

Biblical Ethics and African Approaches to Social Justice and Reconciliation

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Abstract

This study explores the intersection of biblical ethics and African approaches to social justice and reconciliation, examining how biblical principles align with indigenous African moral frameworks in addressing societal issues. Biblical ethics, rooted in justice, love, and communal well-being, provide a moral foundation for addressing injustice and fostering reconciliation. Similarly, African ethical systems emphasize communal harmony, restorative justice, and collective responsibility toward one another and traditional reconciliation mechanisms. By engaging biblical teachings on justice (e.g., Amos 5:24, Micah 6:8) and reconciliation (e.g., in Colossians 3:12-17), this study highlights their relevance to African social structures and conflict resolution models. The research employs both primary sources approach with interviews from ten (10) purposively selected Key Informant Interviews (K.I.I) and In-Depth Interviews (I.D.I) and secondary sources by integrating theological analysis, ethnographic insights and comparative ethical study. Biblical exegesis is used to analyze key texts on justice and reconciliation, while ethnographic methods, including interviews to explore the African traditional justice systems of Traditional Palace Courts (TPCs) for reconciliation practices among the Yoruba of Ado-Ekiti. A comparative ethical analysis examines the similarities and differences between biblical and African ethical frameworks, assessing their applicability to contemporary African societies. This interdisciplinary methodology enables a comprehensive understanding of how biblical and African traditions can inform each other in promoting social justice and reconciliation. The study ultimately argues that a synthesis of biblical ethics and African approaches can offer a holistic and contextually relevant framework for addressing social injustices and fostering lasting peace in African communities.

Keywords: Biblical Ethics, Social Justice and Reconciliation among the Yoruba of Ado Ekiti, Ethnographic Methods and Comparative Ethical Analysis.

Introduction

Biblical ethics and African approaches to social justice and reconciliation offer complementary perspectives on addressing societal injustices and fostering communal harmony. Both frameworks emphasize moral responsibility, justice, and reconciliation as foundational principles for sustaining peace and equity in society. Biblical ethics, derived from scriptural teachings, promote justice, love, and restoration, aligning with African traditional values of communalism, restorative justice, and reconciliation. The convergence of these ethical paradigms provides a valuable lens for understanding and addressing social justice issues in

Africa. This study explores how biblical ethics intersect with African approaches to social justice and reconciliation, highlighting their relevance to contemporary African societies. Biblical ethics refer to the moral principles and values derived from the Bible that guide human conduct. These principles are rooted in the nature of God and His expectations for human relationships and societal structures. Key themes in biblical ethics include justice *mishpat*, righteousness *tsedaqah*, love *agape*, and reconciliation *katallage*. The Old Testament emphasizes justice as a divine imperative, as seen in Amos 5:24, which states, "Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream". Similarly, Micah 6:8 calls for individuals to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. The New Testament builds on these principles, with Paul emphasizing the concepts of put to death evil vices, put away bad habits and put on good virtues as we have them in Colossians 3:12-17.

Biblical ethics are not merely abstract principles but are deeply practical, influencing social policies, legal systems, and community interactions. They provide a foundation for addressing oppression, economic injustices, and conflict resolution, advocating for fairness, dignity, and the restoration of broken relationships (Wright, 2004). Christian theologians argue that biblical ethics call for active engagement in social justice, challenging systems of exploitation and promoting the well-being of all individuals, particularly the marginalized (Stassen & Gushee, 2003). African ethical systems are deeply rooted in communal values, emphasizing the interconnectedness of individuals within society. The African worldview perceives justice not as punitive but as restorative, focusing on repairing relationships and restoring harmony (Mbiti, 1969). Traditional African justice systems, such as those practiced among the Yoruba of Nigeria, the Akan of Ghana, and the Zulu of South Africa prioritize mediation, resolution, dialogue, and consensus-building rather than retributive justice or trading blames. The concept of Ubuntu, which means "I am because we are," encapsulates African ethics by emphasizing mutual care, collective responsibility, and reconciliation (Tutu, 1999). This philosophy aligns with biblical teachings on love and reconciliation, where justice is not merely about punishment but about restoring broken relationships to the initial shape (Matthew 5:23-24). African reconciliation mechanisms often involve elders, community leaders, palace courts and spiritual figures who mediate conflicts, encourage repentance, and facilitate the reintegration of offenders into society. These practices resonate with biblical principles of forgiveness and restorative justice, as seen in Jesus' teachings on reconciliation in Matthew 18:15-17.

