

## CARE FOR ORPHANS IN NKANULAND IN THE CONTEXT OF PROV. 31: 8-9 FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

UGWUEWO, CHISOM S

### Abstract

The ugly experience of children without parents in Nigeria in general, and Nkanuland in particular, has not been totally eradicated. Orphans still suffer abuse of various kinds in the hands of the wicked. The wickedness has led to other social ills such as robbery, stealing, prostitution, wrong notion about life, forgery, cyber theft etc, which found among contemporary youths including teenagers. The cause of these problems is not far from the poor or lack of care for the independent children such as orphans. The following captures the ways these desolate children are abused: physical hitting, hard labour, sexual harassment, child trafficking, female child marriage, starvation and other similar cruelty. The height at which they are exploited indicate that they need salvation. In order to seek solution to their plight, the researcher uses the text of Prov 31:8-9 as an opener to all leaders of all levels in Nkanuland to understand and assume their roles in the defence of orphans against ill-treatment. The text enjoins all leaders to speak out for desolate and peasant who cannot defend themselves against injustice and other forms of wickedness. The writer recommends that if leaders in Nkanuland will meticulously apply the teaching of the text, condition of the orphans will be enhanced for consistent development of Nkanuland in particular and Nigeria in general. The research method used is rhetoric method and biblical exegesis.

**Key words:** orphans, Nkanuland, care, sustainable development, exegesis.

### Introduction

Israelites by divine order were to show unreserved love to strangers and the less privileged; they were also supposed to be custodians of justice, and combat injustice, for the LORD fought for them against injustice from the nations and empires under whom they were vassals in the time past. Having been in the condition similar to that of an orphan and the needy, they were therefore to ensure that people of such peasant status should not be allowed to be afflicted. The population of orphans in Nigeria according to Olusegun (2018) is 17 million, and this adversely affects individual and corporate income. In neither Enugu State nor Nkanuland is the population of orphans statistically represented in literature, rather the researcher's effort through visitation to Local Governments, communities and orphanages in Nkanuland makes it realistic. This researcher's effort reveals that in the 21 communities (towns) in Nkanuland, there are group of philanthropists (benevolent individuals) who organised welfare outreach for orphans on *gala* days such as Children's day, Christmas day, New Year day, Easter day etc. The result of this personal effort shows that average number of orphans below 18 years that benefit from the program in Nkanuland is 130 from each community, hence the estimate number is 2,730 orphans in Nkanuland. This estimate population excludes orphaned children in Orphanage and Abandoned Children Home. Very few orphaned children in Nkanuland are in Orphanage and Abandoned Children Home whereas majority of them are in the care of family relatives and even strangers. It is obvious that vulnerable children including orphans need individual and corporate assistance for their survival. Members of the society are expected to assume the responsibility of their upkeep irrespective of one's belief, background and echelon. Orphans and other vulnerable children are not half humans because condition and vicissitude of life denied them the opportunity of enjoying parental care from biological parents. They are precious to the LORD, and it is expected that they are accorded equal rights with other privileged children in the human society. The situation to which the contemporary society exposes vulnerable children is



undeserved. The level of daily maltreatment they receive from their accidental parents is high and malicious.

The researcher in this work seeks among others to proffer solution towards amelioration of the above noted problems; the writer intends to achieve this aim by analysing the chosen Old Testament text and applying it in the context of contemporary Nkanuland.

The research method adopted in this study is Rhetorical Analysis and Sociological Approach. Obiorah (2015, p.93) explains rhetoric thus "Rhetoric is the art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing." Pontifical Biblical Commission (1993) adds that it is the art of composing discourse aimed at persuasion. The Sociological Method of studying the text of Old Testament takes cognizance of *Sitz-im-Leben* or situation in life. *Sitz-im-Leben* is the study of sociological milieu that generated a particular text. The both methods are used because of the nature of the text. Rhetoric is employed because it is the suitable exegetical method for biblical poems. Poetic techniques were also brought to surface in order to examine the poetic lines literally. A good biblical exegete cannot doubt the fact that the text, "Proverbs 31:8-9" is a poem. Sociological approach is also applied in order to trace the prevalent social practice that gave rise to the text.

