

Concrescence: Journal of Multi-Disciplinary Research

Volume 2, Number 1, 2025, ISSN: 1595-9287

DOI: https://doi.org/10.68251/cjmr.v2i1.9

Concrescence: Journal of Multi-Disciplinary Research
Vol. 2, No. 1, 2025, ISSN: 1595-9287

The Biblical Jubilee Year as Praxis for Socio-Environmental Justice in Urhoboland of Nigeria

Omorovie Ikeke[1]

Doris Udoka Uti[2]

Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy,
Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria
[1]*drikeke@delsu.edu.ng*
[2]*utidu@delsu.edu.ng*

Abstract

Urhoboland, which is part of Nigeria's Niger-Delta region, like other parts, is afflicted by various social and environmental problems. These problems include soil erosion, deforestation, gas flaring with oil spillage leading to marine and land/atmospheric pollution, poverty, poor management of domestic and chemical waste, banditry, herdsmen-farmers conflicts, etc. Many of these problems instigate situations of social and environmental injustice as people are either denied or deprived of their human rights, and their dignity is suppressed. This paper uses a critical analytic and hermeneutic method to interpret the key concepts and examine the issues raised. The paper finds social and environmental injustice in Urhoboland of the Niger-Delta. The paper argues that the biblical doctrine of the jubilee year can serve to inspire praxis for social and environmental justice in Urhoboland. It concludes that if this is done, it will help to create a more peaceful and harmonious Urhoboland.

Keywords: Bible, Jubilee year, Environment, justice, Urhobo, Niger Delta.

Introduction

One of the most radical and revolutionary ideas and enactments from the Judeo-Christian tradition is the concept of the jubilee year recorded in Leviticus 25. The Judeo-Christian tradition is unique because it does not condone wickedness, injustice, unrighteousness, or oppression of the poor and vulnerable, and it radically opts for widows, orphans, strangers, etc. God is seen as the father of orphans and defender of the widow (Ps 68:5). While not ignoring the misuse and abuse of biblical texts and stories, it is obvious that people in the course of history have used the bible to promote and foster racism, apartheid, slavery, women's subordination and oppression, misogyny, patriarchal values, deforestation, fundamentalism, fanaticism, extremism, religious wars, bigotry, morbid nationalism, etc.

Despite its misuse, the biblical texts remain revelatory, prophetic, and open to authentic humanistic values.

This paper argues that one of the ways that the biblical texts remain relevant to the contemporary situation is in their biblical jubilee year enactment and praxis. The paper draws from the biblical jubilee year praxis to argue for the transformation of Urhoboland in Nigeria's Niger Delta. Consequently, the paper will make some conceptual clarifications and examine the need for socioeconomic and environmental justice in Urhoboland. The paper will also look at the importance and implications of the biblical jubilee and then present how the jubilee year's socioeconomic and environmental justice value should be applied to Urhoboland.

Conceptual Clarifications

Basic concepts that require explication in this paper are jubilee year, social justice, environmental justice, and Urhoboland.

Jubilee year: The term jubilee comes from the Hebrew word (*yobel*) and refers to the ram's horn that was used to announce every 50th year, which was seen as a year of "thanksgiving, of liberty, of forgiveness, and sanctification" (Jovian, 1989, p. 289).

Justice: Justice refers to "juridical order in which a judge dispenses justice by enforcing observance of custom or law" though from a moral notion it extends to giving each person his due (Descamps, 2004, p. 281). In the bible, justice is in showing integrity, fidelity to the law, reward for conduct, wisdom and goodness (Descamps, 2004). As Singh holds, justice is "the fulfilment of the legitimate expectations of the individual under the existing laws and ensuring him the benefits promised therein and afford him protection against any violation of his rights or against any encroachment on his rights"(Singh, 1976, p. 33). In a sense, justice is what is right and good. Though the source of criteria for deciding what is right or good varies from society to society. For some, what is right or good is based on divine command or religious texts, which, of course, have their problems, for there are diversities of religious texts. For some, what is right comes from natural order. For others, it inheres in human nature or conscience. While for some it is purely sociological or what society has legalized. In this paper, justice is understood as what aligns with the welfare and good of the human person and his environment.