The convergence of biblical ethics and African approaches to social justice and reconciliation offers a holistic framework for addressing contemporary social challenges in Africa. Both emphasize communal well-being, moral responsibility, and the necessity of reconciliation for societal harmony. Biblical teachings on justice and reconciliation can complement African traditions by providing theological justification for ethical practices that promote peace and equity (Katongole, 2017). Conversely, African traditions offer practical models of conflict resolution and justice that enrich biblical ethical discourse. In post-colonial Africa, where societies grapple with the legacies of colonial injustices, economic disparities, and ethnic conflicts, integrating biblical ethics with African justice systems can contribute to sustainable peace and social transformation. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, is a notable example of how biblical principles of forgiveness and African reconciliation practices can work together to heal national wounds (Tutu, 1999). Similar approaches can be applied to contemporary conflicts in Nigeria, Rwanda, and other African nations, where communal tensions and historical grievances persist.

Research Approach and Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach, incorporating biblical exegesis, ethnographic analysis, and comparative ethical study. Biblical exegesis will analyze scriptural texts on justice and reconciliation, drawing insights from both the Old and New Testaments. Ethnographic methods, including interviews and case studies, will explore African traditional justice systems, particularly among the Yoruba of Ado-Ekiti. Comparative ethical analysis will examine the intersections and divergences between biblical and African moral frameworks, assessing their applicability in addressing contemporary social justice issues. This

interdisciplinary approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Biblical ethics and African approaches to social justice and reconciliation share fundamental principles that emphasize justice, communal responsibility, and reconciliation. By exploring their intersections, this study seeks to demonstrate how these ethical frameworks can inform efforts to address social injustices and foster peace in African societies. A synthesis of biblical and African ethical traditions offers a robust and contextually relevant model for addressing conflicts, economic disparities, and historical grievances. Through interdisciplinary research, this study aims to contribute to contemporary discussions on social justice, providing insights for theological scholars, policymakers, and community leaders.

Literature Review:

Biblical ethics and African approaches to social justice and reconciliation provide valuable frameworks for addressing issues of justice, peace, and societal transformation. Biblical ethics emphasize principles such as righteousness, mercy and justice, while African approaches prioritize communal harmony, restorative justice, and reconciliation. This literature review explores these themes, highlighting their relevance to contemporary social justice issues. Biblical ethics are deeply rooted in the moral teachings of both the Old and New Testaments. The Hebrew Bible, particularly the prophetic literature, emphasizes justice as a divine mandate. Passages such as Micah 6:8 call for justice, mercy and humility (Wright, 2010). The prophets, including Isaiah and Amos, strongly condemn oppression and economic exploitation while advocating for societal righteousness (Brueggemann, 2014). In the New Testament, Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) highlight love, forgiveness, and ethical living as core principles (Hays, 1996). His concern for marginalized groups, including the poor, widows, and oppressed, reflects a commitment to social justice. The book of Colossians is also of the opinion according to McNeil that reconciliation is all about how to relate with each other or one another even following the time that pardon and fairness had taken place; however, nonexistence of antagonism is probable without a spiritual elements such as spiritual love, kindness, meekness, lowliness, patience, fore-bearing etc. He further remarks that reconciliation is achievable when it is approached mainly as a spiritual procedure that necessitates an attitude of trust in the integration work of Christ. To give comprehensive qualities of what reconciliation is McNeil explains reconciliation to be a continuing spiritual progression relating to pardon, remorse and fairness that brings back wrecked relationships and organization to imitate God's new purpose for every creation to prosper (McNeil 2015)

African ethical systems emphasize communal values, relational accountability, and the philosophy of **ubuntu**, which means "I am because we are" (Ramose, 2002). Ubuntu promotes interdependence and collective responsibility, aligning with African traditions of conflict resolution and restorative justice (Tutu, 1999). Unlike Western retributive justice, African approaches focus on healing and reconciliation through truth-telling, dialogue, and compensation, as demonstrated in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (Villa-Vicencio, 2009). Although biblical and African ethical traditions differ in their methods, they share a fundamental commitment to justice and reconciliation. Biblical justice often involves divine accountability and moral absolutes, while African justice emphasizes social harmony and relational restoration even after estrangements among the Yoruba of Ado-Ekiti (Láléye, 2014). Some scholars advocate integrating these approaches to create a holistic model of justice and reconciliation, balancing theological principles with indigenous wisdom (Katongole, 2017). This integration can help address contemporary challenges such as political corruption, ethnic conflicts, and economic disparities. Biblical ethics and African approaches to social justice and reconciliation offer complementary perspectives for promoting peace and justice. Biblical ethics provide a theological foundation for justice, while African traditions emphasize communal healing and restoration. A combined approach can provide a model for addressing social injustices in Africa and beyond.

