parent-child relationship (Romans 8:22-25; I Corinthians 3:1-2; I Thess.2:7, Eph.1:5; 2:3; 4:14; 5:1, 8). The general concept is that children are valuable members of the community who by nature are weak and immature and thus in need of 'discipline', training and formation process to become godly and productive human beings (Aasgaard, 2008:269). In the Judeo-Christian society, this training, nurturing and discipline of the child centre on the role of both parents in the home, and outside of it- in other daily endeavours. The act of imparting a good legacy to children in the Jewish system was seen as the responsibility of the mother. However, the glory was given to the father most of the time. Learning how to write was among the common things taught to young Israelites at the early stage of life (Amolo, 2011:241).

The common teaching method practised by the Jewish fathers was oral instruction. The father asked questions and the children (sons) answered back. The content of the Jewish education a father teaches to his son was very general. The father handed on to his son the national traditions, and the divine commands given by their forefathers. At the heart of the instruction was the Torah, which itself enjoined the teaching of the commandments to children (Deut.4:9; 6:7; 11:19; 32:46). The same pivotal role of the parents, the father in particular, in the inculcation of religious and moral instruction, training, nurturing and admonition of the child is taken as a divine obligation in the Christian tradition. The Judeo-Christian culture or society prioritizes early child training. The biblical narratives demonstrate certain occasions when by supernatural insights or medium the future destiny or assignments of some children like Isaac, Moses, Samson, and John the Baptist were given to their parents to guide them in raising the child (Gen.17:19; Hebrew11:23; Judges 13:1-18; Luke 1:5-16). Generally, children are instructed with great diligence and care (Deut.6:23). They are required to honour and obey their parents, and are subject to the father's control in all things (Gen. 22:21; Nu. 30:5; Eph.5:1). However, in the Christian tradition, there seems to be a departure from the Jewish cultural view and treatment of the girl child as of lower social status to the male child. The Christian community encourages fair, equal and egalitarian treatment of both sexes in all matters of social relationship (Gal.3:28; I Cor.12:13; Col.3:11).

### **Findings, Implications and Recommendations**

Haven taken an intercultural approach in drawing out shared family values of both the traditional Yoruba and Judeo-Christian society, it is advantageous to highlight the implication of the findings and what recommendations emerge for promoting and strengthening the family values in the Afro-Christian communities/churches. From the foregoing, we can say that the Yoruba Society's understanding of the effectiveness of child training and moral formation when it is given very early is highly commendable in light of research reports from child educationists and psychologists (Varkey, 2010). This approach to child training is exactly what is recommended by the biblical command to train a child while it is young or a child (Proverbs 22: 6). Jesus as a child exemplified the benefits of receiving such early moral development, religious instruction and positive socialization. It was reported of him that 'and the child grew...in stature (physical development) and waxed strong in spirit (Spiritual growth), being filled with wisdom (Cognitive development) and having favour with God and man (proper socialization) (Luke 2:40; 2:52. This early child moral training is a missing gap that probably has resulted in many deviant young people, increased juvenile delinquency, violent activities, internet scam by young people in our society. Parenting practices, such as support and control, have been found in a large body of research related to delinquency (Rollins&Thomas,1977).

The Yoruba Christian family is culturally positioned to prioritize early inculcation of biblical morality of honesty, contentment, respect for authority, truthfulness, hardworking, accountability, self-discipline etc and teach their children the basic tenets of the Christian

faiths, stories of Biblical characters and memorization of simple but selected Bible passages. These moral and religious instructions are to be complimented by proper socialization. In traditional African society, as we have noted above, the moral development of the child, though the primary responsibility of the parents, nevertheless it is also carried out as a communal responsibility. The moral corruption of contemporary society is overarching in that the youngest people cannot easily find adult moral examples to challenge or motivate them.

Christian families, church leaders, and members who are passionate about the challenges facing young people can make it their God-given assignment to be role models to available young people within their circle of influence. If we are going to see a resurgence of interests and active participation in church/religious activities by many of our Christian young people who already are dis-orientated about life, we must demonstrate a genuine interest in them, stop sending them negative overtures that 'they are good for nothing' or 'have fallen short of our self-righteous standard' but stoop down to lift them and become hopeful of the younger generation. Perhaps for many young people, this will fill the gap created in their lives by their negative home environment. The communal responsibility for the positive development of the child in traditional Yoruba society is replicated in the understanding of 'the household of faith' or 'family of God's description of the church or Christian community (Gal.6:10; I Timothy 3:15; Heb.3:6).

