Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS), Vol.8 No.2 June, 2025; p.g. 131 – 143; ISSN: 2695-2319 (Print); ISSN: 2695-2327 (Online)

A RE-READING OF BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD IN 1 CORINTHIANS 15:29 IN THE LIGHT OF CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIANITY

DANIEL DAUDA GAMBO, Ph.D
Religious Studies Department, Babcock University, Nigeria
+2348061144033
danield@babcock.edu.ng
&
KINGSLEY C. ANONABA, Ph.D
Religious Studies Department, Babcock University, Nigeria
+2348166807748
anonabak@babcock.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

This study carried out a text linguistics study of baptism for the dead in 1 Corinthians 15:29 in the light of the contemporary Christianity. It argued that the various interpretative approaches employed in the debates regarding the passage, such as the metaphorical, literal, word emendation, and interpolative are capable of maiming the original meaning. Having observed that attempts made to resolve the issues implicit in the prepositional phrase "for the dead," regarding the rite of baptism have colored the interpretation of the concept and practical application of the Christian ordinance of baptism in contemporary Christianity; this paper applied the Historical-grammatical method of hermeneutics in interrogating 1 Corinthians 15:29. The central purpose was to examine the passage as it relates to 'baptism for the dead' and its interpretation and practice with the view to identifying the theological implications of the various interpretations of the passage and its sociological implications on the contemporary Christianity. Findings projected that the multiplicity of interpretation accorded the passage that have further engendered confusion in relation to the place of text and practice among some contemporary Christianity. Consequently, a religious organization has adopted a literal baptism for the dead in its tenets and practices. The findings further revealed that whereas many denominations do not subscribe to the literal baptism for the dead but they however engage in practices namely prayer for the dead, and proxy penance that carry the same theological weight since they all entail benevolence for the dead. Also, the adoption of the literal interpretative approach of the passage to offer justification for baptism for the dead in Mormon Church is an aberrant to the contextual meaning of the text as metaphoric view fits into the interpretation of the phrasal expression "baptized for the dead."

Keywords: Re-Reading, Baptism, Dead, Contemporary Christianity.

Introduction

The objectives of this study are hinged on understanding the conceptual knowledge of baptism for the dead in the ancient and contemporary societies. It further seeks to explore the theological implication of the application of baptism in the literal sense which has paved way to the inclusion of the practice of literal baptism for the dead in some denominational tenets. It also attempts to analysis the sociological implications of the interpretative approaches and

theological position advocated in the contemporary Christianity. Congruently, it highlights the synergy between the adoption of baptism for the dead and benevolent acts for the dead as reflected in the practices of Purgatory, Penance and prayer for the dead.

The major salience of this study originates from the various interpretations of 1Corinthians 15:29; a doctrine that is perceived to set Paul as directly contradicting the Scriptures by paving way to heretical practices. This work becomes significant for further reason, that it will benefit those who radically disagree with some aspects of the doctrine of baptism as upheld by some denominations and religious bodies as biblical-based on 1Corinthians 15:29. Such practices as penance, purgatory, prayer for the dead as well as literal baptism for the dead upheld by denominations and religious bodies as biblical and should be practiced. Thus, this study opens up for further discussion, the interpretation of 1Corinthians 15:29 in the context, as well as an interpretative and theological positions that baptism for the dead has attracted, and the critical reviews of the sociological implications of these interpretative and theological thoughts.

Commentaries on 1 Corinthians 15:29

There is a cloud of varied interpretations and explanations for 1Corinthians 15:29 among Bible scholars throughout church history. According to Kistemaker (1993), many of these interpretations concern the phrases, "baptised for the dead" and "baptised in their behalf." In spite of all the exegesis on this passage it appears that a satisfactory solution has not been achieved. For instance, Kistemaker posits (1993) that "living members were baptized vicariously for those believers who had died but had not received the sacrament of baptism". Likewise, the Greek preposition ὑπὲϱ (for) in the phrase "for the dead" is interpreted to mean "above the graves of the dead." In addition, "baptized for the dead" may mean that a Christian friend was baptized symbolically on behalf of a new convert who had died from martyrdom, although there is no mention of a major persecution in Corinth at the time of the production of the epistle (Archer, 1982). On his part, Keener (1993) pointed out that, the phrase "baptized for the dead" could mean the practice of washing the dead before they are buried which was prevalent among the Jews.