A. Biblical Ethics of Justice, Love, and Righteousness in Micah 6:8 and Amos 5:24

The prophetic books of the Old Testament emphasize justice, love, and righteousness as foundational ethical principles. Micah 6:8 and Amos 5:24 serve as central texts in biblical ethics, calling individuals and societies to uphold divine moral standards. This section explores the exegetical roots of these verses, highlighting their theological significance and ethical implications. Concerning justice, Micah 6:8 states that, "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (NIV). The Hebrew term *mishpat* (justice) signifies fairness, equity, and the proper application of divine law (Wright, 2010). Justice in this context goes beyond legal fairness; it implies active engagement in rectifying social inequalities (Brueggemann, 2014). The phrase "to act justly" demands ethical behavior in both personal and societal relations, reflecting God's concern for the vulnerable. As regards righteousness and love Amos 5:24 declares, "But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!". The term *tzedakah* (righteousness) refers to right relationships with both God and people (Hays, 1996). Amos critiques empty religious rituals and emphasizes that true worship must be accompanied by justice and ethical living (Gustafson, 1981). Love, in this prophetic tradition, embodies steadfast commitment to God's moral order and compassion for others. The ethical demands of Micah 6:8 and Amos 5:24 highlight a holistic approach to justice, love, and righteousness. These principles call believers to align their faith with social responsibility, ensuring that divine justice permeates all aspects of life.

B. African Ethical System: Community Harmony, Restorative Justice, and Reconciliation Mechanisms

The African ethical system is deeply rooted in communal values, emphasizing harmony, justice, and reconciliation as essential for societal well-being. Traditional African societies prioritize moral values that foster peaceful coexistence, promote the restoration of relationships, and uphold justice through collective participation rather than punitive measures (Mbiti, 1990). African ethics is centered on the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, which underscores interdependence, mutual respect, and collective responsibility (Gyekye, 1997). The maxim, "*I am because we are*," reflects the communal approach to morality, where individual well-being is tied to that of the larger society. Traditional African societies function as extended families where conflicts are resolved through dialogue and consensus, ensuring the stability of the community (Wiredu, 2004). Social norms and taboos regulate behavior, reinforcing ethical conduct through communal expectations rather than rigid legal frameworks. Unlike Western legal systems that emphasize retribution, African justice systems focus on restoration and reconciliation. Restorative justice in Africa seeks to repair harm rather than impose punitive sanctions (Tutu, 1999). The *gacaca* courts in Rwanda, for instance, were instrumental in resolving post-genocide disputes by allowing offenders to confess, seek forgiveness, and reintegrate into society (Clark, 2010). Similarly, in many African communities, conflict resolution is managed by elders who facilitate mediation and compensation, ensuring that both the victim and offender find resolution. This approach prioritizes healing, emphasizing the reintegration of wrongdoers rather than alienation (Zartman, 2000).

Reconciliation in African societies is often achieved through communal ceremonies, rituals, and dialogue. Traditional African justice systems involve *palaver* sessions, where disputing parties engage in open discussions facilitated by community elders (Murithi, 2009). Symbolic acts such as sharing meals, exchanging gifts, and public apologies play crucial roles in restoring broken relationships. For instance, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) demonstrated how African reconciliation mechanisms could be adapted to national contexts, promoting truth-telling and forgiveness (Tutu, 1999). Also, among the Yoruba of Ado - Ekiti, mechanisms like covenants, oaths, taboos and atonement are very critical when it comes to reconciliation. In every African society, there exist several covenants that people put in place to control numerous relationships; such as marital issues, agreement, settling of quarrels, admissions into "societies", borrowing of properties and other various promises. In the moral structure of the Yorùbá people, covenant plays a very important role in peace making, reconciliation and peaceful communal living. To say the truth, both at individual dealing and deity-to-human relationships, all is largely depended on covenants cutting (Idowu, 1962). Therefore, the African ethical system prioritizes communal harmony,

restorative justice, and reconciliation. These values ensure that justice is served without severing social ties, making African ethics a model for sustainable peace-building.