Social justice: Social justice is justice about individuals and even social groups as they live and exist in society. It includes the fact that the structures and institutions, and processes of society are ordered for human flourishing, fostering of human dignity and environmental health. In Plato's *Republic*, justice is each person finding and functioning in line with what the person is naturally suited for and endowed with. From an Aristotelian perspective, justice is treating each person according to their proper due, and injustice is when equal people are treated unequally. In the Marxist tradition, justice comes when the proletariat overthrows the bourgeois and creates a classless society, and this society begins with the common ownership of the means of production. Social justice pertains to the framework for distributive justice in society and just conditions of social cooperation (Reeve, 2009).

It will suffice here to assert that social justice is the recognition and safeguarding of human dignity and worth, and by extension, protecting the environment in which human persons

live. It becomes unjust, for instance, to harm the environment that human beings need to enjoy a flourishing life.

Environmental justice: Environmental justice is justice that comes in protecting the planet Earth and environment from hazards and harms, and promoting a healthy relationship between human beings and the environment. As defined by the Environmental Protection Act of 1990, the environment here refers to "…all, or any of the following media, namely the air, water and land" (Stranks, 2008, p.134). The term environment comes from *environe*r, a French word, and means what surrounds (Allison, 2009). The environment is all that surrounds a thing, person, organism, entity, reality, etc. Everything that is in existence constitutes the human environment. Hook holds that "In modern times, the environment refers to the entire global system. That is, everything from the outermost reaches of the atmosphere to the Earth's inner core. Inherent within this are all the factors that influence the environment, from its geology to the fauna and flora as well as the prevailing climate (Hook, 2008, p.77).

Environmental justice means that there should be equal distribution of burdens and benefits of environmental resources, and so environmental injustice arises when there is unequal distribution and some persons are made to suffer environmental harms more than others (Ezedike, 2020). Making the so-called developing countries suffer for environmental problems caused by the so-called Western development nations, and this impedes the rapid development of the so-called developing countries, amounts to environmental injustice.

The Urhobo: The Urhobo live in the Western Niger Delta with her immediate neighbours as the Ukwuani in the Northeast, the Isoko to the East, the Bini to the North, Ijaw in the South ad Itsekiri in Southwest (Darah, 2014). The Urhobo people are one of the largest ethnicities in Nigeria, and a bulk of Urhobo people live in Urhoboland and the territory in the central political part of Delta State. Many Urhobo people speak Urhobo language and other adopted languages such as English, Pidgin English, French, etc. In terms of population, Professor Andrew Onokerhoraye estimated, as of 2011, that there are about four million (Otite, 2021). The climate of Urhoboland is a tropical one, and the area is covered with evergreen forests with many rivers. Because of the terrain of the area, fishing, farming, hunting, palm oil and kernel production, pottery, and native salt production are common (Otite, 2021). Major towns in Urhoboland include Effurun, Ughelli, Sapele, Oghara, Agbarho, Abraka (the university town), Okere-Urhobo, Ogunu, etc.

Need for Social and Environmental Justice in Urhoboland

It is important to ask if there is a need for social and environmental justice in Urhoboland. This paper strongly believes that there is a strong need for social and environmental justice in Urhoboland. There is a need for justice because what is obtained in society leaves much to be desired. Rather than justice prevailing, what is found often in society is injustice. Injustice permeates the land. Urhoboland is inundated with many forms of social and environmental injustice. In Urhoboland in time past, there used to be deep concern in protecting the natural environment for its own sake and the praxis of biospheric principles, but today modernisation, population growth, influence of outsiders, and unprofessional resource use have all contributed to environmental degradation, economic and social fragmentation (Chokor, 2014). A major factor that has contributed to both social, economic, and environmental injustices in the Urhoboland is the petroleum industry. The cohesive economic and social life of the Urhobo people has been greatly weakened by a petroleum-pipeline economy, as this economic system has created massive oil spillage, burst-pipe fires,

gas flaring, ecological disasters, and, "being an export-oriented system, there is limited involvement. The wealth generated from the industry benefits more foreign users and sections of Nigeria that enjoy hegemonic power to divert the wealth to favour their areas of the country" (Darah, 2014, p. 56). This is a clear case of environmental injustice and racism. It is also a case of socio-economic injustice. There is penury in Urhoboland as in other places in the Niger Delta.