However some other scholars see this text as referring to ordinary Christian baptism, ὑπὲϱ τῶν νεκϱῶν taken to mean "with an interest to the resurrection of the dead," that is, in expectation of the resurrection (Driver, 1994). Grosheide points out that, "the objection that the Apostle could not have meant anything like a baptism for the benefit of others is exegetically out of place." He further suggests two possible interpretations of the text: the first interpretation takes ὑπὲϱ (for) locally and translates it by "above." According to him, "this view implies that there were some at Corinth who had themselves baptized above the graves, namely of relatives who had died in Christ. This would then have been a way to express their unity and communion in Christ with the dead." In stressing the second interpretation he points out that, the unbaptized who died during a persecution were reckoned as having been baptised in their death.

Fee (1987) speculates that "those involved in this practice felt that baptism was necessary for entrance into the eschatological kingdom." Orr and Walter (1976) state that they felt that baptism was necessary for salvation. It is worthy of note that apart from this verse, there is no historical or biblical evidence of such practice in Corinth or elsewhere during the first century (Godet 1977). Keener suggests that, washing of the bodies of the dead preparatory to their

burial could also fit into interpreting "baptized for the dead." It is important to note that no information abounds concerning this practice of baptism for the dead even though Church fathers like Tertullian made mention of it based on supposition. Other scholars argued that this baptism was for the dead, i.e. for one self as dead in sin (Bruce, et al 1986).

It is possible the Apostle was asking the rhetorical question in order to challenge the position of those denying the resurrection of the dead while at the same time being reserved concerning the baptism on behalf of the dead. Mare (1977) states that: "This letter by Apostle Paul was reactive rather than proactive. 'Baptism for the dead' was a slogan used by trouble makers in Corinth who were denying the resurrection in order to make light of Paul's efforts for the unenlightened or spiritually dead." He further explains the baptism in the metaphorical sense to point to Paul's trials and sufferings for the gospel while νεκροὶ refers to the spiritually dead or spiritually unenlightened. Murphy (1981) however posits that 'dead' refers to spiritually dead, while some suggest that it is the administration of the sacrament over the graves of the dead (Everett, et al 1960).

The Ideology and Purported Reasons for the Practice of the Baptism for the Dead

This opinion is one of the most generally supported substitutes to vicarious baptism. The phrase "baptised for the dead" is held in the sense of "unbelievers being baptized because of believers who have died (Robertson and Plummer 1985)". This explanation seems to propose that unbelievers were concluding in their mind to be part of the rank of Christians because of the effect of a believer who had died. This opinion is maintained by several arguments. First, Paul used νεκροὶ with and without the definite article consistently in 1Cor 15 to distinguish between Christian dead and the dead in general (Raeder, 1956). In logic the argument here is that "the dead" τῶν νεκρῶν refers to the dead Christians.

Also, the preposition ὑπὲρ with the genitive can have the causal sense of ' 'because of'' (Deblass and Debrunner, 1961). Jeremias J. supports this opinion on the evidence that in considering the context, Paul appears to return to his first argument on the illogicality of denying the believers resurrection which he concludes with specific discussion of Christian dead. Nevertheless, G. G. Findlay disagrees with this opinion and he proposes that 'if Paul had meant Christian dead' he would have simplified his intention when referring to the dead with more specific phrasing such as "dead friends" or dead relatives. Thus, ideological reasons for the practice of the baptism for the dead include the following four reasons; being united with the dead, assume the position of dead believers, with reference to resurrection of the dead and their dying bodies.

Being United with the Dead

Murray (1962) proposes that the preposition ὑπὲρ is functioning with the final sense of "for." Jeremias further contends that verse 29 refers to the "pagans who take baptism upon themselves for the dead with intention of becoming integrated with their deceased Christian relatives at the resurrection.". However, even though this preposition may have a final sense, this usage seems uncommon in the New Testament (Meyer, 1980). Further, Mosley (1962) detects that, "this interpretation requires filling substantial ellipses in order to convey this sense, such as 'baptized in order to be integrated with their' deceased Christian relatives at the resurrection."

Assuming the Position of Dead Believers

In bearing in mind the consistency in usage of "baptism" and "dead" in the Pauline thought, this position maintains the common substitutionary sense of ὑπὲρ without demonstrating that this action is vicarious or for the advantage of the dead. Nevertheless, this opinion holds its weakness: The act of new believers coming to replace believers who have died is not immediately having indication in the context (Barnes, 1962).