C. Critical Exegetical Analysis of Micah 6:8 and Amos 5:24 as regards Justice and other virtues in the Old Testament

Justice is a central ethical and theological theme in the Old Testament, particularly in the prophetic literatures of Micah 6:8 and Amos 5:24. They provide a profound critique of societal injustice and a divine mandate for ethical living. This exegetical analysis explores the historical context, linguistic significance, and theological implications of these passages. The Historical and Literary Context of Micah 6:8 is part of a legal disputation where God indicts Israel for failing to uphold covenantal obligations. The verse serves as a summary of divine expectations: "To act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (NIV). Amos 5:24, in contrast, appear within a harsh critique of Israel's empty religiosity: "But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (NIV). The prophets emphasize that justice is not merely an abstract ideal but a practical demand for social transformation (Brueggemann, 2014). Also, as regards linguistic and theological analysis of the two texts, the Hebrew term *mishpat* (justice) in both passages denotes fairness, equity, and the proper application of God's laws (Wright, 2010). It is often linked to the protection of the poor and marginalized, reflecting divine concern for social equity (Hays, 1996). The imagery in Amos 5:24 of justice as an ever-flowing river suggests that justice must be ongoing and unceasing, rather than sporadic acts of charity (Gustafson, 1981). Therefore, both Micah and Amos affirm that true worship is inseparable from justice. Their prophetic messages challenge believers to embody divine justice in societal structures, advocating for systemic righteousness rather than ritualistic religiosity.

D. Critical Exegetical Interpolation of Colossians 3:12-17 with regard to reconciliation in the New Testament

Both Ephesians and Colossians deal much on the subject of reconciliation. The Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians exhibit significant textual similarities. Specifically, out of the 155 verses in Ephesians, approximately 78 have parallels in Colossians to varying degrees. This accounts for about 50% of Ephesians' content, Colossian is here chosen. Colossians 3:12-17 provides a theological foundation for Christian reconciliation, emphasizing virtues that foster unity and peace. Paul's exhortation to the Colossians underscores the transformation of believers through Christ, urging them to adopt a new ethical identity marked by compassion, forgiveness, and love. This exegetical analysis explores the historical context, linguistic significance, and theological implications of the passage as it pertains to reconciliation in the New Testament. Historical and Literary Context Colossians was written during Paul's imprisonment, addressing false teachings and urging the church to remain rooted in Christ (Dunn, 1996). Colossians 3:12-17 falls within a broader discussion of ethical living, contrasting the old sinful nature with the new life in Christ. The passage emphasizes virtues necessary for communal harmony, linking reconciliation with spiritual transformation (Wright, 2008).

Verse 12 calls believers to "clothe themselves" with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. The Greek term *splanchna oiktirmou* (σπλάγχνα οἰκτιρμοῦ), translated as "compassion," denotes deep, heartfelt mercy (Thielman, 2005). This virtue is foundational for reconciliation, as it requires believers to empathize with one another. Verse 13 commands forgiveness, paralleling Christ's forgiveness of believers. The Greek verb *charizomai* (χαρίζομαι) means to grant favor freely, emphasizing grace in reconciliation (O'Brien, 1998). Paul links forgiveness to divine example, reinforcing that reconciliation must mirror Christ's redemptive work. Verse 14 highlights love as the supreme virtue that "binds all together in perfect unity." The Greek term *agapē* (ἀγάπη) signifies selfless, sacrificial love, essential for true reconciliation (Lincoln, 2000). Without love, reconciliation is incomplete and unsustainable. Verse 15 speaks of the "peace of Christ" ruling in believers' hearts. The Greek word *brabeuetō* (βραβεύετω), meaning "to rule," conveys the idea of peace acting as an arbiter in relationships (Moo, 2008). Paul suggests that peace should govern decision-making, ensuring reconciliation is prioritized. Verse 16 emphasizes the transformative power of God's word in fostering reconciliation. The phrase *ho logos tou Christou* (ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ) refers to Christ's teachings permeating

believers' lives, leading to wisdom and mutual edification (Witherington, 2007). Singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs reflects a communal worship experience that reinforces unity. Verse 17 concludes with an all-encompassing exhortation: "Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus." This verse underscores the necessity of Christ-centered living, where reconciliation is an outflow of obedience to Christ (Harris, 1991). Finally, Colossians 3:12-17 presents a holistic vision of reconciliation, intertwining virtues such as compassion, forgiveness, love, and peace. Paul's theological argument underscores that reconciliation is not merely a human endeavor but a divine mandate rooted in Christ's transformative work. By embodying these virtues, believers can foster genuine reconciliation within the church and beyond.