The researcher examines the life situation which made the wise poet (or poetess) to give such instructions to royal house concerning the destitute and the relevance of the poetic demand/command in Nkanu context, with special respect to welfare of orphans.

## Exegesis of the Text

### Hebrew Text of PROVERBS 31:8-9

8 וְלֹאֵלֶּם פִּתְחֵי־פִי  
9 וְעַתָּה שִׁפְטֵם קִיָּין וְאִיִּין

### English Translation of Proverbs 31:8-9

8 Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute

9 Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.

### Textual Criticism of Proverbs 31:8-9

Etymologically, the word criticism is derived from Greek word *krinein* which means to distinguish, decide or judge. Textual criticism could therefore mean to distinguish a text from another. It could also mean to decide a text which is close to the original or oldest text. It studies critically the distinction between original text and other translations from the original text. It takes cognizance of what is/are added or omitted in the later translation. It studies differences in the syntax of the original language and other translations. וְלֹאֵלֶּם פִּתְחֵי־פִי translated "for right of all the destitute" poses a problem in interpretation. The Hebrew phrase *'el-din* rendered "for right" in English rendition is inadequate. The phrase is better put as "to or towards judgment" for the Hebrew word *'el* means "to or towards" and *din* means "judgment." וְעַתָּה שִׁפְטֵם קִיָּין translated "all the destitute" in English version makes interpretation of the text an uphill task.

This Hebrew phrase וְעַתָּה שִׁפְטֵם קִיָּין is supposed to be "all the sons of the passed away" instead of "all the destitute" or "all the unfortunate" or "those appointed to destruction" as given in other English translations. The implication of וְעַתָּה שִׁפְטֵם קִיָּין in the original text is that the wise instruction in the text is geared towards defending Children without parents (orphans) against partial judgment whereas the implied meaning of English rendition of וְעַתָּה שִׁפְטֵם קִיָּין is that the right of all the less privileged members of the society must be



protected. Hence, omission of specific reference to the fatherless or parentless children as retained in the original text.

וְאֵת עֲנִי וְאֵת צָרִים (translated “and defend the rights of the Poor and needy”) conspicuously manifest a difference between the original text and the English translation. The accurate translation of the conjunction sentence וְאֵת עֲנִי וְאֵת צָרִים should be “and justify poor and needy,” or “bring justice to poor and needy.” The addition of definite article *the* to the word “poor” and representation of “defend” as the verb of the noun (object) of the sentence in the text are all later development in the subsequent translations. They are not part of the original text at all. More so, the word “poor” in the English version does not adequately represent the original text. The Hebrew word עֲנִי does not mean just poor as the Hebrew adjective germinate root אָנָּן which means just “poor.” It means “afflicted poor” or “an oppressed poor.”

### Sitz-in-Lebem of the Proverbs 31:8-9

It is necessary to note that every biblical text is written out of a particular situation/condition prevalent in the society as noted by the writer, and Proverbs 31:8-9 is not exempted. Copeland (2007) reveals that in Proverbs wisdom regarding authority is a virtue often lacking... People with authority frequently do abuse their authority; people under authority always suffer worse situation in different respects situation worse. The mother of Lemuel concluded that counsel pertaining to care for orphans is highly indispensable in the leadership of his son as a prince who would soon become a king. The urgent need of such a counsel was because those in authority were known for ignoring the rights of the less privileged.

### Literary Form of Proverbs 31:8-9

Literary form of a text is also called genre. Genre concerns itself with the form in which a text exists. It is called in other terms (from German Language) *gattung* or *gattungen* of a biblical text. Obiorah (2017) identifies various forms in which a biblical text can appear: narrative, proverb, aetiology, homily, prayer, law, parable etc. Munde (2012) who refers to it as *style* avers that every literary *gattung* has been produced from a concrete social context. He further states that literal style (genre) in OT can take the following forms: narratives, Psalms of laments and thanksgiving, novella, didactic stories, myth, laws including apodictic laws, wisdom saying, priestly and royal oracles, songs/poem among others.