Reference to the Resurrection of the Dead

This explanation declares that baptism for the dead refers to the general baptism of all believers that were baptized with reference to the dead. Rheume observes that "This opinion usually holds to an obscure ellipses of resurrection in order to harvest the meaning of baptism with reference to the resurrection of the dead. There is little support for this opinion other than the fact that it partly eliminates the theological weaknesses of vicarious baptism and that Christian baptism has the symbolic sense of being integrated with Christ in his death and resurrection (Rom 6:3-5). Also, Apostle Paul elsewhere used the preposition ὑπὲρ to mean "with reference to" (2 Corinthians 1:7; 8:23). Robertson and Plummer stated out that: "The major argument against this opinion is that the implied ellipsis of 'resurrection' in the phrase 'baptized with reference to the resurrection of the dead' is too violent." Therefore, Paul would have possibly employed resurrection if he meant that.

Relevance to their Dying Bodies

This opinion emphasizes that 1Corinthians 15:29 is denoting to the Christian baptism in order that an individual is baptized so that his dying body can be the beneficiary. Early Church fathers which included Tertullian and Chrysostom attributed to this proposal and it was later held by Erasmus as well. In fact, Tertullian commented on this passage on two occurrences and adopted the explanation of Christian baptism for their dead or dying bodies. It is observed in the writings of John Calvin (1979) about a suggestion of a more specific nuance of unbelievers repenting and being baptized on their death beds. Reume detects "O'Neill has most recently adopted this position, quoting further indication based on a tenuous deduction from textual evidence." This opinion appears to avoid the theological complications of vicarious baptism and interprets baptize and ὑπὲρ in congruence with the common usage of Pauline writing. Nevertheless, this opinion is weak given its assertion that νεκροὶ should be interpreted as "dying bodies" since there is no justification of such in the New Testament.

Literary Analysis of 1 Corinthians 15:29

Presentation of the Passage (1st Corinthians 15:29)

> Επεὶ τί ποιήσουσιν οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν; εἰ ὅλως νεκροὶ οὐκ ἐγείρονται, τί καὶ βαπτίζονται ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν;
>
> Transiliteration
> *Epei ti poiesousin hoi baptizomenoi huper ton nekron; ei holos nekroi ouk egeirontai, ti kai baptizontai huper auton;*
>
> English Translations
> Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead? (NKJV)

> Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them? (NIV)
>
> Now, what about those people who are baptized for the dead? What do they hope to accomplish? If it is true, as some claim, that the dead are not raised to life, why are those people being baptized for the dead? (Goodnews)
>
> Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead? (KJV)
>
> Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? (ESV)
>
> Why do you think people offer themselves to be baptized for those already in the grave? If there's no chance of resurrection for a corpse, if God's power stops at the cemetery gates, why do we keep doing things that suggest he's going to clean the place out someday, pulling everyone up on their feet alive? (MSG)
>
> If the dead will not be raised, what point is there in people being baptized for those who are dead? Why do it unless the dead will someday rise again? (NLT)
>
> However, people are baptized because the dead [will come back to life]. What will they do? If the dead can't come back to life, why do people get baptized as if they can [come back to life]. (GW)

Larger Context to 1 Corinthians 15:29

Whereas the first epistle of Paul to the Corinthian believers is a unit of discourse, the book paid close attention to varying issues the church grabbled with. Hence, the wider context to the passage under review begins from chapter 15: 1 with the discussion on the death and resurrection of Christ, in which the apostle reminded his audience of the gospel he preached to them which they also believed. Paul argued and established that Christ really died, ἀπέθανεν as being crucified, buried ἐτάφη but was raised from the dead ἐγήγερται and appeared to more than five hundred believers after appearing to the apostles (1 Corinthians 15:3-5). Paul emphatically maintained that the risen Jesus Christ also appeared to him (1 Corinthians 15:7) as he solidifies the reality of resurrection. Thus, the larger context is within the range of 1 Corinthians 15:1-32. Baptism actually played a vital role in the work of the apostles. In his epistle to the Romans, Paul describes it as a symbol of burial and resurrection with Christ Jesus (Rom 6: 3-11). In Galatians, he portrayed baptism as an act of putting on Christ. "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ, did put on Christ (Gal 3:27). However, there is a rare occurrence of the verb βαπτιζω in Paul's letter outside 1 Corinthians.