E. The Structures of Reconciliation and Peacemaking within the Yoruba of Adó-Èkìtì

One major characteristics of Adó-Èkìtì system of reconciliation is peacemaking (Ajibade, 2021). In any form of society, estrangement, conflict and misunderstanding among individuals cannot be ruled out. The sources of these estrangements vary from economic, social, religious, marital, contractual, and professional to political matters. At every situation of the society, they are bound to be people who will renege on their contractual commitments in the simplest language that would let the other fellow down. (Lai Olúròde and Olúsànyà. 1994) The sources through which principles govern human behaviour arise may be difficult to locate especially in societies with recent written records. The laws which regulate human conduct may be as old as possibly can be imagined. It is usually in the area of economic activities that such laws may seem fully developed. Thus a society where fishing is the main occupation may have an elaborate set of rules governing the allocation of fish ponds and who has the right at a point in time to fish and at where. In a sedentary culture, where agriculture is the main means of livelihood, laid law maybe expected to be well worked out because land in that society constitutes a scarce resource. And for people who rear cattle, laws may focus more on the allocation of grazing land.

What is central to the process and qualities of reconciliation and adjudication is primarily "Peacemaking" between estranged parties during conflict or misunderstanding. The resolution of the conflicts is not expected to lead to a permanent break in social relationship. In Adó-Èkìtì especially at the native palace court, the process of adjudication must seek to re-establish the status quo between the feuding parties. Thus what (Peristiany, 1956) said of the kipsigis in Kenya is also true of the Yorùbá of Adó-Èkìtì social judicial system. According to him: "The leaders of communities are closely familiar with each complainant and they are aware of the situation for which allegation and counter-allegations are made in opposition to each other... and judgment is a therapy that has to please the councils, plaintiffs and the accused person. The characteristic of a just judgment is a concession that takes care of the ethical order and societal reality". To any affiliate of this little scale and undifferentiated people, the Western court of edict with its lack of interest, its line of work, attitude and its recurrent persistence on revenge instead of compensation may perhaps come out as administering, not justice but an inflexible, theoretical and heartless procedure.

The above characteristics of the legal system explain the resort to the traditional mode of adjudication in order to resolve social conflict, it is not that colonialism has not had an impact on the traditional mode of justice, administration and communal peace, but the old system retains its attraction. (Olúsànyà, 1989) provides a justification for research on issues such as this in his study of six methods of traditional theft detection still in use among the Yorùbá. The Yorùbá system of adjudication and reconciliation which is not far-fetched from that of Adó-Èkìtì which abhors the use of force to resolve conflict or seek redress among parties except if all peaceful avenues of reconciliation proved abortive. A person of good birth is not expected to take laws into his own hands. Indeed, the 'Oníwàpèlẹ́', that is, 'the meek in character' is not expected to engage in street fighting. As a matter of fact, "long before the establishment of British rule in Yorùbá land, the people had reached the stage where redress for injuries, suffered directly or indirectly was taken out of the hands of the individual and his kindred (Fadipe 1970)". The previous point alluded to by Peristiany above re-echoes in this fact. The Yorùbá are not interested in retributive and reparatory justice but also in what may be called peacemaking justice. In peacemaking justice, the aim is to intervene and arbitrate in

quarrel and misunderstanding which impair kinship or social solidarity or are likely to deteriorate into an actual breach of the community peace. Peacemaking justice is little at all developed in western countries. Among the Yorùbá it is considerably developed. In this form of justice more than in others while the apportionment of praise and blame is the desire, it sometimes requires to be tempered by the necessity to conciliate according to the prejudices and customs current in Yorùbá society. Thus a characteristic of the Yorùbá system of conflict resolution is peacemaking. Among the Yorùbá of Adó-Èkitì once a case is settled, the guilty party may be punished or fined or compelled to make a befitting apology to the wronged person. This is done so that their *ab inito* relationship is not affected even after the wrong is committed. Once a case is satisfactorily resolved, kolanuts may be brought by the parties to the conflict and this may be distributed among the judges and the audience so that the peace that is restored may be spread across. The feuding parties may be expected to share one lobe of kola nut and eat it together.

No matter the subject of reconciliation (except murder case), decisions are taken which are tailored towards reconciliation, mutual cooperation and unity. Peacemaking is always taking place though sometimes may be unsolicited. It could be at bus-stop, water-collection point, at a social gathering or at market place. Among the Yorùbá of Adó-Èkitì, when neighbours notice that verbal exchanges between couples are in pitched tone, such neighbour, without being solicited, may run there to make peace. Most Yorùbá communities conduct their affairs regarding conciliation in accordance with the Yorùbá proverb that; 'a young child's head does not bend sideways while an old person is in the market'. This means that an elder person does not stand by looking while two people are fighting. The old person is expected to act as an umpire and make peace between them. Peacemaking is indeed an undying aspect of the people's heritage and it is so entrenched that one may be blamed for failure to intervene to separate quarrelling people. The blame may be more if one is considered to be able to intervene meaningfully to restore social order and peace. Thus mere passers-by are also expected to constitute an ad-hoc court and play the role of judges temporarily in order to make peace. Witness may be summoned on the spot and then once peace is restored, the crowd that would have shown interest disperses.