From the foregoing, one can draw a conclusion that there is no biblical text without special style or genre. Proverbs 31:8-9 is a collection of poem on the shrewd command relating to care for destitute. Waltke (1979) avers that like the wisdom sayings in the Book of Proverbs, these texts of varying provenience are composed in poetic form, that is, they are cast in parallelisms. There are different of the literary genres, forms (*Gattungen*) that one can find in the Biblical Hebrew poetry. Such literary *gattung* are *šir*, *hūdār*, *māšāl*, *qināh*, *nehī* and *bʾrākāh* (Obiorah, 2017). *Māšāl* which is saying of any various categories, proverbs, parables including all wise instructions and command is worthy of note in this research composition. The conscious teaching of a disciplined mother for moral development of her son as presented in the text gives credence to the elucidation above. Hence Proverbs 31:8-9 belongs to literary style called *māšāl*.

### Poetic Techniques in Proverbs 31:8-9

Poetic techniques are those devices employed in the literary work particularly poetry for the purpose of interpreting the proper message and thought of the poet or poetess. By deploying these devices, one tends to understand the varied effort of the poets in order to convey their sublime thought with conviction. In the Hebrew poems such techniques are very numerous in the



*k'tûbîm*. Some poetic techniques in the text of Proverbs 31:8-9 include the following: parallelism, repetition, ellipsis, key words and refrain.

**Parallelism:** Parallelism is a poetic device used to analyse poems arranged in parallel lines. It occurs in poems when the first line shows a form of correspondence to the second line. These correlations differ in their appearance, hence various types of poetic parallelism: synonymous, antithetic, chiasmic etc. The type of parallelism that dominates the text of Prov 31:8-9 is synonymous parallelism. Synonymous parallelism is used to indicate a case where the second line shares similarity with the first line by the careful use of common or similar words. Moreover Obiorah (2017, p.8) maintains thus "the idea in the first line is "repeated" in the second line. However, it is more than mere repetition because the idea stated in the first line is, in the second line heightened, intensified, clarified, vivified or elucidated." The similar words that were both heightened and elucidated in v. 8 are "those who cannot speak" in the first line and "the destitute in the second line;" "speak out" in the first line and "defend" in the second line of v.9. There is expression of the need to defend the helpless in v.8, both those who cannot speak and the destitute are two synonymous words used to describe the helpless. To seek their redress is represented by the two words "speak and "defend" in lines one and two of v.9.

**Repetition:** In the Hebrew poetry, repetition can be of three types including repetition initial or anaphora, end repetition or *epistrophe* and immediate repetition. Anaphora which occurs when two or more poetic lines consecutively begin with the same word or phrase is the type that is contained in Prov 31:8-9. The imperative statement "speak out" is repeated in the first line each of vv.8 and 9.

**Ellipsis:** Ellipsis according to Obiorah (2017, p.15) is "omission of particle, word or group of words within a poetic or grammatical unit, where its presence is expected." Proverbs 31:8 omits the phrase "speak out" in the second line where it is expected.

Speak out for those who cannot speak for the rights of all the destitute.  
One would expect that the phrase "speak out" should come before "for the right..." in the second line.

**Key words:** Key words are words repeated many times by their sound, position and meaning in the poem, and by incessant occurrence tend to dominate the poem. The key words in Proverbs 31:8-9 are "speak out" which is repeated by itself and another similar word "defend," and "the destitute" which is frequently repeated by other synonymous words such as "those who cannot speak," and "the poor and needy."

**Refrain:** This is a term used to designate recurrence of a set of verse more than once within a poem. Such exhibition manifests in Proverbs 31:8-9 where line one of v.8 reoccurs in line one of v.9. This kind of refrain is called variant refrain because it is not verbatim.

### Close Reading of Proverbs 31:8-9

The explanation of the text is done as follows:

#### Mouth Piece for the Desolate v.8a

The Hebrew word *ḥēl* which is adjective masculine singular absolute is best translated literally as "dumb." But it is figuratively used in the text to describe desolate group of ancient Israel who are not wielded with power and authority to clarify their view. They could not speak for themselves not because they possess no mouth but because they were less conscious of their rights and privileges as well as afraid of the ruling class who were hostile to them. Johnson (2010) is of the view that the "dumb" is anyone who for any reason whatever is unable to plead his own cause; he may be of tender age, or of lowly station, or ignorant, timid,



and boorish; and the prince is enjoined to plead for him and defend him. Benson (n) corresponds to this claim by adding that such people (the peasant) cannot speak in their own cause, either through ignorance, or because of the dread of their more potent adversaries. Clarke (1831) posits that the people to be spoken out for, are the accused persons who have no counsellors, and cannot plead for themselves. In the same vein Ellicott (1905, para 18) holds similar view in the following words