The precarious social, economic and environmental situation in Urhoboland is captioned by many Urhobo writers like Neville Ukoli, Emmanuel Avwiorokoma, Isidore Okpewho, Ben Okri, Tanure Ojaide, Mabel Evwierhoma, Emmauel Aguariavwodo and Hope Eghagha who have discussed the pitiable socioeconomic realities of the Urhobo people and land in their nonfictional and fictional writings such as *Delta Blues* and *Home Songs*, *Kingdom of Songs*, *The Activists* by Tanure Ojaide (Darah, 2014). Amid the sufferings and social deprivations suffered by the Urhobo people, there cannot but be a call for social and environmental justice in the land.

When it comes to environmental justice, it should be seen that there is environmental injustice in Urhoboland. The standard of oil exploitation that is maintained in other foreign countries, especially in the Western world, is not maintained in Urhoboland. People are harmed disproportionately. In Urhoboland, oil pipelines run through people's farmland and backyards, exposing people to hazards and dangers. It is rare in the Western world to see oil pipelines running through people's farmlands and neighbourhoods. It amounts to environmental racism when black people in Urhoboland are treated as less than humans compared with White people in Western countries. Many of the villages in which oil is exploited and gas is flared in Urhoboland don't enjoy the same status as Western communities in which the same oil companies exploit for oil. It is the benefits that these oil companies get from the exploitation of oil that are mainly their concern, not the well-being of the host communities.

In the Niger Delta, environmental problems include unethical methods of oil exploration, hazards from oil mining and refining activities, massive frequent oil spills causing pollution, natural gas flaring causing greenhouse effects, destruction of biodiversity, deforestation and loss of species, oil bunkering, pipeline vandalization, militancy precipitated by in justice, and neglect of the region (Ezedike, 2020). It is important to note that Urhoboland is in the Niger Delta with oil wells, oil companies, exploitation of oil and gas flaring taking place. Many of the problems found in some other parts of Niger Delta are also prevalent in Urhoboland and the area suffers from similar consequences found in the Niger Delta. The activities of oil companies have caused not only environmental problems but also social problems such as economic deprivation, unrest, dislocations in communities, conflicts among leaders in the oil companies, health issues, etc. Despite the massive financial resources emanating from Urhoboland, the area is still massively underdeveloped and marginalized.

Both social and environmental justice is necessary for the good ordering of society and human welfare and wellbeing. Without justice, the weak will be trampled upon. The reality is that justice fosters peace and harmony. When there is justice, there is bound to be good neighbourliness and good relationships in society. Justice helps to foster wellbeing, welfare, reconciliation, an end to violence, good governance, and a transformed society (Aniagwu, 2011).

Vol. 2, No. 1, 2025, ISSN: 1595-9287

The Biblical Jubilee Year and Its Importance

As previously noted, the mandate for the jubilee year can be found in Leviticus 25:8-17, 29-31. It is imperative to present the passage here:

> 8 You shall count off seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the period of seven weeks of years gives forty-nine years. 9 Then you shall have the trumpet sounded loud; on the tenth day of the seventh month—on the day of atonement—you shall have the trumpet sounded throughout all your land. 10 And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family. 11 That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you: you shall not sow, or reap the aftergrowth, or harvest the unpruned vines. 12 For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you: you shall eat only what the field itself produces. 13 In this year of jubilee you shall return, every one of you, to your property. 14 When you make a sale to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor, you shall not cheat one another. 15 When you buy from your neighbor, you shall pay only for the number of years since the jubilee; the seller shall charge you only for the remaining crop years. 16 If the years are more, you shall increase the price, and if the years are fewer, you shall diminish the price; for it is a certain number of harvests that are being sold to you. 17 You shall not cheat one another, but you shall fear your God; for I am the Lord your God. (Lev 25:8-17, NRSV)
>
> 29 If anyone sells a dwelling house in a walled city, it may be redeemed until a year has elapsed since its sale; the right of redemption shall be one year. 30 If it is not redeemed before a full year has elapsed, a house that is in a walled city shall pass in perpetuity to the purchaser, throughout the generations; it shall not be released in the jubilee. 31 But houses in villages that have no walls around them shall be classed as open country; they may be redeemed, and they shall be released in the jubilee. (Lev 25:29-31, NRSV)

The jubilee year is the year of liberty or freedom (Hahn, 2009). It is also called the year of favour. It occurred in the 50th year and was proclaimed on the Day of Atonement with the blast of the trumpet horn. At the proclamation of the jubilee, slaves were set free and were to return to their family to reclaim their ancestral land, people were to rest from agricultural work; and it prevented the permanent sale of rural land, having suffered as slaves in Egypt the jubilee meant Israel was never to be reduced to a life of slavery, (Hahn, 2009). It is important to take into consideration the economic background that informed the jubilee year.