In peacemaking, seniority is of importance. Older persons are assumed to be more knowledgeable and are expected to use their wisdom to settle misunderstanding between people. Husbands are also regarded as superior to their wives and should make peace with regard to their wife's relationship with others. In a situation where co-wives are involved in a conflict, a neutral person other than the husbands may be expected to make peace. The husband may be an interested party because the co-wives may be fighting over resource allocation or task allocation within the domestic economy. As a manifestation of the reconciliation process among the Yorùbá of Adó-Èkitì, the individual who makes peace in a case may himself admit causing the occasion that has led to the conflict. This is merely to bring happiness to the parties so as not to apportion blame. Sometimes, the peacemaker may prostrate before the feuding parties to restore lasting peace (Olúróde, and Olúsànyà 1994).

F. Relevance of African Social Structure and Conflict Resolution Models

African societies are characterized by deeply rooted social structures that have historically played significant roles in managing disputes and promoting communal harmony. These social systems are not only frameworks for governance and identity but are also central to traditional conflict resolution mechanisms that remain relevant in contemporary society. Understanding these structures and their conflict resolution models offers valuable insights for peacebuilding and restorative justice. At the heart of African social organization is the communitarian worldview, where the individual exists in relation to the community. This philosophy is expressed in the concept of *ubuntu* – "I am because we are" – which emphasizes interconnectedness, mutual respect, and collective responsibility (Tutu, 1999). This worldview informs traditional conflict resolution processes that aim at restoring relationships rather than merely punishing offenders.

African conflict resolution is often embedded in kinship systems, age grades, and councils of elders as can also be seen in the Yoruba system of adjudication, peacemaking and social justice

which serve as mediators and arbiters. These structures function within a moral framework shaped by customs, proverbs, and collective memory. Elders are seen as custodians of wisdom and impartiality, use dialogue, storytelling, and negotiation to mediate disputes (Gyekye, 1997). Their authority is derived not from coercive power but from communal trust and cultural legitimacy. One of the key features of African conflict resolution is its restorative approach. Unlike Western legal systems that focus on retribution or abstract legal principles, African models prioritize reconciliation, reintegration, and social harmony (Nwolise, 2005). Offenders are often required to apologize, pay reparations, and perform rituals to restore broken relationships and community equilibrium. These actions are not only punitive but also therapeutic for victims and the community.

The relevance of these models in modern conflict resolution is evident in their application to post-colonial and post-conflict societies. Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, such as the one in South Africa, drew heavily from indigenous practices that emphasize confession, forgiveness, and public truth-telling (Villa-Vicencio, 2009). Similarly, in community mediation and restorative justice programs across Africa, traditional conflict resolution principles continue to offer culturally grounded alternatives to adversarial legal systems. Moreover, African conflict resolution methods are adaptable to modern challenges such as inter-ethnic violence, political disputes, and youth restiveness. Their emphasis on dialogue and community involvement fosters ownership and sustainability in peace processes. They also underscore the importance of inclusive participation, particularly the role of women, youth, and traditional leaders in peacebuilding (Murithi, 2006). In conclusion, African social structures and their associated conflict resolution models remain profoundly relevant today. Their emphasis on reconciliation, communal responsibility, and restorative justice provides enduring tools for addressing conflict in a manner that resonates with local values and fosters long-term peace.

G. Comparative Insights and Thematic Relevance

Both African and Biblical models emphasize the restoration of harmony over punitive justice. In African traditions, the goal is to restore social balance and communal integration, mirroring the Biblical pursuit of peace and righteousness. As (Tutu 1999) notes, the African concept of *ubuntu* – “I am because we are” – aligns with the Biblical ethic of neighborly love and shared humanity. While African systems use oral traditions, storytelling, and symbolic gestures, the Bible employs covenants, parables, and sacraments to communicate reconciliation. Both traditions value confession and forgiveness, highlighting their therapeutic and relational significance. In both systems, the community plays a central role in healing and restoration.

H. Taboos, superstitions, warnings, forgiveness, atonements and Udiroko festival are all instruments of communal peace in Ado-Ekiti.