Open thy mouth for the dumb,...Not who are naturally so, but who cannot speak in their own behalf, either through want of elocution, or knowledge of the laws; or who are bashful, timorous, and fearful, being overawed by the majesty of a court of judicature, or by their prosecutors; or who, as they have not a tongue, so not a purse, to speak for them, the fatherless and the widow; which latter has her name, in the Hebrew language, from dumbness. Here Lemuel's mother advises him to open his mouth freely, readily, boldly, and intrepidly, and plead for such persons.

Lange (2017) pin-points that speaking out for the those who cannot speak implies to help such to their right as are not able to maintain it for themselves; be to them a judge and at the same time an advocate (comp. Job 29:15, 16). A close study of the text alongside its interaction by the above scholars shows that herculean task awaits those in authority especially with regard to restore and retain justice for the destitute.

The Hebrew phrase *דַּבֵּר לְאִלְמָנָה* translated “speak out” indicates imperative. Being in qal imperative masculine singular gives credence to the point established above. Monarchs of Israel were commanded to consider the desolate in their undertaking in order to avoid negligence of their welfare because of their vulnerability. Barner (1834) maintains that in contrast with the two besetting sins of Eastern monarchs stands their one great duty, to give help to those who had no other helper. With specific reference to the text as counsel of a wise mother to her son who would emerge as a king, David Thomas (2017, para 3) explains the text thus; “what this mother inculcates is compassion to the poor. It is the duty and honour of kings to espouse the cause of the distressed. This mother enjoins not only compassion, but also justice. She is a model mother.”

Copeland (2007, p.62) attempts to explain the text thus “those in authority they must be fair and merciful - Prov 31:8-9 for those unable to speak for themselves, for those who are poor and needy. Those in authority need the qualities that will ensure righteous and merciful judgment”. Using this motherly advice to a dear son, kings and leaders were compelled to understand that their basic role in leadership includes combating for the peasant against cruelty of the wicked. Henry (1991) comments that open thy mouth, denotes the liberty of speech that princes and judges ought to use in passing sentence. They must especially look upon themselves as obliged to be the patron of oppressed innocents.

It is pertinent to note that *אִלְמָנָה* “those who cannot speak (dumb)” as literary represented in the text needs to be clarified the more. In interrogative words, who are “those who cannot speak? This question cannot be left rhetorical because the society, i.e ancient Israel teemed with people of unequal classes. *אִלְמָנָה* therefore include all desolate and peasants who were vulnerable as a result of poverty and probably loss of parents, and other related causes. They were the set of people whom the more opportune class seizes their penury condition to exploit them. This gives clue to why the kings and judges were issued divine order to deliver them from such exploitation.

### Defending the Orphans Against Injustice v.8b

An average reader of the text may be posed with problem of the use of *כָּל־בְּנֵי־יָתוֹם* which has been elusive to interpret. A clear evidence of this problem include the following English translations of this Hebrew phrase: *כָּל־בְּנֵי־יָתוֹם*. KJV and KJV translated it as “all such as are appointed to destruction”, ASV translated it as “such as are left desolate”, (CSB



translated it as "all who are dispossessed". ESV, NIB and NIV translated it as "all who are destitute", NRSV translated it as "all the destitute", NAS and TNK translated it as "all the unfortunate", NET translated it as "all the dying" etc. The next question that comes into mind is which represents the original text accurately? One cannot decide the appropriate translation by mere looking at these English translated phrases. For accurate translation and interpretation of the text, one needs proficiency in Biblical Hebrew Language. The Hebrew phrase under analysis, *בְּנֵי חַלְוָה* is a combination of three Hebrew nouns- *בְּנֵי* noun common masculine singular construct.. It is best translated "all" when it is in construct relationship with plural noun. *בְּנֵי* is construct form of masculine plural noun *banim* (sons) and it is best translated "sons of." *חַלְוָה* which means either "passing away", "vanishing" or "passed away", "vanished." When these three words are literary put together, the result becomes "all sons of passing away or vanished" "or all sons of the passed away or vanished." The implied meaning of this phrase could be "orphans." Hence it is not absurd to infer that the text contains an idea of orphan in addition to other destitute including the poor and needy which is equally characteristic of an orphan in most cases. It is worthy of note to recall that an orphan in the Old Testament is a term often used to describe a male child whose father is deceased. Holladay (1988, p.148) makes it clearer when he defines an orphan in the context of Old Testament as "a boy who has become fatherless." The reason for scholarly acceptance of this view is probably because the ancient Jewish society considered women and children as inconsequential members of the then society.