Besides its ten occurrences in 1 Corinthians, Paul uses βαπτιζω in Romans 6:3 up to two times and in Galatians 3:27. Apart from the two appearances of the word βαπτιζό in 15:29, it also appears eight times in 1 Corinthians (1:13, 14, 15, 16 [2x], 17; 10:2; and 12:13). John Reuame states that, "Paul consistently used this term with the literal sense of the Christian initiatory rite." However, he further observes that, there are three instances in which Paul used the word in a nonstandard way with reference to a believer being identified with Christ in His death (Rom 6:3), the Israelites being identified with Moses and believers being immersed by the spirit of God (1 Cor 12:13).

According to some, the word "baptize" was used in the literal (active) sense of "to suffer shipwreck," "to perish" or "to drown." In the Septuagint, the word occurs only four times and both the literal and figurative senses are present (cf. Lev 6:28; Isa 21:4). In the *Koine* Greek period, the usage of the word βαπτιζω continued with both the literal (active) and figurative (passive) meanings, with the active sense of "to immerse" becoming especially prevalent. In a few cases the literal meaning was applied to the sacred washings of the mystery religions. However, the figurative sense continued as βαπτιζω which is used to refer to "going under" with respect to sleep or intoxication and "perishing" (Murray, 1974). In the LXX and the New Testament, βαπτισμα and βαπτιζω are always used literally except for their use in Mark 10 and Luke 12 in a figurative sense. Despite the usage of the word is in the literal sense in some cases, as mentioned earlier, but the balance in this context seems to hang in favor of the figurative reading.

Textual/Theological Comments on 1 Corinthians 15:29

Many suggestions have been offered for the puzzling expression *baptized for the dead*. There are up to 200 different explanations for the passage; Thompson argue that the likely interpretation is that some Corinthians had undergone baptism to bear witness to the faith of fellow believers who had died without experiencing that rite themselves (Thompson 1987). Reaume argues that the phrase "baptized for the dead" is understood to be used in the metaphorical sense by designating the suffering of the apostle Paul for the sake of the spiritually dead persons, especially those whom Paul and his associates, were on a daily basis striving for their salvation in Corinth.

Murphy (1981) continues to propose that the group in Corinth that was denying the resurrection of the dead was influenced by pre-gnostic opinions of Philo. This opinion deflates the opinion of vicarious baptism as would be discussed later. This opinion also seems to be credible therefore Paul's mention of his suffering in 1Cor 15: 30-31. As postulated by Godon Fees, this statement faces some difficulties of differing nuances of νεκροὶ in the immediate context. In order to sustain this idea, Reuame suggests that, "In its first occurrence it would have to be understood literarily as the physically dead. More so, it is not made clear how an appeal to this alleged slogan would strengthen Paul's case for the certainty of the resurrection. If the point of the alleged slogan was to debase Paul's efforts for the spiritually dead as O'Connor advocates, then why would the apostle include the slogan in the context where his struggles for the spiritually dead are given as evidence for the certainty of the resurrection? Commenting on the view of a slogan, Carson (1987) posits that, "Little confirmation exist that the phrase 'baptized for the dead' is a slogan, for it lacks some of the key characteristics of a slogan such as, brevity, sustained qualification and ambiguous response."

Murphy's submission appears to meet the first characteristics but falls short on the rest, as Paul is seen as agreeing with the simple principle of alleged slogan rather than qualifying it. Also there is no adversative to distinguish the slogan from his response to it (1Cor 6:12, 13; 7:1). Fee further recommends that, "the assumption of Philo's influence on the Corinthians in order to prove that the Corinthians would have used νεκροὶ in the sense of 'spiritually dead' is questionable at best." Given the theme (resurrection of the dead) of 1Corinthians 15 and the flow of thought by the author at the beginning of the chapter, there is an obvious abrupt interruption of this narrative in verse 29-34. This shift has invariably sparked a considerable number of series of heated debate among Bible scholars who grappled with the acceptance of its ownership being credited to Apostle Paul. Some scholars assert that the author digressed in verse 29 from the main subject of his argument in favor of the resurrection of Christ and the dead believers hence the possibility of the insertion of spurious foreign material into the passage (Ellingworth and Howard Hatton, 1985). Conzelman (1975) on the other hand posits that verse 29 is independent and has no connectivity with the argument advanced so far. While maintaining that the "rhetoric of verse 29-34 follows naturally from the preceding argument, Gordon Fees further posits that "it does not necessarily follow logically (Fee, 1987)". William, in contrast, argued that, this passage "is an interpolation, neither composed by Paul nor included by him in the Corinthian letter." He further suggests that expunging verse 29-34 could assuage the difficulty of the passage and even make the logic of the argument more clear without altering, downplaying or attenuating the weight of the author's overall argument.