Economic security in Israel was very low, debts were common among families even those who own land, harvest can be disrupted by wars, droughts which made families to borrow to plant in the next year, interests were high on debts because of no external control, people sold their lands to pay debt or indenture themselves as slaves until they pay (O'Connor, 2005). In the promised land, harsh economic conditions made some people to sell their tribal land thus making some people wealthy land owners, while others became displaced; and so the jubilee was intended to redistribute land to their original tribal owners and there was provision of return of land to Levites (Lev 25:32-34); and slaves were also to be

released indicating the need to treat slaves as human beings (Lev 25:44-46) (O'Connor, 2005).

In the viewpoint of some biblical exegetes, the jubilee year mandate is ideal as there is no indication in the OT that it was ever practised (Mckenzie, 2002; O'Connor, 2005; Hahn, 2009). The fact is that even if it is just an ideal, it is an ideal that inspires and that should be aspired towards. The jubilee became a symbol of hope in the late Old Testament and the Lucan gospel (O'Connor, 2005). It was aimed at social and economic justice in Israel (O'Connor, 2005). The jubilee is part of the Levitical Holiness Code found in chapters 19-26 of Leviticus, and it took its final form after the Exodus, 516 BCE (O'Connor, 2005).

The concept of land is central to the jubilee. All the mandates of God revolve around the land. Much poverty in human society comes from people being deprived and alienated from the land and the produce that comes from the land. The land belongs to God and human beings are mere tenants; the land is to be equally shared among God's people, and land monopoly is unacceptable to Yahweh, and this is also seen in the fact that land monopoly is denounced in Isaiah 5:8-10 (McKenzie, 2002, 460). Private ownership is not an absolute. Even for the public good, private ownership of land can be moderated. That is why in most countries, when land is needed for the public good, such as the construction of a road, the government can take over the land and give compensation. About private ownership of land and property, it should be noted that the goods of the earth are destined for the common good of all, and it is unjust to keep for the use of oneself what is destined for all (Holy See, 1994). In the biblical tradition, the land is considered to be holy. For the holiness of the land, God rested on the seventh day, and Israel is also required to rest on a weekly seventh day so that the land can rest. Every seventh year in Israel is a Sabbath year, and in the cycle of seven times seven years, making 49 years, the jubilee is to be proclaimed. There seem to be two positions on the jubilee year, either it is occurring on the 49th year or the 50th year (Hahn, 2009)

The jubilee mandate should not be separated from the prophetic and liberation movement that is found in scripture. The God of the jubilee is also the God who is advocating for justice and wellbeing in society. It is this prophetic tradition that Jesus takes up when he makes the Old Testament Jubilee the context and text of his ministry. The evangelist Saint Luke writes of Jesus declaring:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to set free those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:18-18, NRSV).

The jubilee year is so important that Jesus, liberator of the human condition and prophet of the Beatitudes, Sermon on the Mount, saw the mandate of the year so important and not just for the Old Testament dispensation that he publicly adopted it and incorporated it into his manifesto. Jesus deconstructed and re-appropriated the jubilee mandate. It is not just the last part of Luke 18-19, the phrase on the year of favour (which is the jubilee) that Jesus meant. What he proclaims in the entire text that he took from the prophet Isaiah becomes part of and a re-visioning of the jubilee year. The jubilee year is no longer just the 50th year,

but an everyday event and a lifestyle. The jubilee year is to be understood in the way that Jesus understood it and carried out his ministry of spreading the good news of the kingdom of God. The values that Jesus preached and lived for became the values of the Jubilee. Jesus' proclamation of the jubilee "ushered in a new age of freedom and divine favor" (Kodell, 1992, p. 945). It is important to note that in the context of Jesus' declaration of the jubilee in Luke 4, the dividends and benefits of the jubilee are not just for the Jewish people but also for non-Jews and non-Israelites. When his people began to question his identity and see him merely as the son of Joseph the carpenter, "Jesus compares himself to two great prophets of Ancient Israel, noting that they served non-Israelites because their own people were not open to their ministries. The implications are that he, too, is a prophet who will take his message to outsiders" (Kodell, 1992, p. 945).