Other scholarly submission to the fact that the text pin-points on orphans is Barner (n.d) who avers that such as are appointed to destruction - literally, "children of bereavement," with the sense, either, as in the text, of those "destined to be bereaved of life or goods," or of "bereaved or fatherless children." Clarke (1831) maintains that those that are appointed to destruction - *בְּנֵי חַלְוָה* could be children of passage - indigent travelers; children of desolation - those who have no possessions, or orphans. Even in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction; whose destruction is resolved on by their accusers and prosecutors; and who are in danger of it, being charged with capital crimes; unless some persons of wisdom, power, and authority, interpose on their behalf. It may be rendered, "in the cause of all the children of change", or "passing away" (s); the children of the world, which passeth away with all things in it, as Kimchi; or orphans, whose help passeth away, as Jarchi; or rather strangers, as others, who pass from place to place and whose state and condition is liable to many changes who may be ignorant of the laws of the country where they are, and may stand in need of persons to plead for them (Ellicott, 1905). Keil and Delitzsch (1878) argue that the text discusses "children of inheritance" equals "children left behind", after khallafa, to leave behind; and Luther, "for the cause of all who are left behind. This authenticates that these children are left after departure of their care givers who are most probably their parents.

Lange (2017) contends that "for the right of all orphan children," --"Sons of leaving, of abandonment or disadvantage" are clearly those left behind as helpless orphans; the word therefore conveys a more specific idea than the "sons of want" in Proverbs 31:5. The text does not posit that an idea of orphan is isolated in the context but maintains that these orphans are left unaided by the monarchs of ancient Israel, and consequently exposed to injustice and other social vices. It is on this ground that kings were mandated to intervene on their behalf. Pooles (2017) argues that those orphans are those without succour from the judge, and are likely to be utterly ruined, therefore the judges and kings own them both justice and charity as obligation to preserve them. Johnson (2010) elucidates on the text by saying that the royal heart and hand are to be at the service of those who cannot help themselves - the widow, the orphan, the poor, and "all that are desolate and oppressed. He is to be both advocate and judge. He is to be an earthly type of God.



### Divine Imperative To Administer Justice V.9a

𐤒𐤍𐤕𐤓𐤕𐤔 which means “judge righteously” needs contextual explanation. To judge in Old Testament does not imply to condemn or to take laws into hands by those in authority. It rather denotes to take decision in the right manner or to vindicate one from false allegation. It is not in the hand of mortal to decide whose life to terminate because it is not in his hand to create life. Therefore to judge in the context of this text is not to take solemn decision on preservation or termination of life, but to vindicate the innocent from the injustice of the wicked and to take decision towards retaining the welfare of all. Gill (2017) opines that to judge righteously means to pronounce a righteous sentence and to deliver it freely and impartially, with all readiness and boldness, not caring for the censures of wicked and unjust men. In oriental history according to Black and Rowley (1976, p.457), “kings must have clear minds, to maintain power and to judge for the poor and helpless.”

Just as the beginning of line one of v.8 illustrates command, line one of this v.9 also indicates a must do instruction. The first phrase 𐤒𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤓 meaning “speak out” that begins the verse gives allegiance to this observation. Kings and judges were not implored by the development of this collection of wise sayings to administer with impartiality their decisions especially with utmost regard to the desolate.

### Defense of the Peasant v.9b

The two nouns that are used to represent the peasant in this text according to *New Revised Standard Version* are “the poor and needy.” 𐤒𐤍𐤕𐤓𐤕𐤔 translated “defend the rights of the poor and needy.” The Hebrew words 𐤒𐤍𐤕𐤓 means “and bring justice,” the leadership of Israel were under compulsion to provide a platform which must negate the denial of justice to the peasant members of the society. Their kinship and judgment must aim at advocating impartiality and frowning at victimization of any sort especially against people who feed from hand to mouth. 𐤒𐤍𐤕𐤓 translated “poor” in the English version is stronger and deeper than the English rendition. It is an afflicted poor, it is quite different from the Hebrew word which means only “poor” i.e. to have little money or resource for basic needs 𐤒𐤍𐤕𐤓 in the context of this study is a poor person who is exploited as result of his poverty condition. It is the poor who is overwhelmed by want. This gives clue to why kings and judges were compelled to seek their welfare without delay.