It came out clearly during our interactions with some Yoruba Christian families that the Yoruba customary practice of legislating against the younger ones speaking up or the child 'answering back' when adults speak is being taken to some negative extremes. However, this is not a general rule but is usually enforced when the adult is correcting or rebuking the young ones to make sure they listen, do not argue back or put up unnecessary self-defence. These extremes include 'shouting down the child', 'demanding the child withdraw into his/her room' because it is shameful to see such by the visitor in the sitting room, and getting angry by the parents and choosing to feel insulted by the acts. A typical response from some young adolescents interviewed is that: 'even when one is trying to clarify a wrong assumption about another person's intention or action, one is still clamped down on as being rude and violating customs' (Dara, 2021& Bolu, 2021). We must come to the reality that times have changed, many adults around are predators, taking advantage of others, much earlier self-awareness of the child, earlier sexual maturation of the adolescents, dynamic and explosive environment, an avalanche of innuendos that robs children of their innocence, unfettered access to knowledge etc., are the identified reasons today's kids and youths cannot be taciturn or docile as in the traditional setting. It may spell doom for their immediate and future existence. In this context Christian parents are to protect the right of the child to be loved, accepted, given freedom of speech, and to be accorded the benefit of hearing him/her out, and be treated as a unique individual. While children are to be taught to respect adults, avoid being verbally rude etc. All Christian parents and the Yoruba Christian parents in particular must be easily accessible to their children and must be ready to listen to them to understand their challenges and guide them with sound wisdom drawn from experiences and the word of God.

In the same context of the centrality of the home in traditional Yoruba culture, the home environment where the child is safe, secure and supplied with parental care, comfort and concern is central to God's purpose of redemption and restoration of the cursed earth. The historical record of Moses' family background (Exodus 2:1-10; Acts 7:20-22), Jesus's own earthly family, his conception and childhood (Mathew 1-2; Luke 1-3) and Timothy's commitment to godliness as a youth, traceable to his home environment (II Tim.1:5-6), are positive illustrations of what the home environment is to the all-round development of the child and in the fulfilment of destiny. On the other hand, we are also quick to cite from Jewish history, the failed home experience of Eli, the High Priest. Eli's children, Hophni and



Phineas, for lack of fatherly discipline, missed the mark and were slain by God for their sexual immorality, sexually assaulting women who came to worship at the Temple and abusing their ecclesiastical position. The royal rumble in King David's family life as seen in the incest, insubordination, and murder that ravaged the life of his children is also instructive. King David was a laudable king but a lousy father while Eli was a notable Priest but a negligent father.

From another perspective, it can be seen that gay marriage and same-sex activities are a sinister attack on the traditional institution of marriage and childbearing. We consider it a strong possibility that in a few years to come, the prospect of finding a marital partner for a heterogeneous marriage in some societies may become very difficult. Also, giving birth to children and nurturing them up in the home setting for a fulfilled lifestyle in society will be negatively impinged upon. The anti-procreative culture of postmodern society takes a new turn from the use of contraceptives to the non-procreative sexual activities of two people of the same gender. This stands in antithesis to the Yoruba cultural acceptance of procreation and biblical pronouncement over the first couple in the first marriage institution to 'Be fruitful and Multiply...replenish the earth' (Genesis 2:20). The Christian home should be open to the blessing of the birth of the child(ren) planned wisely in the context of physical health and economic status. God wants the earth to be populated and is looking for children to be taught in the ways of the Lord as His missionary agents to actualize His purpose on earth. The decision not to procreate is to work against this purpose of God in creation and conversion.