However, the literary pattern in the ancient times, precisely the period in which this document was authored, a digression of this nature was a tradition by the rhetoricians. This point is further buttressed by Fees who states that digression can be "used to amplify an argument's principal point, to abridge an argument, to make emotional appeal or to introduce those topics that would add to charm and elegance to the composition" (Fee, 1987). The literary style of 29-34 has been observed by Robert to be in sharp difference from the whole of chapter 15 as a whole (Hawkin, 1943). This, however, as true as it may appear to be, does not in any way negate the possibility that the verses are of Pauline origin. Credence to the attribution of these verses to Paul is further stressed in his literary usage of the conjunctions (*epei*) and (*alla*) in verses 29 and 35 respectively vis-à-vis the employ of these words in other portions of the authors documents.

The question that consequently comes to mind is, how did this passage find its way into this chapter if its authorship is not attributed to Paul? Walker in Adolf Von Harnack has drawn a plausible observation when he notes that the passage under study was incorporated into the Marcion's version of 1Corinthians; Baptism on behalf of the dead was not a strange practice among the Marcionites. The origination of the practice of the baptism for the dead among the Marcionites which is said to have been in effect in the middle of the second century is speculated to have paved way for the interpolative efforts in 1Cor 15:29 so as to provide an apostolic warrant for the practice. Thus, the interpolator must have been a Marcionite or someone in favor of the practice. Moreover, Darryl J. Schaffer in Walker stresses the fact that the subject matter contains some uniqueness in the sense that there is no mention of such rite (baptism for the dead) and the scenario of him engaging in a fight with wild beast in Ephesus (verse 32). The pagan literature collaborates with this position by casting doubt on the authenticity of the passage as tracing its origin with Paul (Schafer, 2009).

As appealing to the senses as Walkers position may appear, to be it has the incapacitation of taking into cognizance the issues of co-authorship and the employ of amanuensis (secretaries) which was the tradition in those days. Also, the mechanics of the letter writing process is rarely discussed though there is a consensus among scholars that the services of a scribe were engaged by the Apostle Paul (Richards, 2004). He engaged his missionary team in the secretarial work of his letters evident in 1 Cor 1:1 where Paul mentioned Sosthenes as co-sender of the epistle. Richard, despite the cloud of efforts to debunk the idea of Sosthenes being a coauthor of the letter strongly maintains the position of crediting the co-authorship to Sosthenes. According to him, "When Paul lists a co-sender, there is no evidence to claim this is anything other than a coauthor." The implication of cooperate authorship is liable to convey the possibility of insertion of any foreign material from the coauthor without the knowledge of the original author. As plausible as the speculation of the tendency of Sosthenes intercalating spurious information into the original document may appear to be the argument is only based on supposition. Otherwise, the embrace of the opposite could possibly vindicate the position of some who argue that Apostle Paul should ordinary have reprimanded those engaged in this practice or blatantly condemned the practice were the statement originated with him. Those who hold this position think that Paul should have objected to the misappropriation of a rite that was in conflict with his theology. Even though "the paucity of references to (the practice) by Christian writers suggests neither a widespread nor long-lived phenomenon" (Demarris, 1995). This connotes that the practice was in rarity not unrealistic.

Walker confutes the idea of the document of 1 Corinthians having been originated with Paul the Apostle. His argument in summary is heavily based on the following grounds: The first argument he advanced concerns the context of the passage under study. He argued that 1 Corinthians 15:29-34 is out of place in its current location in the letter that is it breaks up the logic of Paul's argument. He further observed that the content is not consistent with Paul. According to him, even though the text is clearly speaking about the vicarious baptism, Paul would not have ordinarily approved of such a practice and therefore must be a non-Pauline material. Walker further views this text as a self-contained unit in which he states that, the text holds up an independent unit as it is not dependent on the rest of the text. In a sense, there is no flow of thought between the passage and the rest of the verses in the chapter. Interestingly, he, in conclusion conceded there is no any textual proof to support his claim of interpolation. He, however, argues that lack of textual evidence does not render his position of interpolation invalid as there could be possibility for interpolative.