In the same way, the condition of 𐤒𐤍𐤕𐤓 translated “needy” is akin to that of the debased poor as described above. 𐤒𐤍𐤕𐤓 is beyond just the needy, it is an oppressed needy i.e. a needy person who is oppressed. This understanding makes clearer the reason kings and judges must bring justice to them. Raymond, Brown, Joseph, Fitzmyer, Roland and Murphy (eds) (2014, p.461) aver that the text “asserts the royal duty to implement justice.” Because the poor and needy were not only helped but were debased and abused, it then became a point of duty for the monarchs to come to their aid for amelioration.

### Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is continuous development which is hampered by any factor even in the future. The World Commission on Environment and Development otherwise known as Brundtland Commission (1987) defines sustainable development as development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Harris (2000) observes three major aspects of sustainable development which as follows:

- Economic: An economically sustainable system must be able to produce goods and services on a continuing basis, to maintain manageable levels of government and external debt, and to avoid extreme sectoral imbalances which damage agricultural or industrial production.



- **Environmental:** An environmentally sustainable system must maintain a stable resource base, avoiding over-exploitation of renewable resource systems or environmental sink functions, and depleting non-renewable resources only to the extent that investment is made in adequate substitutes. This includes maintenance of biodiversity, atmospheric stability, and other ecosystem functions not ordinarily classed as economic resources.
- **Social:** A socially sustainable system must achieve distributional equity, adequate provision of social services including health and education, gender equity, and political accountability and participation.

### **Application of the Exegesis**

As the text of Proverbs 31:8-9 focuses on the divine and wise instructions to religious and political leaders, and legal practitioners of ancient Israel to maintain the welfare of the desolate and peasant including orphans, its application is therefore directed to political leaders, community leaders and legal practitioners in Nkanuland for maintenance of welfare of children without parents. The roles of the government (i.e four main Local Government that make up Nkanuland) to the orphans, the role of community to the orphans and the roles of legal practitioners including individuals (who are Nkanu indigenous) to the orphans will be examined and discussed alongside the findings of the studied text.

### **Local Governments in Nkanu and Care for Orphans**

Enugu South, Enugu East, Nkanu East and Nkanu West with their teeming population in the different communities are left with consistent role of administering proper welfare to the orphans in their locality. Evidence of attempt made by Local Governments in Nkanuland to seek the welfare of orphans may not speak volume but such effort exists. For instance, in the recent time, department of Social Welfare, Enugu South Local Government Area of Enugu State makes a yearly mandate to visit the less privileged including the orphans in their distress with the sole aim of alleviating their penury condition by giving a token of financial and material assistance according to their strength. This annual event takes place every December (Ugwu I, personal communication, 4<sup>th</sup> July, 2018).

UNAIDS (2004) describes the role of Government to the orphans as the priority actions for Education and Orphans and Vulnerable Children as follows,

to ensure access to education for all, including orphans and vulnerable children, through initiatives such as abolishing school fees, reducing hidden costs and opportunity costs, establishing community networks and monitoring progress; to manage the supply and ensure the quality of education by strengthening education management and information systems, as well as building teacher/administrator HIV/AIDS capacity and establishing policies and practices to reduce the risks of this group; to expand the role of schools to provide care and support to orphans and vulnerable children through measures such as linking with community social services and networks and coordinating multi-sector and partner involvement; and to protect orphans and other children made vulnerable by HIV/ AIDS by developing policies and practice to reduce stigma and discrimination as well as sexual abuse and exploitation (p.8).

The foregoing corresponds to the expectation of political heads according to the studied text. Besides supply of material items to the orphanages and other related places for vulnerable children, the Local Governments in Nkanuland should make policies that will enhance the welfare of orphans. The bye law of each LG must contain stipulation that will prohibit vulnerability of orphans to human antagonism and promote their human right. The administrative heads are under divine imperative to enforce adherence to all dick and harry of



Nkanuland by stipulating penalty for those who might be recalcitrant to such promulgation. By this, the text will be absorbed as it ought to.