The Afro-Christian church may not support or celebrate the marriage of an intending couple if it confirms from them their intention to decide against childbearing and rearing. On gender issues, Child rights and status, the Christian Scriptures uphold the uniqueness, value, and equality of both genders. The two genders are God's creation because 'male and female, he created them'(Genesis1:27,5:2; Mathew 9:14); both are joint heirs of eternal life(Romans 8:17; I Peter 3:7), and in marriage, a representation of the 'Groom-Bride' allegorical description of what Jesus is to the Church-his people(Ephesians 5: 23, 25, 27; Rev.21:2) Even the modern secular society and related local and international social institutions like UNICEF, UNO, UNESCO, Planned Parenthood, Nigerian Society for Family Health, and Nigerian Women Lawyers Advocacy for Human Right etcetera, stands against discrimination of the feminine gender or the girl-child, and have made giant strides in enforcing and achieving their goals in many ways. It is appropriate to mention the activities of Feminist Theologians, of which Amba Oduyoye Modupe, Dorcas Akintunde and Oderinde Olatundun are notable Nigerians in that movement. The movement has found enough biblically justifiable reasons to defend women's status, dignity, and intelligence, intellectual and spiritual capacity for ecclesiastical and political leadership.

These African Feminist Theologians by their untiring campaign, publications and advocacy raise awareness of the need to upturn the repressive status and stereotype accorded the feminine gender or girl-child as a sex object, reproductive machine, second-class citizen, inferior being and an appendage to the male folk especially in the family setting. To their credit, many women have been liberated with a measurable societal positive and progressive disposition to women folks. These are the inspiring motivation for Yoruba women in particular and the Afro-Christian churches in Nigeria to break whatever limitations they think the traditional society and its cultural constructs has placed on the feminine gender-women or the girl child, especially where it relegates the purposes of God in family relationship.

We must make important recommendations on the divisive cultural disposition to the practice of Female Genital Mutilation/Circumcision (FGM) in some Yoruba ethnic groups. This practice should be discouraged because of the sexual health and reproductive dangers that have been associated with it. For the Yoruba Christians, going by the Judeo-Christian culture, we find no biblically approved precedence for it too. The modern medical practice

considers the eight-day and upward as safe for the baby circumcision not to be unnecessarily traumatizing for the child. This validates the indigenous health therapeutic technique of the traditional Yoruba society and the ancient wisdom of the Judeo-Christian world in male child circumcision.

Finally, we have noted that the ultimate goal of the traditional Yoruba is to see the child turn out to become an *omoluwabi*, whose morally upright personality and glowing attributes we have described in the first section of this paper. We may consider the term or designation *Born again* as the church version of an *omoluwabi* at least going by who such a fellow is and what kind of lifestyle is expected of him in the traditional Yoruba society. The ultimate goal of a Christian family is for their children to be transformed by parental teaching, training, nurturing and admonition in the way of the Lord. The *omoluwabi* goal of child training among the Yoruba people group is a strong motivation and aspiration for Yoruba Christian parents to work together with themselves, the church, the school teachers, their child peers and other stakeholders to achieve results of seeing their children becoming godly, morally upright, law-abiding and positively impacting the society and fulfilling their God-given destiny.

### Conclusion

The study examined the traditional Yoruba family values, and where it shares the same worldview with the Judeo-Christian or biblical tradition. From these it provides a scripturally balanced approach to the parent-child relationship for Christian converts from such cultural backgrounds. This study engages in a contextual theological discussion that centres its argument on biblical context, contemporary issues and the importation or adaptation of Yoruba traditional family values. This paper also brought to the fore a few problems confronting parent-child connectedness on the part of the parents and as well pointed out certain confounding factors in African (Yoruba) traditional family settings that modern Christian homes/Afro-Christian churches should subject to scriptural rationalization and contemporary assessment. The rich traditional Yoruba people group moral and religious heritage, in many ways, position and prepare Christian converts from this ethnic tribe to easily incorporate biblical family values into their marriages, home and the parent-child relationship.

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### **Oral Interviews/Personal Communication**

1. Adeddeji Kolawole, Aged 76, an African Religion Scholar, June 2, 2021.
2. Elder James Oyenekan, an octogenarian Yoruba traditionalist, June 7, 2021.
3. Victoria Olaleye, Aged 71, a community women leader, June 7, 2021
4. Raphael Adeyinka, Aged 68, a traditional moral thinker, July 5, 2021
5. Oluremi Esther, Aged 72, an African Religion Scholar, July 8, 2021.
6. Bolutife Babatunde, Aged 22year, adolescent, July 8, 2021.
7. Dara Oluwatoba, Aged 17 years, teenager, July 10, 2021.