Stauffer who states that in I Corinthians 15:29, Paul pre-supposes that the potency of intercessory baptism for the dead reaches even to *Sheol* and there benefits men, who in this mortal life have not been sealed with the name of Christ. Richardson in the late fifties presents a similar view by opining that no entirely satisfactory explanation has ever been found for the reference of baptizing for the dead in I Corinthians 15:29, which he argued that was apparently a practice of baptizing by proxy on behalf of someone who had died. Perhaps in view of the New Testament evidence that the faith of a sponsor was considered to avail for a person – an infant or an epileptic who could not answer for himself, it was the custom to baptize by proxy on behalf of the catechumen who had died before he could be baptized. Richardson's explanation offered here, whilst conjectural, as he himself concedes, does at least try to make sense of an otherwise inexplicable verse.

Vicarious Activities for the Dead in the Contemporary Christianity

This section aims at exploring some practices in the contemporary Christianity that assumes an equal theological weight with the literal application of baptism for the dead in the passage under study.

Prayer for the Dead

Prayer for the dead is an intercessory activity by the living for the benefits of the dead. This is usually done to set the dead free from any unconfessed or unforgiving sin that could impede their admittance to heaven. The belief that the dead can benefit from benevolent acts of the living are evident in some activities in the contemporary Christianity. For instance, the practice of offering a wishful prayer for the dead at funerals namely; "May his/her soul rest in peace" "May God forgive our beloved brother/ sister" with the hope that the dead could benefit from such intercession trails the path of baptism for the dead (Daniel D.G, 2023). The institution of the practice of offering prayers for the dead traces its origin to the period of a famous Jewish leader – Judas Maccabees after a bloody battle that claimed the lives of many Jews in 163 (2 Maccabees 12:39-49). Maccabees called for a special prayer for the slain soldiers having discovered that they violated the war rules as each of them had amulets in their tunics Toner P (1908). Consequently, Ripley (2002:88) argues that this scenario was used as a justification for the prayer for the dead by St. Augustine in the first part of the 5th Century.

The progression of time paved way for this belief to form an integral part of the doctrine of purgatory. The Catholic Church stresses the need for the living to intercede for those who are believed to undergo a process of purgation in purgatory. In buttressing this point Anthony Kanu asserts "Just as we rely on the prayers of the saints in heaven, the same way they (the dead in purgatory) depend on our prayers" (Anthony Kanu, 2018:3). Also, the practice of substitutionary penance otherwise called proxy penance where a person carries the burden of another person including the dead trails the path of benevolence for the dead. This practice is said to be hinged on the idea that another person's burden can be borne by a friend or relative who has deemed it necessary to close the gap by standing in for the guilty as in the case of Christ's suffering on behalf of human race Garvin (2017). The question that comes to mind is whether the act of praying for the dead enjoys a biblical support. Can the dead benefit from any external support of the living? The Bible maintains in Ezekiel 18:20 that "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bears the sin of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself." This passage offers a binary of dimension in resolving the difficulty in understanding the meaning of the term "soul" as well as proffering solution to the state of the dead relative to benefiting external services from the living. It employed the terms "son" and "father" to describe the antecedent "soul" which denote persons, human, people, individual etc. In a sense the term "soul" could be translated as person etc not as an independent substance that exist in man. The Bible records that God used only two materials (Dust and breath) for the creation of man (Genesis 2:7). Until now man was not a living being before God breathed the bread of life into him which changes his status to "living soul." Accordingly, the New Testament word for 'soul' phyche which is rendered nephesh in Hebrew is translated as "life" of "human being" (Daniel D.G, 2023:152) Daniel further states that "There is no mention of the independent existence of phyche 'life' outside of human being himself…" Given, the soul cannot live outside of man but it is an abstract integral part of man that describes his status of being. Correspondingly, (Conen Lothar, 1971:444) offers

explanation for "*nephesh*" to mean "The whole man, his total existence and it's the whole man that dies Coenen (1971:444)." Further, (Galenicks Erick, 2005:159) postulates that "when man dies the whole person dies." Therefore, the existence of the soul in a certain location when man dies does not find scriptural justification. It further stresses that righteousness is not transferable; it cannot be gained by proxy. Accordingly, the Bible points out the unconscious state of the dead who are incapacitated of receiving any help form the living (Ecc 9:5,6; 3:19, 20).