### Nkanu Communities and Care for Orphans

There were evidences of attempts to cater for the orphans in Nkanu, however these efforts were not enough as children without parents abound in several communities waiting for arrival of their *messiah* who would deliver them from their mess. The *messiah* in this regard is an individual, village or community who would make it a point of duty to defend their cause in order to ensure that their humanity is restored and retained.

Prior to contemporary Nkanuland, orphans were catered for in different ways. For instance, it is expected among Ugwuaji people of Enugu South Local Government Area, one of the communities in Nkanu, that if a child or children are left orphaned, the immediate relative takes the responsibility of parental care to the family (children) of the deceased parents. The immediate brother of the deceased parents may not be under custom to take care of the children of the deceased parents. He would do that if he wills but not under compulsion. If the expected care does not come from him probably as a result of unwillingness or financial quagmire, the alternative care the children would receive comes from their maternal home and other concerned individuals including good friends of the deceased parents (Ewo C. O, personal communication, 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2018). By implication there was no community provision for orphans in Ugwuaji since the olden days and the practice is prevailed till date. Till date, such individual care as against community care for orphans abound in such communities as Amuri, Agbani, Akpugo etc of Nkanu West and Nike and other communities of Enugu East.

Care for orphans among the people of Nara in Nkanu East of Enugu State is dependent on the nature of the death of the parent/parents and the relationship the deceased parent/parents kept while alive. If a man is suspected to die as a result of evil he committed, the children would be left to suffer the consequences of their father's atrocity through abandonment. A case where the man is innocent of any moral evil but is suspected to be killed by the wife, she would be punished by taking the responsibility of catering for her children welfare alone, after being subjugated to punishment of rigorous process (Ezemba A, personal communication, 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2018). Children without parents are seen as vulnerable children who need to be cared for. But the care depends on the kind of relationship the deceased father most times and deceased mother sometimes kept with other members of the community during their lifetime. In some places, help given to orphans is conditional in the sense that sometimes the giver expects a certain service from the recipient or demands sexual escapade from the female adult relative of the orphaned child/children whose care of the child/children is entrusted to (Ezemba A, personal communication, 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2018).

However, it is worthy of note to emphasize that it was normal in the era of ancient Nkanuland for farmers in communities such as Ugwuaji and some others, not to harvest every mature plants such as yam, cocoyam, potatoes etc in their farms during harvest time. Those reserved mature plants are left for the peasant members of the community including orphans. They had the freedom to enter such farm(s) to look for what to eat. Such mercy act gradually became a custom (Ani D.O, personal communication, 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2018). Unfortunately, hardship and hunger become obstacles to this welcome development. Now most families don't even have enough for their daily feeding, to talk of reserving for the poor. This hunger epidemic is common among communities in Nigeria. The communities need to devise other means of supporting the welfare of these orphans in the contemporary time.

Physical abuse including sexual harassment, physical hitting, starvation etc, and other abuse such as child trafficking, female early marriage remain the ugly experience of orphans in Nkanuland. An ugly experience of a boy who had an accident during road hauling was



