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RURAL – URBAN MIGRATION IN GENESIS 12:10: A MODEL OF MIGRATIONS IN THE CHURCH.

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Abstract
Migration is a natural phenomenon found among animals and experienced by human beings both in the church and secular world. Rural-Urban migration is prevalent due to the availability of social amenities and job opportunities in urban areas. This article, therefore, aims at studying rural-urban migration as a model of migration in the church by investigating the causes and effects of migrations in the church and society in order to proffer possible solutions. Primary sources of information were employed while the paper recommends that the rural churches be given adequate support, while orthodox churches should modernize their modes of worship, equip their clergy, encourage their members and embark on lucrative investments that will glorify God and be relevant to the society.

Keywords: **Migration, Rural Population, Urbanization, Church, Biblical Narratives.**

Introduction

Studies on environmental issues and the level of unemployment among youth in Nigeria have shown that Rural-urban migration should be given attention to as a concept. Rural-urban migration is consequent upon the fact of the movement of people from rural to urban areas in search of greener pastures, where social amenities and job opportunities are available. The Church as the integral part of the society has been affected in various ways by rural-urban migration. Churches in rural areas are more or less made up of aged men and women. Youths who cannot cope in urban cities due to their poor educational performance and productivity are also found in rural areas. On the other hand, churches in urban areas have working class members who migrated from rural areas to urban cities where standard of living is better. However, this paper x-rays rural-urban migration as a model migration in the church.

Conceptualization of Terms

Rural area could be defined as an area in a country which is less densely populated. Thus in this paper "rural" an adjective of "ruralism" means the state or quality of being rustic which

depicts a less-populated and non-urban area, while "urban", according to (Wehmeier, 2000) is connected to the city which is more developed and populated. It has functional social amenities. "Migration" from the same source, is the movement of large number of people from one place to another. People who migrate into territory are called immigrants, while those that migrate outside are called emigrants. According to Nwanunobi and Peter, Migration relates to the voluntary movement of people from one continent to another to settle and being impelled by multifarious impulses. This entailed mostly movement from less economically developed nation of Africa to the more highly economically developed nations of Europe and America. The world "model" in this context is a simplified representation used to explain the workings of a real world system or event. While "Church" is derived from the Greek word *ekklesia* which connotes 'a calling out' that is the assembly of the redeemed called out to propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ. Its Hebrew equivalent is *qatal* which means congregation, assembly, company and multitude. Contextually, this article looks at the movement of people from undeveloped rustic locality to the massive cosmopolitan city as a replica of a population drift in the church.

Rural-Urban Migration in Genesis 12:10

The text under study contains one of the episodes in patriarchal narratives that reveal the indispensability of rural-urban migration in salvation history. Abram's call was a divine mandate to migrate from Ur to Canaan. Canaan was an urban city in the Ancient Near East – the Promised Land full of milk and honey. While in transit, Abram, the first patriarch engaged in series of migrations as a result of famine in the land. One of such was his movement from Negev to Egypt. Negev (bgEEnE) is translated "South" in Hebrew being the southward from Beersheba, a dry wasteland that Abram went through after building his first altar for God at Bethel (North of Jerusalem- a hilly area).

The Hebrew word rWgl" (*lagur)* meaning "to sojourn" suggests that Abraham migrated with his wife (Sarai) and nephew (Lot) to settle temporarily in Egypt. The movement was not just rendered as drEEY<<w;; (*wayyered*) translated as "and went down" probably a visitation to return. Again, the words ba;r;h" db,k" (*kabed hara'ab*) connote a strong indication of grievous famine. The passage clearly stated that Abram's migration was predetermined by the severe and grievous famine in the land, thus: *wayhi ra'ab ba'ares.*

Hale and Thorson (2007) observe that *ra'ab ba'ares* was a severe universal famine affecting most nations in Ancient Near East including Canaan the Promised Land. But Egypt was exceptional and could be regarded as an urban area at this time due to the abundance and dependable water supply from River Nile, Egypt was the gift of Nile with ideal conditions closely comparable to Eden. The urban nature of Egypt at that time was evident at the dependable food supply which necessitated the migration of Abram and other people to Egypt.