Jesus is a universal messiah, and his mission is for the whole world and universe. True social justice treats foreigners as cosmopolitan citizens and, no matter their nationality; and treats and respects the dignity of others. Social justice should also be global, and not rooted in morbid nationalism. The fact that slaves are to be released on the jubilee year is an indication that slavery is not a divine institution. It is a human practice that is unacceptable because all are created equal. Out of human exigency, it has occurred, but God's perfect will is freedom for all. While, for instance, there is ambivalence in the Pauline letters on slavery, it seems likely that the first and radical Paul denounced slavery, but some of his reactionary followers tend to support slavery (Borg and Crossan, 2009). Slavery and exile are conditions of unfaithful covenant partners (Turner), and so it can rightly be argued that it is not the divine purpose and is not revelatory. That something is practiced in the bible does not necessarily make it of divine origin. That slaves were set free indicates the jubilee implies the need to end slavery.

The vital point to be noted is that the jubilee year is no longer to be understood simply in the perspective of the Old Testament, but in the light of the ministry of Jesus. The values of the Jubilee are seen in the life of Jesus. By his life and ministry, Jesus identified with the kind of people that the Old Testament jubilee is concerned about, the poor, those in debt, those deprived of their land unjustly, etc. Jesus lived in an insignificant peasant village, not a city, and in the gospel of Mark he never enters a city until he goes to Jerusalem, being a day labourer and having landless family in a time when peasants were heavily taxed and oppressed; and his message of forgiveness of debts resonates with the poor peasants and landless people (Kammer, 2004). In the praxis of Jesus, debts are now to be forgiven not in the 50th year but graciously and lavishly as a way of living. The teaching in the Lord's Prayers and the parable of the unmerciful servants illustrates this. The Jubilee is now a lifestyle, not an event or date. As re-appropriated by Jesus and his followers, the Old Testament Jubilee points to Jesus, who himself declared, "Today, this is fulfilled in your hearing. Jesus is the Jubilee who proclaims good news to the poor, opens the eyes of the blind, frees the oppressed, and the entire life of Jesus was characterised by the message of the jubilee" (Paul, 2000).

In summation of what the Jubilee is, it should be understood that Jesus, who was a typical Jew who was steeped in the tradition of his people, and he knew how this text of scripture was interpreted and so for him to revolutionize the interpretation of the texts is highly significant (Kammer, 2004). For Jesus the Jubilee reorders society, calls for the stewardship of the goodness of creation, living by the values of Yahweh's covenantal community, and sharing of the goods of creation, protection of the *anawin* of Yahweh; and solidarity with those who are economically, physically, and socially poor (Krammer, 2004). Jesus stands

squarely in the prophetic tradition of scripture. For Christians, the jubilee implies and calls for respect for the dignity of all people, including the oppressed and the poor and promotes economic and social justice without which the Christian identity is questionable (O'Connor, 1996).

From the Biblical Jubilee Year to Socio-Environmental Justice in Urhoboland

Following from the discussion above, the question that now arises is whether the biblical jubilee has any implications or applications to Urhoboland. The situation in Israel is not the same as that of Urhoboland, but lessons can be learnt from Israel. The fact is that we live in a global world in which cultural diffusion is a reality. The biblical stories also apply to all ages, all the more as there are many Christians who live in Urhoboland who are informed by Judeo-Christian values. And so lessons from the Judeo-Christian tradition should not be sidelined in seeking the transformation of Urhoboland.

There are many issues that the biblical jubilee raises, such as the institution and ownership of slaves, the cancellation of debts, recuperative rest for the land on the sabbath, the sabbatical year and the jubilee year. The way that Jesus understood the jubilee and the many implications of the jubilee already identified above, all have relevance for Urhoboland and beyond. Take the institution of slavery, it does not exist as in former days, but there are situations in Urhoboland in some towns in which families recruit especially adolescents or teenagers to work for them, but do not send the children to school or pay them a just salary. In the name of house-boy and house-girl, these maids are made to do all the domestic chores and are made to suffer many deprivations. This practice is common in Urhoboland. Maids are simply treated as things and properties to be used. In the light of Jesus' interpretation of the jubilee and Pauline egalitarianism of the children of God, maids should be treated as human beings with equal dignity to the persons who have employed them. The apostle Paul wrote to Philemon to treat Onesimus no longer as a slave but as a brother (Philemon 1:16).