## References

- Barner, A (1834). "Barner's commentary." <http://biblehub> (retrieved 20<sup>th</sup> Dec, 2017)
- Benson (n.d). "Benson Commentary on the Old and New Testaments." Bible support.com. (retrieved 20<sup>th</sup> Dec, 2017).
- Black, M and Rowley, H. H (eds) (1976). *Peake's Commentary On The Bible*. "Commentary on wisdom book". Nairobi Kenya: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd.
- Clarke, A (1831). "*Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*." Text Courtesy of [Internet Sacred Texts Archive](#)
- Copeland, M.A (2007). The Book Of Proverbs. ExecutableOutlines.com. Accessed 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2018.
- David Thomas, D.D (2017). "The Counsels Of A Noble Mother To Her Son". *Biblical Illustrator*. [www.biblecc.com](http://www.biblecc.com). Retrieved 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2018.
- Ellicott, (1905). *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*. Text Courtesy of [BibleSupport.com](http://BibleSupport.com).
- Gill, J (2017). "Exposition of Entire Bible". [www.biblecc.com](http://www.biblecc.com). Retrieved 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2018.
- Harris, J. M (2000). *Basic Principles of Sustainable Development*. Global Development And Environment Institute Working Paper 00-04. Tufts University Medford MA 02155, USA.
- Henry, M (1991); *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in one volume*. Peabody: Hendrickson.
- Holladay, W. L (1988); *A Concise Hebrew And Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- James Gray (2004). *Concise Bible Commentary*. Text Courtesy of [BibleSupport.com](http://BibleSupport.com).
- Johnson, E (2010). "The Pulpit Commentary" Electronic Database. Biblesoft, Inc. [www.biblecc.com](http://www.biblecc.com). Retrieved 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2018.
- Mundele, A. N (2012); *A handbook on African Approaches to Biblical Interpretation*. Limuru, Kenya: Kolbe Press.
- New Revised Standard Version with Deutero canonical Books. (2008); China: Bible Society Resources Ltd.
- Obiorah, M.J (2015); *Bibliotheca Divina: A Basic Introduction To The Study of the Bible*. Enugu: University of Nigeria Press.
- Obiorah, M. J (2017). "Steps in Biblical Exegesis." Masters lecture note, Department of Religion and Cultural Studies, UNN. 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2017.
- Obiorah, M.J (2018). "Hebrew Poetry". 2017/2018 Lecture note For the Use of Students, Department of Religion and Cultural Studies, UNN.
- Olusegun, A.S (2018). "National Bureau of Statistics". <http://www.population.gov.ng>. Retrieved 7<sup>th</sup> August, 2018.
- Pooles, M (2017). "Matthew Poole's Commentary". [www.biblecc.com](http://www.biblecc.com). Retrieved 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2018.
- Raymond, E, Brown, S.S, Joseph, A, Fitzmyer, S. J, Roland, E and Murphy, O (eds) (2014); *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. New Delhi: Indira Printers.
- Robert, J, Fausset A.R and David, B (1882). "A Commentary, Critical, Practical, and Explanatory on the Old and New Testaments." Biblehub.com (retrieved 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec, 2017).
- UNAIDS (2004). "HIV/AIDS and Education: The Role Of Education In The Protection, Care And Support Of Orphans And Vulnerable Children Living In A World With HIV and AIDS". <http://role-of-govt-to-orphans.pdf>. (Retrieved 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2018).



United Nations General Assembly (1987). Report of the world commission on environment and development: Our common future. Oslo, Norway: United Nations General Assembly, Development and International Co-operation: Environment.

Wallkie, B. K. (1979). *The Book of Proverbs and Ancient Wisdom Literature*. A Publication of Dallas Theological Seminary.

### List of Respondents

Name of Respondent	Age	Town	Occupation	Contact
Chief Dennis Okeke Ani	70	Ugwuaji, Enugu South	Traditional prime Minister (Onowu), Ugwuaji	08060772168
Very Rev. D. A. Ezemba	58	Nara Unateze, Nkanu East	Methodist Priest	08033805266
Deac. Z. N. Ede	50	Amuri, Nkanu West	Headmistress	08064243093
Mrs. Ngwu	75	Nike, Enugu East	Farmer	No phone
Hon. Chijioke Egbo	48	Enugu South	Supervisor of finance, Enugu South LGA	08035333757
HRH Igwe C. O. Nyia	70	Obeagu, Ugwuaji autonomous community	Traditional ruler	08037792087
Mr. Ikechukwu Ugwu	51	Enugu South	High work superintendent/coordinator, Social Welfare, Enugu South	07069094277
Ezinne Hannah Ogbodoachime	77	awkunanaw	Business woman	09032477982
Madam Comfort Mgbankwo Ede Ngene	77	akpugo	Farmer	07034641365
Mrs. Abigail Ezemba	46	Nara	Teacher	08062915899
Mrs. Nwakaego Ngwu	63	Amechi	Farmer	08167542247
Mrs. Theresa Nwobodo	70	Nike	Business woman	No phone
Mrs Chinyere	72	Amodu	Farmer	No phone
Elder Dina Onu	80	Agbani	Farmer	No phone
Edeh Samuel	23	Ugwuaji	Student	08170712575