In this section, Key Informant Interviews (K.I.I.) were conducted with ten (10) respondents who were two palace courts chiefs from Òkè-Èwí, two from Òkè-Ìlá, and two from Odò-Adó. In-depth interviews were also conducted with four (4) chiefs were randomly selected administrative secretaries of the Traditional Palace Courts (T.P.Cs) about how do they go about justice and reconciliation among the traditional people of Ado-Ekiti through Taboos, superstitions, warnings, forgiveness, atonements and Udiroko festival which are all instruments of communal peace in Ado-Ekiti and their interviews were interpreted using descriptive analyses. Taboos are powerful instrument of peacemaking and communal peace in Ado-Ekiti according to, (Francis Òjó Olórúntógbè), who is the second-in-command to the Èwí of Adó-Èkìtì. He affirmed that taboos, warnings and superstitions play very important role in maintaining peace and harmony among the dwellers of Adó-Èkìtì in that anyone that flouts whatever among the Taboos will not just invite the anger of the deities and owner of the land but will also bring metaphysical troubles such as epidemics, death, unexplainable problems, unrest and chaos upon himself and the community.

Another major tradition that leads to communal peace in Adó-Èkìtì is the Ùdìròkò Festival. Ùdìròkò festival otherwise called Oḍún Olórúnbòrun marks the beginning of a new year in Adó-Èkìtì traditional calendar. Ùdìròkò festival has become the most important cultural fiesta

in Adó-Èkìtì. It serves as a platform to celebrate the growth, development, communal peace and reconciliation moves among prominent sons and daughters of Adó-Èkìtì who have made impact in their chosen carriers. *Ùdìròkò* is as old as Adó-Èkìtì itself, as the name Adó means "here we have settled". *Ùdìròkò* festival also gives precious opportunity to the chiefs, groups, natives and guests to pay homage to Èwí, pledge their allegiance, show commitment to the communal peace among the dwellers and discuss on key matters that are affecting the city.

Unlike other Yorùbá festivals that have been practiced in Yorùbá land such as *Ògún*, *Egúngún*, *Oya* and *Sàngó*, it is only in Adó-Èkìtì that *Ùdìròkò* festival is being celebrated. This makes it a unique unifying factor among all other festivals. The people generally rejoice that another milestone is covered or reached in their lifetime. No deity is worshipped during *Ùdìròkò* and no sacrifice is performed. It is a ritual free festival (Ayegbusi, 1987). In (Olátúnjí Obáyemí's) view of *Ùdìròkò*, it has the ability to unite people; clear barriers in relationships and at the same time promote peace among the people. Concerning peace and communal peace role of *Ùdìròkò* festival in Adó-Èkìtì, (Festus Olúsholá) Àlàbí said that *Ùdìròkò* festival invites and unites the people of Adó-Èkìtì. (Alexander Àjàyí) said it brings people together, encourage fellowship, love and harmony. (Jimoh Afolábí Adélùsì) says it reunites people and makes them to do well to one another such as exchange of food, gift and other goodies in Adó-Èkìtì. (Olárénwajú Awéléwà) said, people who have quarrels before *Ùdìròkò* festival do come together to settle it and forget it. The process of atonement, in the Old Testament, New Testament or in Traditional Religion has not been without sacrifice. Sacrifices have profound religious significance for putting reconciliation and communal peace in place. There are hundreds of sacrifices that take place across Africa and Yorùbá, including Adó-Èkìtì on daily basis and they are with a view to restoring peace or broken relationship among God/god with man, man with man, among communities or ethnic groups, hence, the purpose of sacrifice is not to destroy life but to save life through restoration (Falusi, 1988).

Apart from forgiveness and atonement, other traditions leading to Communal Peace in Adó-Èkìtì include taboos, superstitions and warnings. (Àlàbí Olúsholá) sees the concept of taboos, warnings and superstitions as very important in achieving communal peace goals in Adó-Èkìtì. He sees the trio as a check on evil behaviour that can engender chaos in the society. (Julius Òjó) in his submission affirms that taboos, superstitions and warnings create fear in people's heart so as to behave well and be civil in the society, the reason being that where there is no law, there is neither sin nor punishment. This Key Informant Interviewees (K.I.I) affirmed that *Ùdìròkò* festival has a very important role in peace moves in Adó-Èkìtì; the three of them are Kúnlé Àjàyí., Báýò, Ogúnmodimú and Francis Olótuntóògbè. The three of them are of the opinion that *Ùdìròkò* Festival has an inbuilt of peace, such as pleading for peace by the Kábíyèsí during the festival to all the dwellers of Adó-Èkìtì to eschew violence and that *Ùdìròkò* is always characterised by reunion among the indigenes and non-indigenes in Adó-Èkìtì.