Abram's experience in this episode foreshadows Israel's later experience in Egypt, as the author of Genesis, writing after the exodus was very much aware. The parallels that show the effects of Israel's migration to Egypt are: a famine in the land (Gen. 47:4); affliction at the hands of the Egyptians (Gen. 12:10, 12-15; Exod. 1:11-14); God's plague on the Egyptians (Gen 12:17; Ex 8-11); Egyptians sending the people away as a result (Gen 1219-20; Ex 12:31-32); the

Egyptians letting them take with them all their possessions (Gen 12:20; Ex 12: 32); the people obtaining wealth from the Egyptians (Gen 12:16; Ex 12:36); return to Canaan by stages through the desert (Gen 13:1-3; Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua); arrival back in Canaan, where they worship the lord (Gen 13:4; Jos 5:10; 8:30-35; 24:1-27). The parallelism shows that Abram was truly the father of faith and Israel through whose migration God brought salvation to humanity.

Migration in Biblical Perspective

In the Old Testament, migration could be viewed in four E-dimensions namely: expulsion, Evocation, Exodus and Exile. Considering expulsion, the narratives of Genesis 1 -11 which bible scholars regarded as myths (a vehicle to convey the theological truth in ancient Israel to subsequent generations), use migration to portray the descriptive nature of human condition. Adam and Eve migrated from the land of Eden to the land of tillage and toil having been expelled by God. Cain was also driven out to the land of Nod – Land of restless life according to Westermann, Noah and his family because the archetypal boat people during the deluge. The dispersal of human kind from Babel and confusion as a result of different languages gave room for universal 'ur-migration' and movement of human communities to diverse place as emigrant.

Naish notes that the call of Abram could be termed "evocation" in the original sense of a calling out or calling forth in other to provide a schema of four Old Testament movements pointing to migration in its theological direction. To him if the expulsion of Genesis 1 – 11 draws out the pain of leaving one's place, the journeys which Abraham and his descendants make evoke its excitement. This is free and voluntary migration.

The biblical exodus narratives reveal the migration of the Israelites to Egypt and their emigration or exodus from that land of slavery to Mount Sinai where they made covenant with God and received the law as a chosen nation. It is instructive to note that the flight from oppression, the wilderness experience and the subsequent struggle for land and purpose are regarded as a journey or migration towards Yahweh. The Israelites' exile to Babylon and their return to Jerusalem form the final great foundation and formational migration of the Old Testament. (Brueggemann,2002) an Old Testament missiologist and theologian analyzes that the people of Judah nonetheless continued to live in the land of Assyria, since the exile of the northern kingdom to Assyria as a possession rather than as gift. They sought to control the land as a place of security and self-preservation, to eliminate the very precariousness which is at the centre of covenantal existence in or out of the land. Hebrew biblical scholars accepted that the period of exile was the most intensive period. The radical rethink of Yahweh's action to them which their displacement necessitated, led to new reflection and fresh perception of his way. Nevertheless, the episodes Ruth and Esther are also good examples of migration Old Testament.

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ came from heaven probably as God's migrant worker. He was born in Nazareth, amidst migration because of the mechanism of imperial control. As a child he became a migrant, a refugee fleeing from tyranny and violence of King Herod, his family migrated to Egypt for his safety. Christ's life, death and resurrection offer us a model of migration or living as strangers anywhere on earth. Although Jesus is not described in the

gospels as a foreigner or alien since the Greek word "paroikos or xenos" was not used for him. But those in Christ are citizens of heaven and ambassadors to the earth where we live. Migration is also evident in the missionary journey of Paul which helps in the accomplishment of his mission of propagating the gospel.

Migrations in the Church

Studies on Church history unveil the movement of missionaries from one geographical location to another for the purpose of disseminating the gospel in England at about 18th Century. This movement could be traced down to the advent of the early missionaries into West African countries of which Nigeria is among. Their migration into Nigeria was Urban-rural migration which offered illumination that the recent generation enjoys. Some of the benefits are education, Christianity, Social amenities, abolition of slavery, killing of twins, and other obnoxious and dehumanizing traditional practices. All these achievements were not supporting the propagation of the gospel in His majesty powers.