The jubilee has serious implications for every form of relationship. Human beings should be seen as human beings and their dignity respected. Domestic abuse and violence are common in Urhoboland. Urhoboland is still rooted in patriarchal values. Some Urhobo men see their wives as inferior, the weaker sex, and to be used and utilised. Some flog and beat their wives. These are all unacceptable practices in the light of the biblical jubilee and human rights values. In Urhobo culture, as other Nigerian cultures arising from patriarchal factors, the female or girl is socialised to be subservient, timid, silent and to be ruled over (Erhimeyoma, 2016). This is the case of some localities in Urhoboland where women are being domestically abused and subjected to violence. It is important to relate that the jubilee liberation and emancipation brought by Jesus implies that women should be freed from negative aspects of patriarchy that oppress them. Women should never be treated as if they are slaves. Women are still culturally subjugated in much of Urhoboland where male domination is seen as the ideal and because of this women find it even difficult to support a woman in politics and that is why there are very few of them in the House of Representatives, the Senate, State House of Assembly and as Local Government Chairpersons (Otite, 2021). The way that women are treated in some places in Urhoboland is akin to how slaves are treated. The fact is that Modern-Day Slavery exists. Women are certainly not called slaves, but they are often seen as simply existing to serve the needs of the male folk. More women empowerment and liberation need to take place in Urhoboland. Human trafficking, especially of children and child labour, has also happened in Urhoboland.

Another issue that is worth commenting on is the issue of debts. Money lending is common in Urhoboland as a result of harsh economic conditions. Money lenders behave like Sherlock. They lend money at exorbitant rates and interest. Stories are common in Urhoboland of money lenders who go to make charms to make it difficult for people to repay the money they have been loaned. People's properties and collateral have been taken away as a result of their inability to pay.

There is also the challenge associated with land use. Urhobo people practiced shifting cultivation, which allowed land to lie fallow while other lands were used. This indigenous knowledge allowed the land to lie fallow and recuperate. But with population pressure, industrialization, and oil activities, it is now difficult to allow land to lie fallow. It is also a fact that much land in Urhoboland has been degraded by oil exploitation and spillage activities. In the light of Jesus' understanding of the jubilee, the sabbath is not just a day but a lifestyle. Land is to be respected and allowed to rest. The Urhobo people traditionally have days they do not go to the forests and farm for the land to rest and fallow. There is a need to restore the traditions of allowing the land to rest. It provides for sustainability. It is not only human beings who need rest; non-humans and other organisms also need rest.

At the heart of the jubilee is the call for social and economic justice. All people are entitled to the benefits and dividends of society, and nobody should be denied these dividends. God opts especially for the poor, the vulnerable, those in debt, prisoners, and the rejected of society. There is no society in which there are no poor or vulnerable people. The land and peoples of Urhoboland have suffered from the hazardous effects of oil exploitation and other mining industries, gas flaring, and many other problems associated with oil exploration. They deserve to have justice done to them. They deserve to have their human rights restored to them and their human dignity safeguarded. As a result of the oil pollution caused by the activities of oil and gas companies, the water and the atmosphere are polluted, deforestation has occurred, biodiversity has been endangered, farmland has been destroyed, and people suffer from many health hazards. This being the case, the call for jubilee is very appropriate to Urhoboland. There should be massive investments in infrastructure by the government and the oil companies to ameliorate the plight of people in Urhoboland. From the biblical perspective, land is a trust from God, the supreme being, the true owner of the land. This is also what is affirmed in traditional Urhobo thought. The land is not to be misused and abused. Oil companies should be more mindful of the impact of their activities in the area and act more responsively. The people should not be treated as if they are slaves or nobodies. Their humanity should be recognized and protected. When oil companies act with impunity, commit ecocide, degrade the environment and act as if only the interests of their shareholders matter, their actions amount to treating people as slaves. This should not be as oil companies should not act as feudal lords and capitalist profiteers.