Conclusion

The convergence of biblical ethics and African traditional values offers a profound and contextually rich framework for holistic reconciliation and sustainable peacebuilding. Amos 5:24, with its stirring call—"But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream"—reveals that true relationship with God demands the pursuit of justice and moral integrity. This prophetic vision denounces empty ritualism and elevates social righteousness as the foundation for national renewal. Similarly, Micah 6:8 encapsulates God's ethical expectations in three transformative virtues: acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God. These imperatives emphasize a relational and restorative approach to human interactions, calling both individuals and communities to embody fairness, compassion, and humility in all areas of life. In Colossians 3:12-17, Paul exhorts the Christian community to clothe themselves with virtues such as compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love. These are not abstract ideals but practical, communal virtues that sustain unity, foster healing, and enable peace to flourish. The directive to "let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts" (Col. 3:15) aligns powerfully with the African traditional emphasis on community harmony, collective responsibility, and the healing of broken relationships through inclusive processes.

African traditional systems, as articulated by thinkers such as John Mbiti and Kwame Gyekye, prioritize reconciliation through dialogue, restorative justice, and the communal resolution of conflict. The Yoruba of Ado Ekiti also emphasizes the doctrines of taboos, superstitions, festivals, forgiveness and atonement as great tools for communal peace. When an offense occurs, it is not addressed in isolation but through the participation of elders and the broader community, aiming at restoring social harmony and moral order. This resonates with the biblical mandate of reconciliation not only between individuals and God but also among members of the community (2 Corinthians 5:18–19). Together, the ethical wisdom of the Bible and the restorative mechanisms of African traditions present a deeply rooted model for societal healing. This holistic approach addresses both the spiritual and structural dimensions of brokenness. In a world fractured by injustice, division, and historical wounds, such a framework calls for a return to justice, mercy, humility, and love as the foundation for peace. Faith communities, policymakers, and peacemakers alike must draw from these twin legacies to build societies where reconciliation is not only possible but sustainable, life-giving, and deeply transformative.

Biblical ethics and African traditional systems provide complementary frameworks for holistic reconciliation and sustainable peacebuilding in *Amos 5:24*, *Micah 6:8* and *Colossians 3:12*. The qualities in all these verses are essential for healing broken relationships and fostering communal harmony. African traditional systems mirror these biblical values through their emphasis on community, collective responsibility, and restorative justice. In many African cultures, reconciliation involves the entire community, not just the offender and victim. Elders, family members, and community leaders play a role in restoring harmony through dialogue, compensation, and moral accountability. Justice is not merely punitive but aims at restoring relationships and reintegrating individuals into the community. The convergence of these two ethical systems underscores that true reconciliation must address both the heart and the structures of society. By integrating biblical principles of justice, mercy, and peace with African communal approaches to conflict resolution, societies can develop a culturally rooted and spiritually grounded model for peacebuilding. This synergy offers a relevant and holistic pathway to healing divisions, promoting justice, and fostering lasting peace in communities.

Recommendations

A profound convergence exists between biblical ethics and African traditional structures in promoting holistic reconciliation and sustainable peace. Three key biblical passages—*Amos 5:24*, *Micah 6:8*, and *Colossians 3:12–17*—provide a moral compass for societal transformation. In *Amos 5:24*, the prophet declares, “*But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!*” This text prioritizes justice as a divine requirement for authentic worship and societal well-being. It calls for institutional and structural reforms that protect the vulnerable and promote fairness, aligning with African traditional emphasis on restorative justice and communal redress. *Micah 6:8* further distills divine expectations into three relational imperatives: “*to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.*” This triad of justice, mercy, and humility resonates deeply with African communal ethics, where reconciliation involves truth-telling, forgiveness, and the restoration of dignity. In traditional African societies, elders often facilitate reconciliation not merely to punish wrongdoing but to restore harmony and preserve communal identity.

Colossians 3:12–17 shifts the focus to interpersonal virtues that sustain peace: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love. Paul urges believers to “*let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts*” and to “*put on love, which binds everything together in perfect unity.*” These values are not abstract ideals but practical tools for mending relationships and building spiritual and social unity. African traditional systems similarly uphold the values of forgiveness, communal responsibility, and harmony, where peace is pursued as a shared moral obligation rather than an individual preference. To achieve holistic reconciliation in contemporary societies, especially in post-conflict or divided communities, these shared values must inform peacebuilding frameworks. Faith communities, traditional leaders, and civic actors should collaborate to integrate biblical principles and indigenous wisdom in mediation processes, community healing rituals, and restorative justice mechanisms. Emphasizing justice with mercy, promoting truth and forgiveness, and restoring relationships

and communal integrity will foster peace that is both spiritual and structural. This synergy offers a culturally grounded, theologically rich, and practically effective model for reconciliation that speaks powerfully to African contexts and beyond.

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