It is instructive to note that the proliferation of churches led to numerous denominations we have today which also encourage migration. But prior to the recent development was the migration of three major missions: The Methodists, Church Missionary Society (Anglican), and the Baptist mission as stated by (Akuma, 2002). Haar (2008) agrees that there is a close relationship and connection between mission studies especially where it is traced back to the Bible. Migration in Methodist Church Nigeria started when James Ferguson, an ex-slave Methodist wrote a letter to the Methodist Church in Sierra-Leone requesting that a missionary be urgently sent to them in Nigeria. According to Akuma (2002) he wrote *interalia* thus: "for once I know I was under the light and now I am in darkness", while another ex-slave also wrote: "come quick…." In response to these request, Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman was asked to proceed to badagre, from cape post (gold coast, now Ghana) where he was working he arrived in the company of Degraft on 21st September, 1842 and later proceeded to Abeokuta in December, 1842 when he stayed 10 days. He embarked on a mission to Dahomey after hosting a dinner party which 25 people attended on the eve of his departure. From then till now Methodist ministers have been moving from place to place, preaching and planting churches. The drift is also felt among the laity of whom majority have deserted the rural local churches and over flocked the churches in urban areas probably in search of their greener pastures. As a result the local churches in rural areas suffer lack of manpower and insufficient fund to maintain and develop the church in all ramifications. This issue is prevalent and also applicable to other denominations found in rural areas. Good numbers of members have left their churches to other denominations.

Reasons and Results of Church Migrations

Having noted that migration could be punitive (expulsion or Adamic) and redemptive (voluntary or Abrahamic), we shall consider why some members move from one denomination to another and from one geographical area to another. Haar has observed that forced migration of Africans through the transatlantic slave trade has left its religious traces on America and influenced the Christian religious landscape of North America in particular. Both forced and voluntary migrations overlap for political and economic reasons. It has also been observed that migration from the mainline or orthodox churches to the Pentecostal or charismatic churches is on the increase than the reverse order. Orthodox churches include:

Roman Catholic, Methodist, Anglican, Presbyterian and ECWA, while some of the fast growing Pentecostal churches are: The Redeemed Christian church of God, Winners Chapel and Christ Embassy to mention but a few.

Major reasons of migrations in the church could be seen on the charismatic display and modernized way of worship of the Pentecostals coupled with the use of sophisticated instruments for evangelism and participation in social activities. Their emphasis on media evangelism, empowerment programme for the youth and laity, counseling, prayer, deliverance prosperity messages and bible study have immensely attracted members of other denomination to their churches. Their welfare packages and encouragement to their pastors towards self development, financial security and prosperity have gone a long to affect their productivity positively. Stress on spiritual gifts, miracles, revelation, knowledge and elaborate publicity for revivals and crusade has caught the attention of the masses. Nevertheless, their investments on schools at various levels and vital lucrative business have also enhanced their financial, infrastructural and numerical growth rapidly. Majority now view them as modern churches that are led by the Holy Spirit while the orthodox or mainline churches are seen as old churches with outdated traditions and unattractive programmes.

Consequently upon the above – mentioned fact, the youths have migrated to the new generation churches, thereby leaving old father and mothers in mainline churches. This massive drift has immensely affected the orthodox churches numerically, financially, infrastructural and spiritually. However, some orthodox churches in the urban areas are waxing stronger with good ideas of planting more churches on order to reach the unreached, all over the world. This vision, worthy of emulation, is not without the support of the urban churches of the same denomination. Howbeit, a focus on these few successful mega-church should not blind us to the fact that the majority of new generation churches in urban areas are also struggling to survive. Not only that they often lack a proper place to worship, in many cases they also have very limited financial resources, raised from members with low-paid jobs, many of whom have enormous social problems inherent to their immigrant status, illness, depression, marital problems, lack of job and education facilities, language problems and so on.

Causes and Effects of Rural-Urban Migration

Rural life is natural and peace. It gives room for kingship, kinship, mutual understanding and caring among the community members. A stranger can identified easily as the people belongs to various families in the village. Norms and traditions are strictly observed to enforced morality while the offenders are discipline accordingly there are various types of rural areas, depending on how accessible they are from the urban areas. These range from the rural-urban fringe to the extreme remote rural area. Rural areas change over time. These changes could be caused by economic, environmental and social factors. Economic factors include: Tourism income, faming profitability and primary sector jobs. Environmental factors involve land use, pollution and conservation. Social factors comprise population change, migration leisure and retirement population. In spite of the peaceful co-existence of the inhabitant, rural life and sources of income are usually boring and hard, due to lack of social amenities such as electricity, pipe borne-water, good road-network, functional schools, hospitals and post offices undoubtedly, this has resulted to rural-urban migration. The desire to escape from harsh realities of persistence poverty in rural areas and to enjoy the more comfortable life in

the urban cities as accelerated this phenomenon of urban shift. Nmah (1998) enumerates the reasons for rural-urban migration as follows:

i. Insufficient food supply at home
ii. A better education and employment in the city
iii. Modern social amenities in urban areas
iv. Freedom from the harassment of elders due to generation gap in the village
v. Better opportunities for choice in marriage and opposite sex relationship.