The Mormon Church and Baptism for the Dead

The Church of Latter Days Saints adopts the practice of literal baptism for the dead. This doctrine is said to have originated with Joseph Smith, the founding father of the Church. The formulation and incorporation of this tenet into the Mormon doctrine assumed its lime light when Joseph Smith's older brother Alvin fell ill with bilious colic. Shortly after his death Smith began to have visitations from the angel *Moroni* in the woods. Since the Smiths were not members of any church, the pastor who conducted Alvin's funeral declared in his address that Alvin was in hell because he was not a church member. This condemnation understandably upset the Smith family, especially since Alvin was a most handsome man of great strength, "surpassed by none but Adam and Seth," according to Joseph Smith (Bushman & Smith, 1984:91).

Further, as Joseph Smith was translating the book of Mormon, he discovered baptism was a requirement for eternal life. And the appearance of John the Baptist gave him the authority to baptize; years after that Elijah appeared to him and gave him the authority to baptize even the dead. This invariably paved a way to the baptism of the dead in the Mormon Church (Gregory P.P, Margaret D. and Ariel M.). Whereas most protestant churches do not subscribe to the practical action of the living baptizing on behalf of the dead, the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints regard and carry it out as a necessary obligation. The biblical support they offer for this practice is 1 Corinthians 15:29. (Tobler 2013: 87). They further assert that by the baptisms they perform in behalf of the dead, they testify that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (Tobler).

Also, it is believed that the first president of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints, Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) witnessed in vision how Christ among other instructions commanded him to perform a vicarious baptism which may include not only the living but the dead:

> The Savior visited the spirit world and from among the righteous [spirits], he organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness. In this, they were taught faith in God, repentance from sin, vicarious baptism for the remission of sins, [and] the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hand (Covenant, 2009).

This vision reinforces the belief that the dead can benefit from intercession by the living. The doctrine that the living can provide baptism and other essential ordinances for the dead vicariously was further revealed anew to the Prophet Joseph Smith (Covenant). Since then the Church has embraced and practiced baptism for the dead.

Findings

This study carefully examined the original text of 1 Corinthians 15:29. The study considered the various interpretative approaches and translations of this singular Pauline statement with a view to determining the meaning and possible literary interactions that could be based on the text and the context in which it was used. This led to an identification of several attempts to resolve the difficult hermeneutical and linguistic problem posed by the phrase "baptised for the dead". These attempts, rather than resolve the problem, generated speculative polemics instead thus, raising more issues than answers concerning the use of the term baptism in the text. Trailing the conventional trajectory of interpretative approaches, the issues raised centered on the metaphoric, substitutionary, and ordinary concepts of baptism. On the other hand, another school of thought, in an attempt to unravel the conundrum in the passage conducted a contextual and intertextual study on the lexical items *huper, nekroi* and *nekron*. All these efforts towards unravelling the difficulties of the passage resorted to the expository and contextual meanings and praxis of the doctrine of 'baptism.' This atmosphere has further engendered the literal interpretative approach of the passage that resulted to the literal performance of the ordinance for the dead in some denominations. The findings further revealed that whereas some church organizations do not subscribe to the literal baptism for the dead but however, similar practices such as prayer for the dead which have the same theological weight are upheld.

Conclusion

After a careful and close examination of the passage, 1 Cor 15:29, this study is concluded thus: A plausible translation of the word ὑπὲϱ in the passage should be "for" as against "above" as suggested by some scholars since the word that follows it is in the genitive case and not accusative case. The expression "those who are baptized" in the passage (1 Cor 15:29) could refer to the baptism in the metaphorical sense and not literal. Consequently, "those dying" is used in the metaphorical sense to denote the daily suffering of the apostle Paul and his associates who were risking their lives for the salvation of sinners who were dying figuratively in their sins. Therefore, it is very improbable that he was making any allusion to any baptism rather than the figurative. Furthermore, there is no biblical justification in this passage which suggests the institution of the practice of baptism for the dead as being practiced by some religious group. This practice of baptism for the dead in the modern times is based on the misapplication and misinterpretation of the passage. The literal accommodation of this idea could, though not directly, pave a way to the teaching of immortality of soul since it gives room for the dead to benefit from the gesture of their living loved ones. Similarly, it portends the tendency of encouraging socioeconomic challenge to a society given the fact that the dead can be appeased for, hence, a possibility of experiencing salvation without any compliance to a moral living on their part.

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