Conclusion

The paper showed that there are a lot of social and environmental injustices in Urhoboland. It was shown that realities like oil exploitation with its attendant problems have led to situations that have deprived Urhobo people of the full enjoyment of their human rights and dignity. People are deprived of their right to food, water, movement, and basic amenities of life as a result of environmental degradation and pollution in the land. The paper argues for the application of the message of the biblical jubilee year to Urhoboland. The biblical jubilee year, as enunciated in Leviticus 15 and the teachings of Jesus, requires ending slavery, forgiveness of debts, sabbatical rest for the land, and living in egalitarianism. It was shown that while it is true that Urhoboland is not exactly like the land of Israel and the

circumstances are different, yet it was shown that the message of the Judeo-Christian traditions of reordering society and promotion of justice in all its ramifications applies to all societies. While there may be no ancient forms of slavey in Urhoboland yet there are some forms of modern-day slavery. Draconian, Sherlock money lenders who lend money and make sure people are not able to pay, to put them under bondage, should be brought to an end in Urhoboland. Forgiveness should become a given and a normal practice in the land. The land is to be protected from all forms of injustices and social ills. For injustice and social ills do not only offend against humans but also against the land. From the message of the jubilee, the land is to be conserved. If all these are done, they will help to create a more peaceful and harmonious society in Urhoboland.

References

Allison, L. (2009). *Environmentalism*. In Iain McLean and Alistair McMillan (ed..), *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics* (pp.172-173). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Aniagwu, J. (2011). *Faith and social action: Perspectives on the Church and society*. Iperu-Remo: Ambassador Publications.

Borg, M.J., and Crossan, D. (2009). *The first Paul: Reclaiming the radical visionary behind the Church's conservative icon*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

Choker, B.A. (2014). Community experience of environmental resource degradation and transformation in the Ethiope area of Urhoboland: Implications for sustainable development. *Aridon: International Journal of Urhobo Studies*, 1, 23-51.

Darah, G.G. (2014). Discourse on national identity and resistance in the popular music of the Urhobo people of the Niger Delta. *Aridon: International Journal of Urhobo Studies*, 1,53- 77.

Descamps, A. (2004). Justice. In Xavier Leon-Dufour (ed.), *Dictionary of biblical theology* (pp.281-286). Ibadan: Society of Saint Paul.

Erhimeyoma, E.E. (2016). *Rethinking the Nigerian family system*. Ibadan: Kraft Books.

Ezedike, E.U. (2020). *Environmental Ethics and sustainability: An Introduction to environmental philosophy*. Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press.

Hahn, S. (2009). *Catholic Bible dictionary*. New York: Doubleday.

Holy See. (1994). *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Vatican City: Urbi et Orbi Communications.

Hook, P. (2008). *The Little Book of Environmental Principles*. London: New Holland Publishers.

Johari, J.C. (2012). *Contemporary political ideology: New dimensions, basic concepts and major themes*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited.

Jovian, P. L. (1989). *Dictionary of the Liturgy*. New York: Catholic Book Publishing Corporation.

Kodell, J. (1992). Luke. In Robert J Karris 9ed.), *The Collegeville Bible commentary* (pp. 936-980). Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press.

Krammer, F. (2004). *Doing faith justice: An introduction to Catholic Social Thought*. New York: Paulist Press.

McKenzie, J.L. (2002). *Dictionary of the Bible*. Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation.

O'Connor, K.M. (2005). Jubilee year. In Carroll Stuhlmueller (ed.), *The Collegeville Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (pp. 499-501). Bangalore: Theological Publications in India.

Otite, R.E. (2021). *The Urhobo woman*. Warri: Dannykems Publishers.

Paul, P.J. (2000). *Apostolic letter tertio millennio adveniete of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to the bishops, clergy and lay faithful on preparation for the jubilee of the year 2000*. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19941110_tertio-millennio-adveniente.html

Reeve, A. (2009). Social justice. In Ian McLean and Alistair McMillan (ed..), *Oxford concise Dictionary of Politics* (p. 494). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Singh, B. (1976). *The Supreme Court as an instrument of social justice*. New Delhi: Sterling.

Stranks, J. (2008). *A-Z of the environment*. London: Thorogood Publishing.

Turner, W.A. (1992). Leviticus. In Dianne Bergant (ed.), *The Collegeville Bible commentary* (pp. 115-143). Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press.