Mbaegbu (2015) observes that migration has continued under the form of both voluntary migration within one's regions, country, or beyond and involuntary migration which includes the slave trade, trafficking in human beings and ethical cleansing. He equally notes that migration may occur as a result of risk aversion on the part of the household that has insufficient income. Again migration occurs because individuals search for food, sex and security outside their usual habitation.

Lee categorizes the causes of migration into two, namely: "Push and Pull factors" Push factors are things that are unfavourable about the area that one lives in. Some of the push factors include: insufficient job, few opportunities, inadequate conditions, desertification, faming or drought, political fear or persecution or crisis, slavery or forced labour; poor medical care, loss of wealth, natural disasters, death threats, desire for more political or religious freedom; pollution discrimination, poor chances of marrying, condemned housing and war. And pull factors are things that attract one to another area like job opportunities, better living conditions, employment, education, better medical care, attractive climates, security, family links, industry, better chance of marrying.

On the other hand, Alokwu (2013) states the effects of rural-urban migration thus: unemployment, poverty, environmental pollution and degradation, health and social problems. The aforementioned challenges are real and prevalent in our nation today; in the sense that the high rate of migrants in some urban areas, such as Lagos has increased the demand for employment which has resulted to unemployment with adverse effects on the environment, the society and the poor or lower class citizens. There is much armed robbery, kidnapping, ritual killing, over-crowding due to over population, increase in house rent, poor refuse disposer, air and water pollution amongst all in urban areas, thereby leaving the rural areas undeveloped and crude.

Furthermore, Alokwu summarized some of the major consequences of rural-urban migration which indirectly affect the church: first, since many people who migrated to urban cities are unemployed, they find it difficult to make ends meet. As a result, they usually resort to the exploitation of their immediate environment as a survival strategy in the face of adverse economic situations. Second, because the unemployed are primarily concerned with meeting the basic necessity of life (food, water, shelter and clothing), the issue of environmental sanitation or environmental protection is often not a priority. Third, the issue of traffic congestion as a result of increase in population and the number of motor vehicles raises some serious environmental concerns. The critical areas of concerns are mainly the incessant accidents in and around the urban areas together with the problem or air pollution especially in the form of carbon emissions. Fourth, urban migration comes with a heavy demand for

housing. The housing situation in many African countries at the moment is still overwhelming and has increased the ubiquitous sprouting of informal settlements with inadequate services or in most cases non-existence.

Nevertheless, urban lifestyle alleviates the power of customs, traditions, culture and authority or respect for the elders which enhance morality. Consequence upon the fact has given rise to prostitution, promiscuity, divorce, abortion, child trafficking, illegitimate children, and drug abuse. Nwanunobi and peter agree that child trafficking for labour and trafficking of women for sexual exploitation are part of the dimensions and effects of migration. For Donovan (2000), most cities are crowded, dirty, dangerous, impersonal and unfriendly. There is trash, disease, crime and a general lack of concern by people on the street for welfare of one another. There is materialism, pride lust, greed and selfish indifference instead of the gentle, supportive community youngest people would have experienced at home. There are helpless handicapped people begging to survived and homeless people hoping for a handout. There is always high rate of crime ranging from drug abuse and alcoholism, strong temptation and impersonal selfish individualism in business and even in the church.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Both the church and government have roles to play in rural areas in order to check rural-urban migrations. The government should develop the vast fallow land in rural areas by establishing industries, university, airports, and constructing good road-network with necessary amenities in place. This in-turn provides job opportunities and enhances the growth of rural churches. The church, on the other hand, should support their rural congregations in all positive ramifications and embrace good modernized ways of worship in order to disseminate the gospel effectively, orthodox churches should device means of putting an end to the dwindling of their members, they should work towards providing job opportunities to their members who will in-turn help the church financially through their tithes, offerings and donations. Churches should embark on lucrative investments such as schools, hospitals, factories and industries instead of depending only on Sunday offerings and levies. Ministers should be well trained and cared for, to maximize their productivity in both the church and society at large. The church needs to be equipped spiritually, numerically, infrastructural and financially to ensure growth and relevance to the glory of God.

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